



## **Ad-Hoc Query on assessment of authenticity of documents submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh**

**Requested by SK EMN NCP on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

**Compilation produced in 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

**Responses from Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom plus Norway (21 in Total)**

*Disclaimer: The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.*

### **1. Background Information**

The Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic has recently recorded applications from asylum seekers from Bangladesh. They would like to ask about the practice in other Member States regarding the assessment of authenticity of documentary evidence submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh as they do not have much experience in this field.

#### **Questions:**






1. How do national authorities in your Member State assess authenticity of documentary evidence submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh?
2. Have you experienced any specific examples of falsification of these documents?

**EMN Ad-Hoc Query: on assessment of authenticity of documents submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh**

**Disclaimer:** *The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.*






We would appreciate your response by **December 3, 2014**.

**2. Responses**

		<b>Wider Dissemination?</b>	<b>1. How do national authorities in your Member State assess authenticity of documentary evidence submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh?</b> <b>2. Have you experienced any specific examples of falsification of these documents?</b>
	<b>Austria</b>	<b>Yes</b>	In Austria, Asylum decisions are made on a case to case basis. Considering the high prevalence of forged or falsified documents, if such documents could be crucial, the content will be verified by means of an enquiry directed to the Austrian Embassy in New Delhi. Most of the verified documents were original, but not authentic; the cases had often been fabricated by the clients.
	<b>Belgium</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>1. The formal characteristics of the documents (issued by the Copying Departments of Bangladeshi courts) are checked against a number of (formal) prescriptions that are to be legally respected. The COI Unit of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) has collected and verified these prescriptions over the years passed. Additionally, the contents of these legal documents submitted are checked against the content details of the refugee account of the asylum seeker. Sometimes the signatories of other written evidence that is submitted to sustain an asylum claim are contacted to check the authenticity of their signatures. Furthermore, when assessing an asylum application all elements are taken into consideration, all statements and all documentary evidence submitted. Even when authentic documents are submitted a negative decision is possible, if the explanations are not convincing. (Also because there are frequently submitted authentic documents whose content is incorrect).</p> <p>2. Many false documents exist; and also the content of genuine documents is often questionable. The corruption in various levels of the government weakens the integrity and the credibility of officially issued documents. It is common for (political party) membership confirmation letters to be issued to facilitate verification procedures, even if the information is incorrect. Genuine medical certificates containing incorrect information can also be issued. Birth certificates are issued (often years after the person's birth) upon verbal or written request, and no proof of the person's date of birth, identity or age is required; these certificates have the same value as the information provided by the applicant. Similarly, it is relatively easy to obtain a passport under a false identity.</p>
	<b>Czech Republic</b>	<b>No</b>	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further.
	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Yes</b>	1.-2. Bangladesh nationals asylum seekers has been submitted in Estonia only the passports issued by the People's Republic of Bangladesh and no doubts about evaluation of the authenticity of the these documents has been encountered.
	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>1. The Finnish Immigration Service responsible for making asylum decisions is assessing the authenticity of the identity and travel documents submitted by the Bangladeshi asylum seekers with the assistance of the Finnish Border Guard which has expertise in document investigation.</p> <p>As far as other documents submitted by the Bangladeshi asylum seekers are concerned it should be taken into consideration that, in accordance with the country of origin information, plenty of forged documents are found Bangladesh and, in practice, any official documents can be bought (e.g. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, <a href="http://irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=453136">http://irb-cisr.gc.ca/Eng/ResRec/RirRdi/Pages/index.aspx?doc=453136</a> ). Therefore, the reliability of Bangladeshi documents submitted by asylum seekers is often not fully verified and their value of proof is been assessed in relation to the narrative and other evidence given by the</p>











**EMN Ad-Hoc Query: on assessment of authenticity of documents submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh**

***Disclaimer: The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.***

			<p>asylum seeker as a whole.</p> <p>2. There are no specific examples of falsifications.</p>
	<b>France</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>1. The protection officers of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) regularly have suspicions concerning the veracity or the authenticity of documents submitted by asylum seekers from many countries. While they are indeed able to express their doubts, there is no established or legal mechanism for overcoming this kind of difficulty. They may, however, contact the French consular authorities in the countries of origin so that the latter can verify the authenticity of the documents produced by the applicants. Moreover, the facsimiles of civil registration certificates collected during fact-finding missions, organised by OFPRA in the countries of origin, are a useful tool for detecting the falsification of identity documents. OFPRA carried out a fact-finding mission in Bangladesh in 2010. The mission's report is available <a href="#">here</a> (in French).</p> <p>2. No.</p>
	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>1. The Authority inspecting documents at BAMF only receives documents from Bangladesh in isolated cases which means that we cannot make any substantiated statement on this point. Only 13 documents have been presented since the end of the year 2011 and most of these were so called subordinated documents, e.g. excerpts from registers, birth certificates or other miscellaneous documents. For the evaluation of documents we rely on the reference collections compiled by the police authorities as well as on our own reference collection. With respect to Bangladesh we do not have any reference collection compiled by our own offices, but only the information received from the police authorities and the application of such documents can only be inquired about at the police authorities.</p> <p>2.No.</p>
	<b>Greece</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>1. Documents submitted by any asylum seeker, not only by those of Bangladeshi nationality, are taken into account in the examination of an application for international protection. In the event there are suspicions about a particular document's authenticity, and provided this document is important for the judgement on the application, then the document can be submitted for authentication to the relevant department of the Hellenic Police.</p> <p>2. Not infrequently, Bangladeshi asylum seekers submit in original or (more often) in photocopy documents to support their applications for international protection. It is quite common for these documents to purport to be court documents related to land disputes, violent incidents, etc. For most of these documents there are indeed suspicions that they are forgeries, falsifications or they refer to persons other than the specific asylum seeker. However, since the overwhelming majority of applications for international protection from Bangladeshi nationals are unfounded and rejected, the documents submitted do not play a crucial role in the decisions on these applications and, therefore, it is not worthwhile to submit them to the Hellenic Police for authentication.</p>
	<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>1. According to the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN), the security level of documentary evidence submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh does not comply with the security level of travel documents including biometric data, nevertheless, travel documents submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh do contain security elements which are generally accepted and applied by the OIN.</p> <p>2. The OIN's registry includes 6 cases where documentary evidence submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh was assessed, then found authentic indicating that no system-wide problem was specified with regard to these documents. Thereby, no abuse of forged documentary evidence has been reported in Hungary yet.</p>
	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>No</b>	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further.


