

International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) Handbook

3rd Edition, 2009, International ISRC Agency (IFPI Secretariat), LONDON

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To ensure that up-to-date information is used, a link to the ISRC website at www.ifpi.org/isrc is preferred to copying this document.

This 3rd Edition is a minor revision of the 2003 (2nd) edition removing in particular the list of National Agencies which is now hosted on the ISRC website. The next edition will incorporate more substantive revisions and suggestions for issues that should be included are welcome and should be sent to isrc@ifpi.org.

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2 Background

This handbook is designed to provide guidance on the implementation of the International Standard Recording Code (ISRC).

ISRC was developed by the international recording industry through the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) as a response to a need to identify sound and music video recordings. The current version is known as International Standard ISO 3901:2001.

ISO is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies. ISO 3901:2001 was prepared and is administered by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, Information and documentation, Subcommittee 9, Presentation, identification and description of documents and was ratified as an international standard in 2001, following the adoption of the original standard in 1986.

The International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) has recommended since 1988 to its members that ISRC should be adopted as an international means of identification of sound recordings and short form music videos.

In 1989 IFPI Secretariat was appointed the International Registration Authority for ISRC by ISO and functions as the International ISRC Agency; and since 1989, 49 National Agencies have been appointed by the International Agency.

This [ISRC Handbook](#) explains how the system works and what has to be done to ensure that ISRCs are correctly assigned. It has been completely revised from the previous editions of the ISRC Practical Guide, which are withdrawn. It reflects the changes that have been made in the revision to ISO 3901:2001.

The [ISRC Handbook](#) will be reissued on an annual basis to reflect agreed practice in the use and administration of ISRC.

3 Interpretation of ISO 3901:2001

3.1 Scope and purpose of the ISRC

The International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) provides a means of uniquely identifying sound recordings and music videos internationally. For the purposes of this handbook, a music video recording is defined as a short form music video initially produced to support the release of a track.

It is stressed that ISRC identifies sound recordings and music video recordings and not physical products ('carriers') and that there is no conflict with existing product catalogue numbering systems with which it co-exists. Neither does ISRC identify a digitally distributed package, although sound and music video recordings included in such a package should be identified with an ISRC.

The ISRC system is constructed so that any entity creating sound recordings can obtain the means to issue ISRCs regardless of their membership, of or standing with, industry associations and other bodies.

3.2 ISRC Principles

Each distinct recording is to have its own unique ISRC.

The first owner or current owner of the rights to a recording normally assigns the ISRC, providing no ISRC has been issued before. It identifies the recording throughout its life and is intended for use by producers of sound recordings and music videos (i.e. record labels), as well as by copyright organisations, broadcasting organisations, libraries, licensees etc.

Any new or materially changed recording must be provided with a new ISRC (see Section 4.9.1 Remixes/ Edits /). Re-use of an ISRC that has already been allocated for another recording is not permitted see Section 4.1.3 No re-use.

If a recording is sold or licensed and is then released unchanged the ISRC remains the same.

3.3 The Benefits of ISRC

The ISRC has been developed in order to facilitate the accurate exchange of information on the ownership, the use of recordings and to simplify the administration of rights in them. It is a global, unique method of identifying sound and music video recordings.

By identifying all sound and music video recordings that are released, regardless of the format that they are released in, the ISRC enables the tracking and tracing of these recordings through the music value chain.

Potential users of sound and music video recordings will also find it easier to obtain information about the current rights owner because repertoire databases will provide this information with the ISRC.

In addition in many territories the ISRC is increasingly becoming a tool in the fight against piracy.

The adoption of the ISRC system by the music community as a whole has the following benefits:

1. ISRC, being the worldwide recognised standard for recording identification, can easily be accepted and implemented internationally and allow interoperation of different databases and systems.
2. The ISRC coding system is compatible with standards developed in the field of consumer electronics. Incorporated in appropriate digital and manufactured recording media it is readable by hardware equipment.
3. The ISRC is increasingly used in electronic copyright management systems and Digital Rights Management systems.
4. The implementation of ISRC is cost effective; ISRC can be put into operation without requiring special investment in equipment. It only requires a structure able to deal with the administration of ISRC within the organisation using it.

3.4 Administration of the ISRC system

The administration of the ISRC system is carried out at two levels:

3.4.1 International Administration

The international administration of the ISRC system is in the hands of the International ISRC Agency (IFPI Secretariat).

The address of the International Agency is:

International ISRC Agency
IFPI Secretariat
10 Piccadilly
London W1J 0DD
United Kingdom
Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7878 7900
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7878 6832
Email: isrc@ifpi.org
Website: www.ifpi.org/isrc

The responsibilities of the International ISRC Agency are:

1. To promote the worldwide use of the system;
2. To appoint the National (or regional) ISRC Agencies and to maintain a list of the appointed National ISRC Agencies;
3. To administer the ISRC system for territories where no National ISRC Agency exists;
4. To recommend procedures for the efficient implementation of the ISRC system and to publish these from time to time;
5. To answer queries on the implementation of the ISRC system;
6. To report annually to ISO on its activities, the worldwide adoption of ISRC, and the continued relevance of the text of ISO 3901 and to recommend any changes needed.

