SUPPORT IS OUR MISSION

EASO
Country of Origin
Information report
methodology

July 2012

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Cataloguing data can be found at the end of this publication.

Printed in Luxembourg

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Introduction

The Hague programme of the European Council (2004) called for the establishment of appropriate structures so as to enhance practical cooperation between Member States. Since then there has been a lot of progress in the field of Country of Origin Information (COI), like the 'Common EU guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)' and the 'EU common guidelines on (joint) fact finding missions'. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) was established so as to further enhance and streamline practical asylum cooperation between the Member States' asylum authorities.

A common approach to COI is an important aspect of the practical cooperation activities of EASO, with the ultimate aim of increasing convergence and ensuring ongoing quality of Member States' decision-making procedures

EASO is going to research, write and publish its own COI reports (the EASO COI report). Experts of European COI units will be involved in the production of COI reports on countries and topics defined by EASO. However, the adoption and publication of COI reports are the sole responsibility of the EASO Executive Director, as enshrined in the EASO regulation (Article 31(6)(d)).

At the Task Force meeting in Malta in October 2011 a working party (WP) was mandated to draft a methodology on the EASO COI report, including standards and handbook. The EASO COI report methodology has been developed by this working party with the participation of EASO and the representatives of Country of Origin Information units working for the following immigration authorities:

Staatendokumentation, Bundesasylamt — Austria (Chair)

Dokumentations- og Projektkontoret, Udlændingestyrelsen — Denmark

Lifos, Migrationsverket — Sweden

COI Service, UK Border Agency, Home Office — United Kingdom

The outcome of the working party has been discussed by a Reference Group chaired by the Heads of the COI units of France and Finland and composed of representatives from various Member States, UNHCR and the Commission.

Editing was completed by COI Service, UK Border Agency, Home Office — United Kingdom

Project leader:

Staatendokumentation, Bundesasylamt
Landstrasser Hauptstrasse 171
1030 Vienna
AUSTRIA

The EASO COI report methodology is based on the 'Common EU guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)' as well as on the 'EU common guidelines for (joint) fact finding missions'.

The methodology is split into five sections: Standards, Initiation, Research, Report, and Finalisation and follow-up. In addition, it includes two nnnexes: Glossary and EASO COI report template.

This methodology is a public document and was developed for the purpose of EASO COI reports. However, all Member States are encouraged to use this methodology for their own COI reports. In the process of drafting EASO COI reports the use of this methodology is binding.

Part I: Standards

Basic standards (^{1})

Definition: The EASO COI report is a COI document which, based on the needs of the Member States, by analysing and citing existing, publicly available and reliable information to the standards specified below, discusses relevant and specified topics for asylum claims of a certain country or region of origin. Additionally, based on this fact collection, the report can draw conclusions as the final part of and in summary of the analysis, when the information gathered allows to do so.

The compilation of an EASO COI report within the framework of a standardised process is meant to guarantee both overall quality and acceptance by the target audience, composed of case workers, COI researchers, policy-makers and decision-making authorities.

There are several standards to obey.

1. Neutrality and objectivity

The EASO COI report is based on factual information and existing sources. Both have to be used in a neutral and objective manner while ensuring a well-balanced range of sources.

The language used should mirror this guiding principle.

2. Usability

The EASO COI report should address a topic relevant to the target audience. The language of the report should be guided by the target audience. The same applies to the structure of the report, which should be logical and clearly arranged, consistent with the EASO COI report methodology. The language should be exact, conclusions unambiguous. The report is meant to facilitate and support the decision-making process and assist in harmonising practices in the EU. At the same time, the EASO COI report is not meant to dictate particular decisions although the conclusions may guide decisions.

3. Validity

Reliable sources should be used where they are available. The validity of information should be cross-checked and guaranteed as far as possible. At the same time, information has to be checked to ensure that it is relevant and up to date.

If existing COI reports are used, the primary source is to be used where possible.

4. Transparency and publicity

The EASO COI report is to be published by EASO. It is open source, available online and in hardcopy.

Adequate and visible terms of reference (ToR) and a disclaimer have to be given and sources cited in order to ensure transparency and explain how, why and for whom the report was drafted (sources, citations, motivations, methodology, etc.).

5. Quality control

As the EASO COI report should be guided by these standards, a quality control mechanism is required. This mechanism should encourage the authors to stick to the agreed standards and improve the overall quality of the report, especially in content, conclusions and language. Peer review is best practice and will be done by national and/or external experts.

(^{1}) For the basic standards of COI see also: European Union, 'Common EU guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)', April 2008 (http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48493f7f2.html), accessed 30 January 2012.

Part II: Handbook

Initiation

EASO will set up and further develop a standardised country and content determination procedure, which by including quantitative and qualitative data (statistical, legal and COI) should enable EASO to specify the needs amongst the Member States for COI reports. This procedure needs to be created under the parameters of feasibility and effectiveness and reflect the needs of the defined target audience (case workers, COI researchers, policy-makers, and decision-making authorities).

EASO will define the country and topics of the report and select an expert for drafting the report. The expert selected by EASO will have to have a proven solid experience on COI in general and excellent knowledge of the respective country of origin, including experience in research and drafting of reports with regard to the respective country of origin.

1. Introductory remarks

1.1. Language

The EASO COI report should be written in English and bear in mind that most readers are not native speakers.

