

## Q&A: IATI Validator

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## Section 1: General information

### What is the IATI Validator?

The IATI Validator is an online tool for checking if data complies with the rules and guidance of IATI Standard. The tool provides information on how to improve the quality of IATI data to ensure it is accessible and useful to anyone working with data on development and humanitarian resources and results.

### How does the IATI Validator work?

There are three ways to use the IATI Validator.

1. [Check Data](#) - Anyone can upload their IATI data files to be checked before publishing them.
2. [Public Data Viewer](#) - Anyone can check all IATI data files that have been published.
3. [Public API](#) - Developers can GET reports for published files or POST a file and receive a validation report

The Validator undertakes multiple layers of checks to identify where the data does not comply with the IATI Standard. The Validator will then provide validation reports to indicate where errors have occurred and what specifically needs to be changed.

### What happens when the IATI Validator identifies invalid data?

When the IATI Validator identifies invalid data, it returns a message to the user. Based on the issue the Validator has identified, the user will either receive a critical, error or a warning message identifying what the invalid data is and where it occurs in the data file, and provide actionable/directive messages on how to fix it. If there are multiple repeated errors, they will be grouped as the same fix applies to all. For instance, if all activities in a dataset omitted the activity dates, then the user would receive one error message that applies to all activities.

### What do the colours of the reports mean?

If a file is flagged with a **Critical**, **Error**, or **Warning** status it means that there are errors to fix. We recommend addressing the **Critical** errors first. The **Errors** should be addressed next.

**Warnings** should be corrected when possible.

- **Success** - file is valid with no errors of any type, congratulations!
- **Warning** - data can be more valuable and warnings should be corrected when possible.
- **Error** - data is hard or impossible to use.
- **Critical** - data cannot be used by tools

If you see a file that is highlighted in grey and includes a “Pending Download” message, it means the Validator is unable to download the publisher file because it is inaccessible. In such instances, it is best to contact the publisher to address the issue.

## How long does the Validator take to check IATI data files?

This depends on which option you use:

1. When using the [Public Data Viewer](#) to check files that have *already* been published, the validation reports are usually readily available to download. You will be able to see the date/time the file was identified in the Registry and the date/time it was validated.
2. When using the [Check Data](#) option to check your files *before* publishing them, the validation report will usually be returned quickly on the page. You also have the option to copy the address with the validation reports and refer to it at a later stage.

The validation report in both the Check Data and Public Data Viewer will be identical.

## What help and support can publishers access to correct their data?

When data requires correcting, an actionable error or warning message will be displayed. An additional guidance link for each message is also made available. For additional support using the IATI Validator, please refer to:

- IATI Technical Team helpdesk: [support@iatistandard.org](mailto:support@iatistandard.org)
- Post questions to IATI's community on the forum: [IATI Connect](#)

## Will the IATI Secretariat and technical team proactively engage with publishers to improve data quality?

Definitely. IATI's Strategic Plan 2020-25 has prioritised improving the quality and use of IATI data. Therefore the Technical Team will use the IATI Validator to identify how publishers can improve their data and then proactively contact them to offer support. Through effective communications and engagement, the IATI Secretariat will sustain and increase the commitment from publishers to improve their data quality. This will include through blogs, raising awareness at meetings and requesting IATI members take a lead on improving their data, for which case studies can be based on.

## How long does it take to correct invalid data?

It depends on the number of different types of errors identified. We expect that many publishers will have a range of corrections to make which may take considerable time. It is important to note that we do not expect data to be corrected immediately. Using the IATI Validator is the first step in the process to improving IATI data quality and you can use it to prioritise which fixes to make first.

## How likely is it that an IATI publisher will have invalid data?

Very likely. The Validator undertakes rigorous checks of publishers' data against the rules and guidance of the IATI Standard. Therefore we expect that many publishers will find that their datasets contain invalid data.

## **Does the Validator check if datasets have complied with a donor's requirement to publish data to the IATI Standard?**

No. Different donors have their own specific set of data requirements for their grantees that are additional to IATI's rules. Organisations need to refer to their donor's guidance and more information can be found on IATI's [website](#).

## **Can anyone check any publishers' IATI data using the IATI Validator?**

Yes. As long as the link to the datafile is on the IATI Registry, anyone can check that data using the IATI Validator.

## **Can organisations check their data on the IATI Validator *before* publishing the files?**

Yes. Organisations can upload their IATI XML files to the Validator to check their data and make necessary corrections before publishing their data to the [IATI Registry](#).

## **What will happen to invalid data? Will there be changes to which public tools and services provide IATI data (valid and invalid)?**

All data published to the IATI Standard will remain accessible on the IATI Registry, regardless of whether datasets contain invalid data. For any upcoming changes on tools and integration with the IATI Validator, please follow the IATI Connect [Technical Community of Practice](#).

## **Section 2: Technical information for developers and data services providers**

### **Specifically what checks does the IATI Validator undertake?**

The IATI Validator runs checks against version 2 of the Schema and Rulesets of the IATI Standard.

#### **Check 1: Schema Validation- [Critical](#)**

The IATI Validator checks if data adheres to the format set out in the IATI XML Schema. The IATI Schema provides the exact order and structure that organisations should provide their XML in. Full information about the IATI Schema can be found on [IATI's Reference site](#).

