

WCO GUIDELINES ON TRADER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION
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I. Management Summary

1. Cross-border supply chain processes involve many actors, from both the private and public sectors, with different functions and responsibilities. Customs is one of the actors that has a unique regulatory role, *inter alia* to collect revenue, execute trade policy, protect society, facilitate trade and establish a secure supply chain environment. In line with the slogan “Borders divide – Customs connects”, in addition to its domestic-oriented roles Customs has the opportunity to provide a more holistic, global benefit to international trade, through enhanced cooperation with Customs administrations in other countries.
2. One of the Pillars of the SAFE Framework of Standards (FoS), namely ‘Customs-to-Customs cooperation’, can be strengthened through the implementation of mutual recognition of controls and mutual recognition of Authorized Economic Operators (AEOs). Mutual recognition of controls is the recognition by a Customs administration of a control process performed on an economic operator by another Customs administration, thus eliminating/reducing the potential duplication of the control process and enhancing trade facilitation.
3. Furthermore, the WCO SAFE FoS introduced the concept of Mutual Recognition Agreements / Arrangements (MRAs) that enable the AEO status of economic operators involved in supply chain processes to be recognized.
4. In order to enable the efficient implementation of the mutual recognition of AEOs and the mutual recognition of controls and other similar arrangements, there is a clear need to develop a capability for the identification of economic operators by Customs administrations.
5. The WCO has developed a set of Guidelines, including technical standards, and a Recommendation on Trader Identification Number (TIN) to support a globally harmonized approach to the assignment, exchange and identification of TIN for economic operators. The objectives of the development of these Guidelines are to enable efficient implementation of AEO MRAs in particular, and to strengthen Customs-to-Customs cooperation in general.

II. Abbreviations

TIN	Trader Identification Number
NRTIN	National/Regional Trader Identification Number
WCO DM	WCO Data Model
SAFE FoS	SAFE Framework of Standards
AEO	Authorized Economic Operator

III. General Overview

A Identification of economic operators

6. An identifier for an economic operator (e.g., TIN) provides a unique identity to that economic operator, which can be used as a reference/key to access a larger set of information relating to the economic operator, such as its name, address, contact details, director/partners, and legal status. Use of the identifier could eliminate the need to provide information relating to an economic operator in a repetitive manner to

various stakeholders. The identifier (e.g., TIN) can facilitate the retrieval of underlying information concerning the economic operator through an automated IT system.

7. Being required to operate as a legal entity, an economic operator is normally obliged to register itself with the government authorities in a country that will eventually provide an identification number recognizing the status of the economic operator to carry out its economic activities.
8. There are different approaches as regards how countries manage the registration of their economic operators. In some countries, an economic operator may be required to register with several government authorities and will receive several licenses/permits/certificates that include different identification numbers with respect to its status and associated activities. Other countries may have a harmonized and integrated approach to the registration of its economic operators, whereby a single identification number is assigned to an economic operator for multiple purposes.

B Need for a globally unique TIN

9. In the context of a cross-border supply chain, economic operators are normally required to comply with certain formalities, including having a business identifier, before starting their commercial operations.
10. A cooperation arrangement between the Customs administrations of the exporting and importing countries necessitates the identification of the economic operators involved in a supply chain within the country as well as across borders, to enable Customs to perform the appropriate actions. Whilst the identification of economic operators within its national jurisdiction is not an issue for Customs, the challenge could lie in their efficient identification in other jurisdictions across borders.
11. The establishment of an identification number that can be used globally for retrieving underlying information relating to an economic operator could address this challenge, thus improving supply chain efficiency across borders. In order to avoid any potential duplication and to ensure the accurate and efficient identification of economic operators, the Trader Identification Number needs to be globally unique.