3.4.2 National Administration

The administration of ISRC within territories is delegated to appointed agencies, which form the link between Registrants and the International ISRC Agency.

A list of appointed ISRC Agencies is contained in Appendix one: List of agencies and is also available on the International ISRC Agency website (www.ifpi.org/isrc). This is kept fully up to date.

The responsibilities of National Agencies are to:

1. On request, allocate Registrant Codes to all those in their territory wishing to register sound recordings and music video recordings, regardless of the applicants membership of, or standing with, the National Agency, industry associations and other bodies;
2. Inform all Registrants of the appropriate Country Code;
3. Promote the use of the ISRC system to recording industry and other entities and use best endeavours to ensure that an ISRC is allocated to all sound recordings and music video recordings issued in their territory;
4. Encourage the proper allocation of ISRCs to sound recordings where no allocation was made on release;

5. Keep a record of all Registrant Codes and to which entities they were allocated and in accordance with ISO 3901:2001, Annex A.5.2 maintain a listing:

| Country code | Registrant code | Registrant (Name, Address and other contact details) | Department or person to be contacted (if necessary) | Date Registrant Code Issued |
|--------------|-----------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
|--------------|-----------------|--|---|-----------------------------|

6. Report annually to the International ISRC Agency on the Registrant Codes allocated in their territory (as above) and on implementation of ISRC;
7. Provide Registrants with guidelines in local languages where appropriate, on the practical implementation of the system and resolve operational problems in liaison with the International ISRC Agency to prevent inconsistencies;
8. Act as controller and arbitrator for all ISRC matters in its country, taking advice from the International ISRC Agency where appropriate;
9. Ensure as far as possible that all sound recordings and music video recordings released in their territory are included in appropriate repertoire databases whether operated by the Agency itself or by another entity on a national or regional basis.

3.5 Description of the ISRC

The following description summarises the International Standard ISO 3901: 2001 but does not replace it. Where interpretation is required, reference should be made to the ISO document, which is authoritative. Copies of ISO3901: 2001 can be obtained from national standards bodies and direct from ISO (www.iso.org).

3.5.1 General

ISRC is a unique identifier for sound and music video recordings where one, and only one, identifying code is allocated to each version of the recording.

For code allocation purposes, the ISRC is separated into its different elements. However when the code is being used, it is the whole number that represents the sound or music video recording and no significance should be accorded to any one element. In particular, the Registrant Code (see Section 3.5.3. Registrant Code) cannot be assumed to identify a current rights owner as the recording may have changed hands since code allocation. Additionally rights may vary territory by territory. Further, the year of reference cannot be assumed to be a year of recording. It represents the year the ISRC was assigned, which may or may not be the year the sound recording was released (see Section 3.5.4 Year of Reference).

The ISRC is alphanumeric, using digits (the ten Arabic numerals 0 - 9) and the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet. The ISRC consists of twelve characters representing country (2 characters), Registrant (3 characters), Year of Reference (2 digits) and Designation (5 digits). For visual presentation it is divided into four elements separated by hyphens and the letters ISRC should always precede an ISRC code. The hyphens are however not part of the ISRC. See Section 4.10 ISRC Implementation in Software for presentation of ISRC in computer software. The elements appear in the following order:

- Country Code
- Registrant Code
- Year of Reference

- Designation Code

The structure of the ISRC is shown in the following example:

| | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|
| ISRC FR - Z03 - 98 – 00212 | | | | |
| ISRC | FR | Z03 | 98 | 00212 |
| Code identifier | Country Code (2 characters) FR = France | Registrant Code (3 characters) Z03 = Mercury France | Year of Reference (2 digits) 98 = 1998 | Designation Code (5 digits) |

3.5.2 Country Code

The Country Code identifies the country of residence of the registrant. Where the Registrant is part of a group with operations in several countries, the Registrant may elect to either:

- Register in the country where the local operating entity is located or
- Register in the country where the international headquarters is located.

In making this decision, the operation of repertoire databases and other industry-wide activities should be taken into consideration. It is recommended that Registrants consult with their National Agency on the matter.

The Country Code consists of the two letters allocated to the Country according to the ISO 3166-1-Alpha-2 standard. Copies of ISO 3166 are available from National standards bodies and direct from ISO (www.iso.org). ISO now acts as Maintenance Agency for ISO 3166 and publishes a free list of Country Codes on its website - http://www.iso.org/iso/country_codes.htm. The International ISRC Agency will inform each National Agency of the correct code for its territory. National Agencies will inform all Registrants of the national Country Code.

