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**Addressing —**

**Part 4:**

**International postal address  
components and template language**

*Adressage —*

*Partie 4: Composants et langages des modèles d'adresses postales  
internationales*

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ISO copyright office  
Ch. de Blandonnet 8 • CP 401  
CH-1214 Vernier, Geneva, Switzerland  
Tel. +41 22 749 01 11  
Fax +41 22 749 09 47  
[copyright@iso.org](mailto:copyright@iso.org)  
[www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

# Contents

	Page
<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>1 Scope</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Normative references</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>3 Terms and definitions</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>4 Abbreviated terms</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>5 Conformance</b> .....	<b>6</b>
5.1 Composition.....	6
5.2 U-code.....	6
5.3 Rendering of postal address.....	6
5.4 PATDL template.....	6
<b>6 Postal address components</b> .....	<b>7</b>
6.1 General.....	7
6.2 Postal address segments.....	9
6.3 Postal address constructs.....	10
6.4 Postal address elements.....	10
6.5 Postal address sub-elements.....	16
6.6 Requirement for composition.....	19
<b>7 Element and sub-element codes</b> .....	<b>19</b>
7.1 General.....	19
7.2 Requirement for a U-code.....	19
<b>8 Postal address rendering</b> .....	<b>20</b>
8.1 General.....	20
8.2 Rendering parameters.....	22
8.3 Rendition instructions.....	22
8.3.1 General.....	22
8.3.2 Concatenation.....	23
8.3.3 Abbreviation.....	23
8.3.4 Punctuation.....	23
8.4 Requirements for rendering of postal address.....	23
8.5 Requirement for domain of postal address template.....	24
<b>9 Postal address template description language (PATDL)</b> .....	<b>24</b>
9.1 General.....	24
9.2 PATDL as an XML Schema.....	24
9.2.1 General.....	24
9.2.2 Requirement for encoding of rendering rules.....	25
9.2.3 Requirement for data populating PATDL elements.....	25
9.3 PATDL elements.....	25
9.3.1 General.....	25
9.3.2 templateIdentifier.....	26
9.3.3 userPreferences.....	27
9.3.4 triggerConditions.....	27
9.3.5 lineData.....	29
9.3.6 combinedData.....	31
<b>Annex A (normative) Abstract test suites</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Annex B (informative) Postal address profile of ISO 19160-1</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Annex C (informative) Mapping conventions</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Annex D (informative) Template design patterns</b> .....	<b>51</b>

<b>Annex E (informative) PATDL features</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>Annex F (informative) Example of PATDL template</b> .....	<b>58</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>61</b>

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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.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 211, *Geographic information/Geomatics*.

A list of all parts in the ISO 19160 series can be found on the ISO website.

## Introduction

Postal service provides letter, package and parcel delivery on a global and universal basis, without the need for mailers and recipients to enter into explicit service contracts. Postal addresses, which combine private recipient information with publicly known delivery point data, provide the mechanism through which mailers specify the intended recipient and the means by which the postal operator can fulfil its delivery commitment.

Traditionally, postal operators have been highly flexible with regard to the manner in which postal items can be addressed; any form and content of address was acceptable as long as it permitted sufficiently unambiguous determination of the delivery point. Even today, many posts pride themselves on their ability, using staff intelligence and local knowledge, to deliver postal items carrying incomplete or unusual address representations.

However, increasing volumes and labour cost rates long ago reached the point at which automation became not only economic, but essential. As a result, it has become more and more vital to ensure that the vast majority of postal items are addressed in a way which can be processed automatically, without risk of misinterpretation.

When mail is sent with addresses that are incorrect or incomplete, there is the possibility of undeliverable as addressed mail (UAA mail) which results in the mail being sent back to a return address, being sent on to a forwarding address or discarded as waste. All this unnecessary work has negative economic consequences.

