



Designation of SoundExchange as Authoritative Source of ISRC Data in the United States

July 2020

1. Background

In order to address the issue of “authority” in the ISRC system – i.e. whether an ISRC is “officially” assigned to a particular sound recording, SoundExchange has been designated as the authoritative source of this information for the US market. Recognizing an authoritative source of this ISRC data has become important as the music ecosystem evolves and new legislation and regulation is implemented.

The following technical information explains the detail of this designation.

2. Scope

The designation applies within the authorized domain of the US National ISRC Agency, that is the 50 states of the USA together with US territories such as Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. It does not affect the ISRC system outside the US although it is hoped that other national ISRC agencies will adopt a similar approach and the US National ISRC Agency stands ready to assist them in this.

This document does not affect the copyright in any sound recording or musical work used in such a sound recording. Copyrights in a sound recording or musical work exist independent of the assignment of an ISRC. This document deals only with the assignment of an ISRC to a recording so that the recording can be identified. Registering an ISRC to a recording with SoundExchange as noted below should not be confused with an independent, separate, legal process of registering a sound recording with the US Copyright Office.

3. Authoritative Source of ISRC Data in the United States

With effect from July 22, 2020 the US National ISRC Agency has designated the ISRC assignments contained in the ISRC database operated by SoundExchange as authoritative within the US.

4. Implications for ISRC Users

The following recommendations apply to the following classes of recordings regardless of their current or historical ownership:



- (a) Recordings whose owners acted as registrants and assigned an ISRC using a registrant code allocated by the US National ISRC Agency.

Note: these registrants will have been allocated a registrant code for use with the country codes US, QM or QZ.

- (b) Recordings where an ISRC has been assigned by an ISRC Manager appointed by the US National ISRC Agency.

Note: these ISRCs will start with one of the country codes US, QM, QZ or TC. The recordings may originate or be owned outside the US but their ISRC was assigned by a US-based ISRC Manager.

- (c) Recordings which are in commerce or likely to be in commerce (or otherwise present in non-commercial contexts such as libraries and archives) in the US where the ISRC was assigned under the auspices of a National ISRC Agency other than the US National ISRC Agency.

Note: these ISRCs will start with a country code other than US, QM, QZ or TC.

We recommend that the owners of such recordings ensure that a proper registration of the ISRC associated with such recording has been made at SoundExchange. Such registration at SoundExchange is free of charge, though any internal systems or administrative costs incurred by the owner are the responsibility of that owner. Anyone believing they have identified a reason not to register the ISRC associated with their recording at SoundExchange should contact the US National ISRC Agency (isrc@riaa.com) to discuss this.

Owners who use the services of a distributor or aggregator that acts as an ISRC Manager may find that the ISRC associated with their recordings have been registered at SoundExchange on their behalf.

The SoundExchange ISRC database should be checked at <http://isrc.soundexchange.com>, where owners can verify that their recordings and their respective ISRCs are visible and that the registered data is correct.

The US National ISRC Agency is working with SoundExchange with a view to implementing more efficient mechanisms for checking the database.

In common with all identification systems of this type, it is not possible to determine whether two apparently identical registrations in fact relate to the same recording. All ISRCs associated with the same metadata record are to be regarded as authoritatively assigned.

5. Further Information

ISRC System users who wish to seek further information about the designation of SoundExchange are invited to contact the US National ISRC Agency (isrc@riaa.com).