

## **Factsheet on country of origin information reports and summary of work instruction**

### **1. The role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the asylum chain**

The Dutch Ministry of Justice and Security is responsible for the country's immigration policy. At the request of the Ministry of Justice and Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepares country of origin information reports that provide information about the countries of origin of asylum seekers. In preparing the country of origin information reports, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs functions as an independent expert and is also recognised as such in Dutch case law.

At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Country of Origin Information Reports department (Afdeling Ambtsberichten, AB) is responsible for collecting information about countries in country of origin information reports. The department produces general, thematic and short country of origin information reports.

### **2. What is a country of origin information report?**

A country of origin information report is a neutral and objective description of the current situation in a particular country. It concerns the facts relevant for the assessment of asylum applications and for decision-making and policy-making related to the return of asylum seekers whose application for asylum has been denied. A country of origin information report focuses on the themes and questions asked by the Ministry of Justice and Security and is a summary of the factual information that has been collected. It is not a policy document and it does not reflect the vision or policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in relation to a country or region, nor does it contain conclusions concerning immigration policy.

A general country of origin information report focuses on political developments and on the security and human rights situation in the country concerned, including the situation of specific or vulnerable groups. Migration aspects are also discussed, such as the situation of refugees and displaced persons and the reception of refugees from the country concerned in other countries in the region.

A country of origin information report is written with two main aims:

1. The Ministry of Justice and Security partly bases the general admission and return policy for asylum seekers from the country concerned on the information in the country of origin information report;
2. The Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) uses the country of origin information report as a source of information on the basis of which individual applications for asylum are assessed.

### **3. Procedure for creating a country of origin information report**

#### **3.1 Determining the need for a new country of origin information report**

In consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and Security determines the countries for which a country of origin information report is required. Considerations in this regard include developments in the countries of origin of asylum seekers, developments related to the return of asylum seekers, the number of people from that country who are applying for asylum in the Netherlands and the asylum applications that are still pending.

#### **3.2 Establishing the Terms of Reference (ToR)**

The ToR contain the themes and questions of the Ministry of Justice and Security and serve as the basis for the country of origin information report. The Research and Expertise Country and

Language Team (TOELT) of the Department of Specialist Services and International Cooperation (DSDIS) at IND is responsible for drawing up the ToR on behalf of the Ministry of Justice and Security. As a rule, other organisational units of the Ministry of Justice and Security (including the Migration Policy Department and IND/SUA) and social organisations (including Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland) are given the opportunity to provide input for the ToR.

### 3.3 Collecting information and preparing the draft country of origin information report

The research activities for a new country of origin information report start when the Ministry of Justice and Security submits the ToR to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The author of the country of origin information report collects information for the report by:

- consulting public reports from national and international organisations, NGOs, press releases, articles, manuals, reference works, scientific publications, databases and journals on the internet
- consulting internal and public Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports
- interviews with contacts of the employees of the country's regional executive body and other internal experts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- research by the Dutch diplomatic mission at the request of the author of the country of origin information report
- where relevant, deployment of an expert and/or legal consultancy to conduct research into specific (legal) questions
- a mission to the relevant country and/or a relevant neighbouring country or countries if the situation in the country permits it. During the mission, the author of the country of origin information report speaks confidentially with relevant and expert sources such as UN organisations, embassies of other Western countries and international and local (human rights) NGOs
- participation in EASO country days and information exchange with EASO partners
- contacts with organisations in the Netherlands such as Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland.

The research guidelines as laid down in the *EU Common Guidelines for Processing CoI* (Country of Origin Information) and the EASO *CoI Report Methodology* serve broadly as a methodological reference framework for the production of country of origin information reports.

All sources are listed in the footnotes. An overview of the public sources used is included as appendix. All information on which the country of origin information report is based (such as articles, meeting reports, etc.) is archived.

### 3.4 Internal review and publication

The draft official report is submitted to at least one immediate colleague and to the relevant departments and diplomatic missions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They provide it with comments and additions. The Ministry of Justice and Security is then sent the draft country of origin information report and has the opportunity to ask questions for clarification. The final country of origin information report is approved at official level by the director of the relevant regional executive body and presented to the head of the TOELT department of the IND. It is also published on the website of the Dutch government so that it can be used by government departments, foreign nationals, lawyers and other interested parties. Depending on the needs of international partners, the country of origin information report is translated into English.

If the Ministry of Justice and Security sees reason to do so, it will change Dutch immigration policy for the country concerned in response to the country of origin information report. The Dutch Parliament is informed about this type of policy change by means of a policy paper.

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