

# INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

# ISO 3901

Second edition  
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## Information and documentation — International Standard Recording Code (ISRC)

*Information et documentation — Code international normalisé des  
enregistrements (ISRC)*



Reference number  
ISO 3901:2001(E)

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 3.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this International Standard may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

International Standard ISO 3901 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*, Subcommittee SC 9, *Presentation, identification and description of documents*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 3901:1986), which has been technically revised.

Annex A forms a normative part of this International Standard. Annex B is for information only.

## Introduction

The International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) provides a means of identifying audio recordings and music video recordings internationally.

An ISRC identifies the recording throughout its life and is intended for use by producers of recordings as well as by copyright organizations, broadcasting organizations, media libraries and archives, etc.

# Information and documentation — International Standard Recording Code (ISRC)

## 1 Scope

The purpose of this International Standard is to define and promote the use of a standard code for the unique identification of recordings.

The International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) may be applied to audio recordings and music video recordings regardless of whether they are in analogue or digital formats. The ISRC shall not be used for the numbering of audio or audiovisual carriers (e.g. compact discs or videocassettes).

Audiovisual recordings, other than music video recordings produced in conjunction with an audio recording, are excluded from the scope of this International Standard. Such audiovisual recordings should be assigned an International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN) in accordance with ISO 15706.

## 2 Normative reference

The following normative document contains provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this International Standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this International Standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent edition of the normative document indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative document referred to applies. Members of ISO and IEC maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO 3166-1, *Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions — Part 1: Country codes*

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this International Standard the following terms and definitions apply.

### 3.1

#### **country code**

code that identifies the country in which the home office of the registrant for the recording is located at the time the ISRC is assigned

### 3.2

#### **music video recording**

audiovisual fixation of which the audio component consists wholly or substantially of a recording of a performance of a musical work or works

NOTE In most cases such an audio component is produced in conjunction with a separately issued sound recording.

### 3.3

#### **recording**

result of a recording process independent of the type and number of audio or audiovisual carriers and technology used

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NOTE The term recording applies to each recorded item which may be used as a separate unit regardless of whether it is issued as part of a larger recorded work (e.g. each separate track on an album of audio recordings).

### 3.4 registrant

original producer or subsequent owner of the audio recording or music video recording at the time the ISRC is assigned

NOTE If the original producer sells a recording, with all rights, before its ISRC is assigned, the acquirer is considered to be the registrant for the purposes of ISRC from then on.

## 4 Structure and format of the ISRC

### 4.1 General

An ISRC consists of 12 characters and is alphanumeric, using the arabic numerals 0 to 9 and letters of the Roman alphabet. It is divided into four elements in the following order:

- a) country code (see 4.2);
- b) registrant code (see 4.3);
- c) year of reference element (see 4.4);
- d) designation code (see 4.5).

When an International Standard Recording Code is written, printed or otherwise visually presented, it shall be preceded by the letters ISRC and the four elements of the ISRC shall be separated from each other by a hyphen.

#### EXAMPLE

ISRC FR-Z03-97-00212

Code identifier: ISRC

Country code: FR (i.e. France)

Registrant code: Z03 (i.e. Mercury France)

Year of reference: 97 (i.e. 1997)

Designation code: 00212 (i.e. 212th recording assigned an ISRC by Mercury France in 1997)

### 4.2 Country code

The country code identifies the country in which the registrant's home office is located at the time the ISRC is assigned.

The country code shall consist of two letters and shall be in accordance with the codes specified in ISO 3166-1.

#### EXAMPLES

GB = United Kingdom

DE = Germany

SE = Sweden

### 4.3 Registrant code

The registrant code identifies the producer (or subsequent owner) of the recording at the time the ISRC was allocated.

Since ISRCs are normally assigned at the point at which the full mastering process is finalized (see A.1.2), the registrant code usually reflects the original producer of the audio recording or music video recording. However, if the original producer sells a recording, with all rights, before its ISRC is assigned, the subsequent owner would be the registrant for the purposes of the ISRC.

