SWIFT

BIC Policy

This document provides specific guidelines for the use of BICs by SWIFT users, in particular as identifiers and addresses within the SWIFT messaging services.

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Preface

Purpose of this document

This document provides specific guidelines for the use of BICs by SWIFT users, in particular as identifiers and addresses within the SWIFT messaging service.

This *BIC Policy* is an integral part of the contractual arrangement between SWIFT and its customers.

Other SWIFT documentation might also need to be updated. Until such other documentation is updated, and in case of any inconsistency between this policy and other SWIFT documentation, this policy prevails.

Audience

SWIFT intends this document for its customers.

In particular, the following persons should read this document:

- technical experts who operate the SWIFT service
- business decision makers who deal with entity identification, risk management, and exposure management
- legal, audit, and compliance officers
- vendors who integrate BICs into services and applications

Related documentation

- SWIFT Corporate Rules
- FIN Service Description
- SWIFTNet Service Description
- SWIFTNet Naming and Addressing Guide
- ISO 9362 Standard available at www.iso.org
- *BIC Registration Procedures* available at www.swift.com

SWIFT-defined terms

This document contains terms that have a specific meaning in the context of SWIFT documentation (for example, customer, user, or SWIFT services and products).

The definitions of SWIFT-defined terms appear either in this document or in the SWIFT Glossary. In this document SWIFT differentiates these terms as shown in this example:

SWIFT provides secure, standardised messaging services and interface software to its customers.

Significant Changes

The *BIC Policy* has been updated to reflect the end of the transition phase for the implementation of the latest version of the ISO 9362 Standard in November 2018.

In addition to the revised version of the ISO 9362 Standard, a new *BIC Registration Procedures* document has been developed to specify the roles and responsibilities of the different actors including the applicants and owners of BICs. The document is available at www.swift.com

The following table lists all significant changes to the content of the *BIC Policy* since the previous release. This table does not include minor or editorial changes that SWIFT makes to improve the usability and comprehension of the document.

Updated information	Location
Information related to the publication of non-published FINplus BICs has been moved to the FINplus Service Description.	Network Address on page 8

1 Entity Identifiers

1.1 BIC and the ISO 9362 Standard

The BIC is an established international standard defined in the ISO 9362 Standard document available at www.iso.org

This ISO Standard specifies the elements and structure of a universal identifier code, the business identifier code (BIC), for financial and non-financial institutions that require an international identifier to facilitate automated processing of information for financial services.

SWIFT is the designated ISO Registration Authority (RA) for the ISO 9362 Standard.

BIC identifies organisations (excluding individuals).

BICs are either valid or expired.

1.2 BIC Structure

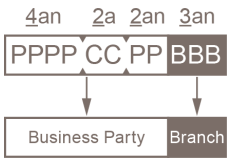
The BIC consists of:

- **8 alphanumeric characters**: when only the element business party is applied, or
- **11 alphanumeric characters**: when both the business party and branch elements are applied

The BIC is an 8-character code consisting of the business party prefix (4 alphanumeric), the country code (two-letter country code as specified in ISO 3166-1), and the business party suffix (2 alphanumeric). This **8-character BIC** identifies the 'Business Party' and is also referred to as the 'Business Party identifier'.

The 8-character BIC can be supplemented with a **3-character optional element** to identify an organisational unit of the business party, such as a specific location, department, service, or unit of the business party that is in the same country as the business party. This optional 3-character code (3 alphanumeric) identifies a 'Branch' of the business party and is also referred to as the 'Branch identifier'. The Branch identifier belongs to the business party identified by the 8-character BIC and, excluding a few existing legacy arrangements for co-operative banking groups, cannot be used to identify a separate legal entity or a third party.

Example



While the pattern illustrated in the example above is as it is defined in the ISO 9362 Standard, SWIFT has implemented the more restrictive pattern **`4!a2!a2!c [3!c]`** in the SWIFTNet FIN messaging service, that is:

SWIFT implementation of the BIC

Format	Format description
`4!a`	four alphabetical characters, that is, A to Z (upper case only)
`2!a`	two alphabetical characters, that is, A to Z (upper case only)

Format	Format description
2!c	two alphanumeric characters, that is, A to Z (upper case only) and 0 to 9
3!c	three alphanumeric characters, that is, A to Z (upper case only) and 0 to 9

For the latest information about the BIC structure, see the published ISO 9362 Standard at www.iso.org

2 Directory Publication

2.1 ISO 9362 Directory

As part of its Registration Authority (RA) function, SWIFT publishes BICs and related data records (that contain the ISO 9362 reference data attributes for each BIC) in the *ISO 9362 Directory* on www.swift.com

Under normal circumstances, BICs and related BIC data records will be published in the ISO 9362 Directory within one business day after successful validation of the information supporting the request.

For more information about the BIC publication procedure and the roles and responsibilities of the applicants and Registration Authority with respect to the BIC, see the *BIC Registration Procedures* document available at www.swift.com

2.2 SWIFTRef Directories

SWIFTRef refers to SWIFT's unique reference data service. SWIFT manages a portfolio of SWIFTRef directories.

