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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  
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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)).

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For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#)

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 68, *Financial services*, Subcommittee SC 4, *Securities and related financial instruments*.

This third edition cancels and replaces the second edition (ISO 10962:2001), which has been extended to cover necessary technical changes.

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## Introduction

The Classification of Financial Instruments (CFI) code was developed to address a number of problems which have concerned the financial community. 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 20 years in new instruments and 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, which 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 is to establish a series of codes which clearly classify 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.

The benefits derived are many.

- The development of these codes will increase the efficiency, reliability, data consistency and transparency of financial services transactions for both market and reference data. Classifying financial instruments in a consistent, structured and standardized way is also beneficial for regulatory reporting requirements.
- The CFI code system provides a set of codes for financial instruments which can be used globally for Straight Through Processing by all involved participants in an electronic data processing environment. An example being, readers of portfolio holdings see reports from different sources using the same categories, groups and attributes making comparison of instruments more credible.
- The broadened scope and coverage of CFI codes encourages market participants to take advantage of other International Standards, particularly international securities identification numbers (ISINs).
- It is intended that the improved understanding of the characteristics and categorization leads to a better comprehension of financial instruments. This leads to more active markets and the resulting improvement in market liquidity. In addition, these codes will be displayed on websites using internet technology, which has allowed the growth of e-issuing, e-trading and e-settlements.