1.2. Terms of reference (ToR) and report frame

The ToR are the frame and the backbone of the report. They contain the general topics as well as subtopics that should be addressed in the report. The report should be consistent with the key elements of the ToR.

The preliminary list of topics identified by EASO might be expanded or reduced (depending on the extent of COI material available) by the author, by consulting national COI experts. After this consultation it is possible that new ideas for topics to be included in the ToR may arise. When considering these suggestions, the author must determine whether the topics are already adequately addressed in existing source material or to include them in the ToR (see Research).

If need arises, topics or sub-topics which are explicitly excluded from the scope of the TOR should be noted in the ToR (see the example in the annex - Easo COI report template).

The final ToR are to be approved by EASO.

1.3. Time frame

The time frame is decided by EASO and should take into consideration the scope of the ToR and allow time for peer review and editing.

1.4. Quality control: the peer review group (see *Finalisation and follow-up*, section 1)

National and/or external experts are to be chosen in advance of the compilation of the report to do the peer review. As the review is included in the general time frame, reviewers should be given a specific deadline reflecting this.

Possible external reviewers include NGOs, academics, international bodies, etc. with a proven knowledge on the specific topics of the report. Peers are to be chosen by EASO.

The peer review of the report will take into consideration the report's compliance with the EASO COI report standards, and so these should be known by reviewers.

Additionally, someone with knowledge of English to the standard of a native speaker should carry out proofreading in order to guarantee the best possible quality of language, keeping in mind that the text is addressed primarily to non-native speakers.

Research

Research should be carried out in accordance with the ToR. In order to maintain a high level of transparency, it is crucial that any deviation from the ToR will only occur extraordinarily and the reason to do so should be clearly stated in the report (see *Initiation*, section 1.2).

However, if a need for additional information should arise during the research due to new developments in the country/region or for other reasons, and it is considered crucial for the main themes of the report and feasible to deal with within the given time frame, this information may be included in the report. The reason for adding the information should be carefully explained in the introduction to the report.

After the ToR has been finally decided and the author has started the research, none of the issues included in the ToR can be omitted. If no public information is available on certain topics of the ToR, it should be clearly pointed out in the report, and main sources

consulted in an attempt to collect the information should also be mentioned.

1. Sources research, selection and validation

1.1. Definition of 'source'

In the context of processing COI, the meaning of the term 'source' can vary depending on the circumstances of its use: it may be used to describe the person or institution providing information or it may be used to describe the information product produced, either by that person or institution, or by others.

For the purpose of these guidelines, the various definitions of 'source' are as follows.

- A source is a person or institution producing information.

- A primary source is a person or institution closely or directly related to (i.e. having first-hand information of) an event, fact or matter.

- An original source is the person or institution who documents the event, fact or matter for the first time. The original source can also be the primary source.

- A secondary source is the person or institution who/ which reproduces the information documented by the original source.

- Sources of information are, for example: reports, written press, TV programmes, radio, journals, books, position papers, published statistics, maps, blogs, networking sites.

1.2. General principles

■ *Selecting sources*

Any source may provide information that can be relevant to the asylum determination process. This means that no source should be excluded without further consideration.

Sources that are found to provide inaccurate or unreliable information on one subject may provide valuable information on another.

■ *Searching for original/primary sources*

Where possible, the author of the report should refer to, quote from and reference the primary source.

Although it is not always possible to go back to the primary source, every effort should be made to find the original source that documented the event, fact or matter for the first time. This will help to avoid round tripping (see glossary), false corroboration and misquoting of information.

Where need arises, and where possible, additional primary sources should be taken into consideration (academics, NGOs, etc.). This may include obtaining information from primary sources orally, for example by telephone interview.

It should be borne in mind that primary sources may inadvertently or intentionally provide false information, for instance due to language/translation problems or to political opinions. Therefore, even original/primary sources must be validated.

■ *Searching for multiple sources*

The author of the report should always try to find more than one source and different kinds of sources (e.g. governmental, media, international organisations, NGOs) for each issue, preferably the original/primary sources in each case.

It is important to search for as wide a range of sources as possible which reflect differing opinions about the issue or event, as this will help to ensure a balanced picture is obtained and presented in the report. Finding more than one source will give added weight to the information provided, particularly if it is of a sensitive or controversial nature, by showing that the opinion it is not restricted to one — possibly biased — source.

■ *Anonymous sources*

As a general rule, sources of information used in the report should be named. However, there may be situations where this is not possible, for instance where a primary source has been contacted directly by the author and their personal security may be put at risk by publication of their details. In such cases it may be possible to cite the organisation the person represents. If a source is to be referred to anonymously this can be done in various ways (a professor, an academic, an activist of civil society, etc.). Alternatively, they could be listed as 'a source who did not wish to be named'. The source should be consulted and approve how they wish to be referred to and what information can be revealed about them and/or the organisation they represent.

As COI units of Member States follow research best practice as set out in the 'Common EU guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)' and the 'EU common guidelines on (joint) fact finding missions', reports of those units can be used as original sources where the primary source is anonymous.

It is important to keep a detailed record of all sources and information gathered, particularly when using anonymous sources. This should guarantee robust and transparent COI and will ensure that if the information and analysis contained in the report is challenged, EASO can demonstrate the accuracy and integrity of the research process and the information obtained.