Examples:

FR = France

JP = Japan

GB = United Kingdom

3.5.3 Registrant Code

The Registrant Code identifies the entity assigning the Designation Code in an ISRC. Since ISRCs are normally allocated at the point prior to the preparation of the final production Pre-Master, the Registrant Code will normally reflect the original producer of the recording. However, if the producer of a recording sells the recording with all rights before its ISRC is assigned, the new owner should be considered as the Registrant when they elect to allocate an ISRC.

The Registrant Code is alphanumeric and consists of three characters, each of which can be either numeric or alphabetic. This provides a maximum capacity of 46,656 Registrant Codes per territory. National Agencies will allocate appropriate codes in accordance with local conditions and customs, but will ensure uniqueness within their territory.

The Registrant Code is assigned by National Agencies upon application by an entity wishing to allocate ISRCs. National ISRC Agencies should allocate a Registrant Code to all applicants without reference to their membership of, or standing with, the organization acting as National Agency. National Agencies may make a reasonable charge to cover their costs in allocating Registrant Codes, but should note that the usual practice has been to perform this function free of charge.

3.5.4 Year of Reference Element

The Year of Reference Element identifies the year in which the ISRC is allocated to the recording.

This allocation will normally take place in the year in which the preparation of the final production Pre-Master for the recording is finalised. The Year of Reference Code consists of the last two digits of the year in which the ISRC is allocated (see Section 4.8 Year of Reference).

Definitions of this field in earlier revisions of ISO 3901 and associated documentation referred to the year of recording. This practice is not conformant with ISO 3901: 2001. The use of the year of allocation facilitates maintaining uniqueness, as no reference to the list of ISRCs issued in previous years is needed to avoid issuing a duplicate code. The year of recording is important information but should be obtained from the metadata associated with the recording and not from the Year of Reference element itself.

Examples:

92 for 1992

00 for 2000

Although the Year of Reference element is only two digits in length, the 'Year 2000' ('Y2K') problem does not in practice arise with ISRC. (See Section 4.8 Year of Reference)

3.5.5 Designation Code

The Designation Code consists of five digits assigned by the Registrant. Numbers for the Designation Code should preferably be assigned sequentially and care should be taken to ensure that the same Designation Codes are never re-used within one calendar year.

Registrants whose systems can ensure uniqueness are at liberty to assign Designation Codes in any manner they choose, for example by dividing the numeric range between business units.

The Designation Code must always be five-digits long. Where the Designation Code is less than five digits long, it should be packed from the left with zeros to make it five digits in length, for example, '00013'.

3.6 Distinction between Sound and Music Video Recordings

As national legislation often differentiates between the administrations of rights in sound recordings and in music video recordings (for instance as phonograms or videograms), it is recommended that the procedures for assigning ISRC include a means of distinguishing between audio and audiovisual formats in order to facilitate rights management.

Appointed ISRC agencies may decide on the appropriate method to administer this distinction. Two possible methods are:

1. Provided the Registrant Code is alphanumeric and consists of three characters, appointed ISRC agencies may administer this code to suit their requirements. For instance, companies, which produce both sound recordings and music videos, may be assigned separate Registrant Codes for each of those formats.

Example:

AA2 = Registrant Code used by 'Company X' in ISRC for sound recordings.

ZZ8 = Registrant Code used by 'Company X' in ISRC for music video recordings.

2. Information on the recording format can form part of the basic ISRC information that registrants add to repertoire databases (see Section 4.1.5 Registration in Repertoire Databases). This information can be made available to users of the system in an appropriate way, which allows them to identify whether an allocated ISRC refers to an audio or an audiovisual item.

Each agency should ensure, however, that the chosen method keeps the ISRC system with sufficient numbering capacity to serve the recording output of their territory.

3.7 Encoding of the ISRC

The ISRC should be encoded in digital sound carriers in the pre-mastering or authoring process in accordance with the specification on the format used.

Therefore, the ISRC should be allocated in each recording when a Master is completed and the decision to release a recording has been made.

Normally the authoring system used will allow an ISRC to be associated with each track. Where this is not the case, the International ISRC Agency is able to approach manufacturers of such systems to promote the benefits for all parties of including ISRC capability. In the meanwhile, however, ISRCs should be assigned although the authoring system may not permit an ISRC to be associated with the track.

As new formats emerge, the International ISRC Agency will work with the industries concerned to ensure that ISRC can be accommodated on them.

3.7.1 Compact Disc

In the case of Compact Discs the ISRCs and other PQ-data are encoded in the disc subcode (Q channel) in the disc mastering process. For this reason, ISRCs must be encoded for each track in the Pre-Master for CD. The ISRC codes, together with the Digital Copy Prohibited flag (if appropriate), and the relevant point of sale code, such as EAN/UPC should be inserted on the Pre-Master during the pre-mastering process from the original Master.

