



Ad-hoc query on searching of COI for asylum procedures

Requested by EE EMN NCP on 2th July 2014

Compilation produced on 22th September 2014

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 Police and Border Guard Board of Estonia is looking for information on the current migration and return policy in the European Union Member States. Please provide your responses by **25th July 2014**.

		Wider Dissemination? ¹	1. How is searching of COI arranged in your Member State? Is there a separate unit for conducting COI searches in your
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¹ A default "Yes" is given for your response to be circulated further (e.g. to other EMN NCPs and their national network members). A "No" should be added here if you do not wish your response to be disseminated beyond other EMN NCPs. In case of "No" and wider dissemination beyond other EMN NCPs, then for the Compilation for Wider Dissemination the response should be removed and the following statement should be added in the relevant response box: "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: fingerprint biometry in travel documents and residence cards

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			<p>Member State?</p> <p>2. If there is a separate COI unit in your Member State, then</p> <p>a) how many COI experts work in the unit;</p> <p>b) how is it decided information of what countries of origin is being researched in the particular frame of time?</p> <p>3. Which are the resources for COI search in your Member State? How and where are the COI reports saved for future easy access and how often the COI of a particular country is being updated?</p> <p>4. Have you used the resources of the European Refugee Fund for setting up any COI services (library, databases etc) or are you planning to use the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for COI activities in the future? If yes, then which?</p>
	Austria	No	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further.
	Belgium	Yes	<p>1. Yes, the Documentation and Research Centre (CEDOCA) of the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) is made up of researchers who are specialised per geographic region. The researchers follow the situation in the countries of origin on a day-to-day basis, they gather and select all relevant information and make this available to the protection officers. They carry out specialised research to answer protection officers' questions during their processing of the individual asylum applications.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>a) There are currently 28 COI-experts working for CEDOCA. All COI-experts have a master degree and are specialized in 1 to 5 countries from a specific region. Apart from COI Research, the COI-experts provide trainings on COI, give briefings on particular subjects, organize conferences and are active in several international COI networks (e.g. EASO).</p> <p>b) The research priorities are determined through regular consultation with the case worker units and board of directors. The individual questions from protection officers are processed via database. For what concerns the thematic papers, there is a planning tool where all requests for thematic papers are registered with date of request and deadlines. This list is revised every Tuesday and published on te intranet "inSite". This planning is subject to monthly consultation with the heads of department.</p> <p>3. There is no specific budget for Cedoca. The budget is part of the the annual budget of the CGRS. All the research output and information is stored on the intranet InSite and there is also a library. Updating of COI is a continuous process. The update of thematic papers is mentioned in the planning tool (see above) . General security situations in a limited number of countries (+/- 12) are updated every 6 months. Other information is updated when the need arises.</p> <p>4. The CGRS made use of the ERF funding for a 2 years project on the harmonization of the COI products and for the development of a website. The website with COI output will be up and running at the end of the year. In the framework of the harmonization project, a guide for a house style, templates and indicators for several horizontal themes were developed. In the future, the CGRS would like to use resources of AMIF to organize Fact Finding Missions and international workshops related with these FFMs.</p> <p>For more information , please contact :</p>





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			<p>An VANDEVEN Head of department Cedoca – Documentation and Research center Tel +32 2 205 56 07 Cell +32 479 94 85 10 Fax +32 2 205 51 24 An.vandeven@ibz.fgov.be</p> <p>Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless persons WTC II Koning Albert II–laan 26 A 1000 BRUSSEL www.cgvs.be</p>
	<p>Bulgaria</p>	<p align="center">Yes</p>	<p>1. In February 2014 a new "Information and Analysis" Department within the "International Affairs" Directorate at the State Agency for Refugees was established under the recommendation of the European Asylum Support Office.</p> <p>2. a) There are 5 COI experts in the "Information and Analysis" Department who are responsible for preparing of the information on countries of origin. Their activity is managed by a head of the Department;</p> <p>b) The information compiled in the "Information and Analysis" Department includes answers to specific questions about the countries of origin, requested by the case workers and legal advisers in the State Agency for Refugees. If necessary, the COI experts also prepare analytical reports for internal use in connection with the early warning about countries, a large influx of asylum seekers of which is expected or the security situation is quite dynamic.</p> <p>3. When preparing the information on countries of origin the commonly used sources are the portals Ecol.net, Refworld and the EASO COI Portal; sources of media BBC News, CNN International, All Africa and others. The information on countries of origin is stored in the developed and established in 2011 Information Database "Resource Centre for the countries of origin", which is accessible to all case workers and legal advisers. Usually, the information about a specific country is updated when a new request by the case workers and legal advisers is received.</p> <p>4. The development of the Information Database "Resource Centre for the countries of origin" was financed by the resources of the European Refugee Fund. Currently we do not plan to use the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for future COI activities.</p>
	<p>Cyprus</p>	<p align="center">Yes</p>	<p>1. Every case worker is responsible for carrying out his/her own COI research depending on the asylum claim's requirements. What is appropriate COI it depends on the case worker's decision. Needless to say that, the appropriate COI, used by the caseworkers,</p>