Today, the vast majority of postal items carry printed addresses which are extracted from computer databases. Such databases need to be maintained in the face of population mobility, creation and retirement of delivery points and changes in their specification, such as renaming of streets, renumbering of properties, etc. Moreover, there is a growing need for validation of addresses in e-commerce and the tendency for organizations to exchange or trade address data and for organizations in one country to hold address data of organizations and individuals in other countries, which might use different approaches to the rendering of postal addresses.

Addresses can be rendered according to rules that differ from country to country or from one mailing event (a batch of mail, e.g. letters or monthly statements, sent by a mailer at one time) to another. This document does not impose any obligation on countries or mailers on how addresses shall be rendered but provides a language to express rendering rules recommended by postal operators for mailing purposes.

Templates specified according to this document may be used to exchange information about address rendering rules on international cross-border mail and domestic mail. These templates are available from the UPU for all countries which have approved them. This facilitates automated processing of mail and international e-commerce deliveries. Rendition engines based on this document are expected to produce the same results for the same addresses. This is conditional upon using approved templates with the same parameters. Even if this were not the case, consistency remains an appropriate goal.

The intended readers of this document include designers and developers of computer systems that process global postal address data including postal address rendering, those who formulate and implement international addressing policies and anyone seeking to reduce UAA mail.

The preparatory work for this project is described in *Review summary of the ISO 19160 stage zero project (20110)*<sup>[2]</sup> and recommended five projects with the following titles:

- *Addressing – Conceptual model*
- *Addressing – Good practices for address assignment schemes*
- *Addressing – Quality management for address data*
- *Addressing – International postal address components and template language*

— *Addressing – Address rendering for purposes other than mail*

This document implements the fourth of these recommendations and focuses solely on addresses for postal purposes. Addresses for other purposes are described in other parts of ISO 19160.

This document is based on UPU S42, Part A, Version 7 and has been developed with UPU. It is intended to be adopted by CEN as a replacement for EN 14142-1.

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# Addressing —

## Part 4: International postal address components and template language

### 1 Scope

This document defines key terms for postal addressing, postal address components and constraints on their use.

Specifically, this document defines postal address components organized into three hierarchical levels:

- elements, such as organization name or postcode, which have well-defined conceptual meaning and are not themselves made up of subordinate components, though they may be sub-divided for technical purposes;
- constructs, such as organization identification, which group elements into units form a logical portion of a postal address;
- segments, such as addressee specification, which group-related postal address constructs and/or postal address elements into units with a specific defined function.

This document also specifies a mechanism for creation of sub-elements, which correspond to either sub-divisions of element content, such as door type or door indicator or to multiple occurrences and locations of elements in an address, such as levels of administrative regions.

This document does not specify the length of any component nor the value range of any component.

Moreover, this document defines the codes to identify elements and sub-elements.

Further, this document specifies postal address rendering rules. This includes identification and ordering of output lines in a rendered address, conditions for selection of candidate lines, the order and concatenation of postal address components, required and optional components, parameters to contextualize address for rendering and the formatting of the components, subject to constraints on the space available for that task. Postal address rendering rules are represented in this document as a postal address template.

Finally, this document specifies language suitable for computer processing to formally express postal address templates.

### 2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 639-1, *Codes for the representation of names of languages — Part 1: Alpha-2 code*

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

ISO 15924, *Information and documentation — Codes for the representation of names of scripts*

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>
- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <http://www.iso.org/obp>

#### 3.1 address

structured information that allows the unambiguous determination of an object for purposes of identification and location

[SOURCE: ISO 19160-1:2015, 4.1]

#### 3.2 addressable object

object that may be assigned an *address* (3.1)

[SOURCE: ISO 19160-1:2015, 4.2]

#### 3.3 addressee

*party* (3.10) who is the ultimate recipient of a *delivery* (3.4) item or service

Note 1 to entry: The addressee may be explicitly defined as part of the *postal address* (3.11), or may be implicit. For example, in certain countries, omission of addressee information is taken as implying that delivery is to be to an individual or legal entity having legal access to the *delivery point* (3.6).

