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**Codes for the representation of names  
of countries and their subdivisions —**

**Part 2:  
Country subdivision code**

*Codes pour la représentation des noms de pays et de leurs  
subdivisions*

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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 of 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 [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, *Information and documentation*.

This fourth edition cancels and replaces the third edition (ISO 3166-2:2013), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows.

- The codes have been moved to the database format.
- The components of the codes have been defined by descriptors, not by column or line numbers.
- The status of each alpha-2 country code element has been made explicit, as it is the main resource managed by ISO 3166/MA, necessary for traceability over time.
- All characters in the database, specifically those with diacritical marks, have been checked with the Universal Character Set, ISO/IEC 10646, and are used consistently.
- The database encoding is UTF-8 (Universal Character Set Transformation Format - 8 bits) from ISO/IEC 10646, and the same has been used in many applications.
- The three parts — three codes — belong to the same database, updates are done only once for all parts.

A list of all parts in the ISO 3166 series can be found on the ISO website.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

The initial edition of the International Standard ISO 3166 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 46, in collaboration with the following International Organizations: Customs Cooperation Council (CCC), [since 1995: World Customs Organization (WCO)], United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), International Labour Office (ILO), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), International Union of Railways (UIC), United Nations Organization (UN), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Universal Postal Union (UPU), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and World Health Organization (WHO).

ISO 3166 was first published in 1974, subsequent editions in 1981, 1988 and 1993. In 1997, it was divided into three parts.

- Editions of ISO 3166-1: ISO 3166-1:1997, ISO 3166-1:2006, ISO 3166-1:2013.
- Editions of ISO 3166-2: ISO 3166-2:1998, ISO 3166-2:2007, ISO 3166-2:2013.
- Editions of ISO 3166-3: ISO 3166-3:1999, ISO 3166-3:2013.

ISO 3166 provides universally applicable coded representations of names of countries (current and non-current), dependencies, and other areas of particular geopolitical interest and their subdivisions.

ISO 3166-1 establishes codes that represent the current names of countries, dependencies, and other areas of particular geopolitical interest, on the basis of country names obtained from the United Nations.

ISO 3166-2 establishes a code that represents the names of the principal administrative divisions, or similar areas, of the countries and entities included in ISO 3166-1.

ISO 3166-3 establishes a code that represents non-current country names, i.e. the country names deleted from ISO 3166 since its first publication in 1974.

The ISO 3166 series do not express any opinion whatsoever concerning the legal status of any country, dependency, or other area named herein, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

The 2013 edition of the ISO 3166 series has been the last one published as paper standard, with the descriptive text, and the codes together.

At the end of 2013, the split had happened: ISO 3166 codes have been moved to the database format (de facto merging three contents together), with access from ISO Online Browsing Platform, while the descriptive text have been awaiting updates.

This 2020 edition of the ISO 3166 series includes an update of the descriptive text (description of the codes) from 2013, for each of three parts. It takes into account the stricter database rules imposed on the code itself, as opposed to paper documents.

The International Standard ISO 3166 has been the very first ISO achievement of the concept of "standard as a database", implemented in the end of 2013. The ISO Online Browsing Platform (ISO OBP) is an application to visualise ISO3166 codes on the web interface, the data being stored in the unseen database.

The International Standard ISO 3166, for each of its three parts - three codes - is formed of two components: documented description of its content, and its related content inside a database.

Both terms "this document" and "the code corresponding to this document" are used throughout this 2020 edition of the ISO 3166 series.

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# Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions —

## Part 2: Country subdivision code

### 1 Scope

This document specifies basic guidelines for the implementation and maintenance of country subdivision codes.

This code is intended for use in any application requiring the expression of current country subdivision names in coded form.

### 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

### 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:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>

— IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

#### 3.1 code

set of data transformed or represented in different forms according to a pre-established set of rules

[SOURCE: ISO 5127:2017, 3.1.13.10]

#### 3.2 code element

result of applying a code to an element of a coded set

Note 1 to entry: In the country subdivision code part, a code element represents a country subdivision name.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 2382:2015, 2121555]

#### 3.3 country code

list of country names with their representations by code elements

Note 1 to entry: The country code types are alpha-2, alpha-3 and num-3.