C Benefits of TIN

Using TINs provides various benefits that include, *inter alia* :

- a. Supporting the implementation of cooperation initiatives (e.g., mutual recognition) between and among Customs administrations;
- b. Enabling recognition of the actions/controls/authorizations of one Customs administration by another;
- c. Enhancing the efficiency of the clearance process by eliminating/reducing the time needed for Customs control;
- d. Enhancing the data quality of Customs clearance processes;
- e. Improving the visibility and transparency of supply chains;
- f. Enabling Customs to enhance supply chain security; and
- g. Maintaining the national / regional approach to managing economic operators' identifiers.

D Use of TIN for supporting AEO – MRA

- 4.

12. Authorized Economic Operator - Mutual Recognition (AEO - MR) is a broad concept within the SAFE Framework of Standards (SAFE FoS), where an action or decision taken, or an authorization granted by a Customs administration, is recognized and accepted by another Customs administration. It provides a framework for extending AEO benefits across borders in the jurisdiction of the partner country, thus aiming at, among others, improving supply chain efficiency through reduced time and costs.
13. Mutual Recognition (MR) of Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) status is considered by Customs administrations as a key element for strengthening end-to-end supply chain security and multiplying benefits for economic operators. MR can be a means to avoid the duplication of security controls, and can contribute greatly to the facilitation and control of goods moving in the international supply chain. MR is being increasingly seen as the way forward for providing additional benefits to AEOs across borders, thus enriching the basket of tangible AEO benefits.
14. The key imperative in an MR process is to assign a unique number – called a Trader Identification Number (TIN) – to each AEO, that can be used across the supply chain and is recognized by MR partners.
15. Given the growing number of Mutual Recognition Arrangements/Agreements (MRAs), as well as the increasing focus on regional or plurilateral approaches to MR, there is a greater need for efficient implementation of MRAs. One of the key requirements identified in the implementation of MRAs is to have a globally unique TIN for AEOs to enable MRA partner Customs administrations to identify them efficiently for the granting of facilitation benefits.
16. Each of the AEOs should have a TIN that is globally unique. The TIN should be processable by the IT systems of partner MR countries. It is suggested to use American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) characters only, and not to use special characters. The partner countries' systems should be able to recognize and cope with TINs assigned by other partner countries.
17. The exchange of AEO data based on TINs improves the visibility and transparency of supply chains; this should lead to enhanced security, whilst at the same time providing trade facilitation benefits to trusted traders that have demonstrated high compliance and put in place adequate security measures. The proliferation of MRAs with different solutions for the exchange of AEO data gives rise to a situation where traders and Customs are required to deal with different processes and multiple identifiers, leading to the inefficient and potentially inconsistent application of trade facilitation benefits. Hence, the standardization and harmonization of TINs is a key operational imperative for more efficient and effective MRA implementation.
18. Having a globally unique TIN obviates any possibility of an AEO not being recognized, or of some other trader being incorrectly recognized as an AEO – both cases having an adverse impact on the AEO and on Customs. It creates a win-win situation leading to improved trade facilitation benefits for AEOs in the jurisdiction of MRA partner administrations, as well as enhanced supply chain security from one end of the supply chain to the other.
19. The key issues involved are : the harmonization of the number itself, the entity information behind the number, and the exchange of such information, including AEO master data, between AEO-MRA partners, along with processes through which traders

are, or should be, providing this number to Customs in order to acquire benefits under the MRA.