Note 2 to entry: Mr. or Mrs. Smith specifies that the addressee is either of two individuals, while Mr. Jones and Mrs. Smith denote that the addressee is a group of two individuals. See also role descriptor.

Note 3 to entry: The use made by the *postal operator* (3.23) of addressee and *mailee* (3.8) data might be dependent on the postal service applicable to the *postal item* (3.22). For some services, such as registered mail, the postal operator's responsibility might include ensuring that the addressee or a duly authorized representative acknowledges receipt of the postal item. In other cases, addressee data could be purely informative or used by the postal operator only for consistency checking and/or for the activation of forwarding services. In other cases, it might be used for sorting or sequencing purposes prior to delivery, e.g. in the case of business mail being pre-sequenced by department or individual company official.

Note 4 to entry: In some countries, the addressee may be an abstraction such as "postal customer".

#### 3.4 delivery

<postal> process in which a *postal item* (3.22) leaves the responsibility of the *postal operator* (3.23) through being handed over to, or left for collection by, the *addressee* (3.3), the *mailee* (3.8) or an authorized representative, or deposited in a private letter box accessible to one or other of these

Note 1 to entry: Delivery does not always imply receipt by the addressee or mailee.

#### 3.5 delivery address

<postal> *postal address* (3.11) which the *postal operator* (3.23) is requested to use to deliver the *postal item* (3.22)

Note 1 to entry: In the normal case, the delivery address is the same as the postal address specified by the *mailer* (3.9).

Note 2 to entry: The delivery address may in certain circumstances, e.g. unaddressed mail, not actually be represented on the postal item. In this case, the delivery address is determined by the postal operator in accordance with an agreement between the operator and the mailer.

Note 3 to entry: The postal item might not actually be delivered to the requested delivery address. For example, in the case of forwarding, *delivery* (3.4) takes place at the forwarding address.

### 3.6 delivery point

<postal> physical location recognized by a *postal operator* (3.23) as a valid location at which *delivery* (3.4) may occur

### 3.7 mail recipient

individual who actually receives a *postal item* (3.22) at *delivery* (3.4) or who first accesses the postal item if it is left for collection

Note 1 to entry: The mail recipient is normally the *addressee* (3.3), the *mailee* (3.8) or an authorized representative of one of these two. However, this might not always be the case, e.g. if the postal item is left for collection in a location to which third parties have access; if the addressee/mailee have moved without leaving forwarding instructions or if the addressee or mailee specification was ambiguous and was, as a result, misinterpreted by the *postal operator* (3.23).

### 3.8 mailee

*party* (3.10) designated in a *postal address* (3.11) as having responsibility for ensuring that *postal items* (3.22) reach their *addressee* (3.3)

Note 1 to entry: Unlike the addressee, the mailee is always specified explicitly in a postal address, i.e. if a postal address does not contain a mailee, then there is no mailee.

Note 2 to entry: Notwithstanding Note 1 to entry, the mailee may be designated explicitly by use of a role descriptor or designated implicitly (with no role descriptor).

Note 3 to entry: As is the case for addressee, a mailee specified in a postal address might be ambiguous.

### 3.9

#### mailer

*party* (3.10) who carries out one or more of the processes involved in creating, producing, finishing, inducting and paying the postage due for a *postal item* (3.22)

### 3.10 party

<postal> one or more natural and/or legal persons and/or organizations without legal personality that act(s) as a single entity for the purpose of participation in a transaction associated with a *postal item* (3.22)

### 3.11 postal address

*address* (3.1), possibly inclusive of the explicit identity of an *addressee* (3.3), where the *addressable object* (3.2) is an actual or potential *delivery point* (3.6) for a *postal item* (3.22)

### 3.12 postal address component component

<postal address> constituent part of a *postal address* (3.11)

EXAMPLE      Locality, postcode, thoroughfare, premises identifier.

Note 1 to entry: The components of postal addresses are defined in 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4.

Note 2 to entry: A postal address component may be, but is not limited to, an element, a construct or a segment.