■ *Validation of sources*

Validation of a source is the process of evaluation of a source by thoroughly and critically assessing it through the quality criteria set out below.

Validation of sources includes:

— assessing the context in which the source operates and the extent to which the source is influenced by its context; and

— assessing the neutrality and reliability of the source.

Sources should be carefully examined, taking into account the following points.

• **Who** is providing the information? Is this clear or is the source anonymous? What is their reputation? Does the source have specific knowledge that makes them an 'expert' on the issue at hand? Does the source have a known bias?

• **What** information is provided? What is the real content/substance of the information produced? Is it delivered independently of the motivation of the source?

• **Why** are they providing this information? What is the agenda of the source? Does the source have a specific interest?

• **How** is the information presented? How is it formulated? Is it clear what research methods are used? How is the information gathered by the source? Is the material presented in an objective and transparent way?

• **When** was the information gathered and when was it provided?

■ *Hierarchy of sources*

It is not possible to establish a hierarchy of sources, as it is not possible to state that individual sources will always be more reliable or useful than others. Some sources (e.g. international organisations and NGOs) may be more valuable for information on the general human rights situation, whereas other sources (e.g. national or local news agencies or experts) may be more valuable for information on particular events.

1.3. Specific issues

■ *If information is found from only a single source*

If information from only one source can be found, the context of that source should be assessed, such as:

• whether the country and/or the subject is widely reported on or not;

• whether the country has an active and free press;

• whether censorship or self-censorship takes place;

• whether there is any independent reporting on the country by established monitors.

The fact that only one source could be found should be stated and the context should be explained.

If possible, the sources consulted should be mentioned and briefly described, especially if the sole source that provided the information is not well-known (see *Report, Section 2.6*).

■ *If information from a 'dubious' source is found*

It may occur that after consideration of who, what, why, when and how (see *Research, subsection 1.2.5*), a source has been assessed as being 'dubious'. 'Dubious' means the source could not be assessed as being reliable.

If this is the only source found and if the information is important or particularly relevant, the information may be presented in the report. However, it should be stated that after following the validation process the source was found to be dubious and for which reasons.

■ *Information found using 'social media'*

Social media is a term used to refer to 'online technologies and practices that are used to share opinions and information, promote discussion and build relationships' ([1]). Examples of social media include networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn, microblogging sites such as Twitter, 'traditional' blogging sites such as Wordpress or Blogger, and other media tools like YouTube. Some organisations or individuals also write blogs on their own website which in turn invite discussion from online readers/users.

Although relatively new, social media is increasingly being used as a platform to report on events and situations in countries of origin. It allows a growing

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([1]) UK Government Central Office for Information, 'Engaging through social media — A guide for civil servants', p. 2, March 2009 (http://coi.gov.uk/documents/Engaging_through_social_media.pdf), accessed 27 January 2012.

number of people to quickly and easily document events and to communicate this information around the world instantly. However, it should be borne in mind that due to its nature, social media is often unregulated and less likely to have had any editorial control than 'conventional' media sources, and particular care must be taken to ensure that, like all sources, any social media used in research is validated on a source-by-source basis following the quality criteria described above. Upon finding potentially useful information on a social media platform, the researcher should bear in mind the same questions that they would ask of any source (see *Research, subsection 1.2.5*). A particular difficulty with social media may be identifying the author, e.g. people using nicknames, or those falsely using the identity of somebody else (particularly a well-known person).

It is important to corroborate information obtained from social media sources in the same way that other sources would be corroborated (see *Research, subsection 2.1.2*). If social media is the only source that can be found on a particular subject, particular care should be taken before deciding to use information provided by these sources (see *Research, subsection 1.3.1*).

2. Information: selection and validation

2.1. General principles

■ *Quality criteria for evaluating and validating information*

Several criteria are important to ensure the research as well as the information presented in the report are of a high quality.

The first consideration must be the relevance of the information. If information is not relevant to the subject it should be excluded.

Reliability, currency, objectivity, accuracy, traceability and transparency are all important criteria. However, it is not possible to order these criteria into a hierarchy. Their degree of importance depends on the subject of the questions being answered. If some of these criteria are not met this does not mean that the information cannot be used. For instance, the objectivity of the information is generally considered to be very important. However, in certain cases subjective or partial information may be used if other quality criteria are fulfilled, but it would be necessary to indicate this bias.

- Relevance: connected to the fact, event or matter in question.

- Reliability: trustworthy to the matter, fact or event in question.

- Currency: up-to-date or the most recent information available and where the events in question have not changed since the release of the information.

- Objectivity: not influenced by emotions, personal prejudices, interests or biases.

- Accuracy: conformity of a statement, or opinion, or information to the factual reality or truth.

- Traceability: the degree to which the primary and/ or original source of a piece of information can be identified.

- Transparency: the information is clear, unequivocal and intelligible.

■ *Corroboration of information*

All information should be corroborated with information from other sources whenever possible unless it is an undisputed/obvious fact (e.g. London is the capital of England, Saddam Hussein was President of Iraq). It should be explicitly mentioned when corroborating has not been possible (e.g. 'No corroborating information could be found from the sources consulted').

Wherever possible the information provided by one source should be corroborated with information from another source (double-checked) and additional sources as appropriate (multi-checked).

Corroboration should be done with different kinds of sources, for example compared against governmental, media and NGO sources (see *Research, subsection 1.2.3*). This is even more important when the information found does not fulfil some of the abovementioned quality criteria.