3.7.2 Mini-Disc

The process for Mini-Disc is very similar to that for Compact Disc.

3.7.3 DVD-Audio

In DVD-Audio, the ISRC is contained in the packet headers of an audio stream and can be included by authoring systems.

3.7.4 DVD-Video

DVD-Video has a similar structure to DVD-Audio and the ISRC can be added by authoring systems.

3.7.5 Super Audio CD

For the SACD (Super Audio CD) format, the ISRC coding specification is contained in the SACD System description Part 2, Audio Specification. It states that the ISRC and Genre List must be present in the area called "Area TOC", which contains information for each track. The SACD specification recommends that the ISRC is present but if none is assigned, the NUL code (00h) is automatically used.

3.7.6 VHS Music Video and other analogue tape formats

Being an analogue format, there is no clear place to carry ISRC information. Where music videos are provided to broadcasters, it is recommended that they should carry an ISRC number on the time clock before the video and documentation accompanying the video.

3.7.7 Electronically Distributed Music

Most formats for electronically distributed music allow the inclusion of an ISRC, which can be inserted by authoring software.

Where electronically distributed formats include several tracks, the ISRC of each track should be associated with it in the metadata of the file.

3.7.8 MP3s

The MP3 format does allow rights management information like ISRC to be included however it is rarely used. What is used is the ID3 system of tags, which is not part of the international standard, but does enable ISRC to be encoded.

It is therefore recommended that an ISRC be encoded into an ID3 tag.

4 Implementation Guidelines

4.1 Principles

4.1.1 Creative Input

A separate ISRC must be assigned to every different track of a recording where there has been new creative or artistic input but not to an unchanged track when it is reused on a new album of recordings.

4.1.2 Separate Exploitation

If at any time in the future the asset may be separately exploited, and this does not necessarily imply monetary value, then an ISRC should be allocated. Examples include: 30-second clips, hidden tracks,

interludes, callouts, and skits. These various examples will be dealt with individually in Section 4.9.4 Special Cases

4.1.3 No re-use

In order to guarantee the unique and unambiguous identification of a recording, an ISRC once allocated must under no circumstances be re-used. It is recognised that, owing to technical errors, numbers will be incorrectly assigned. If this happens the number must be deleted from the list of usable numbers and must not be assigned to another recording.

Registrants should advise the National Agency, repertoire databases and all relevant business partners of the numbers thus deleted and of the recordings to which they were erroneously assigned.

A new ISRC should be assigned whenever a recording has been re-issued in a revised or fully remastered form. Also see Sections 4.9.1 Re-mixes/ Edits / Session Takes and 4.9.10 Re-mastering.

4.1.4 Format Independence

A single ISRC is used for each unchanged recording regardless of the format in which it is released.

4.1.5 Registration in Repertoire Databases

Whilst there is no obligation in ISO3901: 2001 to keep records (beyond those needed to ensure uniqueness), nor to register the assignment with the National Agency or any other body, there is little value in the ISRC system without such records being kept and comprehensive databases being maintained. It is therefore strongly recommended that Registrants keep good records and ensure that the details of the recording (the metadata) and the ISRC allocated, are included in relevant repertoire databases. The International ISRC Agency can provide advice on the appropriate database in particular circumstances.

Work has begun on standardising a minimum metadata set. This is being done by the International ISRC Agency, in co-operation with users and the National Agencies, once completed it will be contained in Chapter 5.

4.2 Administration

4.2.1 Administration by National Agencies

The ISRC System is open to all bona fide producers of sound and music video recordings: this includes individuals as well as corporations. If an Agency receives an application from an entity that they are unsure about, it is recommended that it get in touch with the Applicant and check to make sure that they really do understand what the ISRC System is for and what their obligations are (see Section 4.2.2 Administration by Registrants).

If once these checks have been made, and the National Agency is convinced that the Applicant is not a bona fide producer, the International Agency should be informed so that it can (a) deal with enquiries related to the refusal and (b) monitor the number of such occurrences.

4.2.2 Administration by Registrants

A Registrant is responsible for assigning the Designation Code (see Section 3.5.5 Designation Code).

Registrants can only assign ISRCs once issued with a Registrant Code from the National ISRC Agency (or the International ISRC Agency, where appropriate) for their territory, please see Appendix one: List of agencies or www.ifpi.org/isrc for a list of those Agencies.

The owner of the recording may make arrangements with another body to issue ISRCs on its behalf. If they do this they should ensure that uniqueness is maintained and that details of the recording are supplied to a relevant repertoire database.

The ISRC should be included in all relevant documentation concerning the rights in a recording and their licensing.

A Registrant must ensure that a competent person is responsible for the assignment of ISRC and the application of the pertinent regulations.

A Registrant must keep a register of all ISRCs that have been assigned.