Note 3 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address component” has been shortened to the admitted term “component” throughout this document.

### 3.13 postal address construct construct

<postal address> *postal address component* (3.12) combining *postal address elements* (3.15) which together form a logical portion of a *postal address* (3.11)

Note 1 to entry: The constructs are specified in 6.2.

Note 2 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address construct” has been shortened to the admitted term “construct” throughout this document.

### 3.14 postal address domain domain

<postal address> an area in which a set of specific *postal address types* (3.21) and *postal address renderings* (3.18) is prescribed by *postal operators* (3.23)

EXAMPLE The most typical example of a postal address domain is a country where a designated postal operator provides postal delivery services.

Note 1 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address domain” has been shortened to the admitted term “domain” throughout this document.

### 3.15 postal address element element

<postal address> *postal address component* (3.12) that has a well-defined conceptual meaning with significance for customer or postal processing purposes and is not itself made up of subordinate components

Note 1 to entry: The elements are specified in 6.4. [ISO 19160-4:2017](https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/28126f7b-c817-4eb0-9132-e77e15302084/iso-19160-4-2017)

Note 2 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address element” has been shortened to the admitted term “element” throughout this document.

### 3.16 postal address element code U-code

condensed representation for a *postal address element* (3.15) or *sub-element* (3.17)

Note 1 to entry: The postal address element code conforms to conventions specified in 7.2 and is relatively language independent when compared with the element and sub-element names.

### 3.17 postal address sub-element sub-element

<postal address> identifier of either a sub-division of a *postal address element* (3.15) value or one of multiple occurrences of an element in a *postal address* (3.11)

Note 1 to entry: Postal address sub-elements are used to facilitate *postal address rendering* (3.18), database storage and related technical needs and should not be considered as specific cases of postal address components.

Note 2 to entry: Postal address sub-elements are further described in 6.5.

Note 3 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address sub-element” has been shortened to the admitted term “sub-element” throughout this document.

### 3.18 postal address rendering address rendition

<postal> process in which the *rendered address* (3.24) is created

**3.19****postal address segment  
segment**

<postal address> *postal address component* (3.12) comprising a named group of related *postal address constructs* (3.13) and/or *postal address elements* (3.15) with a specific defined function

Note 1 to entry: Postal address segments are specified in 6.2.

Note 2 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address segment” has been shortened to the admitted term “segment” throughout this document.

**3.20****postal address template  
template**

<postal> specification of *postal address renderings* (3.18) within a *postal address domain* (3.14)

Note 1 to entry: Postal address template may need to include *rendition instructions* (3.26).

Note 2 to entry: A template specifies also constraints for syntactical correctness of *postal addresses* (3.11) by indicating which elements are mandatory and which are optional.

Note 3 to entry: Software that interprets the rendering rules provided in template is needed to produce rendered addresses.

Note 4 to entry: Postal address templates are further described in [Clause 8](#).

Note 5 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “postal address template” has been shortened to the admitted term “template” throughout this document.

**3.21****postal address type**

set of *postal addresses* (3.11) composed of the same set of mandatory and optional components

Note 1 to entry: Postal address types may differ from country to country and from region to region within a country.

**3.22****postal item**

indivisible mailable entity in respect of which a mail service contractor accepts an obligation to provide postal services

[SOURCE: UPU Standards Glossary, 3.90]

**3.23****postal operator**

organization licensed to provide postal services to the general public

[SOURCE: UPU Standards Glossary, 3.141]

Note 1 to entry: Postal administration is a special case of postal operator.

**3.24****rendered postal address****rendered address**

*postal address* (3.11) represented as an image in the form of a rectangular shape comprising text lines in which *postal address components* (3.12) are separated and ordered

EXAMPLE      *Address* (3.1) on mail label, order form address, address displayed on screen

Note 1 to entry: For convenience, the preferred term “rendered postal address” has been shortened to the admitted term “rendered address” throughout this document.