When corroborating, care should be taken to avoid the danger of round tripping of information. A risk of round tripping is that information may not be as current as it appears to be.

■ *Balancing the information*

As indicated above (see *Research, subsections 1.2.3 and 2.1.2*), every effort should be made to use a varied range of sources to ensure that balanced information is presented in the report. EASO reports include official information on the relevant topics from the authorities of the relevant country of origin. However, they do not have to share their point of view.

2.2. Specific issues

■ *If contradictory information is found*

If relevant but contradictory information is found on a certain subject, a search into the background and context of the sources should be made and the contradictions should be presented together in the report (see *Report, sections 2.5 and 2.6*). The sources of such information should be carefully validated and the quality and reliability of the information assessed.

■ *If no information can be found*

If no information is found (e.g. as to the question of whether a certain event took place) this does not necessarily mean that an event/person/issue did/does not occur/exist. The lack of information should be stated. A reference should be made to the bibliography and the main sources consulted. If many sources were consulted and no information was found, this will assist in interpreting the weight to attach to the lack of information.

That there is a lack of information also needs to be considered in the context of the country or issue of interest, and this should be acknowledged in the report.

Report

1. Format

EASO COI reports should be consistent with other publications produced by EASO as far as the format is concerned and maintain a consistent corporate identity (see the template in the annex).

1.1. References, quotations and annotations (see examples in the annex)

As a minimum requirement, every piece of information must be referenced by one source, preferably the primary source. It is not necessary to mention all sources that have been consulted to cross-check a specific piece of information. It is sufficient to mention in the disclaimer that all information has been cross-checked with at least one other source unless it concerns an undisputed fact (see *Research, subsection 2.1.2*).

References to sources should be given as footnotes. It is recommended that references appear on the same page as the text they refer to. In this way, whenever some pages of a report are photocopied, the sources of the information are always identifiable.

All sources referred to in the report should be fully referenced in the bibliography. References should be presented in a standardised way. As a full bibliography is made, references in the footnotes should be written as:

Paper based sources: author's surname and initial(s) or first name, title of the work in italic, publisher, place of publication, year of publication; relevant page(e.g.: Kirk, J. W. C., 'The Yibirs and Midgans of Somaliland — Their traditions and dialects', *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 4, No 13 (1904), Oxford, 1904, pp. 91–108.)
Electronic sources: Author (person or newspaper or organisation etc.), weblink, date of access

This will make the report more readable.

Quotations of five lines or less should be written directly in the text within quotation marks (' ,see the *Interinstitutional style guide* http://publications. europa.eu/code/en/en-250504.htm), whereas longer quotations should be marked by an indentation, smaller font and less line spacing. If irrelevant details within a quotation are left out, it should be clearly marked (,see the *Interinstitutional style guide* http://publications. europa.eu/code/en/en-251000.htm). Author's own comments within a quotation must be clearly marked by square brackets [*author's comment: …*].

The reference to the publication from which the quotation has been taken should include the page or paragraph number.

1.2. Use of language

The language used in the report should be guided by the target audience. The language should be exact, conclusions unambiguous. Terminology, spelling and transcription standards used in the report should be indicated and explained (see *Report, section 2.4*).

2. Structure

The EASO COI report should be laid out in a manner which is consistent with the key elements of the ToR and in a way which makes the information easily accessible and readable for the target audience. The report should be presented in a logical, well-structured and intelligible way, and should include a comprehensive list of content including titles and subtitles of paragraphs which will assist in guiding the reader through the report. Considering that the target audience would want to select a particular issue, the structure of the report should be thematic and in accordance with the ToR, so that the target audience does not have to read or look through the entire report. The content of the paragraphs and chapters should be reflected in the given titles and subtitles, and the individual paragraphs should be framed in a consistent and clear manner that will contain concluded themes.

2.1. Disclaimer

The Disclaimer should state the following:

'This report was written according to the "Common EU guidelines for processing factual COI" (2008) and the "EASO COI report methodology" (2012). It was therefore composed on the basis of carefully selected, public sources of information. All sources used are referenced. All information presented, except for undisputed/ obvious facts, has been cross-checked, unless stated otherwise.

The information provided has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited time frame. However, this document does not pretend to be exhaustive. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

This document is not conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position. The information and views set out in this report do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of EASO. Neither EASO nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged. The target audience are case workers, COI researchers, policy-makers and decision-making authorities.

The report was finished in Malta on XXX/XXX. Any other event taking place after this date is not included in this report.'

2.2. Terms of reference (ToR)

Once the ToR have been created they constitute the frame and the backbone of the report (see *Initiation, section 1.2*). The full list of ToR should be part of the report.

2.3. Executive summary

The report should include an executive summary presenting the key aspects of the research, how it was undertaken and the main conclusions of the analysis.

2.4. Introduction

The introduction shall clearly state that the report is adopted by EASO according to its mandate, and name the organisations participating to the peer review process. The person drafting the report, being under the exclusive responsibility of EASO, shall not be named. The introduction further states the purpose of the report and when the research to produce the report was undertaken.

The main topics dealt with in the report should be introduced and the focus of the analysis of the report should be explained.