IV. TIN Specifications

A Operating Principles for the Exchange of AEO - Data for AEO Identifiers

20. The TIN solution, as set out in these Guidelines, is based on the following key principles among others :
- a. optimize the balance between facilitation, security and compliance;
 - b. provide for greater levels of standardization and harmonization for AEO-MR implementation in the future;
 - c. build on existing international standards (e.g., ISO-2 country code, WCO Data Model);
 - d. reuse existing data when available, e.g., TIN to be based on the granting party's AEO identifier. Inventing new data, when existing data is suitable to be exchanged for AEO-MRA purposes, only leads to additional costs without providing additional benefits;
 - e. minimum impact on existing systems through the use of a non-disruptive approach;
 - f. take into account existing processes / solutions which are already in place. Countries that have already developed systems and processes for the exchange of AEO data will need only minimum adjustments to their existing solutions;
 - g. scalable and future-proof :
 - o consider future multilateral MRAs
 - o applicable and workable for AEO entities / parties other than importers and exporters
 - o the proliferation of MRAs, and the potential development of multilateral MRAs under which AEO data have to be exchanged on the basis of TIN to achieve the full benefits for AEOs, require that the chosen solution must be extendable to new MRAs without requiring further changes to IT systems;
 - h. in applicable cases, respect the protection of the confidentiality of AEO master data :
 - o where public interrogation of identifiers exists, it must take into account the data privacy of the AEO
 - o some countries have strict data protection rules that also apply to the exchange of AEO data. This must be taken into account when developing an AEO data exchange protocol;
 - i. allow for verifiability. Countries must be able to verify AEO data that has been exchanged for MRA purposes, since this has an impact on the risk assessment of supply chains:
 - o provide for future machine readability and automatic processing; with the increase of trade and of MRAs and the widespread use of IT systems to manage cross-border trade, the solution should cater for automated processes.

B Standard Format of TIN

21. A globally unique standardized TIN format for cross-border exchanges can be achieved by adding a separate 2-digit Alfa numeric ISO Country Code attribute as a qualifier to the existing national identifier.

22. This standard format uses the WCO Data Model data element '*Identification issuing country, coded*', in combination with the data element '*Identification*' under the Party Superclass¹.

WCO ID	Data element name
to be assigned in WCO DM v3.8.0	Identification issuing country, coded
S009	Party, coded

C Business Processes

i. Overall Stakeholder interactions

23. The TIN, including its underlying AEO master data, is used within the overall AEO-MR process that involves several stakeholders, including:

- AEOs in the exporting country;
- Customs in the exporting country;
- AEOs in the importing country;
- Declarant (s) in the importing country;
- Customs in the importing country.

24. Overall use-case and associated requirements are set out in the use-case diagram (Annex I).

ii. Registration and / or Assignment of National/Regional Trader Identification Numbers (NTINs/RTINs)

25. An economic operator needs to apply to the Customs administration to obtain AEO status. The Customs administration will perform validation on the applicant economic operator to determine approval of AEO status for that economic operator. A document certifying the AEO status of the economic operator will be provided upon approval. The document will normally contain an identification number for the economic operator.

26. There are different practices for assigning an AEO identification number to accredited AEOs. Some countries reuse an existing national identification number, such as the economic operator's tax number, business registration number or Customs (import/export) number. Other countries generate/assign a new AEO number as the identifier.

iii. Exchange of AEO master data

27. AEO master data should be exchanged between and among Customs administrations (Customs-to-Customs exchange) that are involved in a bilateral or plurilateral MRA, in an automated manner, using a standardized electronic messaging format (e.g., electronic message based on the INTERGOV Base Information Package - BIP). This exchange of information enables the Customs administration of the importing country to validate the status of economic operators involved in a supply chain, and could eliminate the need for economic operators in the exporting country to register/notify themselves in the MRA partner importing country.

¹ Superclass is a type of Class which represents the common characteristics of (shares common data elements with) its Subclasses. Party Superclass for instance, has common data elements, such as name, coded name (identification) and role, with its Subclasses, such as Exporter, Importer, Agent, Consignee and Consignor.

28. The Master Data structure provide semantic information model that could be implemented in actual message exchanges using different message formats. Currently, the WCO support two major message formats, namely the UN/EDIFACT – GOVCBR and XML.

29. It is recommended to adopt a consistent and efficient means of establishing connectivity with different MRA partners for the exchange of messages, in order to avoid a fragmented approach which could lead to increased transaction costs.

iv. Exchange of TINs by economic operators

30. The exchange of AEO master data between MR partners eliminates the need for economic operators to provide a complete set of information relating to their AEO status to the Customs administration in the importing country. The TIN is sufficient to enable the Customs administration of the importing country to look into the underlying information and validate the AEO status of an economic operator.

