EASO

Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology

June 2019

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European Asylum Support Office

EASO
Country of Origin
Information (COI)
Report Methodology

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Contents

Introduction

What is Country of Origin Information (COI)?

Country of Origin Information (COI) refers to information about countries of origin, habitual residence, and transit or return countries used in procedures for the individual assessment of applications for international protection. COI may also be used in the context of non-asylum related migration cases. COI aims to answer questions about countries of origin relating to, for example, the socio-economic, legal, political, human rights, conflict, and humanitarian situation at a given time.

COI facilitates and supports decision-making processes, but does not dictate decisions. It is distinct from country guidance and legal assessments. COI constitutes evidence in the international protection procedure and is important to help making a fact-based assessment.

EASO's role in COI

In EASO's founding Regulation[1] the duties of the agency are described. This methodology will be updated as appropriate when the new Regulation on the European Union Agency for Asylum would enter into force.

Article 4 relates to COI and describes EASO's responsibility in the gathering of relevant, reliable, accurate and up-to date information on countries of origin and the drafting of reports on countries of origin.

Furthermore, EASO is responsible for 'the development of a common format and a common methodology for presenting, verifying and using information on countries of origin' and for 'the analysis of information on countries of origin in a transparent manner with a view to fostering convergence of assessment criteria, and, where appropriate, making use of the results of meetings of one or more working parties. That analysis shall not purport to give instructions to EU+ countries[2] about the grant or refusal of applications for international protection.'

In Art 31(6)(d) of the EASO Regulation, EASO's Executive Director is made responsible for the drafting of COI reports.

For EASO, the production of COI is an important tool in the practical cooperation with and between EU+ countries.

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[1] REGULATION (EU) No 439/2010 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 19 May 2010 establishing a European Asylum Support Office; In the Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Union Agency for Asylum and repealing Regulation (EU) No 439/2010 it is defined that: 'the European Union Agency for Asylum should ensure a more structured and streamlined production of information on countries of origin at the level of the European Union. It is necessary for the Agency to gather information and draw up reports providing for country of origin information by making use of European networks on country of origin information so as to avoid duplication and create synergies with national reports. Furthermore, to ensure convergence in the assessment of applications for international protection and the nature and quality of protection granted, the Agency should, together with Member States, engage in and develop a common analysis providing guidance on the situation in specific countries of origin.' In a chapter on Information on countries of origin at Union level, it is foreseen that the Agency shall be a centre for gathering relevant, reliable, accurate and up-to date information on countries of origin. It shall draw up and regularly update reports and other products, making use of all relevant sources of information. Furthermore, the Agency should develop a common format and a common methodology including terms of reference, in line with the requirements of Union law on asylum, for developing reports and other products with information on countries of origin at the level of the Union. And finally, to foster convergence in applying the assessment criteria established in Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, the Agency shall coordinate efforts among Member States to engage in and develop a common analysis providing guidance on the situation in specific countries of origin.

[2] EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.

Target users

In line with its mandate, EASO's target users for COI reports include case workers, COI researchers, and policy-makers in national determining authorities; courts and tribunals responsible for examining and assessing applications for international protection; as well as EU Institutions, bodies and agencies.

COI methodology

The EASO COI report methodology builds on the Common EU Guidelines for processing COI (April 2008), the EU common guidelines on (Joint) Fact Finding Missions (November 2010) (for oral sources), and the ACCORD Training Manual: Researching Country of Origin Information (2013 Edition).

This methodology is a public document and was developed for the purpose of producing and publishing different types of EASO COI reports. The use of this methodology is binding for EASO COI reports. While the EASO COI Report Methodology first of all intends to support the development of EU-level COI, EU countries may wish to extend its application also to national COI products.

The first version of this COI report methodology was published in June 2012. Since then, EASO has developed a portfolio of distinct types of COI reports, depending on specific user needs and available resources (see chapter on production process). As a result, EASO identified the need to clarify certain concepts and revise the methodology. A working group was formed by EASO composed of COI experts from 7 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovak Republic, Sweden), who discussed the key issues and provided input for the revision.

The new draft of the methodology was sent for comments to EASO's COI Strategic Network[3], UNHCR and civil society organisations specialised in producing COI. Finally, EASO organised a COI methodology conference in Brussels on 15-16 November 2017 with COI practitioners from the EU+ countries, international organisations, and civil society. At the conference, EASO facilitated discussions and sought feedback from participants on aspects of the new methodology.

Taking into account the results of these consultations, the revised methodology was finalised and endorsed by the EASO Management Board on 29 May 2019.

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[3] EASO's Strategic Network (StratNet) is composed of the Heads of COI Units or responsible persons for COI in the EU+ countries.

1. Guiding principles for COI

The production of EASO COI reports within the framework of a standardised process aims to guarantee the overall quality and acceptance by the target users.

The following guiding principles constitute a code of conduct for participants in each phase of the COI production process: initiation; research (selection and validation of sources and information); drafting (presentation of information); quality review; and publication. They are defined and illustrated with examples below. In each phase of this process, EASO aims to cooperate with EU+ countries in order to meet target users' needs and share the burden through joint efforts to produce COI.

1.1 Neutrality and Objectivity

COI should be produced in a neutral manner without seeking to favour a particular outcome or conclusion. Those involved in the production process shall act impartially with regard to anyone's interest.

Objectivity is the quality of being fact-based and not influenced by emotions, speculation, personal or group-based prejudices, interests or biases. COI should aim for the highest degree of objectivity possible.

Examples of the application of the principles of neutrality and objectivity include: (1) developing the terms of reference by examining different relevant sides of the defined topic without prioritising one side in order to manipulate the findings of the research; (2) aiming at consulting a well-balanced range of sources in order to reflect different perspectives; (3) using a neutral tone in language. These and other examples are further elaborated in the respective chapters on the different production phases.

1.2 Relevance and Usability

Relevance means the quality of being closely connected to the fact, event, or matter in question. COI should be relevant for the needs of the target users, mostly for the assessment of international protection needs.

Usability refers to the ease of use. In this regard, the language of the report should be guided by the target users. The same applies to the structure of the report which should be logical and clearly arranged. Terminology used by sources and in the EASO COI report should be clearly explained.

Examples of the application of these principles include: (1) basing the terms of reference on questions rooted in legal concepts of refugee and human rights law or related to material facts in the caseload; (2) avoiding an abundance of background information and selecting only time-relevant information; (3) taking into account that target users may not be native speakers and therefore using plain and clear language. These and other examples are further elaborated in the respective chapters on the different production phases.