4.3 Examples of the application of an ISRC

Example 1. New recording:

For an album comprising ten recordings taken from masters of recordings completed in 1991, where an ISRC is assigned upon the completion of the recordings in that year.

ISRC FR-Z03-91-01231 (Recording No 1)

ISRC FR-Z03-91-01232 (Recording No 2)

ISRC FR-Z03-91-01233 (Recording No 3)

and so on through to ...

ISRC FR-Z03-91-01240 (Recording No 10)

Example 2. Compilation:

For compiling a new album using previously released recordings

Examples of using complete recordings in their entirety

ISRC FR-Z03-91-01234 (Recording No 1)

ISRC FR-Z03-90-02345 (Recording No 2)

ISRC FR-Z03-89-03456 (Recording No 3)

and so on through to ...

ISRC FR-Z03-88-06789 (Recording No 10)

It should be noted that ISRCs allocated in previous years are to be retained new ISRCs should not be assigned to the recordings.

4.4 Associated Video Assets

As well as using the ISRC to identify sound recordings and music video recordings, ISRC may be used to identify audio and audiovisual material:

- which is closely associated with a released sound recording or short form music video,
- which is released in association with it, and
- where a musical performance does not form a substantial part of the content (for example, interviews, documentary material, etc.)

Registrants taking advantage of this provision are required to ensure that such material can be clearly identified in metadata provided to repertoire databases.

4.5 Concert Videos

Where a video of an entire concert is issued (either on a retail product, electronically distributed or for broadcast) the recording should normally be identified by an ISRC.

If parts of that recording are then subsequently exploited as a sound recording, music video recording or a other video asset (see Section 4.4 Associated Video Assets) then separate ISRCs should be assigned to the parts that are separately exploited.

4.6 Copyright Expired Recordings

An ISRC should be assigned to recordings even where copyright has expired.

A recording that is in the public domain in one country may be protected in another. Without the ISRC it would be impossible to track such a recording's exploitation. Even if rights in the recording have expired, obligations to authors and publishers may still exist. And finally a situation could occur as it did in the UK in 1988, where expired rights could be resurrected by a term extension. Without the ISRC it would be impossible to track exploitation of recordings in these circumstances.

4.7 Multi-Channel Re-mixes

A multi-channel mix of a track should have a different ISRC from the stereo mix of the same material.

Example:

A 5.1 mix and a stereo mix of the same 48 track master tape (the "multi-track") should have different ISRCs even if done by the same person at the same time.

However, where the stereo track is derived from the multi-channel by a simple mix-down process in the consumer equipment, then a new ISRC should not be assigned.

Example:

A stereo track on a DVD-Audio disc that is in fact derived from the 5.1 track on the disc by applying static coefficients (i.e., left = 0.7 left front + 0.5 centre + 0.2 left surround – 0.1 right surround) should have the same ISRC as the 5.1 channel track.

In general audio processing in consumer equipment does not justify assignment of a new ISRC, even if the controls to turn on and off the processing are carried with the original recording.

Example:

A track intended for headphone listening, which is processed in the consumer equipment from a 5.1 track should have the same ISRC as the 5.1.

Where the same mix is delivered using different technologies whether on the same carrier or different carriers, the same ISRC should be used.

Example:

Where the same multi-channel track appears on a DVD disc for playback in both audio and video players (in Pulse Code Modulation (PCM)/Meridian Lossless Packing (MLP) and Dolby Digital/AC3 respectively), the same ISRC should be used. However, with these technologies, the mixes may be different - because, for example, unlike PCM/MLP, Dolby Digital band-limits the “.1” channel. Different ISRCs should then be applied.

4.7.1 Record Keeping

It is the responsibility of the Registrant to ensure that their records distinguish between different versions of the same material for multi-channel mixes in the same ways they do for different ‘takes’ of the same material.

4.7.2 Encoding onto carriers

It is recognised that some carriers do not allow for different ISRCs to be associated with different mixes of the same material. In this case, the registrant should allocate the different ISRCs, but only one ISRC should be applied to the carrier in question. The International ISRC Agency will recommend a procedure for these circumstances.

4.7.3 Year of Reference

In accordance with the current recommendations, the Year of Reference element should reflect the year of allocation of the ISRC. Thus when an ISRC is assigned to a multi channel mix of material previously released the year of reference used for the multi channel mix should be the year that the ISRC is allocated.

4.8 Year of Reference

The Year of Reference element should reflect the year of allocation of the ISRC. Thus a track that was originally released in 1996 but not assigned an ISRC until 2001 should have a 2001 Year of Reference (“01”). The year of reference does not have any copyright significance, and the Year of Reference in an ISRC should be allocated as the current year.