In order to maintain a high level of transparency, the introduction should explain in detail the methodology used in the specific report and reference the EASO COI report methodology. If the ToR for the report were expanded or specified, the introduction has to include an explanation for this. It could also be relevant to explain why certain subjects have not been included within the ToR (see the example in the annex). Furthermore, the methodology should include an introduction to the main sources consulted (written and oral), how these sources were selected and how they were dealt with, i.e. oral sources' review of written notes etc.

If major new developments took place in the country/ region after the information for the report was collected, it should be mentioned in the introduction and the possible impact of the events on the analysis of the report should be considered.

Terminology used in the report should be explained; especially if different sources use different terminology for the same groups/persons etc. (see *Report, section 1.2*).

The editorial team and the peer review team should be mentioned.

2.5. Presentation of collected information

This is the central and thematic part of the report which forms the basis of the subsequent analysis. The information collected about the issues outlined in the ToR should be summarised and presented in a systematic and well-arranged way.

The summary must be a short and concise statement of all major, significant points of a subject (see the glossary). Any sources used to produce the summary must be referenced. The author may quote key statements from a particular source but should avoid replication of large parts. Contradictory information should be identified and pointed out clearly in the summary.

The information collected should be presented objectively and there should not be any analysis or conclusions in this part. The language should be neutral and objective. Legal terminology should be avoided where possible (see *Report, section 1.2*).

2.6. Analysis

The author should analyse the information collected and summarised in the report. The analysis must be a neutral evaluation or study of this information, usually made by breaking a subject down into its constituent parts and then describing the parts and their interrelationships.

Any information used in the analysis should be contained in the information section of the report.

The aim is to help the target audience to process the information in a relevant and objective way and put it into a context that helps them to draw informed conclusions relevant to their tasks.

The collected information should be analysed by explicitly validating the sources as well as the information (see *Research Parts 1 and 2*). Sources well known to the audience do not need any further presentation (e.g. HRW, AI), but sources which may not be well known, such as academic experts or local organisations, should be presented by referring to their proven expertise, purpose of work and their funding (see *Research, subsection 1.2.5*). Not so well known sources should be validated within the text. Contradictory information should be discussed.

The author should use his/her expertise to produce the analysis; however all information used, other than undisputed facts, should be referenced.

The analysis should not speculate but should look at the impact events or situations may have on a given situation (e.g.: A new drought in south/central Somalia will lead to increased vulnerability of IDPs as resources are limited even now).

The analysis should not include any recommendations on how to interpret or process the analysed information in a legal way. To ensure this, the language used should be neutral and objective and should not include legal terminology (concerning the decision-making process, not e.g. laws and regulations of country and/or topics under investigation).

The conclusion is the final step of the analysis. The report should present conclusions based on analysis of the collected information. Conclusions should take into account all relevant parameters, as well as their mutual interdependence and their individual importance in comparison with the whole. The author should avoid over-generalising when drawing conclusions.

It should be pointed out clearly which conclusions are drawn by the author.

2.7. Sources/literature
(see the template in the annex)

It is good practice to list within the bibliography not only the sources used but also further reading and the main sources consulted during the research. Therefore, the bibliography should be divided into sources used and further reading/sources consulted. The sources used are to be categorised into electronic sources, paper-based sources and oral sources. If no information on a particular subject was found, the main sources consulted should also be mentioned in the 'further reading/sources consulted' section.

The references should be put in alphabetical order in each category.

Electronic sources
The bibliography should give information of the author/organisation, title/heading (if relevant) newspaper, date, URL and date when the site was accessed (see *Report, section 1.1*).

Paper-based sources
The bibliography should, for books, give information of the author/organisation, title, edition, publisher, place of publication and the year of publication ('undated' if there is no date of publication). For newspapers and magazines, it should give information on the author, newspaper/magazine, title, volume, number, year of publication and page(s).

Oral sources and correspondence
E-mails, telephone conversations, interviews and lectures are categorised as oral sources. The reference should give information of the name, title, organisation, form of contact and date.

2.8. Glossary and abbreviations (optional)

If a glossary is created, existing glossaries of the EU, ECS and EASO (e.g. EU COI guidelines, ECS FFM guidelines, EASO COI report methodology) should be used. The glossary should be added as an annex to the report.

If needed, a list of abbreviations should be made as an annex to the report.

Finalisation and follow-up

1. Peer review (see *Initiation, section 1.4*)

When the report is sent to the peers chosen in advance, a clear deadline should be given. The quality control system should not be at the expense of currency. The review has to be carefully undertaken concerning:

- content;

- structure;

- currency;

- balance;

- completeness;

- neutrality;

- sources and citation: the peers should take a sample of citations and references and check accuracy and usability;

- proofreading: a peer with knowledge of English to the standard of a native speaker should be responsible for proofreading;

- acronyms and glossary words;

- compliance with the EASO COI report methodology.

Comments and corrections should be followed by the author. If there are discrepancies between the views of author and peer(s), these should be clarified directly. In exceptional cases where there is no agreement, this should be clearly mentioned in the report, either by footnote or within the text.

It should be added that approval by peers of national authorities will not imply approval of conclusions drawn in an EASO COI report by those national authorities.

2. Publication

EASO will be responsible for publication and distribution. This should be carried out as soon as possible.

Translation of the report can be considered official only if carried out directly by EASO or approved by the agency; any other translation shall not be deemed as carrying any endorsement by EASO.

