

## International ISRC Agency Bulletin 2009/01 Validating an ISRC

22 September 2009

This ISRC Bulletin contains guidelines intended to assist with checking the validity of ISRCs. While this is principally the responsibility of the party providing the ISRC, checks made by the recipient can provide some protection against error and data corruption.

An ISRC should be assigned to a recording in accordance with the rules set out in the ISRC Handbook (available at [www.ifpi.org/isrc](http://www.ifpi.org/isrc)). When accepting an ISRC from a third party, you may be able to rely on their processes and be sure that ISRCs you are given are valid. However, you may need to check that the ISRCs have been properly assigned.

There are two categories of guidelines here. The first category highlights when an ISRC is certain to be invalid. The second category details instances in which an ISRC may well be invalid and where further checks should be made.

ISRC users who wish to suggest other checks that can improve data quality are invited to refer them to the International ISRC Agency so that this Bulletin can be updated.

### 1. An ISRC is always invalid if:

#### ***- it is not exactly 12 characters long***

An ISRC is always formed of exactly 12 characters. Sometimes it will be found preceded by the characters "ISRC" and it may be punctuated by hyphens. Neither the "ISRC" nor the hyphens form part of the code and there must be 12 characters if these are ignored.

An ISRC may sometimes be punctuated with other characters, such as spaces, and while this is not recommended, there should still be 12 characters.

#### ***- the fields contain illegal characters***

An ISRC is made up from different elements, and while no independent meaning should be given to these fields (see ISRC Bulletin 2006/03), they should be validated.

Element	Position	Legal characters
Country Code	1, 2	A-Z
Registrant Code	3, 4, 5	A-Z, 0-9
Year of Reference	6, 7	0-9
Designation Code	8, 9, 10, 11, 12	0-9

ISRCs should use the 26 capital letters A-Z but may be found with lower case letters a-z. These should be interpreted as upper case letters.

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**- it contains an unallocated Country Code**

The country code should consist of two letters which form one of the “alpha-2” codes specified in ISO 3166-1 or one of the user assigned codes (see below). These are standard two character codes used to identify countries. Some caution is necessary here. These codes are broadly the same as those used in internet addresses with the principal exception of the United Kingdom which is “uk” in internet addresses and “GB” in ISO3166. They are different from vehicle country codes and various other schemes.

A full list of valid country codes is published by the ISO3166 Maintenance Agency at [http://www.iso.org/iso/country\\_codes](http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes).

**- it contains the country code “CN”**

“CN” is the ISO 3166 code for China. China has allocated codes that look somewhat like ISRCs using the country code CN. Codes that have been assigned to date with “CN” are not compliant with the ISO 3901 standard because (i) no national ISRC Agency has been appointed in China and (ii) the structure of the codes used in China is somewhat different from that specified in ISO 3901. The International ISRC Agency and the relevant parties in China are cooperating to implement a compliant form of ISRC in China. News on this will be posted on the ISRC website but for the moment, “CN” codes should be treated as non-compliant.

**- it contains an unused user-assigned code**

Some of the unused country codes are reserved by the ISO3166 Maintenance Agency for internal use by users of the country code system, They will never be allocated to a country.

To date the only user-assigned code which is valid within the ISRC system is “ZZ” which is used by the International ISRC Agency itself. Other user-assigned codes (currently AA, QM-QZ, XA-XZ) are invalid within an ISRC.

The International ISRC Agency may use other user-assigned codes in due course and will publish information on the ISRC web site.

**- it has country code “US” and Registrant Code “S1Z”**

The US National ISRC Agency uses the Registrant Code “S1Z” for illustrative purposes in documentation and training materials. It will never be allocated to a registrant and is invalid in an ISRC.

**- it is the same as the code assigned to a different recording**

It is a fundamental principle of the ISRC system that two different recordings must have different ISRCs. If an ISRC is found that has already been seen assigned to a different recording, then an error has occurred. The source of the error should be investigated.

## **2. An ISRC may be invalid if:**

**- it appears to contain dummy data**

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

**- it contains an improbable Year of Reference**

The Year of Reference now indicates the year that the ISRC was assigned to the recording. In an early version of the standard, it represented the year of recording. Some years are clearly indicative of a need to investigate. For example if the code US-S1Z-35-00001 (with a Year of Reference of “35” meaning “1935”) is found on a recording from the genres of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century or later (i.e. rock and roll, dance, techno etc.), it is probably in error.