Response on WG2 4986 (Feedback on Keyboard Symbols SC2 N4522)
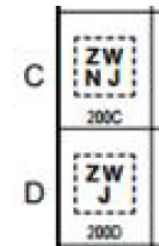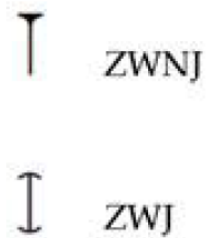
Karl Pentzlin – 2018-06-18 (Note: SC2 N4522 is updated by WG2 N4984 in the meanwhile)

1. In fact, until now there are not many printed manuals using these symbols for the simple reason that the symbols are not present in Unicode. Usual document producing procedures nowadays are neither prepared to handle special fonts with private use encodings, nor an amount of character-size pictures within running text.
    For this reason, the text of the new German keyboard standard has to describe the symbols by shape (outside the pictures and figures) instead of showing them directly, as all PUA characters were turned into garbage due to the production process.
    Also for this reason, the new French keyboard standard has to "recommend" instead to "request" the use of the keyboard symbols, as the correct production of any documentation could not be ensured otherwise. Thus, the request to show printed material before the encoding causes a chicken-and-egg problem in the real world. This request is dropped for other characters anyway (Emoji).

2. Regarding the "variety of symbols being used today":

It is obvious that the Microsoft symbol for ZWNJ is not suited as a keyboard symbol, as a vertical bar shows no distinctiveness. Likewise, the look of the Microsoft ZWJ symbol does not directly imply "joining".
The boxed letter sequences also show no meaning for people not exactly knowing the English abbreviation, besides being too detailed for clearly recognizable keyboard symbols.
Therefore, SC35/WG1 decided to design more suited symbols regarding cognitive and ergonomic aspects.