3. Evaluation

Evaluation should be done by the national COI experts who have contributed to the initiation process (survey forms). They have to consider the usability of the report. This feedback has to be taken into consideration when initiating a new EASO COI report.

4. Updating special topics

If large parts of the report refer to fast-changing topics (e.g. the security situation), EASO should consider publishing updates on the report within a suitable period of time.

ANNEX

1. Glossary

This glossary is mainly based on:

(a) **(EUCG)** European Union, 'Common EU guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)', ARGO project JLS/2005/ARGO/GC/03, April 2008 (http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48493f7f2.html), accessed 2 February 2012;

(b) **(ECS FFM)** European Union, 'EU common guidelines on (joint) fact finding missions: a practical tool to assist Member States in organizing (joint) fact finding missions', November 2010 (http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d0246f79.html), accessed 2 February 2012

(c) **(EMN)** European Union: European Migration Network, 'Asylum and migration glossary 2.0: a tool for better comparability', January 2012, doi:10.2837/74769 (http://emn.intrasoft-intl.com/Glossary/index.do), accessed 30 March 2012

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Accuracy (EUCG)	The degree of conformity of a statement, or opinion, or information to the factual reality or truth. Example: *'The lawyer questioned the truth of my factual account'*.	Veracity Sureness Verity Certainty Correctness *Antonym:* Inaccuracy Falsehood Untruth	
Analysis (agreed by EASO working party)	A critical evaluation or study of the information collected, usually made by breaking a subject down into its constituent parts and then describing the parts and their interrelationships. The analysis ends with one or more conclusions.	Statement Finding Judgement Opinion based on reflection *Antonym:* Synthesis	Description Report on facts Evaluation Assessment Investigation Summary Synthesis
Appropriate (EUCG)	Quality criteria meaning that the information/source fits the fact, event or situation concerned or examined.	Suitable Adapted Pertinent Fitting Adequate Proper *Antonym:* Improper Inappropriate Unfitting Unsuitable Inadequate Unadapted	

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Asylum — application for (EMN)	The application made by a third-country national or a stateless person which can be understood as a request for international protection from a Member State, under the Geneva Convention. Any application for international protection is presumed to be an application for asylum unless a third-country national or a stateless person explicitly requests another kind of protection that can be applied for separately.	International protection Refugee status determination	
Balance (EUCG)	To take all relevant parameters into consideration in a proportional way. Example: *'He balanced the pros and the cons before making a choice'.*	Counterbalance Equity Proportion *Antonym:* Imbalance	
Case worker (EUCG)	Public servant processing individual asylum claims		
Country of Origin Information — COI (EMN)	Information used by the Member States authorities to analyse the socio-political situation in countries of origin of applicants for international protection (and, where necessary, in countries through which they have transited) in the assessment, carried out on an individual basis, of an application for international protection. All relevant facts as they relate to the country of origin at the time of taking a decision on the application are used. The relevant facts are obtained from various sources, including the laws and regulations of the country of origin and the manner in which they are applied. The information used by the Member States' authorities is made available to the personnel responsible for examining applications and taking decisions. The sources of the information used include inter alia laws and regulations of the country of origin, plus general public sources, such as reports from (inter) national organisations, governmental and non-governmental organisations, media, bilateral contacts in countries of origin, embassy reports, etc.		
COI researcher (ECS FFM)	A person who undertakes diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into COI-related matters in order to discover facts and knowledge.	Country expert Country advisor Country analyst	
COI unit (ECS FFM)	Specific department from the asylum authorities or an independent department responsible for collecting and providing COI for asylum-related matters.	COI department Country division	

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Conclusion (agreed by EASO Working Party)	Conclusions are the final step, based on and part of the analysis. They should take into account all relevant parameters, as well as their mutual interdependence and their individual importance in comparison with the whole.		
Corroboration (EUCG)	The act of supporting or strengthening the accuracy, certainty, validity or veracity of information describing facts, events or situations, with other information (or other evidence). *Remark: False corroboration — certain information may be found in a number of sources, but after careful examination of each of the sources it may become apparent that all the sources obtained the information from the same, single source.*	Confirmation Substantiation Authentication Validation, Verification	Cross-checking
Cross-checking (EUCG)	The process through which the quality of the information obtained is submitted to scrutiny by testing whether (one) different and unrelated source(s) confirms that information.	Verification Double-check Triple-check *Antonym:* Compilation	Cross-reference
Currency (EUCG)	The state of being up to date or belonging to the present time and therefore still being valuable with respect to the moment the original statement was issued.	Present day Up to date Current *Antonym:* (Out)dated Old Past	
Decision-making authorities (agreed by EASO working party)	Any judicial, quasi-judicial or administrative body in a Member State, responsible for examining applications for asylum and competent to take decisions on such cases in any instance.	Decision-making function Decision-maker Decision-taker Judge	
Disclaimer (EUCG)	A written statement appended to a document in order to: 1. limit under certain conditions the responsibility for the possible lack of exhaustiveness or for certain (side) effects of the use of the information contained in a document; and/or 2. limit the right of use of that document to a copyright or to a certain circle of clients.	Remark	Introduction Synthesis
Evaluation (EUCG)	A systematic and objective analysis of given fact, event or situation, in order to assert knowingly a judgement or assessment (against given standards).	Finding Judgement Intellectual opinion	Description