SWIFT recommends customers to use the SWIFTRef directories to obtain additional SWIFT-specific information for the usage of BICs on the SWIFT messaging services.

For a complete list of SWIFTRef products and services, see www.swift.com/SWIFTRef

3 BIC Usage

On the SWIFT messaging services, the BIC can be used as network address and/or as a party identifier. As a general principle, users are responsible for all messages sent or other operations performed under their BIC(s).

3.1 Network Address

On the SWIFT messaging services, the BIC is used as network address to identify the sender and receiver of a message or a file.

Each user of SWIFT messaging services must have at least one valid connected 8-character BIC.

Users of the FIN and FINplus services must register and publish at least one valid connected 8-character BIC.

FIN users who decide to use non-published BICs, in addition to their published 8-character BIC, must ensure the use of any such non-published BIC is duly covered by a bilateral or, as the case may be, multilateral agreement between all parties concerned.

Any non-connected BIC, such as an 8-character BIC with '1' in the eighth position, cannot be used to send or receive messages or files over SWIFT.

For more information about the use of BICs as network address on the SWIFT messaging services, see the relevant service documentation.

3.2 Party Identifier within Messages or Files

BICs can also be used by users to identify a party within the message or the file sent through SWIFT messaging services.

Unlike network addresses that require a connected BIC, users can use either a connected or non-connected BIC as party identifier within a message or a file. In all cases, the BIC used to identify a party within the message or the file must be a valid published BIC.

For more information about the use of BICs to identify a party within the message or the file on the SWIFT messaging services, see the relevant service documentation.

4 BIC Registration, Validation, Activation, and Deactivation

The then current version of the *ISO 9362* Standard (available at www.iso.org) and of the *BIC Registration Procedures* (available at www.swift.com) govern the registration of BICs and the related roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.

Customers must comply with all obligations applicable to them under that documentation and this Policy. Failure to do so may result into the expiry of the affected BICs. It may also cause SWIFT to suspend or terminate the SWIFT usership and/or the provision of SWIFT services and products.

Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, customers are reminded that, until the expiry of the BIC, they remain ultimately responsible for the correctness, update, and completeness of the data record of their BIC(s). This applies equally in case of a third-party registration at least as long as the third party for which the customer may have requested a BIC does not officially confirm to the Registration Authority that it takes over the responsibility for its BIC.

Customers can also find more information about how to register, maintain, or expire BICs at www.swift.com/ordering

4.1 Registration

Users can register one or more BICs for their own organisation (self-registration).

To identify a third party and facilitate automated processing of telecommunication messages in banking and related financial transaction environments, users can also register a BIC for a third party (third-party registration). In case of a third-party registration, the requesting user must inform the third party for which the BIC is registered.

A non-connected BIC must always be published.

A connected BIC is allocated to a duly registered and validated SWIFT user subscribed to SWIFT messaging services.

Without prejudice to SWIFT's roles and responsibilities as an ISO Registration Authority (RA), users remain ultimately responsible for any use of or reliance on BICs to identify third parties in SWIFT messages. For more information about SWIFT's roles and responsibilities as ISO RA, customers should refer to the ISO *BIC Registration Procedures* document available at www.swift.com.

As per the ISO 9362 Standard *BIC Registration Procedures*, customers acknowledge and agree in particular that, while SWIFT uses reasonable care and efforts that the information provided by the BIC applicant is accurate and validates it against public sources (if any), SWIFT cannot be held liable for any inaccurate, outdated, incomplete, or misleading information that SWIFT has been requested to publish in the *ISO 9362 Directory* or other directories.

4.2 Validation

BIC registration requests are validated by SWIFT as the Registration Authority. Users are strongly advised to submit registration requests and to provide all necessary information and documents well in advance to allow sufficient time for such validation. For more information about typical validation lead times, see SWIFT's ordering site at www.swift.com/ordering or contact your SWIFT commercial manager.

4.3 Activation

As a general rule, SWIFT activates BICs on SWIFT messaging services on a Saturday. A new FIN connected BIC is published upon activation only.

Users subscribing to the FIN service who already have a non-connected BIC still ending with 1 must request the expiry of that non-connected BIC. The non-connected BIC will expire within the month following the activation in the live environment.

4.4 Deactivation

As a general rule, SWIFT deactivates BICs on SWIFT messaging services on the first Saturday of the month. If a user exceptionally requests the deactivation of a published BIC to take place on another date and SWIFT has agreed thereto, the user must advise the user community of the deactivation of its BIC by means of a SWIFT broadcast message at least 2 business days before the deactivation date.

Note *Deactivation cannot be carried out in certain events, such as the Sibos week.*

Users of the FIN service who request the deactivation of a connected BIC in the live environment must also request the expiry of that BIC at the same time. Once deactivated and expired, the BIC can no longer serve to send or to receive messages or files on the SWIFT messaging services or to identify a party in a message or file.

In all cases, the deactivation should be submitted through the relevant e-order(s) at least 3 business days in advance.

Legal Notices

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Translations

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