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# EASO Newsletters in 2019

Key COI Related Points

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24<sup>th</sup> July 2019

## Items of relevance to COI and the work of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) Consultative Forum as detailed in 2019 EASO newsletters and 2019 COI publications

- Compiled by ARC Foundation [emphasis added] -

### [EASO Newsletter – Quarter 2 \(April – June\) 2019](#)

#### 32nd meeting of the EASO Management Board held in Malta

[...] The meeting approved a procedure for the adoption of Country Guidance Notes, and in addition **two new EASO Country Guidance reports, on Iraq and Afghanistan**. Country Guidance reports aim at fostering convergence in the application of the criteria for qualification for international protection for specific countries of origin, based on common analysis and guidance notes of EU+ Member States. More information can be accessed [here](#). [...]

#### EASO publishes two new country guidance notes on Iraq and Afghanistan

EASO has published **the ‘Country Guidance: Iraq’ and the updated ‘Country Guidance: Afghanistan’**. The documents reflect the common assessment of EU Member States of the situation in two of the main countries of origin for applicants applying in the EU. **They are based on recently published EASO Country of Origin Information Reports and provide a detailed analysis in terms of international protection needs and qualification in accordance with the applicable EU asylum legislation.**

The ‘Country Guidance: Iraq’ is the third country guidance document, produced since the pilot development was completed in June 2018. It adds to the series of tools for policy-makers and decision-makers, with a country-specific analysis regarding the main actors of persecution or serious harm in Iraq, refugee status and subsidiary protection needs of some of the relevant profiles of applicants from Iraq, actors of protection, and the possibility of internal protection alternative in particular parts of the country. Exclusion from international protection is also addressed. The ‘Country Guidance: Afghanistan’ updates and replaces the pilot country guidance document, published in June 2018.

This update focuses on the sections concerning indiscriminate violence in a situation of an armed conflict (Article 15(c) QD), and internal protection alternative. **Some additional changes have been made with reference to the available up-to-date country of origin information, in particular with regard to the profiles of applicants of Hazara ethnicity. Minor changes have also been introduced in parts of the horizontal framework of the common analysis.** These changes do not generally impact the assessment of the situation in Afghanistan as per the previous version of the guidance from June 2018.

The ‘Country Guidance: Iraq’ and the ‘Country Guidance: Afghanistan’ are non-binding. Their aim is to assist in the examination of applications for international protection, and, ultimately, to foster convergence in the decision practices of Member States. It is Member States’ responsibility to examine each application for international protection individually, objectively and impartially, on the basis of the individual circumstances of the applicant and the situation in the country of origin at the moment of the decision.

For more information concerning this area of activities see <https://www.easo.europa.eu/country-guidance>.

#### Experts from the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management in Turkey discuss information needs and best practices in their daily work

On June 26-27, EASO’s Information Analysis Sector and External Dimension Sector, along with the Turkish Directorate General for Migration Management (DGMM) co-hosted in Ankara a conference on the organization and workings of asylum systems in EU+ and Turkey. Also involving representatives from the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management in Turkey (PDMMs), the meeting provided –through a combination of presentations and interactive discussions- a forum for the exchange of experience-based insights into questions pertaining to the function of national asylum systems [...]

**In regards to existing information needs, participants made reference to increasing accessibility to COI products relevant to their work;** the creation of structured processes for regular communication among key stakeholders toward effective information exchange; the importance of technological solutions for verification of applicants’ identity and authentication of documents submitted by applicants; and the need to increase awareness of particular asylum-related matters among all service providers dealing, in different capacities, with asylum applicants [...]

EASO publishes the updated Country of Origin Information (COI) Report Methodology and Writing and Referencing Guide for EASO COI reports

**The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has published an updated version of the 2012 EASO COI Report Methodology.** This methodology was developed for the purpose of producing and publishing different types of EASO COI reports. **The use of this methodology is binding for the production of EASO COI reports.**

EASO aims to cooperate with EU+ countries<sup>1</sup> in order to meet target users' needs and share the burden through joint efforts to produce COI. **The EASO COI Report Methodology constitutes a code of conduct for participants in each phase of the COI production process.**

The methodology explains the guiding principles for COI in the first chapter, which are: Neutrality and Objectivity, Relevance and Usability, Transparency and Publicity, Validity and Quality. After a chapter on the initiation and production process of EASO COI reports, the methodology focuses on researching and drafting COI. Here, quality standards for sources and information are explained and elaborated, as well as the selection and validation of sources. The third chapter discusses the phase of researching and presenting information, focusing on drafting methods such as summarising and synthesising, and on referencing sources. The final chapters discuss quality control, editing and proofreading, publication and follow up of a COI product. Finally, annexes on review and a glossary of the used terms are presented.

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. 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 seven 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, 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.

The EASO COI Report Methodology can be [downloaded](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019_EASO_COI_Report_Methodology.pdf) from the EASO COI portal via the following link: [https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Report\\_Methodology.pdf](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019_EASO_COI_Report_Methodology.pdf).