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Executive summary (abstract) (EUCG)	A brief and concise summary of the main points of an argument, a text or a report. *Remark: Reading the abstract can help you decide if you want to locate and read*	Compendium Apercu Digest Recapitulation Outline Résumé Synopsis Brief account	Introduction Prologue
Expert (EUCG)	A person with proven and reputed special or superior skill in or competent knowledge in a particular area or subject; knowledge as the result of experience or training. An expert acts as a specialist independently from his official function. He produces expertise. Whether an expert is paid or not for providing information does not matter as such. *Remark: Somebody can be an expert, but not an informant or an informer.* *Examples:* *The lawyer providing information on the legal system is an expert.* *The human rights lawyer or journalist providing information on the violation of human rights in prisons is an expert.*	Specialist Adviser Intellectual authority (e.g. academic) Consultant Think tanks Universities *Antonym:* Amateur Neophyte Apprentice Novice	Informant Informer Official agent Official expert
Expert/author (agreed by EASO working party)	The expert/author is a COI researcher and an expert on COI in a specific geographical area. The expert/author is selected by EASO.		
Hierarchy of sources (EUCG)	A (fixed) list of sources in which each source has been attributed a certain ranking based on criteria like quality, reliability, etc.	Ranking of sources *Antonym:* Catalogue Inventory	Inventory of sources Bibliography
Independency (EUCG)	The quality of being free from control or influence.	Autonomous Free Unrestrained *Antonym:* Dependency Bound	Neutrality Objectivity
Information (EUCG)	The basic content or data gathered through specific research.		Source Informant Informer Expert
Neutrality (EUCG)	The state of being unrelated to or without any possible stakeholder involvement with the subject matter.	Uninvolved Unimplicated Uninfluenced Impartiality *Antonym:* Partisan Involved	Independence Objectivity

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Objectivity (EUCG)	The state of not being influenced by emotions, personal prejudices or biases.	Detachment Unbiased Without prejudice Equitable Open-minded Fair *Antonym:* Biased Partial Subjectivity	Independence Neutrality
Original source (EUCG)	The quality of a source to be the person or institution documenting the event, fact or matter for the first time.		Primary source
Paper-based source (agreed by EASO working party)	The state of publications or products to be published by means of pressed type in order to offer them in a printed form.	Publication	
Primary source (EUCG)	The quality of a source to be close or directly related to facts, events or situations without any intermediary. *Example: An eyewitness (e.g. live reporter) or direct victims or actors of an event are primary sources.*	First-hand Eyewitness Testimony *Antonym:* Second-hand Secondary source Indirect Intermediate	Persons and/or organisations reporting first on certain events. Organisations like Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch, regardless their vested authority in the field, are not necessarily primary sources. Original source
Public (EUCG)	In general: The state of content, source and/or information product not to be subject, in theory, to limited distribution. In practice, however, it might be possible or it will even be very likely that the public as such has no access to such content, source and/or information product due to it ignoring the mere existence of such content, source and/or information product, or due to practical thresholds (cf. grey literature). *Remark: In some EU Member States 'public' is to be considered a degree of classification, i.e. the lowest degree applicable. In this context, 'public' means 'not restricted to only internal distribution'. In fact some EU Member States hardly ever or even never disclose information products any further than the applicant and his lawyer. In fact the applicant and his lawyer are the outer limits of the distribution chain. Therefore, in these Member States, 'public' does not necessarily correspond with 'open to uncontrolled public disclosure'.*	Open source Unrestricted Disclosable *Antonym:* Classified Restricted Confidential	Public domain

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Relevance (EUCG)	The state of being pertinent to the matter, fact, event or situation at hand.	Pertinence *Antonym:* Irrelevance	
Reliability (EUCG)	The state of being trustworthy to the matter, fact, event or situation at hand.	Credibility Trustworthiness Unquestionable Undoubtable Faithful Truthful Genuine Reputable Undisputable Veracious *Antonym:* Unreliable Doubtful Fake Questionable Faithless Untrustworthy False	Independence Pertinence Appropriate Traceability
Report (agreed by EASO working party)	A written and detailed account or description of the findings on facts, event or situation which may give analysis, statements or conclusions on the result of the investigation.	Survey Description Account Study Analysis	Judgement Opinion Forecast Summary Commentary
Round tripping information (EUCG)	The fact of information being quoted differently in several sources, but which has to be referred in fact to a single original source of information. *Example: Several secondary sources referred to each other as primary sources without referring adequately to their original source of information.*	Duplicated information	Original information Cross-checking Corroboration
Secondary source (EUCG)	The quality of a source that describes or relates to facts, events or situations already passed over, by referring to an intermediary or primary source.	Second-hand Subsidiary *Antonym:* First-hand source Primary source	
Source (EUCG)	A person or institution producing first-hand or second-hand information.		Information
Statement (EUCG)	An oral or written declaration setting forth an appraisal of facts.	Declaration Explanation Presentation Account Appreciation Address Communiqué Opinion Judgement	Summary Analysis