31. In order to make the Customs administration in the importing country aware of its AEO status, an economic operator needs to share its TIN with the declarant (s) that will file the Customs / Cargo Declaration.

v. The use of TINs in Customs / Cargo Declarations

32. In order to inform the Customs administration in the importing country of the AEO Status of all economic operators involved in supply chain processes, the declarant (s) needs to supply the TIN of those economic operators in its Customs / Cargo Declarations.

33. For identifying the AEO status of multiple actors in the supply chain in an AEO-MR process (where required), the WCO Data Model supports the use of the TINs of multiple types of economic operators in a Customs declaration.

vi. Recognition of TINs

34. The Customs administration in the importing country will validate the Customs / Cargo Declaration that is submitted by the declarant (s), and look for information on the TINs that are supplied in the Declaration. The automated clearance system will retrieve underlying AEO information, including the AEO status corresponding to each TIN from the AEO master database.

35. Customs will apply the appropriate facilitation treatment to the relevant consignment upon confirmation of the AEO status of the exporter and/or other economic operators, as agreed in the MRA.

D Trader Master data

i. Maximum Dataset

A list of AEO master data set is set out in Annex II. The AEO master data elements identified have been incorporated in the WCO Data Model.

ii. Message Standards

A. WCO Data Model

36. The WCO Data Model is a clearly structured, harmonized, standardized and reusable set of data definitions and electronic messages to meet the operational and legal requirements of cross-border regulatory agencies, including Customs.

B. Information Package (IP)

37. The WCO Data Model is a framework that is applicable in many different areas of border management processes. The Information Package is a hierarchical concept for organizing the use of the WCO Data Model for specific border management processes.
38. The INTERGOV Base Information Package (BIP) is the IP to facilitate the exchange of information between government agencies. The exchange of master data between MR partners is developed based on INTERGOV BIP.
39. The INTERGOV BIP includes a Master Data structure that was created to facilitate the exchange of non-transactional information. Unlike transactional data that represents events, Master data represents people or entity (demographic), places (geographic), or things. From a regulatory perspective, the lifecycle of the master data is normally associated with the registration process. Normally, master data contains Information that is relatively steady but could occasionally be updated. The AEO master data falls under the category of master data and needs to use this structure to facilitate its data exchange.
40. The AEO Master Dataset Derived Information Package (DIP) is set out in Annex III.

C. Superclass

41. A Superclass is a type of Class which exhibits common characteristics and shares common data elements with its Subclasses. The AEO master data is modelled on the basis of the Party Superclass. The Party Superclass shares common data elements, such as name, coded name (identification) and role, with its Subclasses, which include Exporter, Consignee, Consignor and Importer.

E ICT Functional Requirements

42. IT systems are the key to MRA implementation. It is therefore essential to guarantee the connectivity/interoperability of the IT systems of both parties, and in particular the capability of the IT systems to handle AEO master data exchange and the identification of each other's AEOs based on the TIN in the Customs transaction systems of both parties. MRA partners should have robust IT systems that have the following features:
- a. capability to update and exchange AEO master data on a real-time or periodic basis;
 - b. promptness, completeness and accuracy of the process of uploading the exchanged AEO data to the parties' respective systems;
 - c. matching of previously uploaded AEO master data with the AEO identifier (TIN) declared by economic operators (e.g., carriers, importers, agents/brokers);
 - d. capability to accept the TIN and identify each party's AEOs in order to grant benefits;
 - e. applicability of benefits based on the results of data matching/validation;
 - f. efficiency and effectiveness of the data exchange channel; and

- g. acceptable time taken to receive an indication of message receipt and data transmission quality.

V. Mechanism for the exchange of Trader Master Data

a. GNC UB on AEO MRA

- 43. The Globally Networked Customs (GNC) AEO-MR Utility Block (UB) developed for the implementation of the US-EU MRA² provides a standardized approach for the exchange of AEO master data in an automated and periodic manner. This UB can be replicated/customized to suit other countries and regions, thus promoting greater use of ICT applications in AEO Mutual Recognition implementation.

