

Definitions

Sirene register

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C

Centre for business formalities (CFE)

Centres for business formalities are places where companies can submit in one and the same place and in a single document declarations relating to the creation of the company, to changes in situation or to the cessation of their activity which they are obliged to do by law. These centres were created by the decree of 18 March 1981.

The existence of these centres means that companies do not have a series of formalities to complete with several distinct bodies (commercial court registry, chamber of trade, Urssaf and other social bodies, Insee, tax department, etc.). The CFE make a formal check and then pass on declarations and supporting documents to the appropriate department. Confidentiality of the information transmitted is guaranteed.

The CFE have the following role:

- centralise declarations;
- make a formal check of the documents presented;
- pass on all documents to the correct department, who then ensure that they are legal and valid.

Company

For the purposes of the Sirene register, a company is an individual or a corporate body independently carrying out a professional non-salaried activity.

There are two major categories of company:

- individual company, which has no legal personality apart from that of the person running it (e.g. trader, craftsman, the professions, farmer, etc.);
- the so-called legal person or corporate body (e.g. public limited company (SA), limited liability company (SARL), etc.)

E

Establishment

For the purposes of the Sirene register, an establishment is a unit of operation or production in a specific geographic location but legally dependent on a company. This is the place where the activity is carried out (shop, workshop, warehouse, etc.)

L

Legal category (CJ)

The legal category describes the legal status of the company. The different legal forms have been created by law, either to regulate an activity, or to meet a specific legal need, but the aim is always to adapt the law to reality and to economic needs.

Business law distinguishes the following:

- independent entrepreneur (craftsman, trader, etc.);
- company (SARL, SA);
- group (EIG, Association).

[To consult the nomenclature of legal categories.](#)

P

Principal Activity (APE)

As the body responsible for maintaining the Sirene register, Insee attributes for statistical purposes, for companies and each of their establishments, a code called the principal activity code (APE) based on the French classification of economic activities (NAF) defined by decree no. 2007-1888 of 26 December 2007. For more information about [NAF 2008](#).

Note that there is a distinction between the code for the principal activity carried out by the company (APEN) and the principal activity carried out by the establishment (APET).

In attributing this code, Insee takes into account the information declared by the company on the forms handed in to the centres for business formalities (CFE). When several activities are described, it is important to declare the principal activity first.

Article 5 of decree no. 2007-1888 of 26 December 2007 states that:

I. – The attribution by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), for statistical purposes, of a code which indicates the principal activity (APE) with reference to the nomenclature of activities, is not sufficient to create rights or obligations towards or on behalf of the units concerned.

II. - The application of this code, and in particular the classification of economic units into the very precise definitions provided by these nomenclatures, by an administration or a public department for a specific (non-statistical) use of these nomenclatures, is entirely the responsibility of the user department.

III. – If a regulatory text or a contract makes reference to these nomenclatures, the signatories take full responsibility for the area they intend to cover. It is they who must clarify this area as fully as is necessary.

[For more information about APE](#)

R

Registration certificate

The registration certificate is sent by Insee in the following instances after all the documents sent by the centre for business formalities (CFE) have been dealt with:

- creation;
- changes;
- dissolution.

Exception: companies that are registered in the trade register (RCS) and in the special register for commercial agents (RSAC) receive their registration certificate directly from their CFE, that is the commercial court registry.

The head of the company can then use this certificate for all administrative procedures.

Warning: No duplicate of this certificate is supplied; to obtain the main information which identifies a company, the solution is to ask for an [identification card](#).

S

Siren

The Siren number is the single identification number given to every company by Insee.

It is a simple serial number, made up of 9 non-significant digits (except in the case of public bodies). It does not reflect the nature of the company.

It is attributed only once and is not removed from the register until the moment when the legal entity ceases to exist (death or cessation of all activity for an individual, cessation of activity for a legal entity). From this number the company can be followed to all its geographical locations, all its moves, throughout its legal lifetime. For an individual (craftsperson, trader, the professions...), attribution of this number is definitive.

[For more information about Siren](#)

Siret

The Siret number is a unique identification number given to each establishment (principal or secondary) by Insee. It is a simple serial number, made up of 14 non-significant digits: the first nine correspond to the Siren number of the company on which the establishment depends and the last five to an internal classification number (NIC). It does not reflect the nature of the establishment. It is deactivated when the activity ceases in the establishment concerned or when there is a change of address.

Every establishment receives a Siret number, even for a company whose business consists of only a single establishment.

- The Siret number is associated with the legal entity. If there is a change of legal entity, there is a change of Siren and hence a change of Siret.
- The Siret is specific to a location.
 - If several companies carry out their activity in the same place, there are as many different Siret numbers as companies.

- A company has as many Siret numbers as there are different places where it carries out its activity.

A number attributed to an establishment attached to a specific company is never used for another establishment of this same company.

[For more information about Siret](#)