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Summary (EUCG)	A short and concise statement of all major, significant points of a subject or report.	Compendium Abstract Apercu Digest Recapitulation Outline Résumé Synopsis Brief account	Introduction Prologue
Terms of reference (ToR)	ToR contain topics and subtopics of the COI report. ToR are prepared in line with the standardised country and content determination procedure approved by the COI Task Force, after consultation with the COI Reference Group. ToR is binding for the author of the report and any deviation from the ToR should be clearly stated in the report.		
Traceability (EUCG)	The degree in which a piece of information or a statement is presented in such a way that the end-user is capable of: 1. reconstructing the same information or statement based on the constituent parts; and/or 2. identifying the individual sources and their kind (primary, secondary, etc.) of each and every constituent part; and/or 3. evaluating the statement made.	Deducible Derivable Inferable *Antonym:* Ineductive Undecomposable Untraceable	
Transparency (EUCG)	The quality of information to be clear and unequivocal and intelligible.	Clearness Intelligibility Understandability *Antonym:* Distortion Obscurity Opacity Unclearness Equivocal Ambiguous	Accuracy Appropriate Objectivity Readability Relevance Usability
Up to date (EUCG)	The state of being in accord with the latest information available on a subject.	Latest Newest Current Recent Present *Antonym:* Out of date (Out)dated Past	

TERM	DEFINITION	SYNONYM/ ANTONYM	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Usability (agreed by EASO working party)	The state of having a language and structure formulated in a user-friendly way for the target audience, guaranteeing it to be easy to read and understand.	Legibility Understandable Clear Comprehensible *Antonym:* Illegibility Unreadable Obscure	
Validation of source and/or information (EUCG)	The process of evaluation of a source and/ or information by (thoroughly and critically) assessing its cogency through quality criteria.	Assessment of Evaluation of	Description of

2. EASO COI report template

EASO logo

COUNTRY/Topic

TITLE

SUBTITLE

For public use

Month and year

Prepared in accordance with the EASO COI report methodology

Contents

1. Disclaimer

This report was written according to the Common EU-Guidelines for Processing Factual COI (2008) and the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012). It was therefore composed on the basis of carefully selected, public sources of information. All sources used are referenced. All information presented, except for undisputed/obvious facts, has been cross-checked, unless stated otherwise.

The information provided has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited time frame. However, this document does not pretend to be exhaustive. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist.

This document is not conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection or asylum. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position. The information in the report does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

This report is for public use and may be quoted. The target audience are case workers, COI researchers, policy-makers, and decision-making authorities.

The report was finished in Malta on the XXX/XXX. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report.

2. Terms of reference

Full list or summary

Example 1:

(limited to list of subjects from the Danish FFM on S/C Iraq, February 2010, see FFMg)

1. General security situation and presence of insurgent groups and Al-Qaeda

    • South/central Iraq

    • Baghdad and its districts

    • Ninewa, Salah al Din, Diyala, Tameen (Kirkuk), including the disputed areas

    • Risk of indiscriminate violence

    • Names of leaders of insurgent and terrorist groups

2. Security and human rights for ethnic and religious communities

    • Non-Arab ethnic communities: Kurds (incl. Faily Kurds), Turkmen, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Shabaks

    • Arab ethnic communities: Sunni and Shia Arabs, Palestinians

    • Religious communities: Christians, Sabean Mandeans, Yazidis, Jews

Example 2:

(Excluding special topics which could have been anticipated by the audience)

The purpose of the report is to throw light upon the issue of citizenship and the possibility for non-nationals to legally reside in the two states the Sudan and the South Sudan, with some extra attention paid to the issue of citizenship in the area of Abyei. The report will mainly focus on issues concerning citizenship which is relevant for citizens of the Sudan and the South Sudan and which has arisen as a consequence of the split into the two states on 9 July 2011. **Information regarding citizenship in the Sudan and the South Sudan for citizens of other countries will be left out.** The question regarding residence permit will focus on the bilateral relation between the Sudan and the South Sudan.

3. Executive summary

Key aspects and conclusions

4. Introduction

Who, why, when, what and how about the report and amendments

(Author, purpose, period of research, topics, methodology)

5. Presentation of collected information

Topic

Summary

Topic

Summary

Etc.

Example for quotations:

(a) Reference/Footnote

There is hardly any information on the Midgan and their protection mechanism. In early reports, they were generally referred to as hunters who attach themselves to a Somal family for protection ([3]). This traditional form of protection ...

(b) Quotation (less than five lines)

There is hardly any information on the Midgan and their protection mechanism. An early report says: 'It is customary for the Midgan, who live by hunting, to attach themselves to a Somal family for protection, for which they pay by acting as hewers of wood and drawers of water' ([4]). This traditional form of protection …

(c) Quotation (five or more lines)

There is hardly any information on the Midgan and their protection mechanism. An early report says:

> 'It is customary for the Midgan, who live by hunting, to attach themselves to a Somal family for protection, for which they pay by acting as hewers of wood and drawers of water. The Yibirs are much more sophisticated, and prefer, if possible, to live by their wits instead of soiling their hands by honest toil. Somals will not mix, or inter-marry, with either tribe, and look upon them as of inferior caste to themselves.' ([5])

This traditional form of protection …

6. Analysis

([3]) Rayne, H*., Sun, sand and Somals - Leaves from the notebook of a district Commissioner in British Somaliland* Witherby, London, 1921, p.117.
([4]) *Ibidem*
([5]) *Ibidem*

Findings A

Findings B

Conclusions

7. Bibliography

(Concerning new media, see as additional source:

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Further reading/sources consulted (alphabetically)

(8. Abbreviations, Glossary)

Existing glossaries should be consulted, used and referenced