

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:

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 Countries 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; training 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 specific instructions for each product type. These instructions specify the norms and the procedures for the preparation of the products. Finally, the methodology covers 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 this 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.
- Country information provided by the database *Country of Origin Information – Content Management System (COI-CMS)* offers general information for a defined number of the most relevant countries of origin to the Austrian asylum and alien law procedures. Furthermore, this database provides for quick and targeted updates of asylum-related information for all its customers.
- Country information provided by *Country Fact Sheets* offers general information from all other countries of origin that are not listed in the COI-CMS database and from Dublin states respectively, regarding facts relevant for asylum and immigration cases. Updates are made on demand.
- Short information (KI) offer immediate facts relevant

to incidents in countries of origin and new developments.

- Topical Reports are scientific articles comprised of information collected in reference to specific country topics.
- FFM-Protocols 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 EUAA (European Union Asylum Agency), and with 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 www.ecoi.net 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 includes 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/Italian thesaurus is also included.

Access authorization

If you are interested in obtaining access to the COI department's database or COI-CMS, please do not hesitate to contact us via phone or email. Information is also 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 regarding the COI department, please contact us:

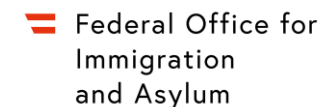
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