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			<p>substantiates the assessment of the caseworker, as well as the decision taken by the Head of the Asylum Service.</p> <p>In some cases, before commencing the examination of applications for specific nationalities, the COI is considered by a team of caseworkers who are in charge of examining applications submitted by such claims.</p> <p>2. If there is a separate COI unit in your Member State, then</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a) how many COI experts work in the unit;</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b) how is it decided information of what countries of origin is being researched in the particular frame of time?</p> <p>There is no separate COI unit at the Asylum Service (which is the competent authority for examining applications for international protection at first instance). Nevertheless, a specific team of experts / caseworkers are responsible for observing on a regular basis all the available updated information from various databases (including UNHCR, EASO RefWorld and UK Home Office sources) and inform accordingly the competent asylum officers / caseworkers.</p> <p>3. COI is collected on a daily basis depending on the asylum claim related to a specific country of origin. COI reports are communicated to the case workers dealing with similar countries of origin claims. The update of the COI of a particular country depends on the availability of the various sources of information. If there is an update of the information for a specific country of origin, identified by the competent officer/caseworker through the various databases used for this purpose, then the latest updated sources are being used for substantiation of the assessment/decision.</p> <p>Additionally, various reports (on original or printout form) are kept at the library of the Asylum Service for easy access by all officers / caseworkers, including reports from different organizations, migration boards / departments etc., e.g. EASO and UNHCR.</p> <p>4. Under ERF II, there was a small project where the funding was used in order to develop an electronic COI database, to be used internally by the caseworkers of the Asylum Service.</p>
	Czech Republic	Yes	-
	Denmark	Yes	-
	Estonia	Yes	<p>1. In Estonia we do not have a specific unit nor an expert who is responsible for searching COI. In Estonia the case workers do the COI searches themselves during the processing of an application.</p> <p>2. No</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a) N/A</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b) In case there is a significant increase of applicants from a particular country the case workers may gather and analyse COI as groundwork which may be used in the future.</p> <p>3. Estonia uses EASO CP, RefWorld, EcoiNet. The COI reports compiled by the case workers are saved in the common files and are reachable by every case worker. COI reports are being updated after 6-12 months.</p> <p>4. No</p>
	Finland	Yes	<p>1. Yes. The unit responsible for searching COI in Finland is the Country Information Service (CIS – in Finnish Maatietopalvelu). CIS operates as a separate section within the Legal Service and Country Information Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service. The CIS works</p>