Examples include checking if:

- ❖ IATI data is published in the XML file format (and not provided in other formats, such as a PDF or Excel file)
- ❖ all [mandatory IATI elements](#) (data fields) have been provided
- ❖ data complies with version 2 of the IATI Standard (either 2.01, 2.02 or 2.03) as version 1 of the IATI Standard has been [deprecated](#).

### Screen grab of a section of IATI Schema

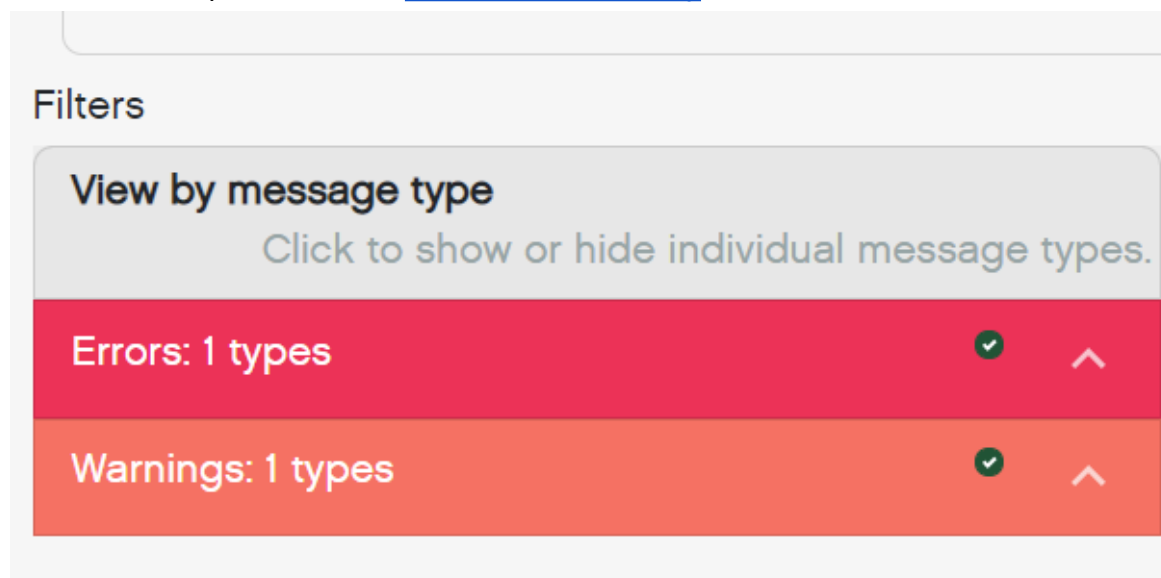
```

<xsd:schema xmlns:xsd="http://www.w3.org/2001/XMLSchema" version="2.03">
  <xsd:annotation>
    <xsd:documentation xml:lang="en">
      International Aid Transparency Initiative: Organisation-Information Schema Release 2.03, 2018-02-19 NOTE: the xml.xsd and iati-common.xsd schemas must
      be in the same directory as this one. This XSD XML Schema defines an XML document type for information about an aid organisation, following the standard
      published at http://iatistandard.org This document type may be extended with additional elements and attributes, but they must belong to an explicit XML
      namespace.
    </xsd:documentation>
  </xsd:annotation>
  <xsd:include schemaLocation="iati-common.xsd"/>
  <xsd:import namespace="http://www.w3.org/XML/1998/namespace" schemaLocation="xml.xsd"/>
  <xsd:element name="iati-organisations">
    <xsd:annotation>
      <xsd:documentation xml:lang="en">
        Top-level list of one or more IATI organisation records.
      </xsd:documentation>
    </xsd:annotation>
    <xsd:complexType>
      <xsd:sequence>
        <xsd:element ref="iati-organisation" minOccurs="1" maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
        <xsd:any namespace="##other" processContents="lax" minOccurs="0" maxOccurs="unbounded"/>
      </xsd:sequence>
      <xsd:attribute name="version" type="xsd:string" use="required">
        <xsd:annotation>
          <xsd:documentation xml:lang="en">
            A number indicating the IATI specification version in use. This is mandatory and must be a valid version.
          </xsd:documentation>
        </xsd:annotation>
      </xsd:attribute>
      <xsd:attribute name="generated-datetime" type="xsd:dateTime" use="optional">
        <xsd:annotation>
          <xsd:documentation xml:lang="en">

```

## Check 2: Rulesets Validation

The IATI Validator also checks if the data follows IATI's Rulesets. These checks provide a more detailed review of the quality of data. To view the most up-to-date information about IATI's Rulesets please refer to [IATI Ruleset repository](#).



On the IATI Validator, there are two types of messages that are provided if the content of the data does not follow IATI's rulesets:

- ❖ **Error message:** An error message is displayed if any of IATI's mandatory rules (rules containing the word 'must') have been broken. For example, if an activity falls within multiple sectors, the percentage of finance allocated for each must add up to 100%. If the percentage is less or more than 100%, then an error message is displayed.
- ❖ **Warning message:** A warning message is displayed if any of IATI's recommended rules (rules containing the word 'should') are broken. For example, when reporting sectors, it is recommended that if a publisher uses a non-DAC classification system or systems, these should be used in addition to DAC 5-digit codes.

## What is the tech stack powering the service?

All application code can be found in the IATI-Validator repositories in [GitHub](#).

- [Validator API](#) - Core validation logic
- [Front End](#) - Angular single page application
- [Back End Service](#) - Back end service for the front end
- [Refresher](#) - Published file identification, download, and validation loop