

From: High Council of Informatics of Iran (HCI)
Date: 2003-10-30
Subject: On the suggested changes to the Bidirectional Algorithm

High Council of Informatics of Iran is very much against one of the proposed changes (version 9-12) to the Bidirectional Algorithm, as suggested in the document L2/03-396. The change is the new Option 1 in Section 4.3, mentioning:

The following are permissible ways for systems to apply higher-level protocols to the ordering of bidirectional text.

1. *Override the bidi property of one or more characters. For example, the Unicode bidi property of a solidus ('/') is ES. It could be overridden to be N, either always or in particular cases.*

HCI believes that such a change will make all of the conformance clauses practically void, which makes it impossible for governmental bodies and other institutions requiring conformance to external standards, Unicode Bidirectional Algorithm in this case, to trust applications from different vendors to work with each other.

For example, a vendor may state full conformance to the Unicode Standard, while only implementing a *simplified* version, by overriding the bidirectional property of lots of characters to simpler classes to handle, say only Left-to-Right. This is specially hard to handle when one uses the application for financial processing, where users could be unintentionally misdirected to approve a certain amount of money while the actual amount is different (and is displayed differently by another application from another vendor).

One can see easily that the new conformance clauses in Section 4 will be very easily overridden, for example:

The bidirectional algorithm specifies part of the intrinsic semantics of right-to-left characters, and is thus required for conformance to the Unicode algorithm where any such characters are displayed.

But how can such a conformance clause hold, if every class can be overridden, and most specifically, only in "particular cases"? Like, say, only when salaries of a certain programmer are displayed to the manager for approval? ;-)

HCI, being the government's synchronization hand of Information Technology in a country with a very frequent usage of the Bidirectional Algorithm in almost every piece of software, is very much worried and concerned about *any* relaxation of the requirements of the Bidirectional Algorithm.