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<p>independently from the decision making units of our office.</p> <p>2. If there is a separate COI unit in your Member State, then</p> <p>a) how many COI experts work in the unit;</p> <p>Currently 6 experts work in the unit, although 1,5 researchers currently take part in a 1,5 year-long project. Thus currently 4,5 researchers search COI full time.</p> <p>b) how is it decided information of what countries of origin is being researched in the particular frame of time?</p> <p>CIS mostly answers COI queries from our Asylum Unit. The queries mostly concern the top ten countries of origin for asylum seekers in Finland, such as Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan or Russia. CIS also regularly meets with our asylum unit and other decision making units in order to find out their information needs. The last two updated situation reports of CIS concern Iraq and Ukraine.</p> <p>3. In addition to our 6 reseachers, the staff of the CIS includes the Head of CIS, Ms Sirpa Ranta, as well as a Librarian and a Senior Adviser working with the Tellus database. The CIS also has an Information Service Secretary and employs 4-5 university and other trainees per on a yearly basis.</p> <p>COI reports are saved in the the Tellus electronic database for country of origin information (COI) which has been created by the CIS. Tellus became operational in 2001 and is aimed at administrative users.</p> <p>The COI information in the database is collected for use in the decision-making process (especially when processing applications for international protection) of the Finnish Immigration Service and it also caters to the needs of other stakeholders. It contains the information produced by the CIS including country reports, thematic reports, fact-finding mission reports and the most important answers to application specific questions since 2001 as well as selected information from the most important countries of origin. The database is updated daily with new documents.</p> <p>The database was executed using the TRIP-platform (for information storage and search facilities) developed by Tieto Oyj (formerly TietoEnator), a Finnish-Swedish software developer and service provider.</p> <p>The Tellus database is available for all staff members at the Finnish Immigration Service on their own work station and it is accessed with a personal log-in name and password. The database is mainly used by the decision making officials in the Asylum unit, the Immigration unit and the Nationality unit. The database also has external users, i.a. the Supreme Administrative Court, the Administrative Court of Helsinki, the Local Register Offices, The Police and The Parliament.</p> <p>Tellus was connected to the EU COI portal of EASO in March 2014. This project started in 2012 and it was mainly funded by the European Refugee Fund (ERF). Access to the EU COI Portal is limited only for CIS and Asylum Unit officials. The National Common</p>
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			<p>Portal Administrator (NCPA) functions as a contact point with the EASO Portal Administrator.</p> <p>Due to limited research resources, the COI of a particular country is being updated on an ad hoc basis, according to the needs of our decision makers.</p> <p>4. In 2013 The Finnish Immigration Service received project funding (75%) from The European Refugee Fund (ERF) to improve the Tellus COI database and to make it more comprehensive. The main goal of the project was making COI queries through the database using an electronic questionnaire form. The list of COI queries and answers will enable statistical analysis. Also a section/platform (now called <i>Mogadishu Local knowledge database</i>) was added to the database including detailed local information specific to a particular city or region, such as maps and images.</p>
	France	Yes	<p>1. In France, the Information, Documentation and Research Division (DIDR) of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) is responsible for conducting COI.</p> <p>2. a) The DIDR counts 23 officers including 12 research officers. 2. b) The DIDR can be requested directly by protection officers (from the instruction division, the legal affairs division, the protection division or the division of asylum at the border) for a general or particular question in connection with the cases they examine. The division may also be requested for a background research (study of more than 50 pages) by the coordinators of the instruction divisions. Moreover, the DIDR develops products to support examination of asylum applications on the basis of needs identified by the office (general directorate, harmonization committee, working groups/coordinators, etc.).</p> <p>3. The DIDR reports are generally carried out by using updated information from different original sources available to the public, in compliance with ethical principles reflected in common EU guidelines for processing COI (2008). These principles include the evaluation of the reliability of sources and the cross-checking, timeliness, transparency and traceability of the information. Information is shared within OFPRA through a database containing not only the DIDR productions but also useful information on countries of origin (reports of international organizations, local NGOs, peer reports, etc.). The database has a large storage capacity. The information stored in the database does not need to be updated. Only productions undertaken to support the examination of cases require updating; such products have been developed since September 2013, the frequency of the updating has not yet been defined. Some of the reports on countries of origin are also available on the OFPRA website and are disseminated to other European administrations in charge of asylum through the European portal of EASO. They are also sent to the National Court of Asylum. The OFPRA is also involved in most COI expert networks (Somalia, Pakistan, Syria, Russia, Iraq and Afghanistan) within which its reports and sources are exchanged with other network members. This information is then disseminated by EASO to all Member and Associated States.</p> <p>4. Yes, France used the resources of the ERF for setting up such COI services and is planning to use AMIF for COI activities in the future.</p>
	Germany	Yes	<p>1. In Germany there is an Information Centre that consists of different teams: COI research, COI analysis, library, press documentation.</p>