The registrant code shall consist of three alphanumeric characters (A to Z and 0 to 9).

#### EXAMPLES

A83 = BMG (Han Kook) Music Co. Ltd.

8G5 = 77 Productions

28R = Inca Productions

191 = Sony Music Entertainment AG

WP0 = Warner Music Japan Inc.

RIP = Riptide Productions

Producers shall use the registrant codes assigned to them by the appointed ISRC agency for their country or region (see annex A).

### 4.4 Year of reference element

The year of reference element identifies the year in which the ISRC is allocated to the recording (see A.1.2).

The year of reference element shall consist of two characters representing the last two digits of the year in which the ISRC was allocated. It shall be assigned by the registrant.

#### EXAMPLES:

98 = 1998

01 = 2001

### 4.5 Designation code

The designation code identifies each recording or part of a larger recorded work that may be used as a separate unit and that is identified as such by the registrant (e.g. in documentation such as the lists of tracks included with the physical carrier).

The designation code shall consist of 5 digits. It shall be assigned by the producer (or subsequent owner) indicated in the registrant code.

Numbers for the designation code should be assigned sequentially and shall not be reassigned within the same year indicated by the year of reference element. To ensure that the designation code contains 5 digits, zeros shall be used as fill characters at the start of the numerical sequence.

#### EXAMPLES

00476

00477

## 5 Administration

The ISRC system shall be administered by the International ISRC Agency appointed for this purpose and by the appropriate ISRC agencies for national, regional or other groupings.

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## Annex A (normative)

### Guidelines for the application of ISRC

#### A.1 General principles for the allocation of ISRC

**A.1.1** Each recording shall have its own unique ISRC.

**A.1.2** An ISRC should be allocated at the point at which the decision to release a recording is taken and before the full mastering process for the recording is completed. However, backstock created prior to implementation of the ISRC system may also be assigned ISRC. Further details are provided in the ISRC *Practical Guide* issued by the International ISRC Agency.

**A.1.3** Any new or changed recording shall be provided with a new ISRC. Any change in sound or image of a recording which affects the intellectual property rights involved requires the allocation of a new ISRC.

**A.1.4** If the original registrant sells the recording in unchanged form after it is released, the ISRC for the recording shall remain the same.

**A.1.5** A separate ISRC shall be assigned to each recorded item which constitutes a separate unit of a larger work (e.g. for each track on an album of recordings). If a registrant intends to exploit part(s) of a larger work separately from the larger work an ISRC should be assigned to each such part of the larger work. When a recording is re-issued in its entirety as part of another work (e.g. a compilation album), the ISRC for the recording shall remain the same.

**A.1.6** Re-use of an ISRC that has already been allocated for another recording is not permitted.

**A.1.7** Designation codes should be assigned sequentially. However, producers may use other schemes compatible with the 5-digit format of the designation code provided there is no possibility that this will lead to duplicate ISRC being created.

**A.1.8** The ISRC should be included in all relevant documentation concerning a recording.

**A.1.9** The issuance of an ISRC shall in no way be related to the process of copyright registration.

#### A.2 Modified versions

**A.2.1** For the purposes of ISRC assignment, a recording shall be considered as a modified version only if its recorded content has been modified. Further details are available in the *Practical Guide* issued by the International ISRC Agency.

**A.2.2** Changes in the physical and/or electronic carrier, packaging or price of an audio recording or music video recording do not constitute the creation of a modified version and a new ISRC shall not be assigned in such instances.

**A.2.3** Recordings of live events are to be assigned their own ISRCs in the same manner as are studio recordings.

### A.3 Fixation of ISRC

**A.3.1** The ISRC shall be encoded in copies of an audio recording or music video recording issued in digital form. Such encoding shall be permanent and secure.

**A.3.2** The ISRC should be affixed to or encoded in copies of an audio recording or music video recording in analogue formats. Such fixation should be permanent and secure.

**A.3.3** The ISRC should be included in all documentation issued with a specific audio recording or music video recording. Such inclusion should be permanent and secure.