1.3 Transparency and Publicity

Transparency refers to the quality of being clear and open about the methods for how research decisions were made, information was obtained, assessed, and presented.

Examples of the application of these principles include: (1) adequate and visible terms of reference, an introduction and a disclaimer explaining how, why, and for whom the report was drafted; (2) making every piece of information traceable to the original/primary source; (3) making EASO COI reports publicly accessible on the EASO COI Portal, in order to guarantee equal access to information.

These and other examples are further elaborated in the respective chapters on the different production phases.

1.4 Validity and Quality

Validity is the quality of being acceptable in meeting the needs of the target users and of being methodologically, logically and factually sound. This is done through guaranteeing quality standards and cross-checking information as explained in the relevant section of this methodology and ultimately by implementing a quality control mechanism.

2. Initiation process

The initiation or update of EASO COI reports may be triggered by EASO's Strategic COI Network members, COI Specialist Network members[4], the Council of the EU, the European Commission or the European Parliament.

EASO can also initiate reports itself to meet COI needs identified in EASO's mandate and work programme related to: Practical Cooperation; Country Guidance; Asylum Support; Training; Operational Support; and External Dimension activities.

EASO has set up a standardised country and content determination procedure, which includes generating and reviewing quantitative and qualitative data, aimed at identifying the information needs of the defined target users. A two layer approach is chosen for the determination of the most relevant countries of origin at a European level. In a first layer, EASO studies quantitative data on caseload and decision rates. The findings of this layer form the caseload-relevant framework for discussions held in the second layer of the system, in which the stakeholders mentioned in previous paragraphs give input and identify specific COI priorities and needs. Once the country of origin and the topic of a COI report has been determined, the terms of reference (ToR) are defined.

2.1 Types of EASO COI reports

EASO has developed three types of COI reports:

1. **Country Overview reports** provide an overview of a wide range of topics relevant for international protection considerations on the country of origin.

2. **Country Focus reports** provide information on a selection of specific topics relevant for international protection considerations. The range of topics is less comprehensive than those in the Country Overview reports.

3. **Topical reports** provide information on one specific topic in a country or region.

This list is not exhaustive and other types of COI reports may be developed in the application of this report methodology.

2.2 Terms of Reference (ToR)

The terms of reference (ToR) are the framework and the backbone of the report. They contain the general topics as well as subtopics or research questions that should be addressed in the report. The ToR aim to address the information needs of the target users. EASO defines the ToR in cooperation with the participants in the production process taking into account input from COI Specialist Networks and/or target users.

The report should be consistent with the key elements of the ToR, unless it is clearly explained in the introduction why certain topics could not be included. For the sake of transparency, the ToR are added as an annex to the report.

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[4] EASO established COI Specialist Networks composed of national COI specialists from EU+ countries.

2.3 Production process

The EASO production process for COI reports includes five phases: 1/ preparation; 2/ researching; 3/ drafting; 4/ quality control; and 5/ publication.

In the **preparatory phase**, tasks and timeframes for each phase are set in consultation with participants in the production process. If the COI supports a particular process or activity (e.g. development of Country Guidance, delivery of operational support, etc.), the timeframes should be aligned with the deadlines or delivery date of that process or activity. EASO finalises the agreed timeframes in a roadmap or a plan for the production which is communicated to the participants. Where (co-)drafters and reviewers are COI researchers from national COI units, their involvement in the process shall be explicitly approved by their national head of unit.

In the **researching and drafting phases**, EASO can work in the following ways, or in a combination thereof:

Joint production: In this case, usually within the framework of a COI Specialist Network, participant(s) and EASO agree to take up roles in a joint drafting process; EASO will select individual participant(s) for co-drafting the report. Participants will be those who have proven solid COI research skills and a good level of knowledge of the relevant country of origin.

Europeanisation: In this case, EASO agrees to publish a national COI report offered by an EU+ country as an EASO product. If the national COI report is in need of updating or does not fully cover all identified information needs, the information in this report may be complemented by some additional research.

In-house drafting: EASO itself can draft COI reports when internal capacity and expertise on a given country of origin and/or topic is available.

Outsourcing: When EU+ or EASO capacity and expertise is not available, EASO can outsource the production of a COI report to an external COI service provider.

In the **quality control phase**, a peer review is done by COI researchers from EU+ countries and EASO, following specific guidelines for peer review. In addition, the report can be submitted for a quality review to UNHCR, and/or other external experts together with specific guidelines for the review. EASO organises editing and proofreading. EASO performs a final review of the content of the report before publication.

In the **publication phase**, EASO publishes the reports via the EASO COI Portal and announces the publication on its website with a press release.

3. Researching and drafting COI

The production of EASO COI reports involves an analytical process which starts at the preparatory phase and is guided by the principles outlined above. Analysis is the neutral evaluation of an issue or problem, usually made by breaking it down into its constituent parts, organising and describing these parts, and identifying their inter-relationships.

The COI analytical process underlies the whole research cycle and involves developing terms of reference and appropriate research questions, conducting research, selecting and validating sources and information, evaluating information and determining relationships between information gathered, and presenting a synthesised, logically organised report on the results.

Stages in the COI analytical process

- Decide which topic, subtopics and research questions need to be addressed.
- Define the ToR and structure of a COI report, by breaking down the topic(s) into constituent parts.
- Research is carried out in accordance with the ToR. Deviations from the ToR and the reasons for that should be clearly mentioned in the introduction.
- Decide on research strategies, where to search, and which sources and information are relevant for the topic.
- Sources and information are assessed against quality standards.
- Throughout the research, researchers use their critical analysis skills to select relevant information, validate information, and understand relationships between elements in a topic.
- Decide how to present the information, by analysing the information found, organising it further by topics and subtopics.
- Synthesise information into a logically organised, cohesive final report that reflects the ToR.

3.1 Sources and information

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

3.1.1 Quality standards for sources and information

All sources and the information they provide are selected, assessed and validated against the following COI quality standards:

Relevance	Relevance means the quality of being closely connected to the fact, event, or matter in question.
Reliability	Reliability means the quality of being trustworthy to the matter, fact or event.
Objectivity	Objectivity means the quality of being fact-based and not influenced by emotions, speculation, personal or group-based prejudices, interests or biases.
Accuracy	Accuracy means the quality of being precise, undistorted, and in conformity with the factual reality.
Currency	Currency means that information is time-relevant, up-to-date and/or the most recent information available and where the events in question have not changed since the release of the information.
Traceability	Traceability means the extent to which the primary and/or original source of a piece of information can be identified.
Transparency	Transparency is the quality of being clear, intelligible, and unequivocal.