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			<p>2. a) There are 14 country analysts and around 14 other COI specialists (researchers, documentation staff) in the information centre b) For this question we have to differentiate between several kinds of COI research: - in general, COI experts/analysts have knowledge of around 180 countries, but the focus is in general on the top 20 countries. COI analysts write country reports and statements on countries, where there is a need for information by the users and according to the present situation in this country. This is needs-based. - COI experts/analysts also compile information on important countries (36 countries) for the decision makers as part of the policy guidelines. This information is reviewed and updated on a regular basis at least once a year. - We collect COI in our database in case this information might be needed in the future. Priority is given to the top 20 countries, but we also collect information from other countries that come up in the asylum procedures. - Specific queries that arise during the asylum procedure are being dealt with whenever they occur. There are no targets as to what timeframe should be applied to what countries.</p> <p>3. a) Databases: MILo (internal BAMF COI database), MedCOI, ecoi.net, RefWorld, CIA World Factbook, external databases (that we pay for) Others: press reports, country specific press, reports by national and international agencies and NGOs (e.g. UN, EU, HRW, Helsinki Committee, amnesty international), books, maps, encyclopaedias, legal texts (constitutions, acts ...); participation at expert meetings and workshops covering specific topics....</p> <p>b) Everything is stored in MILo, the internal COI database at BAMF.</p> <p>4. No</p>
	Greece	Yes	<p>1. There is a separate COI Unit, under the Dept. of Training, Quality Assurance and Documentation of the Asylum Service. However, case workers are expected to do most of the COI research themselves and only in the more difficult cases they request the assistance of the COI Unit, usually through the submission of written queries.</p> <p>2. a) There are 4 full-time COI researchers in the Greek COI Unit. b) COI priorities are decided on the basis of the more common countries of origin.</p> <p>3. The case workers and the COI Unit use primarily RefWorld, Ecoi.net and the EASO Common Portal. The COI Unit also uses the national "Upload Area" in the Common Portal for uploading COI products (mostly but not exclusively) in Greek (responses to queries, factsheets on specific countries of origin, security surveys on Afghanistan, etc.). All case workers are registered users of the Common Portal. Frequency of updating depends on specific circumstances. On Afghanistan, for example, it is every six months, provided there are no dramatic changes in the meantime.</p> <p>4. No.</p>
	Hungary	Yes	<p>1. In Hungary the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) is responsible for providing country of origin information (COI) service according to Government Decree 301/2007 (XI. 9.). The COI unit of the OIN, called Documentation Centre, is directly under the</p>






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			<p>General-Director of the OIN.</p> <p>2. a) 8 staff members are employed at the Documentation Centre: 1 head of Centre, 7 COI researchers, who are specialised in different countries relevant to the OIN. b) The main task of the Documentation Centre is to provide answers to COI queries submitted mainly by decision-makers in RSDP and also by the Aliens Policing Directorate and courts. The Documentation Centre regularly monitors the situation in crisis areas in order to identify main priorities and the Centre makes flash reports on countries where significant political and/or security changes take place.</p> <p>3. The Documentation Centre uses a wide range of sources during the research process: sources of governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, international and intergovernmental organisations and foreign and domestic media. The Centre has a standard list of sources. ACCORD's ecoi.net and UNHCR's Refworld databases are useful starting points for research. All COI replies and reports are uploaded to the COI database of the Office, which is accessible to all OIN staff. Flash reports are carried out in case of significant changes in political and/or security situation of countries of origin relevant to the work of OIN.</p> <p>4. In the framework of the European Refugee Fund OIN has had subscriptions for two international security policy databases (Stratfor and AKE), which provide useful detailed information for COI answers and reports. Based on this information the Centre makes Briefing Notes bi-weekly. The OIN has a special library and a COI database; however, they have not been developed by the European Refugee Fund. The OIN is planning to use AMIF to strengthen COI activities in the future as well.</p>
	Ireland	No	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further.
	Italy	Yes	<p>1. In Italy, we do not have a specific and separate unit who is responsible for searching COI. The <i>National Commission for the Right of Asylum</i> examines asylum applications «in the light of accurate and updated information on the general situation in the asylum seeker's country of origin, and country/ies of transit, if needed, as compiled by the National Commission on the basis of UNHCR data, data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or data collected by the National Commission itself» (Article 8, Legislative Decree No. 25/2008). The <i>Commission</i> consists of five members plus one member designated by UNHCR. It is assisted in its work (investigation, information collection, statistics, etc.) by internal staff.</p> <p>2. COIs are usually collected by four people;</p> <p>3. See 1. In some cases, reports are drafted for the internal use of the <i>Commission</i> or the assisting staff;</p> <p>4. No.</p>
	Latvia	Yes	<p>1. In Latvia we do not have specific unit for searching COI. Each case worker (decision maker) does searching him/herself.</p> <p>2. -</p> <p>3. Latvia uses EcoiNet, RefWorld and home pages of international organisations as well. COI reports are saved in common files available for all decision makers. We update information only when it is necessary. Each decision maker has to check if there is any new or previously unknown information in the above mentioned resources.</p> <p>4. In the framework of ERF we have hired 2 experts for support with COI. ERF has been used also for EASO Training Curriculum. In addition we have bought books about different countries and regions and maps. So far we have also used the possibility to ask questions to ACCORD funded by ERF.</p> <p>In the future we plan to use AMIF for continuing to hire COI experts and for EASO Training Curriculum.</p>



