



United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations

UN/LOCODE

Focal Points

Terms of Reference

2015 - 2

1. Introduction

Trading locations, the places where the goods are consigned from, where they are stored, transformed, packaged, declared, inspected, cleared, transhipped and delivered to, are the essential information without which no international trade transaction can function. Any mistake or ambiguity on any of the locations through which the goods are transiting can have disastrous consequences for the trader, the Government agency, the environment or the society as a whole.

To provide global trade with a unique and unambiguous list of location name, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) introduced in 1981 the United Nations Code for Trade and Transport Locations (UN/LOCODE). UN/LOCODE is a five-character code system that provides a coded representation for the names of ports, airports, inland clearance depots, inland freight terminals and other transport related locations which are used for the movement of goods in international trade. Today UN/LOCODE is widely used by Government agencies and private sector entities around the world. It contains over 100.000 location names and is accessible free of charge on the Internet (<http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html>). Any international trade transaction that is conducted today will use UN/LOCODE either in paper documents and/or for the electronic exchange of information. It is UN/LOCODE that provides the trade location, the same way as the clock provides the local time.

UN/LOCODE is provided by UNECE through its United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) as a service to governments and trade. The standard is defined through UNECE Recommendation No. 16 (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/cefact/recommendations/rec16/rec16_3rd_1998_ecetr_d227.pdf), is published twice a year and is available free of charge on the Internet for download. UN/LOCODE is continuously maintained through the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Agency. As agreed initially, the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Agency would be responsible for the data maintenance work of UN/LOCODE, while the UNECE Secretariat would take charge of the production and publication of the directories. However, since 2004, the data maintenance function of the UN/LOCODE Maintenance Agency has almost been suspended and the Secretariat had to take on the complete responsibility for the data maintenance and production of the UN/LOCODE directory.

Following the launch of the web-based UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Request system for the online submission of new requests for location codes in 2004, the number of entries has dramatically increased - from 8000 locations in 1981 to almost 100,000 in the issue 2015-2. As a consequence of the large numbers of UN/LOCODE and the increased importance of UN/LOCODE for the functioning of the a globalised trading system the UNECE Secretariat has required member states and sector specific international organizations to set up National Focal Points (NFP) and Institutional Focal Points (IFP) to participate in the maintenance. These Focal Points shall maintain the location codes under their specific area of competence for utmost quality, support the Secretariat in its maintenance work, and advise the Secretariat on the further development of the standard.

2. Focal Point Mission, Objectives and Activities

UN/LOCODE focal points will maintain and further develop the UN/LOCODE standard in the best interest of the user community. They will maintain an open, transparent and inclusive maintenance processes on an on-going basis.

A UN/LOCODE Focal Point can be a National Focal Point nominated by each country or an Institutional Focal Point appointed by a relevant international organization. The Focal Point works under the guidance of the UNECE Secretariat.

2.1 National Focal Point

The mission of UN/LOCODE National Focal Point is to:

“Improve quality of UN/LOCODE and support the publication of the standard by establishing a focal point network, to revise existing codes, update codes (change and delete existing codes), and approve new codes in a specified geographic context. National Focal Points will also promote the use of UN/LOCODE and contribute to the further development of the standard.”

For regions of the world where there are only few locations relevant for UN/LOCODE, a focal point may take on responsibility for UN/LOCODE from several countries or a region.

2.2 Institutional Focal Point

Institutional focal points are sector specific international organizations such as International Air Transport Association (IATA), International Maritime Organization (IMO) and Universal Postal Union (UPU).

The mission of UN/LOCODE Focal Point from the international organization is to:

“Improve quality of UN/LOCODE and support the publication of the standard by establishing a focal point network, to revise existing codes, update codes (change and delete existing codes), and approve new codes in a specified sectorial context. Institutional Focal Points will also harmonize UN/LOCODE and other code lists used by the specific sector, promote the use of UN/LOCODE and contribute to the further development of the standard.”

