

International ISRC Agency Bulletin 2015/01

Validating an International Standard Recording Code

March 3rd 2015, Updated July 20th 2022

This ISRC Bulletin replaces 2009/01 and is intended as a reference on checking the validity of codes and aims to help system implementers create automated checks that can verify a correctly formatted International Standard Recording Code (ISRC).

SYNTAX RULES

An ISRC is correctly formatted when it conforms to the syntax rules. These rules state that the different parts of the overall code must be 12 characters in length and only use the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet (A-Z) and Arabic numerals (0-9).

| Element Number | Position in ISRC | Permitted Characters |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Element 1 | 1, 2 | A-Z |
| Element 2 | 3, 4, 5 | A-Z, 0-9 |
| Element 3 | 6,7 | 0-9 |
| Element 4 | 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 | 0-9 |

Table A – ISRC Code Elements

The structuring of the code from elements is purely to provide an easy means for constructing unique codes. Code elements do not have any intrinsic ‘meaning’ once the ISRC has been assigned.

Sometimes ISRCs can be found to have lowercase letters a-z. These should be interpreted as uppercase A-Z.

Care should be taken when using the letter O and the numeral 0, and the letter I and the numeral 1.

As an aid to readability, when an ISRC is written, printed or otherwise visually presented, it is preceded by the characters ‘ISRC’ and the four code elements are separated by hyphens. Preceding characters, spaces or hyphens should never be considered part of the overall 12-characters of the ISRC. Before or during data entry they should be stripped out. If extraneous characters are entered, subsequent software processing may take the first 12-characters which can lead to incorrect results.

VALID VALUES FOR ELEMENT 1

The characters of Element 1 of the ISRC have been drawn from the ISO 3166 country code table; however not all country codes have been utilised at present. In some cases, factors including high demand for ISRCs in particular territories have led to the allocation and use of codes that are designated 'reserved' in the ISO 3166 table. Character combinations which are valid within ISRC Element 1 are allocated by the International ISRC Agency and are shown in the table in Annex A. These are the only codes that are valid within Element 1.

The list in Annex A, will be updated by the International Agency when new Element 1 are allocated within the ISRC system. When checks for ISRC validity are carried out, these should be based on the most recent version of this document.

The ISRC Bulletins that are listed in Annex B have previously announced the allocation of various two letter combinations for use as country codes. These allocations have been consolidated into Annex A of this document and remain valid. The Bulletins in Annex B are superseded by this document and are now withdrawn.

Cases of invalid values for ISRC Element 1 should be reported to the National ISRC Agency or the International ISRC Agency for investigation and/or advice.

EXAMPLES OF WHEN AN ISRC IS ALWAYS INVALID

ISRCs Set Aside for Specific Purposes

Some ISRC Agencies, such as the US National ISRC Agency and the International ISRC Agency use certain codes for illustrative purposes in documentation and training materials. For example, US-S1Z or JM-K40. These codes will never be allocated to a Registrant and therefore if you receive an ISRC with either of these as Registrant Codes it is invalid.

Same ISRC Assigned to Different Recording

It is a fundamental principle of the ISRC System that two different recordings must have different ISRCs. If it is found that an ISRC has already been allocated to another recording then an error has occurred and the source of the error must be reported to the National ISRC Agency or the International ISRC Agency for investigation and/or advice.

EXAMPLES OF WHEN AN ISRC MAY BE INVALID

The ISRC Contains Dummy Data

ISRCs may be found that are formed of data that is clearly not valid. Characters may be repeated in forms like GB-000-00-00000, GB-111-11-11111 or 00-000-00-00000. These ISRC-like codes are sometimes used by companies in their internal systems or for testing, and they are not intended to be released commercially.

The ISRC Contains an Improbable Year of Reference

The Year of Reference now indicates when the ISRC was assigned to the recording. In earlier versions of the standard, it represented the year of recording. Some years will clearly warrant further investigation. For example, a recording from genres of the late 20th century or later (such as, rock and roll, dance, techno, etc) is found to have a Year of Reference of 35, meaning 1935 – that is clearly incorrect.

ANNEX A: LIST OF VALID CODE VALUES WITHIN ISRC ELEMENT 1

This current list is downloadable at https://isrc.ifpi.org/downloads/Valid_Characters.pdf

The International ISRC Agency manages all ISRC Element 1 codes including those for which no codes have yet been allocated to producers. Only the Element 1 codes listed in the document linked above are authorised for use in ISRCs. Where there is no National ISRC Agency codes may only be allocated by the International ISRC Agency. There are no ISO 3166 country codes that are available for user-defined usage within the ISRC system. ISO 3166 part 1 alpha 2 country codes designated for reserved usage by the ISO 3166 Maintenance Agency are managed in respect of ISRC by the International ISRC Agency. Codes that may have been created unofficially including any codes assigned with country codes other than those listed in the document linked above are not valid ISRCs.

Certain territories or island groups may obtain ISRC registrant codes via the National Agency in an associated territory. For example the territory of Puerto Rico, other US territories and US outlying islands would receive Registrant Codes from the US National ISRC Agency.

A complete listing of National ISRC Agencies and contact details is at <http://isrc.ifpi.org/en/contact/national-agency-contacts>

Annex B – Withdrawn ISRC Bulletins

The following ISRC Bulletins have been withdrawn and replaced by this present Bulletin 2015/01:

- Bulletin 2010/01 (Fiji & Luxembourg)
- Bulletin 2010/02 (USA)
- Bulletin 2011/01 (Liechtenstein)
- Bulletin 2012/01 (CP & DG)
- Bulletin 2012/03 (UK)
- Bulletin 2013/01 (Tonga)
- Bulletin 2013/02 (Tunecore)
- Bulletin 2013/04 (France)
- Bulletin 2014/01 (Brazil)

The code allocations announced in these bulletins remain valid and are incorporated into Annex A above.

'ISRC Bulletin 2009/01 – Validating an ISRC' is superseded by this ISRC Bulletin 2015/01.