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	Lithuania	No	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further.
	Luxembourg	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, there is a separate COI unit in Luxembourg responsible for conducting research on the countries of origin. 2. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Three full-time researchers work for the COI unit. One person from the asylum unit joins the team on an ad-hoc basis when there is a specific need. b. COI is gathered when the need comes up depending on multiple factors. Internal guidelines define the time frame of producing the internal COI reports. 3. The COI unit uses all of the usual search engines (ECOI, RefWorld, EASO Common Portal, etc.) in order to compile the information. The reports and results are saved on an internal server accessible only to the asylum unit. Luxembourg is in close contact with other MS too in order to exchange COI. The reports are updated on an annual basis. 4. No.
	Malta	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Office of the Refugee Commissioner does not have a COI Unit. However, it has introduced a country desk system which entails having caseworkers working on specific groups of third country nationals. This system has helped the Office to build country of origin expertise while it ensured that caseworkers become more familiar with the particular country/ies. 2. Not applicable. 3. The Office of the Refugee Commissioner relies on reports published by others such as UNHCR, FRA, Amnesty International, EASO, LANDINFO and other Member States. The Office uses triangulation (use of different sources: international reports, EU reports, news articles...) to increase the reliability of the conclusions/decisions. 4. No the Office of the Refugee Commissioner has not as yet made use of EU Funds for COI services.
	Netherlands	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The COI unit of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service is called Office for Country Information and Language Analysis. In this office we have eleven country experts, organised by country or region, and one senior COI expert. We have four linguists doing, mainly, language analyses. In addition we have eleven COI documentalists divided over the four application centers. The COI documentalists function as a front office, whereas the country specialists function as the back office for more complicated questions demanding more research. 2. Every region or country of origin of asylum seekers is covered by one of the COI experts. The experts answer questions from case workers about 'their' countries. If the same questions occur more often, a fact sheet or report on this topic might be written. Officially a COI specialist has five working days to answer a question, but in urgent cases the question has to be answered as soon as possible. 3. The COI unit uses different COI sources. Only public sources can be used. One important source are the (general and topical) country reports by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Apart from those we use reports from other governments and NGOs, scientists, etc. We have our own (small) library. Information is saved in an electronic database, which is accessible to all case workers. The frequency of updates of the MFA country reports depends on the influx. Some country reports are yearly updated, other country reports may be just incidental reports. 4. We have not used the resources of the ERF.
	Poland	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is Country of Origin Information Unit (COI Unit) at the Office for Foreigners responsible for the gathering and storing