In addition, while the year of reference is only two digits, there is no Year 2000 ('Y2K') problem with the ISRC. The ISRC system's Year 2000 problem will not occur until the year 2040 because even under previous recommendations that the Year element of an ISRC should represent the year of recording, there was a recommendation that years earlier than 1940 should not be used. There are a small number of recordings that were nevertheless issued with ISRCs that represent years before 1940 and the International ISRC Agency and the National Agencies concerned are working on recommendations to avoid problems with duplication. These will be included in a future release of this Handbook.

4.9 Recommendations in Particular Circumstances

The following recommendations are made by the International ISRC Agency after consultation with users and National Agencies.

4.9.1 Re-mixes/ Edits / Session Takes

If multiple sound recordings are produced in the same recording session with or without any change in orchestration, arrangement, or artist and if they are preserved or turned into commercial products, each recording shall be encoded with a new ISRC.

A new ISRC shall be assigned to each re-mix, edit or new version of a recording.

It is recommended that the Registrant associate in its database the ISRC numbers of the original recordings used in the remixing.

4.9.2 Changes in the playing time

The playing time of a recording is an important characteristic as it is used for product design and also as a basic element for the calculation of fees by copyright authorities, broadcasting stations and the owner of the rights.

If the playing time is changed a new ISRC shall be allocated.

The following rules should be applied in determining whether a new ISRC is to be allocated.

- A record begins with the first recorded modulation and ends with the last recorded modulation.
- Deviations in the playing time, resulting from different measuring methods or changes in fade and which have no influence on existing legal rights, should not result in the allocation of a new ISRC.
- When a change of duration is intended 'musically or artistically', a new ISRC should be allocated. The recommended threshold is 10 seconds.

4.9.3 Special Cases

A separate ISRC should be assigned to any new (and different) version of a recording (see Section 4.9.1 Re-mixes/ Edits / Session Takes), which will be exploited regardless of the nature of this exploitation. Specific guidance in particular cases appear below.

4.9.3.1 30-second clips

As even 30-second clips need to be licensed, they can be ‘separately exploited’ (see Section 4.1.2 Separate Exploitation). Therefore they should be allocated a distinct ISRC.

4.9.3.2 Hidden Tracks

Although currently it is not possible technically to embed an ISRC into a hidden track on a Compact Disc, it is nevertheless recommended that an ISRC be assigned.

4.9.3.3 Interludes

These are brief tracks that contain music and/or speaking and are generally put between songs on a pop or urban album. Found on commercial and promotional product, they sometimes get their own skip number and sometimes they are attached to the track that follows. If these can be separately exploited, an ISRC should be assigned.

4.9.3.4 Callouts

These are excerpts of existing songs; they are used as the “hook” or the catchy part of a recording and are generally used on pop promotional product. Ranging from a few seconds to almost a minute, they given their own skip number. If these can be separately exploited, an ISRC should be assigned.

4.9.3.5 Skits

When a skit is primarily music or music-related and can be separately exploited, an ISRC should be assigned.

4.9.3.6 Interviews

Assignment of an ISRC depends on whether the Registrant may separately exploit the work in the future. If the answer is yes, then an ISRC should be assigned.

4.9.4 Compilations (pot-pourris)

When previously released recordings are compiled, ISRCs shall be used as follows:

- If previously released recordings are used in their entirety and unchanged, the original ISRCs shall be used.
- If previously released recordings are used partially, i.e. faded in or out, a new ISRC should be assigned. The duration of the fade must exceed the recommended threshold of 10 seconds.

4.9.5 Allocation of ISRC to existing recordings

Recordings, which have not been assigned ISRCs, should be provided with an ISRC by the present owner of the rights to such recordings, prior to a re-release. In these cases, the Registrant Code will be that of the present owner of the rights.

4.9.6 Restoration of historical recordings

Re-mastering and editing technologies (including re-pitching, re-equalising, de-noising, de-clicking, etc.) offer many ways of processing historical recordings in order that they meet contemporary quality standards. When a full restoration of sound quality is carried out, the processed recording is to be considered a separate recording and thus obtain a new ISRC.

4.9.7 Recordings sold, licensed to /or distributed by agents.

The ISRC must be retained irrespective of when or by whom the recording is manufactured, distributed or sold.

4.9.8 Licensed repertoire

ISRC numbers have to originate from the licensor and have to bear the licensor's registrant code. It is the duty of the licensee to inform the licensor how to obtain a registrant code if none exists. Where the licensor is unable or unwilling to assign an ISRC, National ISRC Agencies are able to authorise the licensee to assign an ISRC. Full details are contained in the ISRC Bulletin 2007/02 on the ISRC website (www.ifpi.org/isrc).

4.9.9 Split deals

The entities involved in the split ownership must agree on which one will be responsible for allocating the single ISRC used to identify the track. The unique numbering of a recording worldwide must be ensured.

Repertoire databases, other users and collecting societies (where applicable) should be notified of the rights ownership for their given territory. The use of a Registrant Code in conjunction with a particular Country Code does not indicate rights ownership in that or any other territory.

