

COUNTRY INFORMATION (CI)

information used in RSD to assess need of international protection, which supports evaluation of human rights, security, political situation, legal framework, humanitarian and economic situation, societal attitudes, cultural norms, events and incidents and geography in the country of origin or transit.

Is information, piece of evidence.

Is not guidance for decision making,

Is not risk assessment itself.

Limits of CI

if CI is too general.

if CI is silent.

if CI is inconclusive.

CI always leaves room for interpretation.

Functions of CI:

- Preparation for interview
- Evidence Assessment: Verification of facts of the case, Credibility Assessment, Risk Assessment
- Basis of guidance: Group Risk Assessment

Burden of Proof

Standard of Proof

CI Quality Standards

1. Relevance
2. Reliability and Balance
3. Accuracy and Currency (Up/to/Date)
4. Transparency and Retrievability

CI Procedural Standards

1. Equality of Arms
2. Neutrality and Impartiality
3. Publicity
4. Protection of Personal Data

EUROPEAN UNION / COMMUNITY LAW

Recast EU Asylum Qualification Directive

Chapter II ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

Article 4 Assessment of facts and circumstances

1. Member States may consider it the **duty of the applicant to submit** as soon as possible all the **elements needed to substantiate the application** for international protection. In cooperation with the applicant, it is the **duty of the Member State to assess** the relevant elements of the application.
2. The elements referred to in paragraph 1 consist of the applicant's statements and all the documentation at the applicant's disposal regarding the applicant's age, background, including that of relevant relatives, identity, nationality(ies), country(ies) and place(s) of previous residence, previous asylum applications, travel routes, travel documents and the reasons for applying for international protection.
3. The assessment of an application for international protection is to be carried out on an **individual basis** and includes taking into account:
 - (a) all **relevant facts as they relate to the country of origin at the time of taking a decision** on the application, including **laws and regulations** of the country of origin and the **manner in which they are applied**;
 - (b) the **relevant statements** and documentation presented by the applicant **including information on whether the applicant has been or may be subject to persecution or serious harm**;
 - (c) the **individual position and personal circumstances** of the applicant, including factors such as background, gender and age, **so as to assess whether, on the basis of the applicant's personal circumstances, the acts to which the applicant has been or could be exposed would amount to persecution or serious harm**;
 - (d) whether the applicant's activities since leaving the country of origin were engaged in for the sole or main purpose of creating the necessary conditions for applying for international protection, so as to assess whether those activities would expose the applicant to persecution or serious harm if returned to that country;
 - (e) whether the applicant could reasonably be expected to avail himself or herself of the protection of another country where he or she could assert citizenship.
4. **The fact that an applicant has already been subject to persecution or serious harm, or to direct threats of such persecution or such harm, is a serious indication of the applicant's well-founded fear of persecution or real risk of suffering serious harm, unless there are good reasons to consider that such persecution or serious harm will not be repeated.**
5. Where Member States apply the principle according to which it is the duty of the applicant to substantiate the application for international protection and where aspects of the applicant's statements are not supported by documentary or other evidence, **those aspects shall not need confirmation when the following conditions are met**:
 - (a) the applicant has made a **genuine effort to substantiate** his application;
 - (b) all **relevant elements at the applicant's disposal have been submitted, and a satisfactory explanation has been given regarding any lack** of other relevant elements;
 - (c) the applicant's **statements are found to be coherent and plausible and do not run counter to available specific and general information relevant** to the applicant's case;
 - (d) the applicant has applied for international protection at the earliest possible time, unless the applicant can demonstrate good reason for not having done so; and
 - (e) the **general credibility** of the applicant has been established.

EU Asylum Procedures Directive 2005

Article 8 Requirements for the examination of applications

1. Without prejudice to Article 23(4)(i), Member States shall ensure that applications for asylum are neither rejected nor excluded from examination on the sole ground that they have not been made as soon as possible.

2. Member States shall ensure that decisions by the determining authority on applications for asylum are taken after an appropriate examination. To that end, Member States shall ensure that:

(a) applications are examined and decisions are taken **individually, objectively and impartially**;

(b) **precise and up-to-date information is obtained from various sources**, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as to the general situation prevailing in the countries of origin of applicants for asylum and, where necessary, in countries through which they have transited, and that such information is made available to the personnel responsible for examining applications and taking decisions;

(c) the personnel examining applications and taking decisions have the **knowledge with respect to relevant standards applicable** in the field of asylum and refugee law.

3. The authorities referred to in Chapter V shall, through the determining authority or the applicant or otherwise, **have access to the general information referred to in paragraph 2(b), necessary for the fulfilment of their task**.

4. Member States may provide for **rules concerning the translation** of documents relevant for the examination of applications.

EU Regulation establishing a European Asylum Support Office 2010

Article 4 - Information on countries of origin

The Support Office shall organise, promote and coordinate activities relating to information on countries of origin, in particular:

(a) the gathering of relevant, reliable, accurate and up-to date information on countries of origin of persons applying for international protection in a transparent and impartial manner, making use of all relevant sources of information, including information gathered from governmental, non-governmental and international organisations and the institutions and bodies of the Union;

(b) the drafting of reports on countries of origin, on the basis of information gathered in accordance with point (a);

(c) the management and further development of a portal for gathering information on countries of origin and its maintenance with a view to ensuring transparency in accordance with the necessary rules for access to such information under Article 42;

(d) the development of a common format and a common methodology for presenting, verifying and using information on countries of origin;

(e) the analysis of information on countries of origin in a transparent manner with a view to fostering convergence of assessment criteria, and, where appropriate, making use of the results of meetings of one or more working parties. That analysis shall not purport to give instructions to Member States about the grant or refusal of applications for international protection.