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			<p>information on countries of origin and for providing it to asylum case workers.</p> <p>2. a) 8 researchers + head of the unit</p> <p>b) COI Unit answers queries sent by case workers. Case workers set the deadline for drafting answers. COI researchers (depending on the complexity of the request, number of other requests to be answered at a given moment and on the number of other duties they need to perform) try to provide all the information case workers need.</p> <p>3. Polish COI unit reviews various sources of COI, including reports, notes, articles produced by international, governmental or non-governmental organizations, research/scientific centers or individual experts, news agencies, etc. It uses also information found in books and encyclopedias. It also cooperates with other EU COI units, bilaterally as well as under the umbrella of EASO.</p> <p>Documents gathered and/or produced by the COI Unit are stored in electronic COI database which is managed by the COI unit. COI documents concerning selected country/countries are updated upon request of case workers.</p> <p>4. COI library, COI database with its library module were all co-financed from the ERF. COI unit benefited from the financial support under the ERF also when organizing fact-finding missions to countries of origin, study visits to other EU MS as well as to commission reports to external experts.</p> <p>COI unit is planning to use financial support available under the AMIF to continue its activities such as: developing COI library, commissioning reports to external experts, organising fact-finding missions to countries of origin, etc.</p>
	Portugal	Yes	-
	Romania	Yes	<p>1. The research process of country of origin information is based on the following aspects:</p> <p>- It is regulated by Law no.122 on Asylum in Romania, Article 13: „Examination of the asylum application (1): The decision regarding the resolution of the asylum application is made after a suitable examination of the applicant’s situation is made by the specially designated officials, who are qualified in the topic of asylum. The latter presumes:</p> <p>a. an individual examination of each asylum application and the making of an objective and impartial decision; and</p> <p>b. <u>Consultation of information from the country of origin, obtained from different sources, necessary to evaluate the personal circumstances of the asylum-seeker.</u>”</p> <p>- As by law there’s a special requirement to provide COI so it is the separate specialized structure: - <u>The Procedures and COI Research Unit</u> within the Asylum and Integration Directorate of the General Inspectorate for Immigration.</p> <p>2. If there is a separate COI unit in your Member State, then</p> <p>a) How many COI experts work in the unit?</p> <p>As the national system of asylum relies on the Asylum and Integration Directorate coordinating 6 Regional Centers, so does the COI process:</p> <p>- 1 COI Expert National Coordinator plus two COI experts inside the Asylum and Integration Directorate of the General Inspectorate for</p>




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			<p>Immigration and other 4 COI researchers for each of the Regional Centers coordinated by AID (two other COI staff positions are pending approval).</p> <p>b) How is it decided information of what countries of origin is being researched in the particular frame of time?</p> <p>1. The degree of COI research efforts is managed by the National Coordinator who decides after balancing the asylum application trends in Romania with the latest human rights developments in the countries of origin. These efforts conclude in larger country reports, which are then later used by the regional researchers as a starting point for the <i>individual responses per each case</i>;</p> <p>2. The time frames differ from one document to the other:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For Country Reports – one to two weeks; - For Individual Responses within the ordinary procedure – 7 working days since the receipt of the COI query; - For Individual Responses within the accelerated border procedure – 3 working days. <p>3.</p> <p>1. The COI resources in Romania take on account to serve all the parties involved in the asylum procedure (apart from RO GII’s decision makers and legal counselors, also for judges, lawyers and NGO-assistants). For this reason we rely on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> INTRANET COI DATA BASE – for Asylum and Integration Directorate of the General Inspectorate for Immigration own uses; One publicly available COI Portal called INDICIUM www.portal-ito.ro – for all the other stakeholders; One NGO partner with three COI researchers handling by wining contract the INDICIUM portal – property of the General Inspectorate for Immigration. <p>As for subsequent resources we rely on the MFA briefings and the interpreters’ network.</p> <p>2. The COI reports are available depending on the purpose it was meant to be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual responses are given to the requesters of COI and stored within the unit; Part of these responses are screened and selected to be publicized on INDICIUM as for public use; Country reports researched and set with the NGO partner are publicly available on INDICIUM; Internal country reports are available on the INTRANET. <p>Nationality questionnaires have restricted use and are sent specifically to the decision makers.</p> <p>3. The COI reports are updated by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consequence – the number of asylum seekers in Romania; Prediction – the rapid deterioration of the security level in a particular country of origin triggering possible influx of asylum seekers. (i.e. Ukraine, Palestine, Iraq etc.) Recommendation - the General Inspectorate for Immigration management, UNHCR Position, MFA. <p>4. Yes, RO-GII used up to now the ERF funding for the COI activities related to publicly available uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administration of the COI Portal INDICIUM; Translation of selected COI; <p>Awareness of quality standards of COI for all the stakeholders to the asylum procedure in Romania.</p>
	<p>Slovak Republic</p>	<p align="center">Yes</p>	<p>1. There is a separate Department of Documentation and International Cooperation (DDFC) at the Migration Office of the Slovak Republic where the employees are specialised in search of information about the asylum seekers’ countries of origin.</p> <p>2.</p>