4.9.10 Re-mastering

When a track is re-mastered for the purpose of reproduction on a new carrier without restoration of sound quality (also see Section 4.9.1 Re-mixes/ Edits / Takes), then no new ISRC is required.

It is nevertheless the Registrant's responsibility to decide where to draw the line between sound restoration (full re-mastering) and simple re-mastering.

4.9.11 Classical Repertoire

In classical music, the performers often vary from movement to movement (for example Handel's Messiah) and increasingly the individual movements are being broadcast. To date many such movements are not identified with separate ISRCs. In some territories the entire piece of music is identified with one ISRC and then the individual movements are identified with other ISRCs, which are then linked in the relevant database systems.

Because the rights often vary from movement to movement, it is recommended that separate ISRCs be allocated to each part (e.g. track) of a composite recording as well as an overall ISRC to the recording as a whole. However, where all of the parts of the classical piece may be separately exploited, a Registrant may opt to assign ISRCs solely to the parts of the classical work but not to assign an ISRC to the entire classical work.

Implementations (assigning an ISRC only to the whole recording) may continue but the above recommendation should be implemented as soon as possible.

4.9.12 Ring Sounds

If the rights holder needs to unambiguously identify, clips of digitised audio files, known as ring sounds that are used on mobile phones it is recommended that an ISRC be assigned to them.

Provided that the integrity of the system is not damaged, users are free to use ISRC in other ways. So if the exact clip used is not regarded as important, the clip might be described as '30-second clip from ISRC GB-XX1-02-12345'. If the exact clip is important, it can be described as '0m36s to 1m06s from ISRC GB-XX1-02-12345'.

4.10 ISRC Implementation in Software

Where computer software displays an ISRC it should separate the four elements with hyphens (see Section 3.5.1 General). Unless the context makes this unnecessary (such as tabular presentation) it should precede the code with characters 'ISRC'.

Where computer software accepts input from a user, it can helpfully accept the four elements and present these to the users with their separating hyphens. Software writers are encouraged to allow the user definable defaults for the Country Code and Registrant Code elements, to offer a current year default to the Year of Reference element and to allow sequential allocating of Designation Codes. Insertion of allocated ISRCs into a local database may be of considerable assistance to the users. Automatic registration in appropriate repertoire databases (see Section 4.1.5 Registration in Repertoire Databases) is also encouraged.

5 MINIMUM METADATA REQUIREMENTS

As noted in Section 4.1.5 Registration in Repertoire Databases to obtain the greatest benefit from the ISRC system, Registrants should ensure that details of the recording are supplied to an appropriate repertoire database. The administrators of such databases will specify their requirements for data to ensure unique identification of recordings but a minimum set of such data will be specified by the International ISRC Agency.

This section will be revised in the future to include the specification of this minimum data set.

6 DATA INTERCHANGE STANDARDS

Over the last four years there have been a number of projects looking at developing standards for the exchange of information about recordings, these have included:

- Music Industry Integrated Identifiers Project (MI3P) – an initiative of IFPI and RIAA (Recording Industry Association of America) together with the music rights societies, represented by BIEM and CISAC;
- Moving Pictures Expert Group - MPEG-21 Digital Item Declaration.
- MUSE Digital Media Communication System – a European Commission funded project for the development of standards to aid data interchange between various parties in the value chain.

In the next twelve months, the International ISRC Agency, in co-operation with users and the National Agencies will continue to work towards building data interchange standards for repertoire information.

This section will be revised in the future to include a description of those data interchange standards.

7 NATIONAL AGENCY APPOINTMENT AND OBLIGATIONS

7.1 Procedure for the Appointment of National Agencies

Since its appointment in 1989 as the International Registration Authority for the International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) by ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation), IFPI Secretariat has appointed 49 national ISRC Agencies.

A complete list of these is available at www.ifpi.org/isrc

The responsibilities of National ISRC Agencies are contained in Section 3.4.2. National Administration.

Once an entity has decided that it would like to be appointed as a National ISRC Agency, the following procedure applies:

1. The entity wishing to become a National ISRC Agency should apply to the International Registration Authority (IFPI Secretariat), using a standard form (See Appendix Two – Application for appointment of National ISRC Agencies) giving full contact details, a rationale for why it should be appointed and its capability to fulfil the role.
2. The International Registration Authority (IFPI Secretariat) will mail a skeleton of the application to other national agencies, and local recording industry members (if the applicant is not their trade association). It will take representations, make appropriate enquiries and recommend acceptance or rejection.
3. Once a decision has been made, this will be communicated as above and made public on the IFPI website (www.ifpi.org/isrc) for a period of 14 days for comments, after which an unopposed decision will become final.
4. Substantive objections from an applicant to a provisional rejection or from another party to a provisional acceptance will be referred to an appeal panel consisting of the CEO of IFPI, the Secretary of ISO TC46/SC9 (the standards committee dealing with the ISRC) and an independent expert agreed by the first two members. The appeal panel will take into account local conditions in the relevant territory and the smooth operation of the international ISRC system in making its decision, which will be final.
5. Names of successful applicants will be published on the IFPI web site.