#### 3.4 country name

name of a country, dependency, or other area of particular geopolitical interest

### 3.5

#### **script**

set of graphic characters used for the written form of one or more languages

Note 1 to entry: Codes for the representation of names of scripts are defined in ISO 15924 standard.

[SOURCE: ISO/IEC 10646-1:2017, 3.50]

### 3.6

#### **language of the ISO 3166 standard**

language in which the terminology has been defined, the terminology shall be maintained current

Note 1 to entry: English and French are the main languages of the ISO 3166 standard.

### 3.7

#### **administrative language of the country**

written language used by the administration of the country at the national level

### 3.11

#### **alpha-2 country code element**

alphabetic 2 character (alpha-2) code

Note 1 to entry: An alpha-2 code is generally recommended to represent country names.

### 3.14

#### **short NAME of country**

<capital letters> short form of the country name, distinctive word first

Note 1 to entry: In language of the ISO 3166 standard.

Note 2 to entry: This item might be inverted, allowing the distinctive word to appear first, so that items can be easily found in an alphabetical list.

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### 3.20

#### **alpha-2 language code element**

alpha-2 ISO 639 language code element of each *administrative language of the country* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: With a hyphen-minus when the code element is missing.

### 3.21

#### **alpha-3 language code element**

alpha-3 ISO 639 language code element ("T" terminological version) of each *administrative language of the country* (3.7)

Note 1 to entry: When an alpha-3 language code element for a language name used in the ISO 3166 is missing in ISO 639-2 and in ISO 639-3, it is indicated with a number, such is 002.

### 3.22

#### **local short name of country**

short name of country given in an administrative language of the country.

Note 1 to entry: It might be noted in language of the ISO 3166 standard as remark part 1 (3.18).

#### EXAMPLE 1

Schweiz (die) is local short country name in German language for the Switzerland.

Svizzera (la) is local short country name in Italian language for the Switzerland.

Magyarország is local short country name in Hungarian language for Hungary.

#### EXAMPLE 2



Zhongguo is local short country name in Chinese language for China, with Romanization system National 1958 = ISO 7098:2015 = UN III/8 1977, used to convert Han (Simplified variant) script to Latin script.

Qatar is local short country name in Arabic language for Qatar, with Romanization system BGN/PCGN 1956, used to convert Arab script to Latin script.

### 3.23

#### **romanization system used**

conversion of writing system from a different writing system to the Roman (Latin) script

Note 1 to entry: If the administrative language so requires.

Note 2 to entry: In language of the ISO 3166 standard.

### 3.24

#### **description of the subdivision**

description of the subdivision of the country

Note 1 to entry: With the relevant term in English, in French and in the administrative language, with the corresponding counters.

### 3.25

#### **list source of the subdivision**

reference to the source of the list

### 3.26

#### **code source of the subdivision**

reference to the source of the code

### 3.27

#### **remarks part 2**

remarks concerning subdivision

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Note 1 to entry: In language of the ISO 3166 standard.

### 3.28

#### **country subdivision code**

coded representation of country subdivision names

Note 1 to entry: The country subdivision code is composed of a maximum length of 6 characters, starting with alpha-2 country code, followed by a hyphen-minus, and up to 3 characters from A-Z;0-9 as a code within the country.

### 3.29

#### **country subdivision name**

name of a unit resulting from the division of a country, dependency, or other area of special geopolitical interest contained in ISO 3166-1

Note 1 to entry: In written language used by the administration of the country for this subdivision.

Note 2 to entry: In exceptional cases, variants of the same country subdivision name are shown in square brackets beside that name.

### 3.30

#### **parent subdivision**

code of another level of regional subdivision not used as part of the subdivision code element

Note 1 to entry: Optional information, when available.

### 3.31

#### **country subdivision name local variant**

name of a unit resulting from the division of a country, dependency, or other area of special geopolitical interest contained in the ISO 3166-1

### 3.32

#### sorting order

of an administrative language

Note 1 to entry: Optional information, when available.