3. Activities and responsibilities of Focal Points

Focal points will liaise with the UN/LOCODE Secretariat and the user community to address all issues related to the UN/LOCODE under their mandate. They will ensure a good understanding of the implementation of UNECE Recommendation No.16 and the maintenance procedure. The UNECE Secretariat can assist the focal point to build up this capacity.

The main tasks of the FP consist in the

- a) One time review of the code list¹ and
- b) Bi-annual validation of changes to the code list

One time review

This consists of a one-time review of the code list in particular with regard of completeness, correctness of names and metadata (subdivision, location function, coordinates) and duplications. Focal points can schedule this work but should aim to complete it within the first three years of their work. Focal points should inform the Secretariat when the review has been completed and send back the review results as requested by the Secretariat.

For large code lists (>500 entries) are asked to consult with the Secretariat on an appropriate schedule to avoid a concentration of changes in one single publication.

¹ If not mentioned otherwise ‘code lists’ refers to the codes that are under the mandate of the Focal Point

Bi-annual validation for UN/LOCODE publication

There are two UN/LOCODE publications every year. Prior to the publication the Secretariat will fix a cut-off date. All requests received prior to the cut-off date will be processed for the new publication. After the cut-off date the Secretariat will send a spread sheet containing the complete UN/LOCODE Data Maintenance Requests (DMRs) in the code list during the period in question to the National Focal Point. The NFP will validate the entries and send them back to the Secretariat before the deadline defined by the Secretariat.

The work includes essentially validation of new entries and deletions, correctness of names and metadata (subdivision, locations function) and check for duplications.

The focal point will have FOUR weeks for this work.

The focal point will also envisage potential impact of critical changes (for example change of name of a large port or airport) and inform the Secretariat and the user community.

The focal point will inform and coordinate with the relevant Government agencies to address the potential impact of changes on subdivisions adopted by ISO 3166-2 to minimize corresponding changes on UN/LOCODE.

4. Activities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat carries the overall responsibility for the publication of UN/LOCODE. It will maintain a list of Focal Points and make it available on the website (<http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/focalpoint.html>). It will assist new FP to become operational by providing training and documentation if required. This includes administrative tasks on focal point management, including FP nomination, performance evaluation of FPs and informing the relevant Government agency through their Mission.

The Secretariat will schedule the publications and prepare spread sheets containing DMRs under the mandate of each FP. The Secretariat will have DMRs related to specific sectors, such as airports with function 4 and Postal Exchange Office with function 5, validated by relevant IFPs and then provide NFPs with the complete DMRs, in which already validated DMRs for information and the rest should be validated by NFP. NFP must consult with the Secretariat for any intention on changes to the DMRs already validated by IFPs. The Secretariat expects that DMRs validated by the focal point are of highest quality and can be published as is.

The Secretariat may organise meetings and conferences to discuss the improvement of the standard.

5. Nomination of FPs and Participation

A Focal Point is a person or a group of persons working under the authority of a Government agency. The Focal point is endorsed by its Mission or the international organization.

The Secretariat sends out requests for nomination of National Focal Points to the Permanent Missions of the Member States to the United Nations. National recognised bodies (such as national Trade Facilitation Bodies or Ministries) that are interested to become a NFP may directly contact the Secretariat in which case the Secretariat will liaise with the Mission.

If a FP can no longer continue its role the country should appoint a new FP and inform the Secretariat in writing. If so, the current FP should make proper arrangements on handover with the replacement person.

The current FP should have the internal arrangement for back-up of its work in case of absence (sick, holiday, etc.).

The Secretariat will evaluate the work of the FPs and may choose to seize collaboration with Focal Points that have become dysfunctional.

6. Funding

The appointment and work arrangements of the FP, including funding, are the responsibility of the national government and the International Organizations

The UN/LOCODE Secretariat belong to the United Nations Regular Budget Activities.

Annex1: UN/LOCODE National Focal Point Form

Annex2: UN/LOCODE Maintenance Technical Guide for Focal Points

Annex 1. UN/LOCODE National Focal Point Form

Country	
Agency Name	
Address	
Name of Contact Person	
Title	
Email	
Telephone and Fax	

Signature: _____

Date: _____