

ISWC Service for Labels: Frequently Asked Questions

What is an ISWC?

The ISWC (International Standard Musical Work Code) is a unique, permanent and internationally recognised reference number for the identification of musical works. It identifies a musical work as a unique intangible creation. It relates to the result of an intangible creation of one or more people, regardless of copyright status, distributions or agreements that cover this creation. For further information see <https://www.iswc.org/>

What is the ISWC Service for Labels?

The ISWC System contains information about millions of musical works uniquely identified by their ISWCs and it is widely used by societies and publishers. DSPs and data aggregators were granted access to the ISWC System to download ISWC-related information during 2023. With labels having access, ISWCs will become a common currency for all music industry stakeholders, using the same international standard identifier for works.

How can Labels use the ISWC Service?

During the process of releasing a new recording a Label can submit information about each recording and work to the ISWC System. Using this information, the ISWC System will check to see whether the work already exists or if it's new. In both scenarios an ISWC will be returned to the Label together with information about the creators.

What information does a Label need to provide?

A Label should provide information about the recording (such as ISRC, recording title, main artist name including International Standard Name Identifier (<https://isni.org/>) and International Performer Name (<https://www.scapr.org/tools-projects/ipd/>) where known, label name) and the work (work title and the names of the creators). Additionally the Interested Party Identifier (<https://www.cisac.org/services/information-services/ipi>) for each creator should be provided where known.

What information is returned to the Label?

An ISWC for each work will be returned. ISWCs can have a status of either 'Preferred' or 'Provisional'. A 'Preferred' status is attributed to ISWCs that have been validated by a society or a publisher and all the creators are identified by their IPI numbers. A 'Provisional' status is attributed to ISWCs for new works created from information notified by a Label.

What is the difference between an ISWC with 'Provisional' status and a 'Preferred' ISWC?

Very simply, the statuses are used to distinguish between the sources of work information and their data authority. While all ISWCs that are issued comply with the standard, societies and publishers are considered to be the authoritative source of works data notified to the ISWC System. They need to comply with providing mandatory information about a work whereas the rules for Labels have been relaxed. When a

society or a publisher registration matches with work details supplied by a Label, the ISWC status is upgraded from 'Provisional' to 'Preferred'.

As a Label how can I get access to the ISWC Service?

Labels interested in using the ISWC Service should consult the page <http://www.iswc.org/labels> where Terms and Conditions for use of the service are available, and register their interest. For more information about the technical requirements for accessing the service please visit the ISWC Developers Portal <http://uat.iswc.org> and view the information given under the heading 'For Labels'. Here you will find the integration requirements using the REST based API. Each Label is required to sign the Terms and Conditions before access will be granted. There is no charge to Labels for using the ISWC Service.

What was the motivation for introducing the ISWC Service for Labels?

PRS for Music sponsored a Proof of Concept, in coordination with CISAC, to assess viability for extending the current ISWC System for use by record labels and embedding the ISWC in the song data even before it is uploaded to DSPs' platforms. During 2023 over 40 participants contributed to a series of workshops, including representatives from the major labels and publishers and their trade associations. The initiative was very positively received and there was support for continuing beyond the initial Proof of Concept stage.

Why are Labels being encouraged to use the ISWC Service?

There is often a delay between the release of a new recording and the registration and identification of the related musical work. Time spent researching the link between a recording and work can result in late royalty payments and creators not being credited on a release. Establishing the link between ISRCs and ISWCs at the point of release and sharing this information with societies, publishers, and DSPs will make this critical information accessible and available to all industry stakeholders.