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			<p>a) There are 4 analyst at the department.</p> <p>b) The DDFC elaborates mainly responses to COI queries, sent by caseworkers in every stage of the asylum procedure. Although the COI researchers are not geographically specialized, there is such tendency to assign set of questions regarding particular case (from certain country of origin) to that person, who has dealt with such issue most recently (or most often) and according to his/her combination of foreign language knowledge. The time needed to answer a specific COI query depends on the number and complexity of questions.</p> <p>General monitoring of the countries of origin is also carried out on the daily basis.</p> <p>3. The responses to COI queries are composed according to the Common EU Guidelines for processing COI and Guidance of the Migration Office MoI SR Director; on the basis of carefully selected information from publicly available sources. The sources used come from specialized databases, such as ecoi.net and Fefworld, or other publicly available databases. The sources can be classified as followed: intergovernmental institutions, NGOs, governmental organisations, media sources, legislative and administrative bodies, and academic sources. All sources used are referenced. All information coming from a non- publicly available source, such as a database with authorized access (EASO CP), is flagged with a specific note and a disclaimer. Except for the responses to the COI queries, the DDFC occasionally prepare other COI products in form of thematic papers on particular country of origin with focus on issues of importance to decision makers. It also prepares daily media monitoring. All COI products are collected in an internal database, called MigDoc, that was created within a project “<i>Strengthening of administrative capacities of Migration Office MoI SR aimed at efficiency of asylum procedure in the Slovak Republic</i>” between June 2004 and January 2005. It is being used since early 2005.</p> <p>In principle, the database is accessible to all asylum workers of the Office; however it is used mainly by decision makers and legal officers.</p> <p>4. No.</p>
	Slovenia	Yes	-
	Spain	Yes	<p>1- In Spain we have a unit of COI with 2 experts, but in some case workers use to make their own researches due to their experience on the Country of Origin, and COI researchers deal with questions more difficult to answer.</p> <p>2- In Spain the case worker ask the Researcher general Information on country of origin if they do not have many experience on the Country and in order to corroborate the information, and depending on the question the COI Researcher can make a resume and provide information providing various sources.</p> <p>3- In Spain the general databases on asylum are used such as, EASO, ECOI, Refworld but due to the Countries of origin of the applicant other database are used such IGC ;CINU UN information Centre ; ECHR(European Court of Human Rights; International Crisis Group.</p> <p>4- No</p>
	Sweden	Yes	<p>1. The Swedish Migration Board has a COI unit which searches for and analyse COI. There is also a database called Lifos, where both reports drafted by the COI unit and other relevant reports are published. Most documents in Lifos are publically available at the internet, http://lifos.migrationsverket.se/startside.html</p> <p>2. If there is a separate COI unit in your Member State, then</p>