It is not possible to order these criteria into a hierarchy. Their degree of importance depends on the topics being researched. If some of these criteria are not met this does not mean that the information cannot be used. For instance, the objectivity of the information is generally considered to be very important. However, in certain cases subjective or partial information may be used if other quality standards are met, but it would be necessary to indicate this bias.

The ways to guarantee these quality standards are explained in the following sections.

3.1.2 Selection and validation of sources

Definition of sources

For the purpose of this methodology, sources are defined as follows.

A *source* is a medium, person or institution producing information:

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

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

- A *secondary source* reproduces or refers to information from the original source (or other secondary sources).

> Example 1:
>
> An eyewitness to an event who is interviewed by COI unit (A) is the primary source. The COI unit (A) who drafts a report using the interview with the eye-witness is the original source. Another COI unit (B) quoting the COI unit's (A) report is a secondary source.
>
> In a COI report, reference is made to the COI unit's (A) report, as the eyewitness is not directly accessible to other COI researchers.

Source assessment

Many sources may provide information that can be relevant to the international protection procedure. This means that sources should not be excluded without further consideration and assessment.

Source assessment is the process of thoroughly and critically evaluating a source against the mentioned quality standards, by way of asking the following questions:

> **Who** is providing the information? Is this clear or is the source anonymous? What is their reputation? Does the source have specific knowledge that makes them an 'expert' on the issue at hand? Does the source have a known bias? What is the context in which the source operates?
>
> **What** information is provided? What is the real content/substance of the information produced? To what extent is it fact-based and documented? Is it delivered independently of the motivation of the source?
>
> **Why** are they providing this information? What is the agenda or mandate of the source? Does the source have a specific interest?
>
> **How** is the information presented? How is it formulated? Is the material presented in an objective and transparent way? Is it clear what research methods are used? How is the information gathered by the source?
>
> **When** was the information gathered and when was it provided?

All sources should be assessed and validated as guided by the above mentioned questions. Sources well known to the target users usually do not need a description (e.g. United Nations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International), but when any of the above questions lead to validity questions in view of the quality standards, a description based on these questions has to be included. Sources which may not be well known, such as academic experts or local organisations, require a more elaborate description.

Preference for primary/original sources

Where possible, the drafter should refer to the primary source. Otherwise, every effort should be made to refer to the original source. This will help to avoid round tripping (see glossary), false corroboration and misquoting of information. It should be borne in mind that primary sources may inadvertently or intentionally provide false information, for instance due to language/translation problems or to political opinions. Therefore, even information provided by original/primary sources must be assessed.

Where need arises and where possible, additional primary sources should be consulted directly. For example, interviews by telephone/Skype, email, or during a fact-finding mission.

Use of multiple and various sources

In general it is important to search for as wide a range of sources as possible which reflect different viewpoints (e.g. governmental, media, international organisations, NGOs), as this will help to ensure a balance of information is obtained and presented in the report.

Reference is made to the [section](#) on cross-checking and corroboration of information.

Use of public sources versus anonymous sources

As a general rule sources of information used in the report should be named and publicly accessible. However, there may be situations where this is not possible, for instance where a primary source has been contacted directly and their personal security may be put at risk by publication of their details. The safety of the source should always be the first consideration.

In some cases it may be possible to cite the name of the organisation the person represents. Some sources may not wish to be named or linked to a particular organisation. If a source wishes to be referred to anonymously this can be done by describing to the extent possible the type and background of the source, e.g. its position/role/title, mandate, reputation and experience, methodologies used, and operational presence/reporting capacity.

As COI units of EU+ countries follow research best practice as set out in the Common EU Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information (COI) and the EU Common Guidelines on (Joint) Fact Finding Missions, reports of those units can be used as original sources where the primary source is anonymous.

No hierarchy of sources

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

Social media

Social media are web applications for the creation of online communities to share content, to exchange and express ideas and opinions. Examples of social media include social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn); weblogs; microblogs (Twitter); wikis (Wikipedia); filesharing sites (Youtube, Flickr); location-based services (e.g. Panoramio, Wikimapia); etc. Because this content can be user-generated, and because of the speed of the communication or content, particular care must be taken to ensure that any source on social media is assessed following the quality standards described above.

Content available on social media accounts is often not submitted to the same research rigour and editorial process as established media or other sources. Therefore, the risk may be higher that content is inaccurate, biased, intentionally misleading, or [dubious](#). For this reason, cross-checking of information found via social media accounts is very important. Also the identification of the source reporting via social media accounts requires particular attention and different methods are available on different platforms, for example, verified accounts on Facebook and Twitter indicated with **✓**.

3.1.3 Selection and validation of information

The information used from sources must be validated against the [quality standards](#) mentioned earlier. Validation of the information can be done by way of scrutinising the origin of information provided by

every source, and by way of cross-checking, corroborating and balancing the information with information of other sources.

Cross-checking involves checking a range of different sources to test whether different and unrelated sources report similar or different information about a fact/issue/topic. Cross-checking is a means to corroborate or contrast information.

Corroborating information supports or strengthens the accuracy and reliability of information by finding matching information from multiple and different kinds of sources with accounts of what occurred that are independent of one another.

For example, cross-checking involves comparing different reporting on an issue, such as accounts by governmental, media and NGO sources, who may corroborate the same number of casualties in an attack.

Care should be taken to avoid the danger of round tripping of information and false corroboration. If a source is not transparent about the origin of its information, it can be difficult to identify false corroboration and round tripping.

Round tripping occurs when secondary sources cite each other instead of referring to the original/primary source. Failure to identify round tripping can lead to the use of information that may not be as current as it seems, or to distortion of the information.

Example 2:

A human rights report (2004) is used in a government report (2005) which is later on quoted by a newspaper (2006). A COI report referring to the 2006 newspaper article but not identifying the 2004 human rights report would be an example of failure to identify round tripping of information.

False corroboration occurs when a piece of information appears to be corroborated by information from different sources while in fact the information stems from the same primary/original source.