**EMN Ad-Hoc Query: on assessment of authenticity of documents submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh**

***Disclaimer: The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.***

	<b>Latvia</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually the expertises on ID documents submitted by Bangladeshi asylum seekers are carried out.</li> <li>Accordingly to the conclusions of the expertises, in almost all cases passports were produced by responsible authority, but afterwards different changes in the original content were made (changed photography, changed name and surname, changed content of the text, etc.). As concerns other documents: – in some cases IT “Schengen” visas were presented (issued by responsible authority, but photography was changed afterwards), and in some cases residence permits of Greece were presented (usually forged).</li> </ol>
	<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>Yes</b>	Lithuania hasn't had any experience in this regard.
	<b>Luxembourg</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the last 4 years, Luxembourg only had a total of 6 asylum seekers from Bangladesh (2010: 2; 2011 : 2; 2012 :1; 2013 : 1 ; 2014 : 0). Hence, it seems difficult to make specific observations about assessing authenticity of documentary evidence submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh in this case.</li> <li>N/A.</li> </ol>
	<b>Netherlands</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We assess the authenticity by checking the used printing techniques in relation to our referencematerial (gathered during the years) and we also use information provided by other foreign documentinvestigation units and our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is difficult to relate to specific examples of documentfraud because it seems to be very easy to get acces to several types of documents.</li> <li>Yes. If necessary we can try to assist. If you mean to do so please send us your questions and a scan of the questioned document.</li> </ol>
	<b>Romania</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In cases when there are any suspicions regarding the authenticity of documents, especially travel documents, they are checked through the specialized authorities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.</li> <li>General Inspectorate for Immigration have had no problems regarding false or falsified documents handed over by Bangladeshi asylum seekers.</li> </ol>
	<b>Slovak Republic</b>	<b>Yes</b>	Slovak Republic does not have any experience in this regard.
	<b>Slovenia</b>	<b>Yes</b>	We do not have any experience in this regard.
	<b>Spain</b>	<b>Yes</b>	In Spain mostly of Asylum seekers from Bangladesh submit the same package of documents, and that document present elements that raise serious questions about the validity, and they never are used as evidentiary documents.
	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Swedish Migration Board has a special unit for Biometrics and Document Verification. All identity documents handed in by asylum seekers are sent to us for verification and storage.</li> <li>From other sources we have been told that a lot of counterfeited and manipulated documents from Bangladesh are in circulation. There are not many asylum seekers from Bangladesh in Sweden, but when there are, they often give us passports that we find manipulated or counterfeited. The most common problem is photo substitution and/or manipulated/erased personal data.</li> </ol>
	<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<p>The UK cannot currently provide information specifically about documents from asylum seekers from Bangladesh; however we can provide some general information.</p> <p>When assessing a document for authenticity, case workers should be looking at the document to ensure that none of the security features/personalisation have been tampered with, and this would be the same at any stage of document verification.</p>

**EMN Ad-Hoc Query: on assessment of authenticity of documents submitted by asylum seekers from Bangladesh**

***Disclaimer:*** *The following responses have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided, to the best of their knowledge, information that is up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCPs' Member State.*

			When considering the weight to attach to any overseas documents, for example, official certificates or arrest warrants, it is for claimants to show that those documents can be relied on ( <a href="#">Tanveer Ahmed [2002] UKIAT 000439</a> ). Caseworkers must assess whether a document is one on which reliance can be placed after looking at evidence in the round. In practice, this means that a document must be considered together with other evidence that goes towards establishing the particular material fact. It is not appropriate to attach little or no weight to a document without giving reasons based on the available evidence regarding its reliability.
	Norway	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In Norway, we make a 2. level document examination of documents for asylum seekers from all nationalities by use of a microscope and an examining unit. We may also make inquiries through Norwegian embassies in cases where this may help. The type of identity document handed in by Bangladeshi asylum seekers in Norway is most often a passport.</li> <li>2. The type of falsification we most often see for Bangladeshi documents, is the use of passports with changed photos. Changes of personal information also occur.</li> </ol>

\*\*\*\*\*