### 3.25

#### rendering parameter

information item that defines the context for *postal address rendering* (3.18)

EXAMPLE When the despatching country and delivering country of the *postal item* (3.22) differ, it is cross-border mailing and the full name of the delivering country is required on the last line of the rendered address. Otherwise, it is domestic mailing and the name of the country is not required on the rendered address.

Note 1 to entry: This includes guiding of rendering of *postal addresses* (3.11) on an external medium, such as labels, data files or screens

Note 2 to entry: Rendering parameters are specified in 8.2.

Note 3 to entry: Rendering parameters do not appear in the *rendered postal address* (3.24), but guide or define the rendition process.

### 3.26

#### rendition instruction

operation which either formats, abbreviates, re-arranges or separates elements within address lines when rendering a *postal address* (3.11)

Note 1 to entry: Postal address rendition instructions are further described in 8.3.

## 4 Abbreviated terms

CEN	Comité Européen de Normalization
CEN/TC 331	CEN Technical Committee 331: Postal Services
PATDL	Postal Address Template Description Language
UPU	Universal Postal Union
XML	Extensible Markup Language

## 5 Conformance

### 5.1 Composition

The abstract test suite for the purposes of conformance testing is in [Annex A](#). Any postal address for a specific domain, e.g. country or region, for which conformance to this class is claimed shall pass the requirements described in the abstract test suite in [A.2](#).

### 5.2 U-code

A U-code (postal address element code; see [Clause 7](#)) assigned to an element or sub-element for which conformance with this class is claimed shall pass the requirements described in the abstract test suite in [A.3](#).

### 5.3 Rendering of postal address

A rendering of postal address for which conformance to this class is claimed shall pass the requirements described in the abstract test suite in [A.5](#).

### 5.4 PATDL template

Any PATDL template for which conformance to this class is claimed shall pass the requirements described in the abstract test suite in [A.4](#).

## 6 Postal address components

### 6.1 General

[Clause 6](#) defines how the postal address is composed from segments, constructs and elements. This is also presented in [Annex B](#) as a profile of ISO 19160-1. [\[1\]](#) Definitions of more general terms and concepts are given in [Clause 4](#).

These components can be used to:

- exchange address data from various countries and between various countries;
- map between databases containing addresses from multiple countries;
- specify address rendition rules for multiple countries.

A postal address specification comprises one to four segments:

- an addressee specification (optional);
- a mailer specification (optional);
- mail recipient despatching information (optional);
- a delivery point specification (mandatory).

Each of these is described in [6.2](#). Segments are built up from postal address constructs and postal address elements, which are described in [6.3](#) and [6.4](#) respectively. In addition to constructs and elements, the specification also defines sub-elements in [6.5](#).

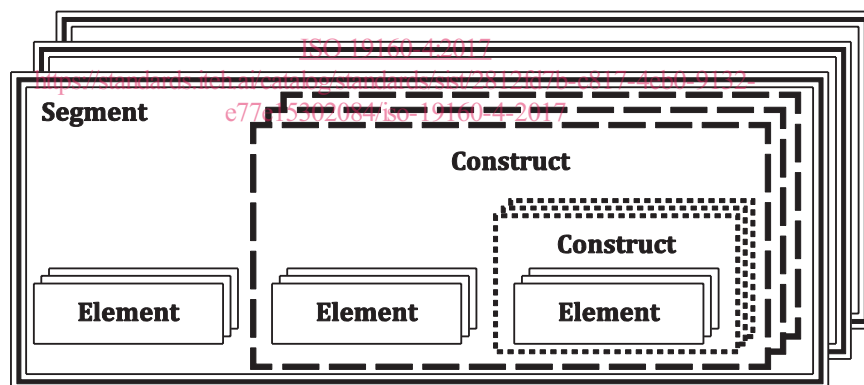


Figure 1 — Relationship between segments, constructs and elements — General box view

[Figures 1](#) and [2](#) show how elements are combined to form constructs and segments of addresses.