In the example above, if the COI report would refer to the human rights report and the government report to corroborate the newspaper article of 2006, that would be an example of false corroboration. Another example of false corroboration is when a COI report uses two different newspaper articles to corroborate an incident, while they both refer to content from one and the same media agency (for example AFP, Reuters).

The need to cross-check and corroborate information depends on the nature of the information and the sources. The need is especially strong in certain cases:

- when it concerns a core matter in an application for international protection or a core research question
- when describing a major trend or a significant situation
- when the information does not fulfil some of the abovementioned quality criteria
- when information stems from anonymous sources.

For other kinds of information, this need is lower or not required, such as for information concerning:

- an obvious fact (e.g. London is the capital of the UK; Saddam Hussein was President of Iraq)
- illustrative events, facts or incidents that serve as a corroboration of a more general trend or development described by more general human rights sources. In this case, it is not always necessary to cross-check each incident.

> Example 3: If an attack by insurgents in a certain village in the summer of 2017 belongs to the core of a claim for international protection, then there is a strong need to cross-check the information found about such an attack.
>
> However, if the same attack is used in a larger report on the security situation and is presented in a chronology to illustrate the general trend of insurgent attacks in 2017, there is less or no need to corroborate each single event.

3.1.4 Specific issues

If information is found from only a single source

If information from only one source can be found, and the information is of a kind that requires cross-checking and corroboration (see chapter on selection and validation of information), the context of that source should be assessed, such as:

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

- whether the country has an active and free press;

- whether censorship or self-censorship takes place;

- whether the source in question is uniquely placed to document the information at hand;

The fact that only one source could be found should in this case be stated in the report. The source should be briefly described, and the context explained accounting for the above elements. Other sources consulted can be mentioned if necessary.

If no information can be found

If no information is found (e.g. as to the question of whether a certain event took place) this does not necessarily mean that an event/person/issue did not /or does not occur or exist. The lack of information should be stated, referring to the main sources consulted. This will assist the reader in understanding the context and deciding what weight can be attached to the lack of information.

If contradictory information is found

Relevant and contradictory information on a certain subject should be presented together in the report. The source assessment should be explicitly presented in the report in order to assist the reader in assigning weight to such information.

If information from a 'dubious' source is found

Although all sources have their own values and agenda, a source is deemed dubious when it cannot be assessed as reliable, for reasons of:

> 1. a lack of transparency on the source's agenda, reputation, operational presence in the field, reporting capacity, seriousness of investigations, and level of knowledge.

> Example 4:
>
> The reliability of Wikipedia is widely discussed because the information can be altered by anyone who wishes to do so. It is often unclear who is the source, what is its expertise, and why the information is added.

> 2. bias, meaning a source presents highly selective or distorted information to advance its agenda.

Example 5:

An insurgent group regularly reports on armed confrontations. While their information on the occurence of the incidents is factual, their reporting on the number of casualities on the government side is exaggerated and minimised on their side. This bias propagates them as the winning party.

The researcher must weigh the relevance of the information against the dubiousness of the source to decide whether or not to include it in the report. If the information is included, the reasons why the source could not be deemed reliable should be stated explicitly.

Information that is not fact-based and deliberately fabricated with the intention to mislead and harm (often referred to as 'fake news') should not be used.

3.2 Presentation of information

Quality standards for sources and information equally apply for the presentation of information in a COI report, as explained in this section. For example, the synthesis should be accurate in reflecting what sources stated and a clear referencing system aims to comply with the requirement of transparency.

All EASO COI reports should conform to EASO's overall stylistic requirements and standards for language, citation, referencing and style (see EASO COI Writing and Referencing Guide).

3.2.1 Language

The EASO COI report should use plain language, bearing in mind that target users may not be native readers. The language should be clear, exact and neutral in tone. Terminology, spelling and transcription standards used in the report should be indicated and explained. Legal terminology related to international protection procedures should be avoided.

To avoid confusion, the names of persons and organisations should be mentioned in the original language and/or transcribed in the same way throughout the report. Abbreviations, technical terms or names/concepts in other languages should be written out in full and explained when used for the first time in the report. A cross-link can be made to the glossary and abbreviations section.

If the presented information from a source reflects an assessment, feeling or opinion of that source, this should be clearly indicated and attributed to the source (e.g. the source assesses, concludes, gives the opinion, etc).

3.2.2 Synthesising information

A COI report should clearly present relevant and readily accessible COI. The approach for the presentation of information in EASO COI reports is by 'synthesising' the relevant information.

Information is synthesised for optimal readability and usability to assist the target users to draw informed conclusions relevant to their tasks. Synthesising means organising, combining and grouping information together thematically to form a coherent whole, instead of listing or quoting information source by source.

The synthesis reflects the analytical COI process and its components, namely the structuring of the content and the sorting of information along this structure, the source assessment and validation of information, including cross-checking of information. The drafter synthesises similar statements found

in sources, presenting corroborating or contradictory information together, and makes the comparison clear for the reader.

Synthesis can occur at the level of the report, chapter, section, paragraph and sentence. For further information on writing techniques for synthesising, refer to the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Guide.

Example 6

A research question in the ToR of a COI report is how insurgents recruit fighters. The COI researcher analyses this matter and breaks it down into different relevant elements, including the structure and general modus operandi of the insurgent group, actual recruitment mechanisms, incentives, etc.

Below, some information and elements are lifted out to illustrate how to synthesise the information.

INFORMATION

The researcher finds the following information from sources A-F:

Source A:

The insurgents' organisation has different hierarchical layers, including a leadership council, a military and other commissions, provincial commissions, district commissions, provincial and district chiefs, and military fronts (squads) headed by local commanders. […]
The insurgents often recruit fighters in village madrassas among the religious students or by local mullahs in religious networks.

Source B:

The insurgents aim to co-opt community leaders, local strongmen, mullahs or commanders to join their ranks. […]
Recruitment of fighters happens via the local commanders or village elders who are responsible for the local military fronts. The insurgents can rely on allied tribal or village leaders and allied strongmen who have networks in an area.

Source C:
The insurgents have one leadership council and different overarching commissions, including a military commission. At the lowest military level, local commanders lead fronts of fighters. […]
For recruitment of fighters, the insurgents rely on clan and tribal loyalty. Normally, the local operational cell or commander is the base of the recruitment. Religious leaders and madrassas can also play a role in recruiting young men as fighters.