VI. Migration Strategy

- 44. One of the key 'Operating Principles for the Exchange of AEO-Data for AEO Identifiers' is that the future solution should take into account existing processes/solutions which are already in place. To that end, bearing in mind that countries are already using different trader identifiers (e.g., business registration number, tax number, import/export code, etc.) in their domestic environments for several purposes, and given the challenges involved in revamping the entire trader identification system, it would be useful to take into account the existing functional national trader identifiers for a globally unique TIN for the AEO-MR process. This allows maximum implementation flexibility and a smooth system transition that disadvantages neither Customs nor trade. Different TIN publication models could be adopted based on the existing national trader identifier systems and other imperatives.
- 45. When a Customs administration is using a national trader identifier system that is already compliant with the global TIN standard, it could simply reuse the national TIN as such, with the addition of the 2-digit Alfa-numeric ISO Country Code, as a qualifier to construct a standardized TIN format.
- 46. Member not aligned with this solution should conduct a comprehensive impact assessment, along with private sector stakeholders, prior to the implementation of the TIN solution to ensure that the solution is fit for purpose and does not create any negative impacts on costs and resources.

VII. Use of the exporting country AEO master data by importing Customs administrations

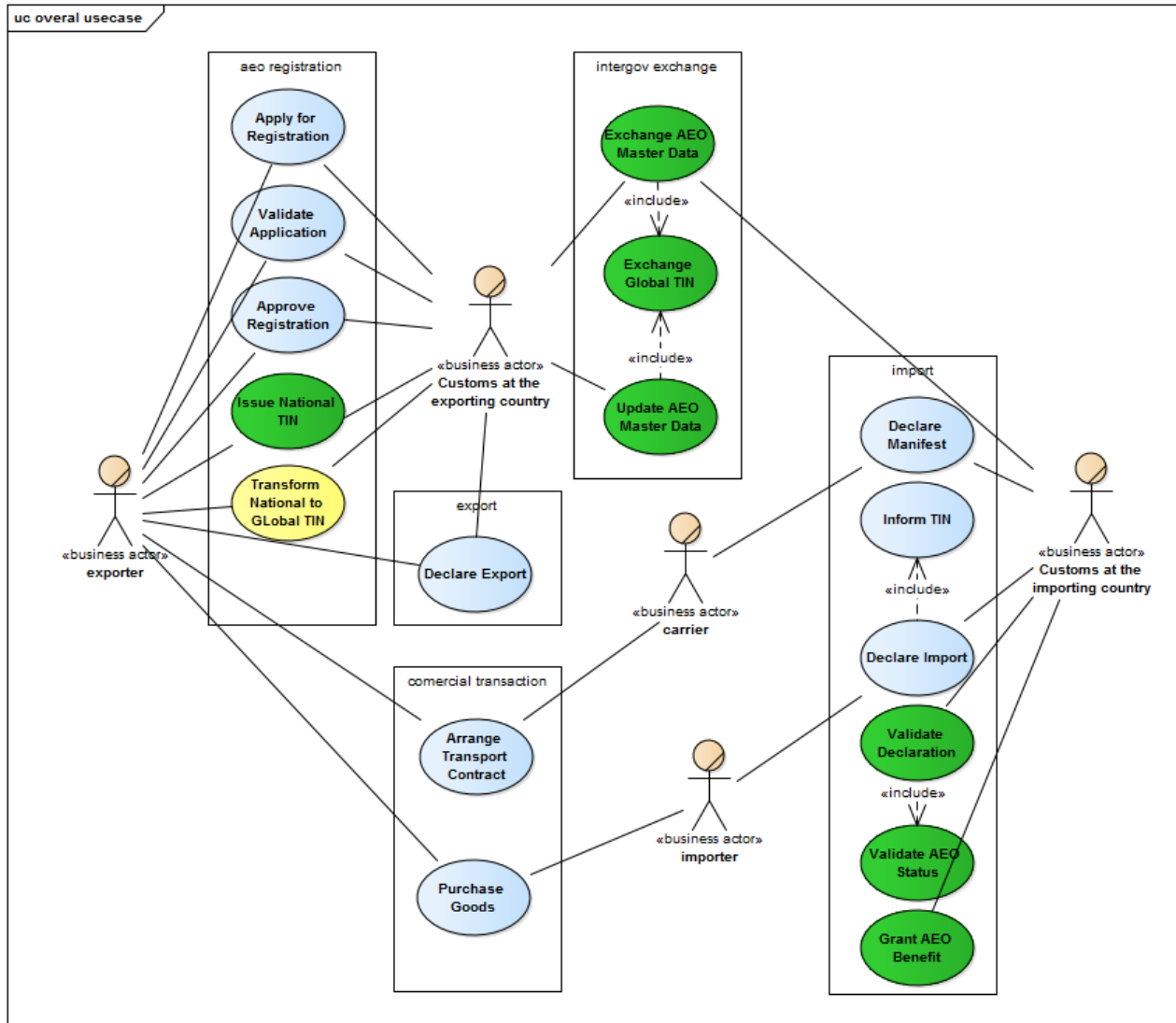
- 47. Once AEO master data has been shared by the exporting Customs administration, the importing Customs administration needs to determine how this data would be stored and utilized (bearing in mind data privacy and security requirements) for the purposes of different national processes, such as clearance validation and risk management. In general, overseas AEO data could be stored in the same database as existing national trader/AEO data. This approach would enable the importing Customs administration to use existing systems to look up both partner countries' AEO data and domestic trader data using the same method/process.

