



Home Office

**The Home Office response to the  
Independent Chief Inspector's report:  
Country of Origin Information  
November 2016**

## Introduction

The Home Office thanks the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (ICIBI) for this report, as well as the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) and the individual reviewers for the positive overall nature of the reviews, the complimentary remarks about the quality standards of the team and their products and the constructive comments and feedback to enable further improvement.

## Response to Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

1. *The Home Office should clarify the guidelines<sup>1</sup> it is currently working to when processing information for the purpose of Country Policy Information Notices, or in responses to Country of Origin Information requests, including its definition of any specific terms, for example 'publicly available'.*
  - 1.1 **Accept** (already comply).
  - 1.2 We believe we already comply with this recommendation. The 'preface' section of each Country Policy and Information Note contains text (see below) which explains the guidelines we are working to. In turn, these include descriptions of common phrases, including 'public information'.

#### “Country information

The COI within this note has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the [European Asylum Support Office's research guidelines, Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.”

### Recommendation 2

2. *The Home Office should ensure that where an IAGCI review raises issues that fall outside CPIT's remit the relevant business areas are made aware and respond.*

*In this instance, the Home Office should confirm that the area responsible for ensuring the safety of vulnerable asylum seekers is aware of the reviewer's comments in relation to the risks to LGBT Afghan asylum seekers living in mixed refugee communities.*

- 2.1 **Accept.**
- 2.2 Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) will notify other business areas where a comment is made that is relevant to them (and has done so in relation to the quoted comment). However, the purpose of reviews commissioned by the IAGCI is to review the country of origin information and not to comment on other immigration matters. There are other more appropriate mechanisms for raising broader concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Common EU Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008

## Recommendation 3

3. *The Home Office should ensure that responses to points and recommendations made in IAGCI reviews are complete, and explicit regarding what action(s) CPIT and others will take and by when.*

3.1 **Accept.**

3.2 CPIT has always endeavoured to respond to points and recommendations in full, including where they are unclear and/or not explicitly raised by the reviewer. We believe the updated template we have suggested should help ensure this happens.

## Recommendation 4

4. *The Home Office should share COIRs and CPINs that refer to trafficking and modern slavery with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) in draft to ensure that Country Guidance reflects the IASC’s knowledge and expectations.*

4.1 **Accept.**

4.2 We will share draft Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs) that relate to trafficking with the IASC to draw upon their expertise.

4.3 However, we do not believe that sharing Country of Origin Information Requests (COIRs) is necessary because: (a) they do not contain “country guidance” – only country of origin information; and (b) they are often produced to challenging deadlines which makes this impractical. However, we will discuss with the IASC how we may be able to do this once they are published.

## Summary

| Recommendation   | HO Response    |
|--|----------------|
| <p>1. <i>The Home Office should clarify the guidelines it is currently working to when processing information for the purpose of Country Policy Information Notices, or in responses to Country of Origin Information requests, including its definition of any specific terms, for example ‘publicly available’.</i></p>  | <p>Accept.</p> |
| <p>2. <i>The Home Office should ensure that where an IAGCI review raises issues that fall outside CPIT’s remit the relevant business areas are made aware and respond.</i></p> <p><i>In this instance, the Home Office should confirm that the area responsible for ensuring the safety of vulnerable asylum seekers is aware of the reviewer’s comments in relation to the risks to LGBT Afghan asylum seekers living in mixed refugee communities.</i></p> | <p>Accept.</p> |
| <p>3. <i>The Home Office should ensure that responses to points and recommendations made in IAGCI reviews are complete, and explicit regarding what action(s) CPIT and others will take and by when.</i></p>   | <p>Accept.</p> |
| <p>4. <i>The Home Office should share COIRs and CPINs that refer to trafficking and modern slavery with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC) in draft to ensure that Country Guidance reflects the IASC’s knowledge and expectations.</i></p>  | <p>Accept.</p> |