**Simultaneously and accompanying the EASO COI Report Methodology, the EASO COI Writing and Referencing Guide was published. The guide is aimed at COI researchers who (co-)draft EASO COI reports written in English. The guide is intended to be a clear, useable, and practical desk companion for researchers/drafters.** The purpose of this guide is also to support a diverse community of EU+ COI drafters, harmonise approaches to EASO writing/referencing, and work consistently across EASO COI publications.

The Writing and Referencing Guide was created after researching best practices and elements of existing COI style guidelines from EASO, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Sweden, UNHCR, ACCORD, Canada, and others. A wide range of professional referencing and citation systems were also consulted. The European Commission English Style Guide and the EU Interinstitutional Style Guide were also used in the development of this Guide, among others. In 2017 and 2018, a working group composed of COI experts from seven EU+ countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Slovak Republic, Sweden) discussed and provided input to the content of this Guide. It was reviewed for internal consistency by a COI expert from Estonia. The EASO COI team and management also provided feedback.

The Writing and Referencing Guide can be downloaded from the EASO COI portal via the following link: [https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019\\_EASO\\_COI\\_Writing\\_and\\_Referencing\\_Guide.pdf](https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/easo/PLib/2019_EASO_COI_Writing_and_Referencing_Guide.pdf).

## [EASO Newsletter - Quarter 1 \(January-March\) 2019](#)

### EASO Management Board welcomes strengthening of Agency's good governance

[...] Amongst the important decisions taken by the Management Board was the endorsement of a **new Country Guidance on Nigeria**. This publication, which is the second of its type following a similar publication on [Afghanistan](#), represents the joint assessment of the situation in Nigeria by EU+ Member States. The ultimate aim of [country guidance publications](#) is to foster convergence in the application of the criteria for qualification for international protection. Furthermore, the meeting also endorsed EASO's new External Action Strategy. [...]

### EU asylum figures 2018: Applications return to 2014 levels, decreasing by 10% over previous year

*The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) has published its [2018 asylum trends overview](#). Data shows a lower recognition rate of applications (34% compared to 40% in 2017) and pending cases at less than half of the peak recorded in autumn 2016. While overall applications continued to fall in 2018, citizens from Iran, Turkey, and several visa-liberalised countries lodged more applications than in 2017.*

[...] More than one-in-ten of all applicants was a Syrian national, compared to 2015-2016, when Syrians made up more than one-in-four applicants. Afghanistan and Iraq completed the top three countries of origin in 2018. [...]

One-in-three decisions made in 2018 was positive, granting either refugee status or subsidiary protection. This compares to a recognition rate of 40% in 2017. Nationals of Syria, Yemen and Eritrea had the highest recognition rates, whereas the lowest shares of positive decisions were for Georgians and Gambians.

More information can be found at the following links:

[EU+ asylum trends - 2018 overview](#)

[Key findings](#)

[Interactive visualisation](#)

### EASO steps up operational support for Cyprus

[...] The new Operating Plan for Italy was signed by Mr. Addou, on behalf of EASO, and the Head of the Department of Public Security, Franco Gabrielli, the Head of the Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, Gerarda Maria Pantalone, and the Ombudsperson of Children and Adolescents, Filomena Albano, on behalf of Italy.

Under the plan, EASO will maintain the technical and operational assistance provided to Italy since 2013. Notably, in 2019 the Agency will continue to support Italian Authorities in the processing of applications for international protection, as well as enhancing their capacity to absorb the backlog of cases accumulated during the spike in arrivals in recent years. Amongst others, EASO will also continue to support Italy by processing Dublin procedures, **strengthening the Italian Country of Origin Information Unit**, and implementing a system to monitor and manage the reception system. Furthermore, EASO will continue to support the Italian Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents with capacity building activities for volunteer guardians.

## **2019 EASO COI Methodologies/Guides**

[Country of Origin Information \(COI\) Report Methodology](#), June 2019

[Writing and Referencing Guide for EASO Country of Origin Information \(COI\) Reports](#), June 2019

## **2019 EASO COI publications**

COI Report: [Afghanistan – Security Situation](#), June 2019

COI Report: [Côte d’Ivoire Country Focus](#), June 2019

COI Report: [Afghanistan - Key socio-economic indicators. Focus on Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat City](#), April 2019

COI Report: [Iraq - Security situation](#), March 2019

COI: [Iraq - Security situation \(supplement\) - Iraq Body Count - civilian deaths 2012, 2017-2018](#), March 2019

COI Report: [Iraq - Targeting of individuals](#), March 2019

COI Report: [Iraq - Internal mobility](#), February 2019

COI Report: [Iraq - Key socio-economic indicators](#), February 2019

## **2019 EASO COI Guidance publications**

Country Guidance: [Nigeria](#), February 2019

Country Guidance: [Iraq](#), June 2019

Country Guidance: [Afghanistan](#), June 2019