
International Standard



6422

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Layout key for trade documents

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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.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for approval before their acceptance as International Standards by the ISO Council. They are approved in accordance with ISO procedures requiring at least 75 % approval by the member bodies voting.

International Standard ISO 6422 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 154, *Documents and data elements in administration, commerce and industry*.

Users should note that all International Standards undergo revision from time to time and that any reference made herein to any other International Standard implies its latest edition, unless otherwise stated.

Layout key for trade documents

0 Introduction

International agreement on the layout of documents used in international trade was reached in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in 1963 with the adoption of the ECE Layout Key. Since then, forms for maritime, rail, road and postal transport have been aligned on the ECE Layout Key by recommendations or provisions in relevant conventions, as well as forms under various international Customs conventions, preferential arrangements and commodity agreements.

In 1969 the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations took note of an ECE Recommendation to use the layout key whenever documents are designed for international trade transactions. This paved the way for international acceptance of the layout key by international organizations and regional bodies, such as the United Nations regional economic commissions for Africa (ECA) and Asia and Pacific (ESCAP).

In 1975 it was noted that documents aligned on the ECE Layout Key had already been introduced in many countries outside the ECE region, including countries with broad interest in world trade such as Australia, Japan, and New Zealand, and that the introduction of urgently needed common national systems had been facilitated by the availability of an International Standard.

In 1978 the ECE Committee on the Development of Trade noted "with satisfaction that the layout key for trade documents agreed by ECE experts in 1963, and formally recommended by the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures in 1973, had reached a level of world-wide acceptance that made it feasible to refer to it as the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents".

This International Standard is based on the aforementioned layout key, amended according to the new version, published by the United Nations in 1982.

National standards organizations and national trade facilitation organs, in both developed and developing countries, have issued standards or recommended national layout keys aligned with the ECE Recommendation and also series of aligned documents for the use of their nationals in foreign trade transactions. Some regional groupings such as the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA) and the Commission of the European Communities (CEE) have aligned many forms for basic documents needed in interregional trade.

Progress in the field of automatic data processing (ADP) and data transmission has been rapid and concern has been expressed that the development of documentation procedures to match new techniques could result in incompatibility between highly and less sophisticated systems applied in various areas in the world, and also that the United Nations Layout Key for Trade Documents might not be suitable for ADP applications. On the basis of experience in several countries and organizations, it has been confirmed, however, that the United Nations Layout Key system is suitable for these applications as well as for traditional methods, and it is felt that it is justified and appropriate to recommend it as a common basis for the presentation of documents for international trade, whether these documents be processed by automated or traditional, non-automated methods.

NOTE — Trade documents based on the United Nations layout key, if sent in a window envelope, may not always comply with all the criteria of standardized postal items as defined by the Universal Postal Union. As a result, articles of this type, when sent through the post, may not be able to benefit from the preferential rates and handling granted by the postal administration of certain countries of posting.

1 Scope and field of application

This International Standard specifies a key for the layout of documents relating to administrative, commercial, productive and distributive activities constituting trade, irrespective whether these documents are completed in handwriting, by mechanical or automatic equipment or by reproduction. It is intended particularly for the designing of aligned series of forms employing a reproducible master in a one-run method of document preparation. Documents prepared in this way are regarded as originals and copies in the same manner as documents prepared by other methods.

2 References

ISO 216, *Writing paper and certain classes of printed matter — Trimmed sizes — A and B series.*

ISO 3535, *Forms design sheet and layout chart.*

UN/ECE/FAL Recommendation No. 15, *Simpler Shipping Marks.*¹⁾

1) Available from : United Nations, Sales Section, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 GENEVA 10, or United Nations, Sales Section, NEW YORK