

Tasks

In accordance with the Asylum Law of 2005, the Federal Asylum Office (BAA) established a Country of Origin Information (COI) unit. As part of the new Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA, established in 2014), the COI department now is mandated under § 5 BFA-G. This establishment of a COI department has allowed for the continuous improvement in the quality of asylum procedures. According to the law, the COI department is assigned to gather information as basis for the decision-making regarding:

1. To determine if factual evidence can conclude the existence of persecution in a certain country;
2. To assess the credibility of statements provided by asylum seekers and foreigners;
3. To decide if a certain country is considered a safe country of origin or if a safe third country can be considered as such, in accordance with the law;

In compliance with statutory requirements, the COI department is tasked with collecting relevant facts on Country of Origin for all instances involved with asylum and immigration procedures. This task requires continuous scientific preparation under the guidelines of the Austrian COI-Methodology. Additionally, the tasks of the COI department include, but are not limited to: conducting fact-finding missions; international cooperation; trainings and workshops; support of the advisory council; constant

improvement of the database; and maintaining continuous evaluations.

Advisory Council

An advisory council was established to provide qualitative support to the COI department. The council's role is to advise the director of the BFA in guiding the COI department and to recommend the implementation of measurements (standards, fact-finding missions, cooperation etc.).

The council consists of renowned experts in the field of migration, refugees, and international relations. The members consist of: international organizations such as UNHCR, higher courts and Austrian ministries.

Methodology

The COI department follows a specific methodology, which is subjected to the following standards determined by the advisory council: neutrality and objectivity, usability, validity, transparency, quality control, data security and documentation (traceability). Furthermore, the methodology contains mandatory instructions (VAA) for each product type. These VAA specify the norms and the procedures for the preparation of the products. Finally, the methodology consists of quality assurance methods and measurements.

The comprehensive methodology ensures the compliance of standards, maintaining a high level of quality, international

comparability of products and with it the recognition of the COI department's work.

Products

The products of the COI department provide processed, summarized and where necessary analyzed COI. The information required by the target audience is gathered primarily through publicly accessible and credible sources.

- Query Responses (AFB) serve as the selective response to questions submitted by relevant institutions.
- COI Reports (LIB) provide an overall description of the situation in countries of origin or in Dublin states, in regards to facts relevant for asylum and immigration cases.
- Short information (KI) offer immediate facts relevant to incidents in countries of origin and new developments.
- COI Research Papers are scientific articles comprised of information collected in reference to specific country topics.
- FFM-reports structure and summarize all relevant information gathered on a fact-finding mission (FFM).

Cooperation

The Austrian COI department has a strong network of international contacts, particularly to other COI units within the European Union. Above all the Austrian COI department cooperates with EASO (European Asylum Support Office), and with the D-A-CH-L asylum cooperation (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Luxembourg).

International cooperation can be a great asset in closing gaps within documentation in certain countries where information is difficult to obtain.

Database

The products of the COI department are available in an international database. The database itself was established in 2006 and is accessible online at www.staatendokumentation.at.

In cooperation with ACCORD (Red Cross), the database and ecoinet are maintained and updated daily. A special remark should be made to the user-friendliness that guarantees a quick lookup of the requested information. The database possesses a breakdown of all documents available, as well as a simple search function that allows the examination of relevant passages without extensive search. A German/English thesaurus is also included.

Access authorization

If you are interested in obtaining access to the COI department's database, please do not hesitate to contact us via phone or email. All information is available on our website www.staatendokumentation.at.

In the event that free access to the COI department database is not granted through § 5 Abs. 6 BFA-G, a 6 month paid subscription is also available.

Contact us

Should you have any questions in regards to the COI department, please contact us:

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