Source D:

A leadership council leads the insurgency, which also has specialised commissions for military, educational, and economic affairs. District chiefs, commissions and commanders also exist. […]
Mobilisation of fighters has to be distinguished between community mobilisation and recruitment of individuals. For the community mobilisation, insurgents seek the buy-in of village or clan elders, local strongmen etc. The recruitment of individual fighters usually happens by the local commander or strongman.

Source E:
A 22 year-old man from the district of X testified about his enrolment in the insurgents' ranks. He was the sole breadwinner of the family and two friends introduced him to the local insurgent commander, from a nearby village.

> **Source F:**
> A local farmer in the village of Y has three sons, of which one joined the local militia established by the village community elders for the protection of their crops and interests in the volatile environment of the decade-long conflict. A few years ago, the tribal elders decided to join the insurgency and the tribe's local commanders pledged allegiance to the insurgents' leader.
>
> **SYNTHESIS**
>
> The insurgents are hierarchically organised in different layers, starting with a 'leadership council', several specialised commissions and local structures (sources A, C and D). Two reports gave examples of recruitment of fighters via village madrassas and mullahs (sources A and C). Different sources indicate that recruitment of fighters usually happens via local commanders (sources B, C, D, E). The role of local clan, tribal or community elders in joining the insurgency or recruitment is also mentioned by sources (sources B, C, D, F).

COI Conclusions

Depending on the nature of the information and the relevance for the target users, COI conclusions may be drawn by the drafter. COI conclusions aim to highlight main patterns in the analysed and validated information in order to assist the target users to draw informed conclusions relevant to their tasks.

A COI conclusion is a reasoned and consolidated evaluation of a particular event, matter or situation based on sources' combined information. It should take into account all relevant parameters, as well as their mutual interdependence and individual importance relative to the whole. A COI conclusion constitutes a 'new piece of information', compared to the information provided by the sources: A + B + C = D. D is the COI conclusion.

COI conclusions cannot include **legal assessments, policy or decision guidance**.To ensure this, the following limitations apply:

Separate	It should be pointed out clearly which conclusions are attributed to the drafter.
Country of origin	The scope of the COI conclusion is focussing on an event, matter or situation in the country of origin, and does not focus on the individual situation of the applicant.
General pattern	COI conclusions should concern general patterns in the information related to an event, matter or situation within the country of origin. However, they should refrain from overgeneralisation and be formulated in a way that leaves room for deviation, exceptions, individual circumstances and situations that might take place in a context different from the general situation.
No speculation	COI conclusions should refrain from speculation, which is the formulation of a theory without sound evidence to support. A COI conclusion should be based on the synthesised and referenced information in the COI report.
No opinion	COI conclusions are a reasoned evaluation and not an opinion of the drafter.
No legal terminology	COI conclusions cannot include any recommendations on how to interpret or process the analysed information in a legal way. To ensure this, the language should not include legal terminology concerning international protection.

When drawing COI conclusions, caution should be taken to avoid distorting information.

In example 7, a COI conclusion is given that stays close to the information from the sources:

Example 7:

Several sources provided the following corroborated information:

In 2014, the armed conflict caused around 100 civilian casualties.
In 2015, the armed conflict caused around 300 civilian casualties.
In 2016, the armed conflict caused around 500 civilian casualties.
In 2017, the armed conflict caused around 800 civilian casualties.

Based on this information, EASO concludes that during the past few years, the civilian toll caused by the armed conflict steadily increased.

This is a COI conclusion because the description of the trend is a new piece of information, since the individual pieces of information from sources only provided numbers of casualties per year, but did not indicate the trend.

Based upon example 6 on synthesised information, the following COI conclusion can be drawn (example 8):

Example 8:

COI CONCLUSION

From the information, EASO concludes that recruitment of fighters by the insurgent usually happens via local community, military or religious structures.

This is a COI conclusion, because EASO deducts this general pattern from the different examples found in sources, because there is no contradicting information and none of the different pieces of information describe the pattern as such. Therefore, it constitutes a new piece of information.

3.2.3 Referencing

As a minimum requirement, every piece of information must be referenced by one source, preferably the primary/original source (see section on selection of sources). References to sources are given as footnotes and appear on the same page as the text they refer to. All sources used in the report must be fully referenced in a bibliography in a standardised way.

For guidance on referencing, see the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Guide. All materials used in the EASO COI report should respect general rules on copyright.[5]

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[5] See: Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society (OJ L 167, 22.6.2001, p. 10–19) and can be accessed via Eur-Lex: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32001L0029

3.2.4 Structure of EASO COI reports

EASO COI reports are organised in a manner consistent with the key elements of the ToR and in a way which makes the information easily accessible and readable for the target users. The report should be presented in a logical, well-structured and intelligible way.

The content of sections and chapters should be reflected in the headings and sub-headings, and the individual paragraphs should be framed in a consistent and clear manner containing information grouped thematically.

For the general lay-out and structure of an EASO COI report, see the EASO COI Report Template.

The general structure of an EASO COI report contains the following parts:

Acknowledgements

The COI units, organisations and experts which participated in researching, (co-)drafting, or reviewing the EASO COI report are mentioned in the acknowledgements section of the report.

Table of contents

The table of contents provides the main headings and sub-headings in order to efficiently guide the reader through the report.

Disclaimer

The Disclaimer states the following:

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2019).[6] The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care within a limited timeframe. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Any event taking place after the finalisation of this report is not included. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the introduction.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EASO nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

Glossary and abbreviations

The glossary lists uncommon, specialised or original-language terms or concepts with their definitions, in alphabetical order. .

Acronyms/abbreviations that are necessary for understanding the content should be listed in the glossary (e.g. ANSF – Afghan National Security Forces, VBIED – Vehicle-borne improvised explosive

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[6] The EASO methodology is largely based on the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008, and can be downloaded from the EASO COI Portal: https://coi.easo.europa.eu/.

device, etc.). However, abbreviated sources that are listed in the bibliography do not need to be included in the glossary (e.g., UN, IOM, etc).

The glossary is placed at the beginning of the report.

Introduction

The introduction clearly states that the report is produced in line with the EASO COI report methodology (2019) and the EASO COI Writing and Referencing guide (2019). The introduction further states the purpose of the report, target users and the main topics dealt with, based on the ToR in the annex of the report.