### A.4 Application of ISRC

The following are examples of the application of ISRC. For further details on the application of ISRC, refer to the ISRC *Practical Guide* which is available from the International ISRC Agency.

#### EXAMPLES

1) New recordings:

A compact disc comprising ten new recordings:

Country: France = **FR**

Registrant: Mercury France = **Z03**

Year of reference: 1998 = **98**

ISRC FR-Z03-98-01231 (1st recording)

ISRC FR-Z03-98-01232 (2nd recording)

ISRC FR-Z03-98-01233 (3rd recording)

and so on through to ...

ISRC FR-Z03-98-01240 (10th recording)

2) Parts of a recording project:

i) A recording of Mozart piano concertos:

Country: Netherlands = **NL**

Registrant: Recording Classics Mgt. = **C01**

Year of reference: 1984 = **84**

ii) Separate parts of the recording project:

Piano concerto in E flat, K.271: ISRC NL-C01-84-13261

Piano concerto in C, K.415: ISRC NL-C01-84-13262

Piano concerto in C, K.503: ISRC NL-C01-84-13263

## A.5 Administration of the ISRC system

### A.5.1 International ISRC Agency

The registration authority for ISO 3901<sup>1)</sup> shall function as the International ISRC Agency for the implementation and maintenance of the ISRC system. The International ISRC Agency shall confirm the appointed ISRC agencies for national, regional or other groupings and shall maintain and distribute a list of appointed ISRC agencies.

In the absence of a national ISRC agency for a specific country or region, the International ISRC Agency may perform the functions associated with ISRC administration (see A.5.2) for that country or region.

### A.5.2 National ISRC agencies

The administration of ISRC within countries or other suitable groupings is delegated to appointed ISRC agencies. These ISRC agencies shall inform registrants of their national country code in accordance with ISO 3166-1 and shall allocate registrant codes to producers or subsequent owners who are acting as the registrant for a recording.

Appointed ISRC agencies are responsible for keeping a directory of all registrant codes and the registrants to which they were allocated. The following data shall be recorded and maintained for this purpose:

- a) country code;
- b) registrant code;
- c) name and address of registrant;
- d) contact person or department for registrant.

These data shall be maintained in such a way that they can be searched and displayed in alphabetical order by registrant codes and by the names of the registrants.

The ISRC agencies shall transmit a current copy of their directories of registrant codes to the International ISRC Agency once a year.

### A.5.3 Registrants

Registrants are responsible for allocating ISRC to recordings. The year of reference and designation code elements of the ISRC are assigned and administered by the registrant.

Registrants should maintain accurate records of all their ISRC assignments and inform their national ISRC agency of details concerning the audio recordings and music video recordings to which ISRC have been assigned. Minimum requirements for descriptive data about audio recordings and music video recordings to which ISRC have been assigned and a specified format for the exchange of ISRC information are available from the International ISRC Agency. Strict adherence to the data requirements and format specified by the International ISRC Agency will permit the exchange of ISRC information by electronic means.

### A.5.4 International agency for the maintenance of country codes

Country codes are established and updated by the international agency responsible for the maintenance of ISO 3166-1. Appointed ISRC agencies shall use the appropriate codes allocated by the ISO 3166-1 Maintenance Agency<sup>2)</sup> for countries within their respective administrative areas of the ISRC system.

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2) ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency, DIN Deutsches Institut für Normung, D-10772 Berlin, Germany, Tel. + 49 30 2601 2791; Fax + 49 30 2601 1231.

**Annex B**  
(informative)

**Supporting information for ISRC registration of recordings**

In order to adequately describe the specific recording to which an ISRC is allocated, registrants shall supply the ISRC agency with a specified amount of descriptive support information about the recording registered. This information shall be maintained by the ISRC agencies.

The specifications concerning the type and format of this support information shall be established by the International ISRC Agency in cooperation with the ISRC agencies.

## Bibliography

- [1] ISO 15706:—<sup>3)</sup>, *Information and documentation — International Standard Audiovisual Number (ISAN)*

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3) To be published.