² <http://www.wcoomd.org/-/media/wco/public/global/pdf/topics/facilitation/activities-and-programmes/gnc/gnc-repository/aeo-mutual-recognition.pdf?la=en>

48. Alternatively, partner countries' AEO data could be stored in a different database, and an additional functionality could be added to allow the existing system to look up the information stored in that database.

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Annex I : Overall Use-Case diagram of AEO data management with connection to Mutual Recognition



Annex II : AEO Master Data Set

- Full name of the AEO
- Short name of the AEO
- TIN
- Identification Issuing Country
- Role (Importer/exporter/carrier/other economic operators)
- AEO Status (validated)
- AEO Certificate Number
- Certification Date
- Validity Date
- Street and number of the AEO
- Postal code of the AEO
- City name of the AEO
- State
- Country
- Business Type

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Annex III: AEO Master Dataset Derived Information Package (DIP)

Class Path/Attribute Name	Definition	WCO ID	Format	Code List	XML Tag Name
MasterData	Exchange of information between Governmental organizations related to Master Data	75B			
Message function, coded	Code indicating the function of a document	017	n..2	EDIFACT codes (1225)	FunctionCode
Functional reference number	Reference number identifying a specific information exchange	D026	an..70		FunctionalReferenceID
Document name, coded	Code specifying the name of a document	D013	an..3	EDIFACT codes (1001) or User codes	TypeCode
MasterData/MasterDataRecipient	Details related to the Recipient of the Master Data	26C			
Master Data Recipient type, coded	To identify the type of regulatory office that receives the Master Data	G016	an.3	EDIFACT codes (9415)	TypeCode
Master Data Recipient, coded	To identify the regulatory office that receives the Master Data	G017	an..17	UN/LOCODE (an..5) + user codes (an..12)	ID
MasterData/MasterDataSender	Details related to the Sender of the Master Data	27C			
Master Data Sender type, coded	To identify the type of regulatory office that sends the Master Data	G018	an.3	EDIFACT codes (9415)	TypeCode
Master Data Sender, coded	To identify the regulatory office that sends the Master Data	G019	an..17	UN/LOCODE (an..5) + user codes (an..12)	ID
MasterData/MasterDataParty	Party information in the context of Master Data	28C			
MasterData Party name	Name of the Party in the context of Master Data	R148	an..70		Name
Master Data party, coded	Identification of the Party in the context of Master Data	R149	an..35	International codes (e.g. DUNS, EAN) or user codes	ID
Role code	Code giving specific meaning to a party	R005	an..3	EDIFACT codes (3035)	RoleCode
Identification issuing country, code	To achieve a globally unique standardised TIN format for cross-border exchanges, add this separate 2-digit alpha numeric ISO Country Code attribute as a qualifier to the existing national identifier.	R147	a2	EDIFACT codes (3207) = ISO 3166-1 2-alpha code	IdentificationIssuingCountryCode
MasterData Party short name	Short name of the Party in the context of Master Data	516	an..70		ShortName
Business type, code	The business type of a party. Represents the nature of business / business area of the AEO	517	an..3	User codes	BusinessType
MasterData/MasterDataParty/Address	Details relating to an address	04A			
Type of address	To identify the type of an address	410	an..3	EDIFACT codes (3131)	TypeCode
City name	Name of a city	241	an..35		City
Country, coded	Identification of the name of the country or other geographical entity as specified in ISO 3166 and UN/ECE Rec 3	242	a2	EDIFACT codes (3207) = ISO 3166-1 2-alpha code	CountryCode
Country name	Name of the country or other geographical entity	412	an..35		CountryName