In order to maintain a high level of transparency, the introduction explains in detail the methodology used in the specific report. This includes how the ToR were defined, whether they were expanded or certain topics could not be addressed in the report. The methodology further describes how information was collected and, if relevant, highlights and explains important sources used in the report. The different use of terminology by different sources should be explained. Finally, the quality control mechanism and the date of finalisation are mentioned.

The introduction gives information on the reference period(s) for information in the report, the period of research, drafting, and review process.

Body of the report

In the body of the report, the analysed and synthesised information found during the research process is presented. It may include an executive summary or COI conclusions depending on the nature of the information and the relevance for the target users.

Annexes

Annex I: Bibliography

All sources referred to in the report should be fully referenced in the bibliography. For guidance on referencing sources in the bibliography, see the EASO COI Report Writing and Referencing Guide.

Annex II: Terms of Reference

4. Quality control

4.1 Review

For every COI report, EASO organises a peer review process by fellow national and EASO COI researchers. Peer review is a quality assurance and enhancement process in which the drafter(s) and peer(s) work together to ensure that the report meets the principles and quality standards set out in the EASO COI report methodology. Reviewers do not change or 'approve' the content of the report, but they contribute to the quality of the report by way of commenting on content or quality issues, checking sources and suggesting additional information. Reviewers are required to follow the EASO rules for review.

In consultation with national (co-)drafters, EASO may select external experts to review the report in line with the EASO COI report methodology and rules for peer review. The external experts are selected on the basis of their proven expertise in COI methodology, knowledge of the country of origin or specific topics. Such experts may include NGOs, academics, and international bodies.

All comments by reviewers are taken into consideration. However, the (co-)drafter(s) decide(s) whether or not a comment is accepted and how to address it. EASO supervises and participates throughout the review process.

It is good practice to consult and give feedback to the reviewers, addressing why comments may or may not have been implemented. As a result of the review, additional information and sources may need to be added to improve the quality of the report. If such additional information substantially changes the content of the report, the reviewers will be informed.

4.2 Editing and proofreading

After the review, EASO arranges editing and proofreading of the COI report in conformity with the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Guide. EASO also ensures that copyrights are properly dealt with.

5. Publication

EASO takes responsibility for the report and gives final approval for publication and dissemination.

Translations of EASO COI reports are considered official only if carried out directly by EASO or approved by it. No other translations will carry EASO's endorsement.

6. Follow-up

Evaluation of the drafting process should be done by the participants. The target users are invited to evaluate the use of the report. Feedback is taken into consideration when initiating a new EASO COI report.

EASO aims to update its COI reports when necessary within a suitable period of time. For the initiation of updates, see also the initiation process.

Annex 1: EASO Rules for Review of COI Reports and Review Checklist

1. <u>The reviewers:</u>

The peer (or external) reviewers conduct the review in their **expert capacities** and are bound by **confidentiality**: they shall not communicate any content, comments or responses to comments with third parties.[7]

2. <u>The review:</u>

AIM	The sole aim of the review is to contribute to the overall quality of the COI product and strive to ensure that COI products are as neutral, objective, usable, valid and transparent as possible. The reviewers should verify whether the information used meets the standards of relevance, reliability, currency, objectivity, accuracy, traceability and transparency. Quality standards are described in the *EASO COI Report Methodology*.
SCOPE	The purpose and scope of the products are clearly set out in an introduction and in the ToR for the COI report. The review should evaluate the EASO COI products in this context. Reviewers should bear in mind the specific needs of the target users and not a general academic perspective. The reviewers have no editorial role. Proofreading and lay-out will be organised by EASO.
	Comments about possible or required additional information shall only be accepted if they do not imply a substantial change to the scope of the ToR of the COI product. These comments will only be accepted if they provide a specific reference to additional relevant sources of information.
FORMAT	Comments shall be made either directly in the draft Word document (tracked changes or comments); or in a separate document clearly identifying which sections of the draft COI product comments refer to.
IMPLEMENTATION	The (co-)drafters decide whether and how to implement the comments. He/she will, however, respond to all unaccepted comments. After implementation of the review, the (co-)drafters provide a final draft to EASO.

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[7] Third parties are all except for the drafter(s), the peer reviewers and EASO.

CHECKLIST FOR PEER REVIEW

Note: *The checklist is only intended to serve as a reminder for reviewers. All comments on the COI report by reviewers shall be made either directly in the draft Word document (tracked changes or comments) or in a separate document clearly identifying which sections of the draft COI product the comments refer to.*

QUESTION	√
PRESENTATION/STRUCTURE/CONTENT	
Is the report presented in a well-structured, logical and intelligible way?	
Is information readable and useable for the target users?	
Is information provided in the report relevant to the topic and for the target users?	
Is information provided in the report current (or time-relevant)?	
Are quotes used in the text referenced clearly (footnotes)?	
Does the report include any recommendations or policy guidance?	
Does the report cover the required elements of the ToR?	
LANGUAGE/TONE	
Is the language used in the report neutral (impartial) and objective (not influenced by opinions, emotions, bias…)?	
Is the language used in the report clear to readers?	
Is the language used in the report specific and precise?	
SOURCES/REFERENCING	
If I noted significant gaps in the research, have I recommended specific sources with links/urls/references that can be checked by drafters to address these gaps?	
Do the drafters use a variety of sources (e.g., government sources, diplomatic sources, media, NGOs sources…)?	
Do the drafters use reliable (trustworthy, credible) sources?	
Did I conduct a random check of footnotes to ensure that the reliability of the sources used has been properly assessed?	
If dubious sources (sources which reliability could not be assessed as reliable) are used, do the drafters explicitly mention this and for which reason(s) it/they could not be assessed?	
Is all information provided in the report referenced (in the footnotes)?	
Is all information provided in the report fully referenced in the bibliography (author, title, date, website if relevant, date of access)?	
If information from Fact Finding Mission(s) (FFM(s) is used, is it properly referenced (e.g. author/title/dates of mission vs date of report publication)?	

QUESTION	√
When a source used in the report is not well-known, is it presented by the drafter (by referring to its expertise, etc) the first time that it is mentioned?	
If the COI report says that 'several' or 'many' sources state something, is this reflected in the referencing (footnotes)?	
Did I conduct a random check of footnotes to ensure that information written by the drafter accurately reflects information provided by the source(s) referenced in the footnote?	
Did I conduct a random check of footnotes to ensure that the author references (when possible) primary sources (instead of secondary sources)?	

