



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Country of Origin Information (COI)
in the context of the refugee status
determination process
Bucharest, September 2012



Expert Workshop on Country of Origin Information

**Eastern Partnership Panel
on Migration and Asylum**

Bucharest, 10-11 September 2012

**Tour de Table
Compilation**

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

<p>1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country</p>	<p>There is no COI unit functioning in Armenia.</p>
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>Authority in charge for asylum procedure is the State Migration Service of Armenia. There are 36 staff members in total, 6 in the Asylum Issues Unit, which is in charge of asylum procedure. The staff consists of 5 case workers and one COI researcher, who holds Master's degree in International Law and passed training course on COI organized by Austrian Red Cross/ACCORD</p>
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>State Migration Service of Armenia</p>
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>There is no national legal framework regulating functioning of either COI unit or activities of the COI researcher. However, when COI request is passed, the desirable deadline for the answer is mentioned by the caseworker. The deadlines have not been broken so far.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Syria, Liberia, Republic of Congo/Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq and Iran</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Syria, Liberia, Republic of Congo/Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran and Iraq</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>The caseworkers get COI by sending request to the COI researcher. The caseworkers need country of origin information starting from the point when he/she begin to prepare for an interview. For preliminary interview usually more general information is requested. For preparation for in-merit interview and later on after interview within the period when decision should be made more specific information is requested.</p>

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. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?	There is no limit in number of questions formulated by the decision maker.
10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?	Yes, as soon as the caseworkers get the requested COI, they inform the COI researcher about the quality and relevance of the product. If there is any missing information in the query response, the COI researcher is requested to improve the product.
11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	There is no unequivocal answer to this question. As a rule, the decision makers rely on information provided by COI researcher. However, sometimes decision makers make their own research due to certain reasons, for example if some additional questions arise during preparing for an interview and there is no time to make a request
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	The position of COI researcher was introduced in 2011 and person hired for this position participated at Blended Learning Course "Researching Country of Origin Information" organized by Austrian Red Cross/ACCORD. The course was composed of two phases: e-training phase (it lasted around 3 weeks) and face-to face phase for one day.
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	No
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?	Yes
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	Armenian
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	The query responses of Country of Origin Information, as well as all the materials, cited in the COI products are collected and saved in country specific electronic folders. However, it is a self-prepared database, instead of professionally developed database system.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	No
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	To include COI researcher position in permanent staff of our organization

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
THE REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	Not any special COI unit has been established in the Republic of Azerbaijan. This work is indeed carried out by the relevant division of the Refugee Status Determination Department (RSDD) operating within the State Migration Service. The
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	<p>Department performs its duties in accordance with the requirements of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, as well as the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on "Status of refugees and IDPs (persons displaced within the country)" dated on May 21, 1999 and "Rule of processing applications on obtaining refugee status" approved with the Decree №419 of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated on November 13, 2000.</p>
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>7 officers of the RSDD are engaged in asylum procedure; all of them have higher education and are specialized in law, philology or translation. Majority of the employees have up to 10 years of experience in the asylum procedure. They conduct interviews in English, Russian, Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Urdu languages and collect information on countries of origin.</p>
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>The staff of the relevant departments of the State Migration Service, staff of the offices of UNHCR and International Organization for Migration in Baku, as well as asylum-seekers benefit from COI.</p>
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>There is no information on any local NGO which could provide COI. However, RSDD closely cooperates with UNHCR and IOM Representations in Azerbaijan in this sphere.</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>According to the national legal framework, applications of persons who apply for refugee status are responded within 3 months. During this period COI is collected and analyzed.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>15 persons from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 14 persons from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 8 persons from the Islamic Republic of Iran, 1 person from the Syrian Arab Republic and 1 person from the Russian Federation applied for obtaining refugee status in 2011.</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>During 2011, most COI queries have been made for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Cameroon.</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>In the procedure of refugee status determination, country of origin information is obtained from databases at application registration and interviewing stages. The sources of such information are periodical reports and web pages of UNHCR and various international organizations involved in human rights protection, various international news agencies, as well as web pages of different entities in countries of origin. This information is used during the examination of cases in the Commission on processing applications on refugee status.</p>
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>Number of questions depends on the complexity of each case.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI</p>	<p>Sometimes difficulties arise in the process of collecting country of origin information. As the information provided by a concrete person cannot always be found in COI databases, gaps and</p>

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products? If yes, how often?	inconsistencies emerge in such cases between the statement of the person and collected COI. However, not a single complaint has been filed by asylum-seekers.
11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	Decision on granting or not granting refugee status is taken collectively. Employee(s) of the RSDD assigned for collecting country of origin information provide(s) the members of the Commission with COI before the adoption of the decision. If necessary, interviewer participating in decision-making personally collects and analyzes country of origin information.
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	Newly hired staff is trained in acquiring country of origin information skills in the first months. These trainings are continued until the newly hired staff fully acquires the necessary skills.
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	National legislation does not provide for any requirement to solicit COI.
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?	There is not any structure and format for our COI specific answers.
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	English, Russian, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Turkish and Azerbaijani languages are used in our COI answers. If necessary, this information is translated into Azerbaijani language.
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	COI products are collected in electronic and printed forms and stored in separate folders on a country-by-country basis.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	Information is exchanged with the relevant state agency of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	We are very interested in learning experience and cooperating with European countries in COI.

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	There are provisions in Belarusian legislation that the Department of Citizenship and Migration collects, systematizes and analyses the information on political, socio-economical, sanitary and epidemiological situation in the country of nationality or former habitual residence of aliens applying for protection. Mentioned information is granted by Ministry of Foreign Affairs upon the request of the Department of Citizenship and Migration. COI is used in preparation for the interview and the decision.
2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).	In sphere of asylum and information, regarding COI, work 14 specialists, 6 of which work in the Department of Citizenship and Migration and 8 works in Regional Directorate of Citizenship and Migration. All specialists carry out the procedure, prepare the projects of the decision and search COI.
3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in	See the question № 2

your country?	
4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.	The Department of Citizenship and Migration make the request in UNHCR Representation in Belarus. The Department of Citizenship and Migration also receives the information which is prepared by Refugee Counseling Service (it is a project implemented by UNHCR Representation in the Republic of Belarus and Belarusian Movement of Medical Workers).
5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?	There is no COI Unit in Belarus.
6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	Afghanistan, Georgia, Iran, Pakistan and Egypt.
7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	The same as point № 6
8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?	During the preparation for the interview, preparation of the conclusion in Regional Directorate and preparation of the decision in the Department of Citizenship and Migration. All the specialists (staff) search the information by themselves or request the information in the Department of Citizenship and Migration. In turn, Department of Citizenship and Migration searches the information by itself or requests it in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or UNHCR Representative in Belarus.
9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?	4-5 questions
10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?	-----
11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	Yes
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	There is no induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI. These questions are covered in the framework of annual seminars in which the staff participates.
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	Yes
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific	No

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answers?	
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	Russian
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	Yes. The COI is filed at paper medium.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	No
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finish Module COI within the framework of European Asylum Curriculum (2 persons have studied the Module in Belarus) - Train all staff when Module will be translated into Russian - Appoint the specialist who will work in the sphere of COI

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	Unit for International Relations and COI (hereinafter the COI Unit) is a part of the Department for Asylum and Migration Policy of the Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic (hereinafter the Department). The COI Unit is structurally and operationally separate from the Asylum Decision-Making Unit (I. Instance).
2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).	<p>The whole Department consists of about 725 staff with majority of them dealing with the residence permit agenda (legal migration). Out of the total number of the Department's staff about 22 staff work in the Asylum Decision-Making Unit and about 13 staff work in the Litigation Unit (incl. administration staff).</p> <p>The COI Unit includes eight staff, however only two of them are COI researchers. One of them primarily specializes on countries of Middle East and Islamic North Africa. The other one mainly deals with Black Africa and Afghanistan. Other countries of origin are dealt with on ad-hoc basis.</p> <p>The COI Unit is, among other tasks, responsible for collection (including communication with all external information providers), evaluation, processing and distribution of COI for international protection as well as for residence permits procedure. Beside this the COI staff deals with all the international agenda related to the COI (EU, international projects etc.) as well as for other international communication</p>

	related both to the issues of international protection and migration.
3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?	COI services are primarily provided to the units of the Department dealing with asylum agenda (Asylum Decision-Making Unit, Litigation Unit, to a lesser extent the Dublin Unit) and to the Foreigners Residence Unit of the Department dealing with legal migration. Beside this COI services are also provided to other bodies of state administrations such as courts, prosecutor's office, Foreigners Police and sporadically partner asylum/migration offices.
4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.	There is no NGO providing COI for the asylum authority in the Czech Republic.
5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?	There is no legal deadline set.
6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	2011: Ukraine (152), Belarus (71), Russian Federation (47), Viet Nam (46) and Mongolia (41) 2012 (January to May): Ukraine (73), Viet Nam (21), Syria (20), Belarus (18) and Russian Federation (17)
7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	N/A. No monitoring/statistical data recording scheme with regard to the number of COI queries is in place.
8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?	- for the initial interview (initial as well as follow-up interviews) - for making decision - for appeal/cassation hearing (litigation officers) At first the caseworkers and litigation officers consult the internal COI database maintained by the COI Unit. If relevant information is lacking they consult COI experts from the COI unit by email/phone.
9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?	N/A. No monitoring/statistical data recording scheme with regard to the number of COI queries is in place.
10. Is there any feed-back on the	Yes. A feed-back is given both from the caseworkers within the framework of daily communication on specific

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quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?	cases/general needs as well as from litigation officers within discussions on needs in relation to specific appealed cases/results of appeal hearings.
11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	They should primarily consult internal COI database and/or the COI Unit. However they sometimes search for some facts in on the Internet.
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	New caseworker of the Decision-Making Unit usually receives a few-hours training on internal sources and work procedures in the field of COI.
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	<p>Requirement to obtain all circumstances and information (in favor of as well as against the applicant) - including COI - important for making the administrative decision is set out in the Administrative Procedure Act as well as in relevant case law.</p> <p>According to the relevant case-law "...the administrative body is obligated to establish facts concerning specific political situation in the country of origin of a foreigner.....". "... the facts established have to be related both to the legal as well as to the factual political situation...". "the administrative body is obligated to collect adequate amount of relevant information and by rule if possible from multiple sources..."</p>
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?	Answers to COI queries can have several forms. A short form may be a simple YES/NO information provided by email/phone, perhaps supported by background material. An extended form has a format of a report with certain set standards/features. Contentwise the report complies with EU COI guidelines. As for the format/layout every report starts with a standard cover-page including name of the Department as the asylum office, name of the COI Unit, Name of the country of origin treated, Main subject(s), keywords/titles of chapters, and a date of elaboration.
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	Czech language which is the official language of any administrative procedure.
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	Yes. COI is stored in Czech data warehouse (database) software called 'eDock'. Beside a system administrator there are two access levels: user (caseworkers) and content administrator (COI Unit staff). The eDock includes a tree-like directory structure with unlimited number of levels. Main level consists of country folders including subfolders for each source further subdivided according various criteria. The database provides for a simple search function.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ad-hoc exchange of translated public documents (reports) conducted with Slovakia - Ad-hoc consultations with experts from other asylum offices - Eurasil mailing request scheme - active/client participation in international projects, initiatives and activities (ECS, MED COI, Eurasil)

18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	Resumption of lectures on COI for caseworkers is planned. Continuation of in-house EAC COI Module training in 2012 is being prepared.
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**PARTICIPATING STATE:
FINLAND**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	<p>The Finnish Immigration Service (Migri), subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, is the agency that processes and decides on matters related to immigration, residence, refugee issues, and Finnish nationality. The agency commenced operation on 1 March 1995 by name the Directorate of Immigration. The name was changed to the Finnish Immigration Service on January 1, 2008. (Source: http://www.migri.fi/about_us)</p> <p>Below is the organizational chart of the Finnish Immigration Service. The Country Information Service, as our COI unit is called, operates under the Legal Service and Country Information unit. The head of the Country Information Service is Ms Sirpa Ranta.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"> Director General Jorma Vuorio </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Communications </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> Management Support </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Immigration Tiina Suominen Deputy Director </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> Customer Service Hanna Koskinen Director of Customer Service </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Asylum Esko Repo Director </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> Administration Kaarina Koskinen Director </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Reception Jorma Kuuluvainen Director </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> Legal Service and Country Information Jaana Vuorio Director </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"> Nationality Heikki Taskinen Deputy Director </td> <td style="text-align: center;"> e-Services Vesa Hagström Director of Information Management </td> </tr> </table> <p>Source: http://www.migri.fi/about_us/organisation</p>	Director General Jorma Vuorio		Communications	Management Support	Immigration Tiina Suominen Deputy Director	Customer Service Hanna Koskinen Director of Customer Service	Asylum Esko Repo Director	Administration Kaarina Koskinen Director	Reception Jorma Kuuluvainen Director	Legal Service and Country Information Jaana Vuorio Director	Nationality Heikki Taskinen Deputy Director	e-Services Vesa Hagström Director of Information Management
Director General Jorma Vuorio													
Communications	Management Support												
Immigration Tiina Suominen Deputy Director	Customer Service Hanna Koskinen Director of Customer Service												
Asylum Esko Repo Director	Administration Kaarina Koskinen Director												
Reception Jorma Kuuluvainen Director	Legal Service and Country Information Jaana Vuorio Director												
Nationality Heikki Taskinen Deputy Director	e-Services Vesa Hagström Director of Information Management												
2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).	<p>The Country Information Service has currently six COI researchers, of which four are employed permanently. The head of the unit also does some COI research. Of the researchers two have attained a PhD and four have attained a Masters' degree mostly in political and social sciences. Currently one researcher specializes in Afghanistan and Iran, one in Iraq, one in Russia, one in Syria, one in Somalia. Obviously all researchers also study many other countries and areas.</p> <p>There are currently 113 staff in the Asylum Unit of the Finnish Immigration Service.</p>												
3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff of the Finnish Immigration Service • Appeal courts for immigration and asylum matters • The Ministry of the Interior/Immigration department, the 												

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	<p>police, the Finnish Border Guard</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Foreign Affairs • The Cabinet office • EU-states and organisations, particularly EASO and EURASIL • Nordic co-operation, meetings with researchers • IGC-member states/ COI co-operation • International organisations (UN organisations/ UNHCR, IOM) • International and local human rights organisations • Universities, research organisations
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI?</p> <p>Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>No such NGO with specialization in COI production exists in Finland.</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>No deadline for a COI answer exists in the Finnish national legal framework.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>2011</p> <p>1. Iraq (586), 2. Somalia (356), 3. Russia (296), 4. Afghanistan (284), 5. Iran (124) (on the rise: 6. Syria – 110)</p> <p>2012 (January-July)</p> <p>1. Iraq (396), 2. Russia (113), 3. Somalia (108), 4. Afghanistan (105), 5. Syria (94)</p> <p>Source: http://www.migri.fi/about_us/statistics/statistics_on_asylum_and_refugees</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>No data available. The requests reflect by and large the major countries producing asylum seekers (see previous answer). In June-July 2012 the Country Information Service was working on 72 COI queries, concerning 33 countries. During that period, the first five countries were:</p> <p>1. Iraq (19), 2. Somalia (8), 3. Afghanistan (6) 4. Russian federation (5), 5. Iran (3)</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>If the caseworker has any knowledge of the applicant's grounds for his/her application, the caseworker searches for COI before the asylum interview. If the basis of the claim is only found out at the interview, the COI will be collected after it. Caseworkers search information from the Tellus database which operates under the COI unit, UNHCR Refworld, ECOI.net and other available sources. If the caseworker</p>

	cannot find relevant information for the case, he/she can send a query to the researchers at the Country Information Service.
9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?	Anything between 1-15. Normally about 4-5 questions per query.
10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?	The Country Information Service has made occasional satisfaction surveys for case workers within the Finnish Immigration Service. The last survey was made in the turn of 2011-2012. The caseworkers also send occasional comments on the COI received from the COI unit. The feed-back is then discussed between the head of the COI unit and the respective researcher, and is possibly taken up in a unit meeting.
11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	Once the COI is collected, the caseworker drafts the decision. The decision maker does not make his/her own research. If he/she needs more COI, the caseworker is asked to make a (new) request for information from the COI unit.
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	Newly hired staff members are given the following training regarding COI: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1 hour general training about COI and the work of the Country Information Service, as well as main points in EU/ EASO COI guidelines -1 hour training on the use of the COI database Tellus, which operates under the COI unit -1 hour training on the use of the Migration Library, which operates under the COI unit -1-2 hour training on each country of origin Newly hired staff is also given the EU/ EASO COI guidelines for further self-study, as well as carefully selected country-specific reports, including possible UNHCR guidelines.
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	No.
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?	Currently we have a form for COI queries in the intranet SUVI of the Finnish Immigration Service. The maker of the query enters in the form his/her name and unit, the date of the query, the sources that he/she already may have checked, the date by which the answer is required, the country/area that the query concerns, and the specific questions. <p>The COI researcher will enter the answer in the form and will present the sources according to COI guidelines. The researcher will also enter into the form the date of the answer, his/her name, and the data classification of the query (most of the answers to the queries are public). Within the COI unit there is a guideline for researchers for the filling of the form when answering the query.</p>
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	Finnish. Sources can be quoted in the original language. The COI unit is also prepared to provide answers in the other

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	national language Swedish, or a third language such as English if needed.
<p>16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?</p>	<p>Yes, many of the answers will be stored in the Tellus database for future benefit. Here is a description of the database:</p> <p>“The Tellus electronic database for country of origin information (COI) is aimed at administrative users. Country of origin information (COI) signifies information relating to the political, human rights, legislative, and geographical situation in a country. This also includes information regarding regular day-to-day life in the country.</p> <p>The COI information in the database is collected for use in the decision-making process of the Finnish Immigration Service, and it also caters to the needs of other stakeholders. It contains the information produced by the Country of Origin Information Unit, as well as selected information from the most important countries of origin.</p> <p>The country of origin information is needed in many areas of work in the Finnish Immigration Service, although it is especially important when processing applications for international protection. The information is used for supporting decision-making and to give a better understanding of the situation in the countries of origin.” Source: http://www.migri.fi/about_us/country_information_service/tellus_country_information_database</p> <p>Tellus is not a public database but requires the user to apply for a username and password, which are granted according to the respective civil servants’ information needs in his/her duties. Different user rights can be granted for the database according to what material the user is able to access (public/restricted/etc). Currently, the Tellus database has a total of around 550 users, including, in addition to users of the Finnish Immigration Service, other civil service organizations such as Local Register Offices, administrative courts and police departments.</p>
<p>17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?</p>	<p>Yes, particularly within EASO/ EURASIL meetings, IGC meetings, ECS cooperation, ICMPD, Nordic researcher meetings and personal contacts between researchers.</p>
<p>18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization</p>	<p>According to an ongoing project which is partially funded by the ERF, the COI database Tellus will soon be integrated to the EU COI Portal. During the project, Tellus is being enhanced and made more up-to-date in the sense that it will enable us to publish new formats of data, including video and audio on the front page of the database. The goal here is to create a field for key recent events and reporting, making decision making organs in the asylum process more aware of the ongoing situation in the countries of origin of asylum seekers. This will be particularly useful in the case of a quickly deteriorating security situation of a given country of origin.</p>

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
GEORGIA**

<p>1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country</p>	<p>COI specialist is a staff member of the joint project by the Ministry and the UNHCR. Agreement between the Ministry and the UNHCR is a legal ground for such activity.</p>
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>4 persons are dealing with the asylum procedure, 1 person works on COI.</p>
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>Department for Refugees and Repatriation is a beneficiary of the COI.</p>
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p align="center">-</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>The Department for Refugees and Repatriation receives the COI in one month after the inquiry.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq, Sri-Lanka</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Russian Federation, Iran, Iraq, Sri-Lanka</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>Caseworkers require the information after the interview with an asylum seeker (based on the request).</p>
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>From 5 to 10 questions.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>No.</p>

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11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	No.
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	There were no such trainings.
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	No.
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?	No.
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	Georgian.
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	No.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	Yes, it cooperates with Germany
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	The Ministry plans to create the COI division within the existing Department for Refugees and Repatriation.

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
GERMANY**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	<p>The German COI unit is called Information Centre on Asylum and Migration (ICAM), it is a unit within the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) which is located in Nuremberg and which is subordinated to the Ministry of Interior. It belongs as Division/Group 41 to the Directorate 4 'Asylum Procedure, Residence Law, Information Centre Asylum and Migration'. It was established in the early 1980s and is responsible for the provision of COI in the context of the asylum procedure.</p> <p>There is no direct national statutory obligation to establish a COI unit or to provide COI in the context of the asylum procedure but the national Asylum Procedure Act and the Administrative Procedure Act contain obligations for the BAMF to inquire into the facts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 Asylum Procedure Act: obligation to inform the applicant about the procedure, his/her rights and duties, and time limits <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • § 24 Administrative Procedures Act: obligation to consider every case-specific fact or
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	<p style="text-align: center;">circumstance</p> <p>Apart from these national legal norms at EU level the Qualification Directive 2004/83/EC (29 April 2004) contains a statutory obligation for the mandatory use of COI in the asylum procedure and refugee status determination (RSD) process. The Asylum Procedure Directive 2005/85/EC (1st December 2005) contains more details on the use of COI in the asylum procedure and RSD process.</p>
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>The BAMF has a total staff of 2.040 people (30.06.2012) working in the headquarters in Nuremberg and in the 22 branches in all German countries (Bundesländer).</p> <p>Approximately 465 people are working in the asylum procedure, 230 of them are decision makers and roundabout 235 people are engaged in special tasks in the asylum procedure (special procedures, representation at the courts).</p> <p>Roundabout 60 people are working in the ICAM, 30 of them are working as COI researches or experts. They have different professional backgrounds and qualifications such as librarians, researchers, legal practitioners, political scientists, demographers, teachers or former asylum caseworkers.</p>
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>The ICAM provides internal, external and international clients with up-to-date, relevant, objective, unbiased, and comprehensive information on the world refugee problem and global migration, mainly information on the countries of origin and countries of transit.</p> <p>Main internal clients of the COI are the decision makers and the staff working in the asylum procedure. As the ICAM is not only providing COI but also information on the whole field of migration and integration, the ICAM provides the other units of the BAMF engaged in these tasks with the relevant information.</p> <p>External users are the administrative courts dealing with asylum cases (all instances), aliens authorities and other Federal and Länder authorities, research institutions, social and welfare institutions working in the field of asylum and refugee protection as well as students or other private persons researching in the field of asylum and migration. International clients are the European Asylum and Migration authorities (EU MS and other European States such as CH, NO), especially the staff members of the COI units, UNHCR and other international organisations.</p> <p>Via internet internal, external and international clients have access to MILO, the information system of the BAMF which contains all COI (primary sources and the COI products of the ICAM and other MS) and other information in the field of asylum and migration available in the BAMF. Public documents in MILO are available for everyone, all other documents controlled by access rights .</p> <p>The case law database is publicly available against payment</p>

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	of fee through the private company Juris GmbH.
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI?</p> <p>Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>Main national NGO provider of COI in Germany is the Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration which is a co-operation network of institutions working in the field of refugee counselling and which aims to provide relevant information for the counselling institutions in the field of asylum and migration law and COI.</p> <p>Partners are: amnesty international and different social organisations such as Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Deutscher Caritasverband, Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband, Deutsches Rotes Kreuz, Diakonisches Werk der EKD, PRO ASYL, Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland. The Informationsverbund also co-operates with UNHCR. The Informationsverbund is based in Berlin and runs the website www.asyl.net with a case law database on refugee and migration law which is supported by the Federal Office. The Informationsverbund publishes the journal "Asylmagazin" with 10 editinos per year and contributes as well to the content management on ecoi.net.</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>No, we don't have such a legal deadline in our national legal framework. Nevertheless we try to answer all requests as soon as possible depending on the complexity and the level of difficulty of the requests, the existing information and the deadline set by the case workers. In case of comprehensive or complicated questions we try to answer them within 5 working days which is as well the answering time for requests in the ECS (European COI Sponsorship) framework.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>In 2011 71 per cent of all asylum applicants came from the following top ten countries of origin:</p> <p>1 Afghanistan (7.767 persons), 2 Iraq (5.831), 3 Serbia (4.579), 4 Iran (3.352), 5 Syria (2.634), 6 Pakistan (2.539), 7 Russian Federation (1.689), 8 Turkey (1.578), 9 Kosovo (1.395) and 10 Macedonia (1.131)</p> <p>January to July 2012 were:</p> <p>1 Afghanistan (4.124 persons), 2 Iraq (3.069), 3 Syria (2.246), 4 Serbia (2.233), 5 Iran (2.165), 6 Pakistan (1.790), 7 Russian Federation (1.098), 8 Macedonia (945), 9 Kosovo (856) and 10 Turkey (812)</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Most COI queries have been made in 2011 for the following 5 countries:</p> <p>1 Afghanistan (237 requests), 2 Syria (229), 3 Somalia (226), 4 Iran (224) and 5 Turkey (223)</p> <p>From January to June 2012 most queries have been made for the following 5 countries:</p> <p>1 Afghanistan (43 requests), 2 Iraq (34), 3 Syria (29), 4 Iran (28) and 5 Serbia (26)</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get</p>	<p>Caseworkers need COI in all stages of the asylum procedure, in the first (screening) interview/preparing of the interview, in the second (substantive asylum) interview, at the decision making, in the appeal procedure, in medical and other appeals</p>

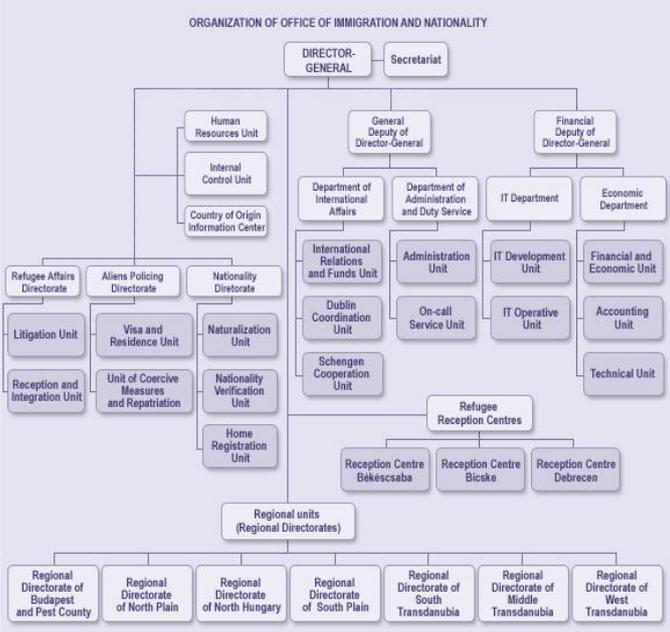
<p>information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>of a humanitarian nature and in the stage of return to the county of origin (prohibition of deportation).</p> <p>Caseworkers are encouraged to do their own research in MILO, the information platform of the BAMF as well as in the internet. They can always contact or send requests to the ICAM, in cases they couldn't find any information, not enough or not relevant or reliable information or if the requests are very comprehensive and require specific research experience, expertise or time.</p>
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>As this depends on the individual case, we can't make any statement on this question.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>There is regular feedback on the quality and promptitude of the COI products, to give you an idea on the frequency of occurrence, in one third of the requests, in cases when customers are satisfied with the information provided and with the COI products as well as in cases when they are not content.</p> <p>Apart from this we conduct in regular intervals customers surveys (every 2 years), the last was conducted in April 2012.</p>
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	<p>As mentioned in answer 8, the decision makers should conduct his own research on COI in the database system Milo as well as in the internet. The decision makers get a special training on the use of MILO in the decision making process and is supported when searching in the internet by link lists directly connected to the Milo system.</p>
<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	<p>New decision makers get a comprehensive 10-days basic training of all aspects of the asylum procedure including a COI training (role and importance of COI in the asylum procedure, COI sources – knowledge and quality assessment, research in MILO and in the internet, European co-operation and projects). A one-week follow-up training is offered and in regular intervals decision makers can participate in COI specific workshops (in general 2 days).</p> <p>At the moment the BAMF is implementing the EAC training for the decision makers, the different modules are in the process of being translated into German, the COI module is already translated and additionally used for trainings.</p> <p>Apart from these training measures the decision makers are trained on the job by experienced senior staff members. The duration of the training is dependent on the qualification and professional background of the decision maker and the countries of origin for which the decision maker is responsible.</p>
<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	<p>As mentioned in answer 1, there is no direct national legal obligation to ask for COI in German legislation but the national Asylum Procedure Act § 24 and the Administrative Procedure Act § 24 contain obligations for the BAMF to inquire into the facts. Apart from these legal norms we have to apply the EU Qualification and Asylum Procedures Directives which contain a statutory obligation for the mandatory use of COI in the asylum procedure and refugee status determination.</p>

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<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	<p>Yes, we have both.</p> <p>As mentioned decision makers are encouraged to do their own research first. If they don't find enough or relevant and reliable information, they can contact the central information desk of the ICAM as well as the respective COI experts and researchers. They can contact them by mail or phone and there is also the possibility to pose a request via MLo subsequent to their own research. We have a specific request template which is enclosed as annex 1 but the requesting person is not obliged to fill in the template. Nevertheless the requests should follow a specific scheme (indication of the relevant facts of the case related to the request, deadline for answering, already used sources).</p>
<p>15. What language is used in your COI answers?</p>	<p>We use mainly the German language for our internal and the external German clients, in the European and international context we use the English language.</p>
<p>16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?</p>	<p>Additionally to the primary COI sources all our COI products except the answers are collected in MLo. In general, we don't provide a Q&A-system in MLo, this is provided only in the context of the ECS project.</p> <p>Main own COI analysis products are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ country information („yellow brochures“) and findings („red brochures“) on many countries of origin ▪ standard text modules and contributions to operational guidance notes for more than 30 countries for asylum case workers ▪ contributions to the Briefing Notes ▪ papers on specific topics (z. B. gender-specific persecution, persecution of minorities)
<p>17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?</p>	<p>We cooperate or exchange COI with all EU MS and other European countries such as CH and NO. There are different levels of co-operation and exchange (bilateral, multilateral, within institutionalized frameworks such as the D-A-CH (Deutschland-Austria-Schweiz) and Luxemburg since June 2012) cooperation or ECS).</p> <p>We cooperate with EASO and support EASO in its starting phase by participation in the Task Force and in different working parties.</p> <p>We participate in different European networks and projects such as ECS, MedCOI (Medical Country of Origin Information) or EMN (European Migration Network) and at international level with IGC (Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees) in the Working Group COI.</p>

	<p>Since many years we have been engaged in capacity building for the new MS and candidate countries in different Twinning projects, most recently in 2008-2010: set-up of an asylum procedure system and a COI system for Turkey.</p>
<p>18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization</p>	<p>We are just in the process of redesigning our MILO system in order to better adapt it to changing needs of our customers and to offer a more user friendly surface from which all European users can benefit as well via direct access to MILO or via the Common Portal (CP) as MILO was the first database system connected to the CP.</p> <p>It is without saying that we are committed to European quality standards in the context of COI and we of course contributed to the development of the EU Common guidelines for processing COI. Nevertheless we are in the continuous process to improve the COI quality with regard to the procurement of primary sources and the publication of our COI products.</p> <p>We will continue to strengthen our cooperation efforts in the European context, especially in the cooperation with EASO. With different practical cooperation projects in the field of COI we are willing to further contribute to the harmonization of approaches and working methods and to support the establishment of CEAS.</p>

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
HUNGARY**

<p>1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country</p>	<p>In Hungary the Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) is responsible for the collection of COI. The Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) is under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior. See below the institutional organizational chart:</p> 
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<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>The Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) under the Ministry of the Interior is responsible for asylum matters. The OIN's Refugee Affairs Directorate consists of two divisions: Litigation Unit and Reception and Integration Unit. The Litigation Unit represents the Office as defendant in judicial procedures and has the task of professional supervision of the Asylum Units. The Reception and Integration Unit is responsible for the professional supervision of the Reception Centers. It also has the task to support the integration of beneficiaries of international protection.</p> <p>Asylum Units at regional directorates take the personal hearings and make decisions in cases of asylum-seekers.</p> <p>Altogether 61 persons work in the asylum branch of whom 20 employees are working in RSDP.</p> <p>The Documentation Centre is composed of 8 members, including head of unit. All COI Unit members search COI and answer queries and one of us is responsible for handling COI database and special library of the OIN.</p> <p>The members of the COI Unit have different kinds of academic qualification (teacher, librarian, specialist of international relations) and speak several foreign languages (English, German, Russian, French).</p>
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>The main users of the Unit's materials and services are asylum caseworkers (1st and 2nd instances) and colleagues of Aliens Policy Directorate. In a few cases we provide COI to courts on demand since they are authorized by law to ask our Unit to send relevant COI information.</p>
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>Apart from our COI unit the Hungarian Helsinki Committee also provides COI. Presently we do not have any common program.</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>There is a legal mention to the establishment of COI Unit in Hungary in the Government Decree on the Implementation of Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum. The independent COI Unit within OIN is mentioned as a responsible unit for collecting COI materials. In this Decree our tasks are specified and our prescribed deadline is 15 days.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>2011: Afghanistan, Kosovo, Pakistan, Syria, and Somalia</p> <p>In first months of 2012 (till 30 June): Afghanistan, Kosovo, Pakistan, Syria and Somalia</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the</p>	<p>We make distinction between COI requests and questions since one request may contain more questions. In 2011 we received 380 specific requests with 1989 questions. The most COI queries have been made in 2011: Afghanistan Pakistan,</p>

<p>data is available).</p>	<p>Iraq, Syria, Turkey.</p> <p>In 2012 (till 30 June) the most COI questions are on: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Egypt, Iran.</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>The refugee authority may disregard approaching the country information centre in the preliminary procedure, and if the status withdrawal is based on voluntary claim of the holder. In any other cases seeking the COI centre is mandatory.</p> <p>Although decision makers must obtain COI in detailed procedure. However, in some cases seeking the COI is necessary in preliminary assessment procedure. (E.g.: if an applicant states that s/he is a Palestine national who originates from Gaza Strip, the authority must ascertain –by asking country and place knowledge questions then checking the replies - whether his/her declaration is valid or not. If the reply is false, the application must be rejected as manifestly unfounded.)</p> <p>The refugee authority usually gets information by sending a request to the country origin information centre or searching in the Intranet based database of country of origin information. There is also a possibility to use external information (gathered not by the COI Centre).</p>
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>Number of the questions depends on the assessment of the case complexity. If an asylum-seeker provides different types of evidence and takes longer declaration, more questions can emerge regarding his/her flight story than in such a case where the asylum-seeker arrives without a well-founded application. In one case decision-makers usually send only one request with variable number of questions from 1 to 10. Sometimes in the judicial procedure the court obliges the authority to obtain a concrete information from COI centre regarding the flight story of the applicant, where only one question can be necessary.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>Caseworkers occasionally – it depends on the difficulty of the case - ask other inquiring questions regarding COI replies via e-mail or by phone. They usually do not send feedback to the COI unit about the usage of the COI database or COI products. We are planning to create a feedback-system for the future.</p>
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	<p>See question 8.</p>
<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	<p>There is no special training for the new colleagues, except for teaching them COI activities. This beginning period depends on many factors.</p>

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<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	<p>Yes, indeed. This obligation is legally mentioned in the Act LXXX of 2007 on Asylum and Government Decree on the Implementation of Asylum Act</p>
<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	<p>Yes, we have standard format for the response to COI.</p>
<p>15. What language is used in your COI answers?</p>	<p>Our answers are presented in Hungarian language.</p>
<p>16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?</p>	<p>Yes, we upload our COI products to a database (Country of origin database). It is accessible to all OIN staff. Colleagues have password to enter and use the whole database but only two colleagues have so-called exclusive right to load/fill up the COI DB.</p> <p>The COI DB has different directories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COI documents (main sending countries) • Other COI documents (less important countries from the OIN's point of view) • Background materials and guidelines on asylum issues • Analysis/statistics • International materials/documents • Bruxinfo <p>COI documents directory</p> <p>This directory contains subdirectories of the main countries of origin (focus countries) in Hungary (40 countries)</p> <p>The following files can be found under a specific country of origin subdirectory:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Archive • COI answers • Country information • Press review (Hungarian and foreign press) • Thematic reports • Maps <p>These files are divided into further subfiles. For example, under COI answer file the answers are listed according to year</p>

	<p>they were presented. In case of Afghanistan answers are further listed according to provinces.</p> <p>Our database has simple and advanced search function, and we are about to elaborate on thesaurus search.</p>
<p>17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?</p>	<p>Members of our Unit have taken part in EURASIL meetings and workshops and we have used the opportunity to disseminate questions via Eurasil network. We participate in the work of EASO as a member of COI Reference Group (e.g. we commented on the draft '<i>Methodology for EASO COI reports</i>').</p> <p>We took advantage of the ECS project (specific information regarding countries of origin that were sponsored by this project).</p> <p>In 2010 and 2011 in the framework of the European Return Fund we visited the COI units in Germany, Austria, Denmark and the Netherlands to study their work and the use of COI during return process. We got a thorough overview of Member States' practices and established basis for further cooperation.</p> <p>Besides, last year we executed a project co-financed by the European Return Fund with the title 'International meeting regarding sharing experiences on Iraq'. The goal of the project was to realize training for experts working with COI and return, where they could share relevant experiences in order to get a picture of Member States' return practices and receive detailed COI on Iraq.</p>
<p>18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization</p>	<p>Our future plans includes the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to organize FFM to strengthen the regional cooperation to put even more emphasis on "pro-active" COI activity to elaborate on the feedback-system regarding COI answers to make further developments on the COI Database

PARTICIPATING STATE: LATVIA	
<p>1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country</p>	<p>A by-law to the Law on the Legal Status of Aliens in the Republic of Lithuania (2004) gives the legal background of the COI unit by saying that the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other state institutions and bodies being involved, shall prepare reports on the situation in third countries and countries of origin with regard to the criteria of a safe third</p>

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	<p>country and a safe country of origin set out in the by-law. For this purpose, since 2004, additional functions to the Information Centre of the Asylum Affairs Division of the Migration Department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs had been added - to provide information to the decision-makers on asylum applicants' countries of origin or third countries, through which they arrive in Lithuania. The Centre also is responsible for other activities: administration of the Foreigners' Register, processing of statistical data and the Dublin procedure.</p>
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>There are 14 employees working in the Asylum Affairs Division of the Migration Department under the MOI. 5 of them work in the Information Centre. 3 staff members of the information Centre are in charge of producing COI reports. The COI researchers have humanitarian background (journalist, English philologists)</p>
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>Decision-makers in the Asylum Affairs Division, legal representatives of the asylum seekers and the court are active users of our COI products. The reports are also made available to other divisions in the Migration Department dealing with the status of aliens in Lithuania. They also can be publicly accessed online as they are uploaded to the national COI portal (except for the pieces of information which are categorized as classified).</p>
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>No, there isn't.</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>There is no legal deadline. The deadline for the answer to the request is a matter of agreement between the COI researcher and the decision maker. Usually decision makers set the deadline of 2 week or 1 month. COI researches usually process more than one request at a time.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Georgia, Russian Federation, Afghanistan, Kirghizia and Belarus/ Armenia</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>Georgia, Kirghizia, Russian Federation, Afghanistan and Belarus</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum</p>	<p>The decision-makers can send their requests for information</p>

<p>procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>on a certain case at any moment while they are examining the case: as soon as they are allocated a file or after they conduct an interview with the asylum seeker. Sometime they repeatedly request information on the same case, especially if a particular case is returned to the Migration department for re-examination by the second instance of asylum procedure - court.</p>
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>COI request may consist of as many questions as the worker thinks it is necessary to him/her for solving the case. One request for COI covers from 1 to 10 questions. 4-5 questions are the most frequent format for a request.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>No, there is no particular official feedback form on the COI products, however, in practice, case workers do comment on reports produced by COI researchers while deciding the case. It also comes without saying that the Court reviewing rejected cases also provide for a certain feed back on COI products by upholding the first instance negative decision or returning the case for re-examination to the first instance which in rare cases is due to COI reports to be supplemented with certain information on particular issue which has not been covered by the report.</p>
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	<p>Case workers are very much encouraged to thoroughly analyse the materials provided in COI reports by further reading on particular issues touched in the report. Following the link provided in a COI report a case worker can find the needed specific information which he/she has not included into his/her request but which could be of importance while deciding the case or such information due to time framing could not be comprehensively provided in the COI report.</p>
<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	<p>The personnel, who have been working in the field of COI, are not new people in asylum sphere, therefore, no introductory training which covers specific topics is provided for them. By performing tasks COI workers gain specific knowledge. Special courses, workshops, seminars are also of use in improving skills.</p>
<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	<p>No, there is no legal obligation.</p>
<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	<p>Yes, specific format for COI requests and replies have been established. A request contains a brief description of the case and the background of the asylum seeker is also provided in short. Then specific questions are listed. If the request is on the general situation in a country of origin, it does not contain specific questions. A COI reply is of the similar structure: if it was a request on specific questions, these questions one after another are answered; if not- an explanatory comment is given. Each COI reply ends with a disclaimer suggested by Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information</p>
<p>15. What language is used in your</p>	<p>According to the national legislation only the state language, Lithuanian, can be used as the language of all official</p>

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COI answers?	documents. Therefore, COI answers are to be translated into Lithuanian if they were prepared in some other language before they are officially attached to the case.
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	COI reports can be publicly accessed online in the national COI portal (except for the pieces of information which are categorized as classified). They are also collected in the internal site of the Migration Department.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	No, there have been no official links established with other countries as to exchanging of the COI materials. However, we have had sporadic contacts with our colleagues from other
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	No specific plans are foreseen for the future. A consistent work on the national COI portal will continue. With regard to this, a project has recently been launched which allows the COI researchers to transfer part of translation work to the translation bureau.

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	The Department on Refugees of the Asylum and Migration Office of Ministry of Interior is an authority responsible for management of asylum seekers cases, refugees and persons under humanitarian and temporary protection. The same department is also responsible for COI collection and analysis while processing asylum applications. (Article 4, 5, "Law on Asylum in Moldova" No 270 as of 18.12.2008)
2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 advisers on asylum procedure • no staff working on COI
3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?	COI beneficiaries in our country are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Advisors on asylum procedure; b. NGOs responsible for the legal support of refugees; c. Judges.
4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.	No such NGOs.
5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer	There are no such legal provisions

within a legal deadline?	
6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	<p>2011:</p> <p>1) Syria, 2) Russia, 3) Armenia, 4) Tajikistan, 5) Turkey</p> <p>2012 (7 months):</p> <p>1) Syria, 2) Afghanistan, 3) Bangladesh, 4) Russia</p> <p>5) Iran</p>
7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	<p>2011:</p> <p>1) Syria, 2) Russia, 3) Armenia, 4) Tajikistan and</p> <p>5) Turkey</p> <p>2012 (7 months):</p> <p>1) Syria, 2) Afghanistan, 3) Bangladesh, 4) Russia and</p> <p>5) Iran</p>
8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?	<p>The caseworkers need the COI on the administrative stage of the procedure, namely before the interview with the asylum seeker, as well as on the stage of decision making and consideration of the asylum application in court. COI is usually collected through the official web portals like Refworld, eoi.net, Amnesty International, Human Right Watch, UK Home Office. There is also access to the MILO COI database (Germany). The COI requests are also being sent to the Romanian side within the Protocol on cooperation between MOI Romania and MOI Moldova.</p>
9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?	<p>3-5 questions.</p>
10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?	<p>No.</p>
11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?	<p>Yes, the decision maker conducts his/her own search of COI.</p>
12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?	<p>Such training has never been organized.</p>
13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?	<p>Law of Moldova No 270 on Asylum of 18.12.2008 provides for use of COI in the decision making process as follows: Article 5. Functions of the Department on Refugees; Article 43. Requirements for consideration of the asylum application; Article 56. Analysis of grounds provided by asylum applicant;</p>

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	Article 57. Collection of the information that is significant for making decision on the asylum application.
14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?	The structure and format for the COI specific answers is foreseen in internal instructions.
15. What language is used in your COI answers?	Romanian.
16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	There is no national COI database.
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Germany – MILO database. • Romania – COI web portal within the framework of Cooperation Protocol between MOI Romania and MOI Moldova.
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	<p>a. Establishment of the COI unit within the Department on Refugees (2 persons).</p> <p>b. Creation of the national COI database.</p>

**PARTICIPATING STATE:
POLAND**

1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	Polish COI Unit functions as one of the units of the Department for Refugee Procedures of the Office for Foreigners. It was established in 2001 by internal decision of Director of the Department for Refugee Procedures, accepted by President of the Office for Foreigners and mirrored by internal regulation.
2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).	<p>The whole Department for Refugee Procedures, including secretariats, Dublin Unit and COI Unit counts 70 persons.</p> <p>COI Unit currently consists of 10 persons (1 serves as manager, researcher, analyst and documentalist; 8 as researchers, analysts and documentalists; 1 is librarian).</p> <p>In general, tasks are divided among the researchers on geographical ground.</p> <p>Staff members of COI Unit are required to have at least master degree (preferably, but not necessary, in the field of political sciences or regional studies). As for foreign language knowledge, Russian is required for those who conduct the research concerning former Soviet Union region and English for researchers covering Asia and Africa. Other languages are an asset.</p>

<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	<p>The main customers of COI Unit are caseworkers of the Department for Asylum Procedures (1st instance). They have access to COI system/database and COI unit researchers answer their requests.</p> <p>Other important customer is Council for Refugees (2nd instance), which also has access to COI database. In some cases COI unit make the research for them.</p> <p>Another users of COI unit's services in Poland are Voivodship Offices (in the frame of regularization procedures). For the moment they don't have access to COI system/database, but can send to COI unit requests via e-mail or fax and COI unit's researchers prepare answers for them.</p>
<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI?</p> <p>Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	<p>Such local NGO COI provider in Poland is not known to us.</p>
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>2011: Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Belarus, Ukraine.</p> <p>2012.01-06: Russian Federation, Georgia, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Belarus.</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>2011: Russian Federation, Belarus, Georgia, Iraq, Democratic Republic of Congo.</p> <p>2012. 01-06: Russian Federation, Belarus, Georgia, Iraq, Iran/Pakistan.</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>Caseworkers need COI at every stage of the asylum procedure.</p> <p>They have permanent access to COI system/database in which different kind of COI is stored (reports, answers for queries, maps etc.), as well as to our COI library.</p> <p>What concerns specifically requests for COI these are usually sent to COI unit after interview with asylum seeker, for the purpose of verification of the applicant's statements and assessment of his/her situation in the broader context of situation in country of origin, as well as evaluation of potential problems he/she could face after the return.</p> <p>Sometimes specific COI is requested also as an assistance to prepare the interview.</p>

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<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>Difficult to say how many questions per case decision maker is formulating as quite often one answer to request is used in many other similar cases.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>Caseworkers have a possibility to send the feedback to COI Unit via electronic database (system of comments). However such a possibility is not used very often. In less official way the comments are much often transferred personally (most of caseworkers have direct contact with COI researchers).</p>
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	<p>Case worker can make his own research.</p>
<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	<p>There is no an organised system of internal trainings for new COI Unit's staff. Nevertheless it should be stressed that 7 of 9 COI researchers are persons with long work experience (most of them work in COI Unit from the very beginning of its existence). Every COI expert received ACCORD training, the majority of them had EAC training as well. As for new members of COI, the Head of the Unit introduce them into functioning of COI database, methodology of COI research and the obligations of COI staff member. And last, but not least, other COI experts share with them their experience.</p>
<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	<p>In fact there is no such an legal obligation. But the use of COI arise implicitly from the Procedural Directive which stipulate that the decision should be based on precise and current information about the situation in the countries of origin.</p>
<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	<p>The answers of COI Unit follow a common format. The sources are enumerated below the answer, with the indications in the text to specify where the information comes from. Document with full list of all source materials, as well as their text (or its fragments) is attached as separate file and can be additionally consulted by caseworker.</p>
<p>15. What language is used in your COI answers?</p>	<p>Polish</p>
<p>16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?</p>	<p>Yes, COI products of Polish COI Unit are stored in COI database. The COI system we use consists of database, in which documents conc. countries of origin are stored but also of module of questions and answers, library catalogue and forum.</p>
<p>17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?</p>	<p>During last years our COI Unit took part in many international projects and initiatives. The most important were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European COI Sponsorship, ECS (2007-2011). In the frame of the project our COI Unit was responsible for Russian Federation/Chechnya (together with The Netherlands) and supplied other European countries with materials and information about Russian Federation/Chechnya (on their request), as well as served as co-organizer of EURASIL workshops on

	<p>Russian Federation. Within the frame of the ECS project Poland was also involved (as a member of Reference Group) in preparation of Common EU FFM Guidelines;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GDISC ERIT Ukraine Project (2008-2010) - together with Slovakia we were responsible for asylum procedures module, including COI. In the frame of the project we supported newly established Ukrainian COI Unit; - Common EU COI guidelines (2006-2007) – with 7 other European countries; - ICMPD/CIS project (2004-2005); - ARGO Report on Chechnya project (2003) together with Netherlands, Belgium and Czech Republic. <p>Apart from that members of our COI unit regularly took part in EURASIL meetings and workshops, as well as in many other meetings/workshops organised ad-hoc.</p> <p>Additionally, there was and it is vivid cooperation on bilateral level - study visits, exchange of information etc.</p> <p>What is more, the majority of FFM reports and thematic reports ordered by Polish COI Unit (written by external experts) are translated into English and are available on the Office's website: http://www.udsc.gov.pl/Wybrane,opracowania,nt.,krajow,pochozenia,1482.html</p>
<p>18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization</p>	<p>Further development of COI system/database and COI library, answering new queries, FFMs, cooperation with COI units of other EU countries.</p>

PARTICIPATING STATE: ROMANIA	
<p>1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country</p>	
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	
<p>3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?</p>	

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<p>4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI?</p> <p>Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.</p>	
<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	
<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	
<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	
<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	
<p>15. What language is used in your COI answers?</p>	
<p>16. Are your COI products</p>	

collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?	
17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?	
18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization	

PARTICIPATING STATE: SWEDEN	
<p>1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country</p>	<p>The COI-unit organizationally sorts under the Legal Control Division, which is headed by the Legal Director of the SMB.</p> <p>A specialized COI-unit was established as part of a larger reform implemented in 2006 (government bill 2004/05:170). The main element of the reform was that the function of the previous review authority was overtaken by administrative courts. With the introduction of a court procedure, new demands were placed on availability and transparent use of COI. Thus, the COI-database was made available online to all parties and the public, and COI- and legal issues were organizationally separated within the SMB by the establishment of a COI-unit.</p>
<p>2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).</p>	<p>Operational staff within the Division of Asylum Examination: 759 (30.06.2012)</p> <p>Staff within the COI-unit</p> <p>COI-analysts: 7</p> <p>COI-researchers: 5</p> <p>COI-analysts have a university degree in either law or social science, usually with a background working with asylum examination. Typically, COI-researchers have a university degree in information science.</p> <p>Analysts as well as researchers are geographically specialized.</p> <p>Analysts conduct intelligence by collecting and analyzing information regarding countries of origin, provide expert support to the management and operational divisions of SMB, produce thematic reports and conduct Fact Finding Missions to countries of origin.</p> <p>Researchers conduct intelligence in order to identify reports to be published in the database, produce reports/answers to information queries made by case workers and administrate</p>