Country sub-entity identification	Code specifying the name of a country subdivision	244	an..9	EDIFACT codes (3229) = ISO 3166-2 2-alpha code or User codes	CountrySubDivisionCode
Street and number/P.O. Box	Specification of the postal delivery point such as street and number or post office box	239	an..256		Line
Postcode identification	Code specifying a postal zone or address	245	an..17	User codes	PostcodeID
MasterData/MasterDataParty/Contact		34A			
Department or employee – Contact name	Name of a department or employee	246	an..70		Name
Department or employee – Contact function, coded	Code specifying the function of a contact (e.g. department or person)	487	an..3	EDIFACT codes (3139)	FunctionCode
MasterData/MasterDataParty/Contact/Communication		25A			
Communication number	To identify a communication address	240	an..50		ID
Communication number type	To identify the type of communication address	253	an..3	EDIFACT codes (3155)	TypeCode
MasterData/MasterDataParty/Communication		25A			
Communication number	To identify a communication address	240	an..50		ID
Communication number type	To identify the type of communication address	253	an..3	EDIFACT codes (3155)	TypeCode
MasterData/MasterDataParty/AdditionalIdentifier		23C			
Sequence number	Number indicating the position in a sequence	006	n..5		SequenceNumeric
Additional identification, coded	Additional identification of a party, e.g. VAT number	511	an..35	International codes (e.g. DUNS, EAN) or user codes. To be used with CDT attributes "Identification Scheme.Identifier" and "Identification Scheme Agency.Identifier" to make the information unique.	ID
Identification issuing country, code	To achieve a globally unique standardised TIN format for cross-border exchanges, add this separate 2-digit alpha numeric ISO Country Code attribute as a qualifier to the existing national identifier.	R147	a2	EDIFACT codes (3207) = ISO 3166-1 2-alpha code	IdentificationIssuingCountryCode
MasterData/MasterDataParty/AdditionalDocument		02A			
Document category, coded	Code specifying the category of a document	D031	an..3	User codes	CategoryCode
Document Effective Date	The effective date of the document (e.g. license, visa, permit, certificate)	276	an..35		EffectiveDateTime
Document Expiration (Expiry) Date	The expiry date of the document (e.g. license, visa, permit, certificate)	275	an..35		ExpirationDateTime
Additional document reference number	Identifier of a document providing additional	D005	an..70		ID

	information				
Document/message status, coded	Code specifying the status of a document	019	an..3	EDIFACT codes (1373)	StatusCode
Additional document type, coded	Code specifying the name of an additional document. Represents the AEO Type (Such as AEO C,...)	D006	an..3	EDIFACT codes (1001) or User codes	TypeCode

AEO Master Data UML Class Diagram