Annex 2: Glossary

This glossary is mainly based on:

a. (EUCG) European Union, 'Common EU guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI)', ARGO project JLS/2005/ARGO/GC/03, April 2008 https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/euinstitutions/PLib/EU_Common_COI_Guidelines_2 008_EN.pdf.
b. (ECS FFM) European Union, 'EU common guidelines on (joint) fact finding missions: a practical tool to assist Member States in organizing (joint) fact finding missions', November 2010 https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/euinstitutions/PLib/ECS_FFM-Guidelines-2010.pdf;
c. (EMN) European Union, European Migration Network, 'Asylum and Migration Glossary 6.0, online version of May 2018 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en
d. (EASO) EASO and discussions/comments/feedback from the methodology working group, StratNet and COI Conference (November 2017).

TERM	DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION	SYNONYMS and ANTONYMS	NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH
Accuracy (EASO)	Accuracy means the quality of being precise, undistorted, and in conformity with the factual reality.	*Synonyms:* Veracity Sureness Verity Certainty Correctness Precision *Antonyms:* Inaccuracy Distorted Falsehood Untruth	
Analysis (EASO)	Analysis is the neutral evaluation of an issue or problem, usually made by breaking it down into its constituent parts, organising and describing these parts, and identifying their inter-relationships. The COI analytical process underlies the whole research cycle and involves developing ToR and appropriate research questions, conducting research, selecting and validating sources and information, determining relationships between information gathered, and presenting a synthesised, logically organised report on the results.	*Synonyms:* Analytical process	COI Conclusion Synthesis
Application for international protection (EMN)	A request made by a third-country national or a stateless person for protection from a Member State, who can be understood to seek refugee status or subsidiary protection status, and who does not explicitly request another kind of		

	protection, outside the scope of Directive 2011/95/EU, that can be applied for separately.		
Drafter (EASO)	The drafter or co-drafter is a COI researcher who conducts research, analyses information, and drafts the COI report in a synthesised form, possibly including COI conclusions.	*Synonyms:* Writer	
Dubious (EASO)	Although all sources have their own values and agenda, a source is deemed dubious when it cannot be assessed as reliable, for reasons of: 1. a lack of transparency on the source's agenda, reputation, operational presence in the field, reporting capacity, seriousness of investigations, and level of knowledge. 2. bias, meaning a source presents highly selective or distorted information to advance its agenda.		
Balance (EUCG; EASO)	Balance means to take all relevant parameters into consideration in a proportional way. The act of checking a varied range of types of sources in order to balance out perspectives and obtain a more complete overall view about an issue/topic.	*Synonyms:* Counter-balance Equity Proportion *Antonym:* Imbalance	
Case worker (EMN)	Personnel of the determining authority responsible for examining and assessing an application for international protection and competent to take a decision at first instance in such a case.		
Country of Origin Information – COI (EASO)	Country of Origin Information (COI) refers to information about countries of origin, habitual residence, and transit or return countries used in procedures for the individual assessment of applications for international protection. COI may also be used in the context of non-asylum related migration cases. COI aims to answer questions about countries of origin relating to, for example, the socio-economic, legal, political, human rights, conflict, and humanitarian situation at a given time. COI facilitates and supports decision-making processes, but does not dictate decisions. It is distinct from country guidance and legal assessments. COI constitutes evidence in the international protection procedure and is important to help making a fact-based assessment.		Country guidance/guidelines Country policy
COI Researcher (ECS FFM)	A person who undertakes diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into COI related matters in order to discover facts and knowledge.		

COI Unit (ECS FFM)	Specific department from the Asylum Authorities or an Independent Department responsible for collecting and providing COI for asylum related matters.	*Synonyms:* COI department Country division	
COI Conclusion (EASO)	A COI conclusion is a reasoned and consolidated evaluation by the COI researcher of a particular event, matter or situation based on sources' combined information. A COI conclusion aims to highlight main patterns in the analysed and validated information in order to assist the target users to draw informed conclusions relevant to their tasks. It should take into account all relevant parameters, as well as their mutual interdependence and individual importance relative to the whole. A COI conclusion constitutes a 'new piece of information', compared to the information provided by the sources: A + B + C = D. D is the COI conclusion. COI conclusions cannot include legal assessments, policy or decision guidance.		Country guidance/guidelines Country policy Decision assessment Fear/risk assessment
Corroboration (EUCG; EASO)	Corroboration is the act of finding separate information from different sources that independently matches other information on the same incident/fact. Corroborating information supports or strengthens the accuracy, validity or veracity of information describing facts, events or situations, with other information (or other evidence).	*Synonyms:* Confirmation Substantiation *Antonyms:* Contradiction	Cross-checking Contrasting
Cross-checking (EUCG; EASO)	Cross-checking involves checking a range of different sources to test whether different and unrelated sources report similar or different information about a fact/issue/topic. Cross-checking is a means to corroborate or contrast information.	*Synonyms:* Comparing Double-check Triple-check *Antonym:* Compilation	Cross-reference Corroboration
Currency (EASO)	Currency means that information is time-relevant, up-to-date and/or the most recent information available and where the events in question have not changed since the release of the information.	*Synonyms:* Present-day Up-to-date Current *Antonyms:* (Out)dated Old Past	
Determining authority (EMN)	Any quasi-judicial or administrative body in a Member State responsible for examining applications for international protection and competent to take decisions on such cases in any instance.	*Synonyms:* Decision maker Decision taker Judge	
Disclaimer (EUCG)	A written statement appended to a document in order to	**Synonyms:** Limitation	Introduction Synthesis

	1. limit under certain conditions the responsibility for the possible lack of exhaustiveness or for certain (side) effects of the use of the information contained in a document and/or to 2. limit the right of use of that document to a copyright or to a certain circle of clients.		
EU+ countries (EASO)	EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland.		
Evaluation (EASO)	A systematic and objective study of the relative weight or value according to given standards.		Description
Expert (EUCG; EASO)	A person with proven and reputed skills or knowledge in a particular area or subject as a result of experience or training. An expert acts a independent specialist based on his/her expertise.	*Synonyms:* Specialist Intellectual authority (e.g. academic) *Antonym:* Amateur Neophyte Apprentice Novice	COI Researcher
False corroboration (EASO)	False corroboration occurs when a piece of information appears to be corroborated by information from different sources while in fact the information stems from the same primary/original source.		
Information (EUCG)	The basic content or data gathered through specific research.	*Synonyms:* Data Content	Source
Neutrality (EUCG; EASO)	The state of not taking sides on an issue, of being unrelated to or without any possible stakeholder involvement with the subject matter, and without seeking to favour a particular outcome or conclusion.	*Synonyms:* Uninvolved Unimplicated Uninfluenced Impartiality Without prejudice *Antonyms:* Partisan Involved Biased	Independence Objectivity
Objectivity (EUCG; EASO)	Objectivity means the quality of a source's reporting being fact-based and not influenced by emotions, speculation, personal or group-based prejudices, interests or biases.	*Synonyms:* Verifiable Fact-based Empirical Observable Concrete Detached Unbiased *Antonyms:* Biased Partial Subjectivity	Independence Neutrality

