

Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set  
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**Doc Type: Working Group Document****Title: Proposal to change the glyph for the DRACHMA SIGN****Source: Michael Everson****Status: Individual Contribution****Action: For consideration by JTC1/SC2/WG2 and UTC****Date: 2010-07-19**

**The Drachma Sign.** Document N1946 “Addition of the drachma sign to the UCS” was prepared by me on behalf of ELOT.

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**Title: Addition of the DRACHMA SIGN to the UCS**  
**Source: ELOT**  
**Status: National Body Proposal**  
**Date: 1999-01-20**

This document proposes the addition of a Greek currency sign to the UCS, and presents the proposal summary form.

Greece has proposed the addition of the DRACHMA SIGN to ISO/IEC 8859-7 in one of the empty positions (xA5 or 10/05). The creation of the EURO SIGN has necessitated the creation of a unique DRACHMA SIGN for use in banking, administration, and for general purposes in Greece and countries trading with Greece both inside and outside the the European Union, especially during the transitional period when both the drachma and the euro are in use.

The DRACHMA SIGN is a glyph with a stylized capital delta together with a small rho.

It contained a glyph made in Everson Mono on the basis of a glyph which had been provided to me.

That glyph consisted of a small Greek rho and a character encoded in Wingdings at U+F0D0, named internally “leafccwne”, which I interpret as “leaf counter-clockwise north-east”. The image I had from ELOT is given on the left, the Wingdings character in the centre, and the glyph currently used in the code charts.

There is no evidence at all that the glyph currently used in the code charts has ever been used in Greece for any purpose. Had it been, ELOT would probably not have given me a glyph using a dingbat. Nick

Nicholas wrote about this, noting that Greek price-tags had made uses of a Drachma sign (see [www.tlg.uci.edu/~opoudjis/unicode/ligatures.html](http://www.tlg.uci.edu/~opoudjis/unicode/ligatures.html)). He suggested that the glyph be changed: “if we're going to have the codepoint, the price tag ligature has the advantage of having existed within living memory.”

To my memory, the symbol for the now defunct drachma has never been anything but the abbreviation  $\delta\rho$ , or  $\delta\rho\chi$ . It is of course already possible to represent the abbreviation  $\delta\rho\chi$  in Unicode using existing Unicode codepoints. In that regard, the drachma sign is unlike the other 17 currency signs in Unicode 4.0—although some glyph realisations of U+20A3 French Franc Sign, F, and U+20A7 Peseta Sign, Pts, are also squashed up abbreviations, and others can be realised readily with overstrike glyphs. Even if the cursive form of the glyph was current in the 19th century, it could still be composed straightforwardly with a simple font switch. So one might wonder why the codepoint was adopted.

The answer is that this was an ELOT idea, and when ELOT wants something, Unicode is obliged to comply. This is the sum total of the [justification](#) given:

The creation of the EURO SIGN has necessitated the creation of a unique DRACHMA SIGN for use in banking, administration, and for general purposes in Greece and countries trading with Greece both inside and outside the European Union, especially during the transitional period when both the drachma and the euro are in use.

And when asked whether the characters already exist:

The glyph looks like script capital DELTA and small RHO but the symbol is intended for unitary use in collocation with the EURO SIGN.

Allow me to paraphrase this uncharitably. For over 150 years, the drachma is written as an abbreviation, with a delta and a rho and usually a chi. Two years before the drachma *ceases to exist*, ELOT decides that if the Euro gets to have a single glyph, so should the drachma—even though that single glyph *is* a delta followed by a rho, and it has a graphical form that has not been seen for at least 50 years, and possibly ever. Why it is so pressing that the drachma has a single glyph now that it would be shown next to € is never made clear. National pride? DM remained good enough for the Germans. Sorting? Surely that's an issue for spreadsheet implementers, not Unicode. Visual display? The two character saving doesn't solve the problem of labels now having two prices on them instead of one. And the whole shebang gets adopted into Unicode, where it will reside as a codepoint for centuries, in September 1999—15 months before the drachma is abolished, and the rationale for the existence of the codepoint (cooccurrence with the Euro) ceases to apply.

Riiight.

To be fair, as Alexandros Diamantidis reminds me, some price tags did print delta-rho in a single space, which might be counted as a ligature—with the delta either above or to the top left of the rho:



Of course, this is still a ligature and not a single character; but if we're going to have the codepoint, the price tag ligature has the advantage of having existed within living memory.

This character was [proposed](#) by ELOT in January 1999, and adopted in Unicode 3.0.

I recommend that the chart glyph be changed from  $\Delta\rho$  to:

