



Home Office

**The Home Office response to the
Independent Chief Inspector's report:
Country of Origin Information, May 2016**

Introduction

The Home Office thanks the Independent Chief Inspector (ICI) for this report, as well as the Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) and the individual reviewers for the positive overall nature of the reviews, the complimentary remarks about the quality standards of the team and their products as well as the constructive comments and feedback to further improve this.

Response to Recommendations

Recommendation 1

1. The Home Office (Country Policy and Information Team) should structure the guidance section of its Country Information and Guidance reports in order to distinguish more clearly between the guidance provided to decision makers and the information about country conditions on which the guidance is based, responding in full to any IAGCI recommendations concerning the latter.
 - 1.1 **Accept.**
 - 1.2 Whilst the ICI's report states that "the question of what is 'policy' is moot", the Home Office believes that it is an important distinction to maintain.
 - 1.3 Although the Home Office believes that distinction between what is policy/guidance and what is country of origin information is already clear – ostensibly through two clearly headed sections in CIGs: one entitled 'Guidance' and one entitled 'Country Information' – on occasions, CIGs may have directly quoted material from the COI section in the guidance section and therefore blurred this distinction.
 - 1.4 We agree that we should keep COI out of the guidance section, other than where it is necessary to provide context.

Recommendation 2

2. The Home Office should ensure that Country Information and Guidance reports (CIGs) are amended as soon as the relevant (ICI) report has been laid in Parliament. Pending this, the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) should use the Home Office intranet to draw the attention of decision makers to IAGCI's recommendations and the CPIT response.
 - 2.1 **Accept.**
 - 2.2 The Home Office endeavours to quickly update CIGs in light of IAGCI reviews, but this is subject to competing priorities and available resources.
 - 2.3 Where it is not possible to update a CIG as soon as the relevant report is laid in Parliament the Home Office will use the Home Office intranet to make decision makers aware of the IAGCI's recommendations and the CPIT response.

Recommendation 3

3. The Home Office should ensure that where IAGCI has made a recommendation in relation to a Country of Origin Information Request (COIR) the recommendation and the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) response is linked to the case(s) that initiated the COIR.

3.1 **Accept**

- 3.2 CPIT will endeavour to notify whoever has ownership of a case which triggered the COIR of the updated material.

Recommendation 4

4. The Home Office should ensure that where Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) has 'accepted' the substance of a recommendation but has judged it to apply to another topic-specific Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report (i.e. not the one that IAGCI has reviewed) the relevant CIG is amended as soon as the covering (ICI) report has been laid in Parliament.

4.1 **Accept.**

- 4.2 As this recommendation is similar to recommendation 2 (above), the Home Office's response is as set out above.

Recommendation 5

5. The Home Office (Country Policy and Information Team) should not reject information it agrees is accurate and relevant to the questions raised in a Country of Origin Information Request (COIR) on the grounds that it post-dates the COIR to which it refers.

5.1 **Accept.**

- 5.2 The Home Office has taken the view that, to date, to 'accept' this recommendation would mean that the 'product' (CIG or COIR) was somehow faulty and deficient when it was published, based on the IAGCI's terms of reference for reviews. We will in future accept the information is accurate but make it clear where it post-dates the CIG or COIR.
- 5.3 As identified in the ICI's report, further discussion on the use and meaning of specific terms – both in IAGCI's reviews and the Home Office's responses – is likely to resolve this issue.

Recommendation 6

6. The Home Office should ensure that the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) is resourced to fund the translation into English of information that IAGCI has recommended and CPIT has 'accepted' should be included in a Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report and is not available from any other source.

6.1 **Reject.**

- 6.2 We will continue to decide on a case-by-case basis whether a translation is necessary, balancing the value of the information to the understanding of the country situation and the cost of translation

Recommendation 7

7. The Home Office (Country Policy and Information Team) should prioritise the production of a Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report on the availability of protection from the Ukrainian authorities for members of ethnic and other minority groups.

7.1 Accept.

- 7.2 The Home Office is planning to produce a CIG on this topic.

Summary

Recommendation	HO Response
1. The Home Office (Country Policy and Information Team) should structure the guidance section of its Country Information and Guidance reports in order to distinguish more clearly between the guidance provided to decision makers and the information about country conditions on which the guidance is based, responding in full to any IAGCI recommendations concerning the latter.	Accept.
2. The Home Office should ensure that Country Information and Guidance reports (CIGs) are amended as soon as the relevant (ICI) report has been laid in Parliament. Pending this, the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) should use the Home Office intranet to draw the attention of decision makers to IAGCI's recommendations and the CPIT response.	Accept.
3. The Home Office should ensure that where IAGCI has made a recommendation in relation to a Country of Origin Information Request (COIR) the recommendation and the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) response is linked to the case(s) that initiated the COIR.	Accept.
4. The Home Office should ensure that where Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) has 'accepted' the substance of a recommendation but has judged it to apply to another topic-specific Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report (i.e. not the one that IAGCI has reviewed) the relevant CIG is amended as soon as the covering (ICI) report has been laid in Parliament.	Accept.
5. The Home Office (Country Policy and Information Team) should not reject information it agrees is accurate and relevant to the questions raised in a Country of Origin Information Request (COIR) on the grounds that it post-dates the COIR to which it refers.	Accept.
6. The Home Office should ensure that the Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT) is resourced to fund the translation into English of information that IAGCI has recommended and CPIT has 'accepted' should be included in a Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report and is not available from any other source.	Reject.
7. The Home Office (Country Policy and Information Team) should prioritise the production of a Country Information and Guidance (CIG) report on the availability of protection from the Ukrainian authorities for members of ethnic and other minority groups.	Accept.