To manage use of country codes with the IALA MRN namespace:

* IALA will utilize ISO 3166-1 2-letter country codes.

**Why ISO 3166-1 Country Codes?**

The ISO 3166-1 standard Country Codes are well-established, stable, and in-use in other areas.

The ISO 3166-1 standard currently (2020) comprises 249 countries, 193 of which are sovereign states that are members of the United Nations. Many dependent territories in the ISO 3166-1 standard are also listed as a subdivision of their parent country.

ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes are the most widely used of the country codes published by ISO. They were first introduced in 1974 and have proven invaluable in various applications including extending postal codes and in establishing internet top-level domains.

* IALA encourages the use of all currently-established ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 Country Codes. In many cases, individual codes are assigned to offshore islands and special areas of geographic interest.

In many cases, individual codes are assigned to offshore islands, dependent territories, and special areas of geographic interest. In many cases within IALA’s domain, such entities may have their own AtoN, VTS, or other needs. In order to maximize flexibility within a country’s namespace(s) and domains, IALA encourages the use of all country codes to the maximum extent possible.

* IALA will assign ISO 3166-1 Country Codes to current National Members[[1]](#footnote-1) (called IALA MRN National Authorities) as soon as practical, subject to approval by IALA Council. Announcement of Country Codes will be made by IALA Council.

Some National Authorities are ready to begin experimenting with MRN and need the space to do so. The timeline to establish a request process, then to receive, deliberate, and respond to requests is an undue administrative burden.

By making assignments, IALA allows countries that are ready to begin utilizing MRN to do so. This also de-centralizes the managerial needs from IALA and allows individual countries and National Authorities to oversee the application of their respective namespaces as they see fit.

* There are five[[2]](#footnote-2) countries (based on the 2017 Membership List) where there are multiple (two) National Members. Prior to finalizing and announcing IALA MRN National Authority assignments, IALA would need to contact these five countries to determine how they would like to utilize the respective Country Codes.

Some suggestions on how to manage these include:  
Utilizing subdivisions of the Country Codes, either by application of ISO subdivisions or by customizing subdivisions. (urn:mrn:iala:aton:gb:sco; urn:mrn:iala:aton:gb:ni)  
Utilizing an “agency code” to follow the Country Code. (urn:mrn:iala:aton:us:nga)  
Utilizing additional codes identified as “Exceptionally Reserved” within ISO 3166-1, such as “uk” in addition to “gb” for the United Kingdom; and “fx” as well as “fr” for France.  
Differentiating the National Authorities for different “Types” defined within the IALA namespace, by assigning the Country Code to a different entity within “aton” as within “vts.”

* Current Associate and Industrial Members, as well as those wishing to utilize MRN within the IALA domain should make agreements with the IALA-assigned owner of the Country Code.

Here’s an example: The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), a body within the United States and an IALA Associate Member, would like to use MRN within their List of Lights publication. To do so, NGA should make an agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) – the U.S. National Member -- for a code within the mrn:iala:aton:us: namespace, such as mrn:iala:aton:us:nga:. NGA’s agreement should be made at the national level, rather than requesting an additional code from IALA.

* Only for cases beyond or outside the scope of Country Code assignments, or where an internal agreement cannot be reached, IALA will establish a request process for “User-Assigned” codes as defined in ISO 3166-1.

This should be seen as a last resort, only when an agreement for sharing country codes or subdivisions cannot be reached with the IALA-assigned entity (National Member).

* In the interest of harmonization when assigning Country Codes, IALA will respect the User-Assigned codes in use by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), and the UN/LOCODE.
* With respect to the ISO 3166-1 reserved codes, IALA will respect all reservations, exceptional reservations, transitional reservations, and indeterminate reservations.
* There are five countries[[3]](#footnote-3) that have an Associate or Industrial Member (currently) but no National Member. IALA will need to determine whether to assign MRN National Authority status to these Associate/Industrial Members, or to impose a subdivision of the Country Code to them prior to assignment. IALA could also reach out to these members to see whether they intend to use MRN and make a determination based on that.

1. “National Member” is an IALA term in its current, Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) construct. This terminology is subject to change as IALA transitions to an Inter-Governmental Organization (IGO). As the IGO governance documents have not yet been finalized, this document uses the term “IALA MRN National Authority” to avoid using a soon-to-be-outdated term. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The five countries are China, Croatia, France, Italy, and the United Kingdom. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The countries are Austria, Comoros, Djibouti, Korea (Democratic People’s Republic of), and Qatar. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)