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			<p>a) how many COI experts work in the unit; At present there are 8 COI Analysts, 4,5 Researchers, 0,5 Database Administrator and 1 Librarian. From 1st of October 2014 there will be 11 COI Analysts, 7 Researchers, 1 Database Administrator and 1 Librarian.</p> <p>b) how is it decided information of what countries of origin is being researched in the particular frame of time? The COI Analysts and the Researchers work in teams with specific geographical areas (Former Soviet Union and the Balkans, Asia and Latin America, The Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa). Which countries within these areas to focus on are decided by the COI unit based on the demand from different parts of the Migration Board, however mainly from the Asylum Examination Units.</p> <p>3. Which are the resources for COI search in your Member State? How and where are the COI reports saved for future easy access and how often the COI of a particular country is being updated? Lifos has been undersized compared to the staff at the Migration Board in need of COI, but has now got an expanded budget and has recently employed 3 more COI Analysts and 3 Researchers who will start working with us during the autumn. The COI unit, among other tasks, answer queries from case officers and draft thematic reports on relevant topics. The thematic reports and some of the responses to queries are published in the database Lifos. New reports, drafted by the COI unit or others, are continuously published in the database Lifos.</p> <p>The COI reports are, as long as they are relevant, published in the database Lifos. We aim to go through the documents in Lifos once a year to take out reports which are outdated.</p> <p>When undersized means have had to be focused on countries where the COI demand has been most urgent, and updates of the COI unit's reports can vary from country to country and from time to time.</p> <p>4. Have you used the resources of the European Refugee Fund for setting up any COI services (library, databases etc) or are you planning to use the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for COI activities in the future? If yes, then which? In 2010-2011 in a project concerning the data base Lifos, and in 2012 concerning the Swedish contribution to the EU COI Portal.</p>
	<p>United Kingdom</p>	<p align="center">Yes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) undertakes COI research and provides guidance/policy advice for officials involved in the asylum decision making process. 2) CPIT: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Has 12 country officers/researchers b. Provides information on the 20-30 countries that generate the most asylum claims in the UK. However, CPIT may also produce COI on other countries where there is a specific operational need, such as whether a particular country is designated under our Non-Suspensive Appeals process (i.e. for 'safe' countries where applicants' claims may only have a right of appeal outside of the UK) or claims processed through the UK's detained fast track process. <p>CPIT has introduced a new product, named a Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report which covers the most common issues / claims arising in UK casework, and provides both guidance on how to handle / decide the claims and COI. We previously produced COI reports (and Operational Guidance Notes which provided guidance). These products are being replaced by the CIG reports. The CIG reports are accessible on the Home Office's intranet and on the UK government's public website: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-information-and-guidance CIG reports will be updated on a needs basis, depending on the events in the country, changes in caselaw and requirements of</p>

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			<p>decisions makers.</p> <p>3) The UK has previously used ERF monies to part fund fact finding missions. We are considering how we may be able to use AIMF monies in the future.</p>
	Norway	Yes	<p>1. How is searching of COI arranged in your Member State? Is there a separate unit for conducting COI searches in your Member State?</p> <p>Yes. In Norway, the Country of Origin Information Centre – Landinfo – was established as an important part of the Norwegian Immigration Authorities in 2005. Landinfo is however, an independent body responsible for collecting, analyzing and presenting COI to actors within the immigration authorities.</p> <p>2. If there is a separate COI unit in your Member State, then</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> how many COI experts work in the unit; how is it decided information of what countries of origin is being researched in the particular frame of time? <p>Re a): Landinfo has a staff of 30, of which 23 are country analysts/COI experts. Re b): Landinfo covers all countries/areas for which the Immigration Authorities are in need of COI, which again is based on influx of asylum seekers and immigrants, and therefore reflects time specific relevance and needs. Use of staff resources on particular countries/areas and COI topics are constantly evaluated and amended when required.</p> <p>3. Which are the resources for COI search in your Member State? How and where are the COI reports saved for future easy access and how often the COI of a particular country is being updated?</p> <p>All shared bases (such as Refworld, EcoiNet) are consulted, as well as multiple other relevant written and oral sources. All sources for COI are listed in the reference lists in our reports (which can be retrieved from www.landinfo.no). Landinfo also conducts a significant number of Fact Finding Missions yearly, from which valuable COI is collected.</p> <p>All reports (also old/outdated versions) are electronically stored in catalogues in our internal system as well as in a shared Immigration Authority archive. Reports are also published in an internal COI database, and with only a few exceptions, the same reports are made publicly available at our website www.landinfo.no.</p> <p>COI is updated continuously according to need and relevance.</p> <p>4. Have you used the resources of the European Refugee Fund for setting up any COI services (library, databases etc) or are you planning to use the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) for COI activities in the future? If yes, then which?</p> <p>No.</p>

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			Norway has recently completed two research reports on training needs in relation to making credibility assessments in asylum cases that might provide some interesting related insights as much is discussed relating to COI in several MS. The link to the report, by Cecilie Schjatvet, primarily in English and with a 35 page English summary http://www.udi.no/globalassets/global/forskning-fou_i/beskyttelse/troverdighetsvurderinger-asylsaker-2014.pdf . Questions about this report can be directed to kac@udi.no
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