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	the database.
3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?	Primary beneficiaries of COI are case workers within SMB, Courts, and applicants and their legal counsels.
4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.	No.
5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?	No.
6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	2011 Afghanistan (4122), Somalia (3981), Serbia (2705), Eritrea (1647), Iraq (1633) Total number of persons: 29648 2012 (January-July) Somalia (2951), Afghanistan (2514), Syria (1855), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1275) and Serbia (1186) Total number of persons: 20450
7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).	2011 Iraq (43 COI queries), Syria (22), Serbia (20), Iran (19), Occupied Palestinian Territory (17) 2012 (January-July) Iraq (21), Syria (17) Occupied Palestinian Territory (15) Kosovo (14) Afghanistan (10)
8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?	Case workers need COI before interviewing asylum seekers and, mainly, before making a decision. The COI-unit administrates a COI-database (Lifos). Case workers are expected to make their own searches in Lifos as well as in other databases (for example Refworld and Ecoi). If they are unable to find the needed information, or if they need guidance on how to interpret the information etc., they can send an information request to the COI-unit.
9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?	Case workers are expected to research on their own before requesting information. In most cases decisions are made without consulting the COI-unit, but instead utilizing Lifos. An information request is usually, but not necessarily, limited to one question.
10. Is there any feed-back on the	There is no continuous, systematic feed-back on COI

<p>quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>products. However, in 2011 and 2012 the COI-unit has completed two separate evaluations with internal respondents, one covering the products of the COI-unit and another concerning the database Lifos.</p>
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	<p>Yes, case workers are expected to make their own searches in Lifos as well as in other databases before making queries to the COI-unit.</p>
<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	<p>All case workers are offered half-day training on how to use Lifos. The role and use of COI in asylum examination is also included in introduction courses on drafting and decision making and evidence assessment, as well as through Problem Based Learning.</p>
<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	<p>The COI-unit has developed standards, which correspond to the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information, for all its reports and products.</p>
<p>15. What language is used in your COI answers?</p>	<p>With the exception of reports on joint Fact Finding Missions, Swedish is used in all COI-products.</p>
<p>16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?</p>	<p>Since 1998 SMB administrates a database, Lifos, which contains approximately 8,600 COI and legal documents. The legal documentation covers judgments from national migration courts and international courts such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Committee against Torture and the Court of Justice of the European Union, as well SMB comments and guidelines. With regard to COI, products from the COI-unit are published in Lifos, but most of the content is from external sources: the Swedish Foreign Ministry and Swedish Embassies in countries of origin, UN-organizations, national and international NGOs and migration authorities of other states.</p> <p>In 2006 Lifos was made available online to external users (see above). More than 80 percent of all documentation is available externally, while some, mainly classified, documents are restricted to authorized, internal users only.</p> <p>In 2011 a new technical platform to the database, which harmonize with ongoing developments in the EU, was launched.</p>
<p>17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?</p>	<p>The COI-unit regularly exchanges information with other countries in different forums. In addition, several Fact Finding Missions have been conducted jointly with other European Union member states, Norway and Switzerland.</p>
<p>18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization</p>	<p>Several areas of development have been identified and a number of plans/measures are currently pending decisions. These include:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the number and further improve the availability of national and international migration-related judgments. - Develop “Country portals” on the most common countries of origin as part of the current database. These portals would present basic facts about the countries, links to important COI-reports and national and international judgments etc.
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PARTICIPATING STATE: United Kingdom	
1. Please describe the institutional setup and legal background of the COI unit in your country	<p>Country of Origin Information (COI) Service sits within the Strategy and Intelligence Directorate in the UK Border Agency.</p> <p>It has no legal foundation and simply exists as an administrative unit within the Agency.</p>
2. Indicate the available number of the staff working within the asylum procedure and please indicate information regarding COI researchers(number, specialization, qualifications etc.).	<p>The UK Border Agency has around 13,000 staff. Of these, around 1,000 are directly involved in asylum procedures.</p> <p>COI Service’s full complement consists of 18 staff: one head of unit; two group managers; eight senior country researchers; six country researchers; and one office manager.</p> <p>The researchers are divided into two broad groups covering Africa and Asia. Within each group there are four research teams each comprised of a senior country researcher and a country researcher. Each researcher has responsibility for one or two main countries (i.e. those countries generating the top 20 asylum claims in the UK). Research teams also cover a number of ‘minor’ countries.</p> <p>Staff are not required to possess particular academic qualifications. All are, however, civil servants and will have been required to pass exams to enter the civil service. They will also have had to apply for and been interviewed for the role as a researcher in COI Service.</p>
3. Who are the COI beneficiaries in your country?	<p>All officials involved in the asylum decision making process. Primarily decision makers (caseworkers and presenting officers) and policy officers, but also those involved in enforcement and removal of failed asylum seekers.</p> <p>Non-asylum case workers may also use our service on occasion.</p>
4. Apart from your COI unit is there also a local NGO provider of COI? Please name it and please indicate if you have common programs.	<p>No, there are not.</p> <p>There are, however, organizations that undertake research for asylum applicants (and their lawyers), however they charge for this service for which applicants may be receive state legal aid to pay.</p>

<p>5. According to the national legal framework is the COI unit compelled to provide an answer within a legal deadline?</p>	<p>No, it isn't.</p>
<p>6. Please name the first five countries on the number of persons seeking asylum in your country in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>2011 Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Eritrea</p> <p>2012 (January to March) Pakistan, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and India</p>
<p>7. Please name the first five countries for which most COI queries have been made in 2011 (and first months of 2012 if the data is available).</p>	<p>April 2011 to March 2012 Sri Lanka (82 requests received), Iran (73), Pakistan (72), Afghanistan (63) and Nigeria (58)</p>
<p>8. At which stage of the asylum procedure do the caseworkers need country of origin information? How do they get information (e.g. send requests; database system)?</p>	<p>Decision makers may require COI at all stages of the asylum process, but mainly at the first instance interview and decision stages.</p> <p>COI Service produces COI reports on the 20 countries that generate the most asylum claims in the UK. All of these reports are published on the UK Border Agency website. We also produce bulletins and thematic papers, most of which are only published on the Home Office's intranet.</p> <p>In addition, we have an information request service, whereby decision makers can send a query to a country researcher who will provide a response within an agreed deadline (usually one or three days). The responses are placed on the Home Office intranet.</p>
<p>9. How many questions per case is the decision maker formulating when asking for COI?</p>	<p>Not able to provide a definitive answer. It will vary from case to case depending the claim, country (and available country information), experience of the decision maker, etc.</p>
<p>10. Is there any feed-back on the quality and promptitude of the COI products? If yes, how often?</p>	<p>Feedback is largely ad hoc. We conducted a survey of our users in 2011, which provided useful data. We also receive individual feedback from users on irregular basis.</p> <p>COI Service's country information products are subject to external scrutiny by the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information, which commissions independent 'experts' to review our products. The Group reports its findings to the Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration (the Agency's ombudsmen). All reviews of our products and minutes of meetings are available on the Chief Inspector's website: http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/</p>
<p>11. Does the decision maker make his own research on COI?</p>	<p>Sometimes</p>

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<p>12. How long is the induction training for newly hired staff regarding COI?</p>	<p>All but one member of staff have undertaken the 'ACCORD' training course; the exception has just undertaken a variation of this course under the European Asylum Curriculum which funded by the Commission. The course runs for five weeks: four/five weeks e-learning and one day in the class room.</p> <p>No other specific COI training is provided but there may be other instruction on COI-relevant matters, such as use of statistics.</p>
<p>13. Is the asylum authority legally obliged to ask for COI?</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p>14. Do you have a structure and a format for your COI specific answers?</p>	<p>Yes. We have a standard template and naming convention, and there is also house style and responses must conform to our remit of providing up to date, accurate, relevant, balanced and impartial information. However, the actual structure may vary depending on the issue being covered.</p>
<p>15. What language is used in your COI answers?</p>	<p>English</p>
<p>16. Are your COI products collected in a database (if yes, please describe it)?</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>17. Does your country cooperate or exchange information with other countries with regard to country of origin information?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>18. Please indicate future plans regarding COI in your organization</p>	<p>There are no general or specific plans. We hope to continue to develop and improve how we produce country information</p>