		One-sided Speculative	
Oral source (EASO)	A person who is interviewed/contacted by a COI researcher to obtain specific information about a topic that may not be available in published sources. Oral sources can be experts or individuals with particular knowledge relevant to a topic/issue. They are selected and interviewed with particular care and in-depth for specific research purposes. All oral sources and their information is assessed against quality criteria.	***Synonyms:*** Interviewee Interlocutor	Expert
Original source (EUCG; EASO)	An original source documents the event, fact or matter for the first time.		
Primary source (EUCG; EASO)	A primary source is closely or directly related to (i.e. having first-hand information of) an event, fact, or matter.	***Synonyms:*** Firsthand account Eyewitness Testimony ***Antonyms:*** Second-hand Secondary source Indirect Intermediate	
Public (EUCG)	In general: The state of content, source and/or information product not to be subject, in theory, to limited distribution. In practice, however, it might be possible or it will even be very likely that the public as such has no access to such content, source and/ or information product due to it ignoring the mere existence of such content, source and/ or information product, or due to practical thresholds (cf. grey literature). Remark: In some EU Member States 'public' is to be considered a degree of classification, i.e. the lowest degree applicable. In this context, 'public' means 'not restricted to only internal distribution'. In fact some EU Member States hardly ever or even never disclose information products any further than the applicant and his lawyer. In fact the applicant and his lawyer are the outer limits of the distribution chain. Therefore, in these Member States, 'public' does not necessarily correspond with 'open to uncontrolled public disclosure'.	***Synonyms:*** Open source Unrestricted Disclosable ***Antonyms:*** Classified Restricted Confidential	Public domain
Relevance (EASO)	Relevance means the quality of being closely connected to the fact, event, or matter in question.	***Synonyms:*** Appropriate Pertinence ***Antonym:*** Irrelevance	

Reliability (EUCG; EASO)	Reliability means the quality of being trustworthy to the matter, fact or event.	*Synonyms:* Credibility Trustworthiness Faithful Truthful Genuine Reputable Veracious *Antonyms:* Dubious Unreliable Doubtful Fake Questionable Faithless Untrustworthy False	Independence Pertinence Appropriate Traceability
Report (EASO)	A written and detailed account or description of the findings on facts, event or situation which may give analysis, statements or conclusions on the result of the investigation.	*Synonyms:* Description Account Study	Judgement Opinion Forecast Summary Commentary
Reviewer (EASO)	A national or EASO COI researcher who conducts a peer review of the EASO COI report in order to contribute to the overall quality of the report by checking that information used meets quality criteria and the COI methodology is respected. An external expert reviewer may also be used for quality review, based on their knowledge of the country of origin, or experience with COI.		
Round-tripping information (EUCG; EASO)	Round tripping occurs when secondary sources cite each other instead of referring to the original/primary source. Failure to identify round tripping can lead to the use of information that may not be as current as it seems.	*Synonyms:* Duplicated information	.
Secondary source (EASO)	A secondary source reproduces or refers to information from the original source (or other secondary sources).	*Synonyms:* Second-hand *Antonyms:* First-hand source Primary source	
Source (EASO)	A medium, person or institution producing information.		Information
Speculation (EASO)	The formulation of a theory without sound evidence to support	*Antonyms:* Conclusion	Analysis
Summary (EASO)	A writing technique for presenting information that gives a short and concise statement of all major, significant points of a document or report.	*Synonyms:* Compendium Abstract Apercu Digest Recapitulation Outline	Introduction Prologue COI conclusion Synthesis

		Résumé Synopsis Brief account	
Synthesis (EASO)	Synthesising means organising, combining and grouping information together thematically to form a coherent whole, instead of listing or quoting information source by source. The drafter synthesises similar statements found in sources, presenting corroborating or contradictory information together, and makes the comparison clear for the reader. Synthesis can occur at the level of the report, chapter, section, paragraph and sentence using different writing techniques.		Analysis Conclusion Summary
Target users (EASO)	Target users for EASO COI reports include case workers, COI researchers, and policy-makers in national determining authorities; courts and tribunals responsible for examining and assessing applications for international protection; as well as EU Institutions , bodies and agencies		
Terms of Reference (ToR) (ECS FFM; EASO)	The ToR are the framework and the backbone of the report. They contain the general topics as well as subtopics or research questions that should be addressed in the report. The ToR aim to address the information needs of the target users. ToR are prepared as defined in the initiation process. ToR are binding for the drafter(s) of the report. Deviations from the ToR and the reasons for it should be clearly stated in the introduction of the report.		
Traceability (EUCG; EASO)	The extent to which the primary and/or original source of a piece of information can be identified. The quality of being fully referenced and cited clearly.	*Synonyms :* Locatable Identifiable Deducible Derivable Inferable *Antonyms:* Indeductive Undecomposable Untraceable	
Transparency (EUCG, EASO)	Transparency is the quality of being clear, intelligible, and unequivocal. The quality of being clear about the methods for how research decisions were made, information was obtained, assessed, and presented.	*Synonyms:* Clearness Intelligibility Understandability *Antonyms:* Distortion	*Traceability*

		Obscurity Opacity Unclearness Equivocal Ambiguous	
Usability	The degree of 'ease of use' for target users. In this regard, the language of the report should be guided by the target users. The same applies to the structure of the report which should be logical and clearly arranged. Terminology used by sources and in the EASO COI report should be clearly explained.		
Validation (EUCG; EASO)	The process of evaluation of a source and/or information against COI quality criteria.	*Synonyms:* Evaluation	
Validity	Validity is the quality of being acceptable in meeting the needs of the target users and of being methodologically, logically and factually sound		