

ISO

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION

ISO RECOMMENDATION R 639

SYMBOLS FOR LANGUAGES, COUNTRIES AND AUTHORITIES

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BRIEF HISTORY

The ISO Recommendation R 639, *Symbols for Languages, Countries and Authorities*, was drawn up by Technical Committee ISO/TC 37, *Terminology (Principles and co-ordination)*, the Secretariat of which is held by the Oesterreichischer Normenausschuss (ÖNA).

Work on this question by the Technical Committee began in 1951 and led, in 1964, to the adoption of a Draft ISO Recommendation.

In December 1964, this Draft ISO Recommendation (No. 769) was circulated to all the ISO Member Bodies for enquiry. It was approved, subject, to a few modifications of an editorial nature, by the following Member Bodies:

Argentina	India	Romania
Austria	Israel	Spain
Chile	Italy	Switzerland
Czechoslovakia	Korea, Rep. of	Turkey
Denmark	New Zealand	U.A.R.
France	Pakistan	United Kingdom
Germany	Poland	U.S.A.
Greece	Portugal	U.S.S.R.

No Member Body opposed the approval of the Draft.

The Draft ISO Recommendation was then submitted by correspondence to the ISO Council, which decided, in November 1967, to accept it as an ISO RECOMMENDATION.

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FOREWORD

Co-operation and communication between experts engaged in all branches of science and technology are assuming ever-increasing importance as essential conditions for progress, both within each country and between countries. For this exchange to be successful, technical terms should have the same meaning for everyone who uses them. This goal can be achieved only if there is general agreement on the meaning of these terms. Hence the importance of technical vocabularies, in which concepts and terms, as well as their definitions, are standardized (terminological standards). It is just such standards which aid to assure mutual understanding.

These vocabularies are prepared by the National Standards Associations and by the Technical Committees of ISO. During the work on terminology carried out by these bodies, it quickly became apparent that it was necessary to have directives applicable to any field of knowledge and that it was possible to establish them.

Accordingly, ISO set up a Technical Committee, known as ISO/TC 37, *Terminology (Principles and co-ordination)*, with the mission of finding out and formulating general principles on scientific terminology and lexicography.

The ISO Recommendations prepared by this Technical Committee deal with problems that fall under the following four headings:

1. Vocabulary of terminology;
2. Procedure for producing national or international standardized vocabularies;
3. National and international standardization of concepts, terms and their definitions: principles for their establishment and criteria of value;
4. Layout of monolingual and multilingual vocabularies, including lexicographical symbols.

The ISO Recommendation included in class 2 deal with guidance in the organization of the work, while the other classes are concerned with technical details.

The following ISO Recommendations will be prepared:

Class 1

ISO/R ... * Vocabulary of terminology

Class 2

ISO/R ... ** Guide for the preparation of classified vocabularies

Class 3

ISO/R ... *** Naming principles

ISO/R ... International unification of concepts and terms

Class 4

ISO/R ... Layout of multilingual classified vocabularies

ISO/R ... Layout of monolingual classified vocabularies

ISO/R ... Lexicographical symbols

ISO/R ... Symbols for languages, countries and authorities

* At present Draft ISO Recommendation No. 781

** At present Draft ISO Recommendation No. 792

*** At present Draft ISO Recommendation No. 676

SYMBOLS FOR LANGUAGES, COUNTRIES AND AUTHORITIES

INTRODUCTION

This ISO Recommendation deals with items included in class 4, mentioned in the foreword.

Its purpose is to provide symbols showing

- to which language a term or document belongs (language symbols);
- in which country a term is used (country symbols);
- from what authoritative source a term or definition has been taken (authority symbols).

These symbols may be used in vocabularies, in treatises on terminology, and in any other text where a brief indication of language, country or authority is useful.

1. LANGUAGE SYMBOLS

1.1 Form of language symbols

Letter symbols or UDC numbers * may be used at will as language symbols.

Examples: E (or En) or = 20 for English
F (or Fr) or = 40 for French

Two tables showing these symbols are appended to this ISO Recommendation (Annexes A and B).

1.2 Application of language symbols

Language symbols are necessary in the following particular instances:

1.2.1 TO INDICATE THE LANGUAGE USED

1.2.1.1 Generally

Example: In a list of delegates issued at the meetings of the ISO Council, the symbols (E), (F) and (R) may indicate whether the delegates spoke in English (E), French (F) or Russian (R).

* UDC: Universal Decimal Classification published by national standards organizations under authority of the International Federation for Documentation (FID), The Hague.