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## **Securities and related financial instruments — Classification of Financial Instruments (CFI code)**

*Valeurs mobilières et autres instruments financiers concernés —  
Classification des instruments financiers (code CFI)*



Reference number  
ISO 10962:2001(E)

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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.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 3.

Draft International Standards adopted by the technical committees are circulated to the member bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the member bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this International Standard may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

International Standard ISO 10962 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 68, *Banking, securities and other financial services*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Securities and related financial instruments*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 10962:1997), which has been technically revised.

Annex A of this International Standard is for information only.

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## Introduction

The Classification of Financial Instruments (CFI) code has been developed to address a number of problems which have concerned the financial community in the past few years. With the growth of cross-border trading, the requirement to improve communication of information among market participants has become critical.

The business problems centre around an inability to obtain information on securities due to the lack of a consistent and uniform approach to grouping financial instruments. With the explosive growth over the past ten years in new instruments and new features attached to financial instruments, a serious communication problem has developed.

Many market participants are using similar terminology for instruments having significantly different features. The problem is compounded when market participants look beyond their own national markets. They encounter the same words to describe instruments in another country that have significantly different features. Where the terminology is in a different language, the market participant encounters the problem of the same words being applied to different instruments along with the problems of translation which also can be misleading. In addition, the customs and practices of local markets vary considerably in the manner in which they structure financial instruments leaving foreign participants confused and perplexed. On careful analysis, it is often found that the characteristics and features of these instruments are similar to a domestic instrument. However, most market participants do not have the time and resources to do this analysis.

The inability to group securities in a consistent manner is another problem encountered by market participants. Reports of holdings by different sources for similar financial instruments often result in financial instruments being categorized differently. This not only affects comparability but causes a credibility issue with the reader. When relative performances are being measured, the ability to properly categorize holdings is essential if true comparisons are to be made.

The solution envisioned is twofold. One aspect is to establish a series of codes which clearly classifies financial instruments having similar features. The other is to develop a glossary of terms and provide common definitions which allow market participants to easily understand terminology being used.

In principle, the CFI code reflects characteristics that are defined when a financial instrument is issued and that remain unchanged during its entire lifetime. However, a few events that may lead to a new CFI code for the same instrument are anticipated, such as the changing of voting rights or ownership restrictions by a stockholders' meeting. The code has been developed to provide the most comprehensive information possible while at the same time maintaining the code manageability.

The benefits derived are many:

- The CFI code system provides a set of codes which can be used by all market participants in an electronic data processing environment and permits electronic communication between participants. Readers of portfolio holdings will see reports from different sources using the same categories. Performance measurement will be more credible as the groupings for measurement will be the same.
- The development of these codes will encourage market participants to take advantage of other ISO Standards, particularly ISINs and Securities Messages to simplify the communication process among market participants.
- The improved understanding of the characteristics of financial instruments will lead to a better understanding by investors, giving them more confidence to make investment decisions and leading to more active markets and the resulting improvement in market liquidity.

It is understood that some users may not, for practical reasons, be in a position to implement this International Standard immediately. In order for the International Standard to fulfil its objective, users are however recommended to implement it as soon as possible.