## 4 Principles for inclusion in the list of country subdivision names

### 4.1 List purpose

The list of country subdivision names in part 2 of the ISO 3166 database includes those required to satisfy the broadest possible range of applications.

### 4.2 Sources

The country subdivision names included in part 2 of the ISO 3166 database shall be those that properly reflect the subdivisions of the countries included in ISO 3166-1 of the ISO 3166 database. Names reflect the complete currently known subdivision of the countries, without overlaps, as notified by the national authorities concerned or otherwise obtained from sources to which reference is given (see [Annex A](#)).

### 4.3 One-to-one correspondence

A one-to-one correspondence with country names in part 1 of the ISO 3166 database is maintained. Each alpha-2 code element assigned to a country name in part 1 of the ISO 3166 database is also shown in part 2 of the ISO 3166 database.

### 4.4 Categories of subdivisions

Where different terms are used to categorize country subdivisions, they are included. Country subdivision names are listed within their category. The terms used to describe such categories are those used by the countries concerned, with their approximate equivalents in English and in French, if required and available. In some cases, a subdivision term is consistently included as its omission would change the grammatical form of the subdivision name.

EXAMPLE LT-VL Vilniaus Apskritis

Omitting Apskritis (meaning county in Lithuanian) would result in changing the subdivision name to Vilnius (the city name).

### 4.5 Relationship between categories of subdivisions

In part 2 of the ISO 3166 database, whenever several levels occur, the existing relationship between them is documented.

### 4.6 Choice of language, romanization, character set

A country's administrative language is a written language used by the administration of the country at the national level.

The country name and the subdivision name of the country are given in the administrative language(s) of the country concerned as expressed in the Latin alphabet and with the provisions as to character set as stated below.

EXAMPLE DE-BY Bayern (not: Bavaria)

Where the country subdivision names are submitted in non-Roman alphabets, they are shown in part 2 of the ISO 3166 database in romanized form, to the extent possible in accordance with the relevant

International Standards, especially those which are recommended by the United Nations Expert Group on Geographical names (UNGEGN), or otherwise with indication of the source.

For the country subdivision names listed in part 2 of the ISO 3166 database, the 26-character alphabet in Latin script is used, in relevant cases using diacritic signs as contained in the character inventory of ISO/IEC 10646.

#### 4.7 Special provisions: alternative names

In exceptional cases, variants of the same country subdivision name exist. However, in the case of several administrative languages, the alphanumeric order of the code elements is considered. The sources of the variants are generally indicated.

In cases where country subdivision names exist in more than one administrative language, these may be shown with the same code element. The language used is indicated by the relevant ISO 639 code element, if it exists.

## 5 Principles for assigning (country subdivision) code elements

### 5.1 Code element formation

Code element shall consist only of the following characters (cf. ISO/IEC 10646):

- LATIN CAPITAL LETTER A through LATIN CAPITAL LETTER Z
- DIGIT ZERO through DIGIT 9
- HYPHEN-MINUS

Code elements alpha-2 and alpha-3 are formed with LETTERS, num-3 is formed with DIGITS.

Code elements alpha-4 are formed with LETTERS.

Code elements for subdivisions are formed with up to 6 characters: alpha-2, HYPHEN-MINUS, and 1 up to 3 LETTERS or DIGITS.

### 5.2 Relationship to national or international code systems

It is desirable that country subdivision code elements assigned in the ISO 3166 reflect code systems already established nationally or internationally. If the ISO 3166/MA has not been notified of code elements, it assigns appropriate code elements (see [Clause 7](#)). These code elements are marked by an asterisk. The sources used by the ISO 3166/MA are included in the lists.

### 5.3 Structure of country subdivision code elements

The country subdivision code elements shall have a maximum length of six characters, including a hyphen-minus as separator). The coding structure is as follows:

- a) the first two characters are the alpha-2 country code element provided in part 1 of the ISO 3166 database;
- b) the alpha-2 country code element is followed by a hyphen-minus and the code element of the country subdivision name;
- c) the code element designating the country subdivision name shall consist of one, two or three alphabetical and/or numeric characters.