7.2 Process for Reporting By National Agencies

According to ISO 3901, National ISRC Agencies are obliged to report once a year, to the International ISRC Agency (IFPI Secretariat), on the implementation of the ISRC in their region/territory. These are to be sent electronically in a standard format.

In April of each year, the National ISRC Agencies are to provide the International ISRC Agency with the following information for all registrant codes they have issued (whether or not in current use).

| Country Code | Registrant Code | Audio or Video | Registrant Name and Address | Department or Person to Contact | Date Registrant Code Issued |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|

The data should be supplied preferably in an Excel spreadsheet (.xls), otherwise a comma separated value file (.csv). Any other format for data submission must first be approved by the International ISRC Agency.

At the same time information will also be requested that will form the basis of an Annual Review, that will be published each June and sent to ISO in accordance with ISO 3901 and be used for general promotion purposes. The data required for this publication may change each year, but its purpose is to foster greater interest and positive participation in the use of ISRC and to illustrate best practice as well as to highlight initiatives undertaken to further the implementation of the ISRC system worldwide.

8 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

This glossary lists key terms, which are used in a specific way in this document and within the ISRC System. It will be kept as concise as possible but will be used to define new terms in away that avoids duplicate or overlapping definitions.

| Term | Definition or synonymous term(s) |
|----------------------|---|
| Applicant | Any entity, including an individual that produces sound and/or music video recordings and is seeking a Registrant Code from an ISRC Agency |
| CD | Compact Disc – one digital format that an ISRC can be encoded into. |
| Designation Code | Fourth element of the ISRC identifier. Five-digit unique reference used to distinguish each track. |
| DVD | Informally known as Digital Video Disc or Digital Versatile Disc. An optical disc storage technology and format that an ISRC can be encoded into. |
| DVD-A | DVD – Audio. An application format of DVD. |
| DVD-AR | DVD – Audio Recordable. An application format of DVD. |
| International Agency | International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) appointed by ISO to oversee the ISRC System globally; performs the role of National Agency in regions or territories where no National Agency exists. |
| ISRC | International Standard Recording Code |
| Licensee | A company or individual that negotiates the use of a sound or music video recording that they do not own the rights to, in order to use it on their own product. |
| Licensor | A company or individual that owns the rights to a sound or music video recording that is licensed to another company or individual that negotiates the use of that sound or music video recording that they do not own the rights to, in order to use it on their own |

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| | product |
| Metadata | Descriptive information about a sound or music video recording. |
| MP3 | MPEG 1, Layer 3 – a compression format, part of the Moving Picture Expert Group (MPEG) suite of standards, used to store sound recordings |
| Music Video Recording | A short form music video initially produced to support the release of a track |
| National Agency | An organisation appointed by the International Agency to manage the ISRC System within a given territory |
| SACD | Super Audio Compact Disc – a high quality audio disc format, using similar physical structure to DVD. |
| Registrant | A successful Applicant |
| Registrant Code | Second element of the ISRC identifier. A three character alphanumeric reference that identifies the entity issuing the ISRC. The Registrant Code is unique within the issuing Agency. |
| User | It is a company or individual performing any function or role within the ISRC System. |
| Year of Reference | Third element of the ISRC identifier. The last two digits of the current year denoting the year that the ISRC was allocated |

APPENDIX ONE: LIST OF AGENCIES

The up to date list of National ISRC Agencies is now available on the ISRC website at www.ifpi.org/isrc.

APPENDIX TWO – APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT OF NATIONAL ISRC AGENCIES

Background

Since IFPI Secretariat was appointed in 1989 as the International Registration Authority for the International Standard Recording Code (ISRC) by ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation), it has appointed 49 national ISRC Agencies. A complete list of these is available at www.ifpi.org/isrc. These appointments are now made under the Procedure for Appointment of National ISRC Agencies (see Section 7.1 Procedure for the Appointment of National Agencies).

Potential applicants should read the procedure and complete the following form.

Once completed please return the form to the International ISRC Registration Authority (IFPI Secretariat) at isrc@ifpi.org or fax +44 (0) 20 7878 6832 marked “National ISRC Agency Application”.

Part 1 – Contact Information

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Contact Person | |
| Organisation | |
| Full Address | |
| Telephone | |
| Fax | |
| Email | |
| Website | |

Part 2 – Rationale for Appointment

Provide a concise reason why your organisation should be appointed as the National ISRC Agency for your country.

Part 3 – Capacity to Fulfil the Role

Why do you feel that your organisation can fulfil the role of National ISRC Agency? What will you do to ensure the full implementation of the ISRC system in your country?