Please cite as: EUAA, '3.3 Third country information and guidance' in *Asylum Report 2020*, Januar 2022.

3.3 Third country information and guidance

To support well-informed and fair asylum decisions and policy development, EASO collects reliable, accurate and up-to date information on countries of origin of persons applying for international protection in a transparent and impartial manner, according to an established methodology. Through a network approach and in cooperation with COI experts from Member States, EASO drafts joint COI reports, sometimes focusing on a specific topic within a country. These reports, in addition to a variety of COI resources produced by national and international institutions, are available on the EASO COI Portal. In addition, EASO organises practical cooperation meetings about specific countries in regions of interest with the participation of experts from the EU.

Box 3.5 Country of origin information (COI) produced by EASO in 2019

65 products on COI, including query responses, reports and methodology, including a COI Writing and Referencing Guide.

24 thematic or methodological COI events organised, including on specific countries of origin.

Over 500 queries processed regarding medical treatments (MedCOI).

In 2019, EASO continued to develop the medical country of origin information (MedCOI) transfer project. The MedCOI project is currently implemented by the Netherlands and Belgium, together with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD). The specialised system was established to improve access to medical information in countries of origin for European migration and asylum authorities. With a centrally-managed database of information, accurate and fair decisions in international protection and migration procedures can be taken at the national level. The transfer is expected to be completed in 2020 when EASO will have the full capacity to deliver the MedCOI services.

To assist decision-makers and policy-makers in the assessment of the situation in main countries of origin and to foster convergence, EASO engages EU+ countries in the development of Country Guidance. The agency coordinates the development of country-specific common analysis and guidance by the Country Guidance Network of senior policy officials. The process is further supported by teams of national experts, and with input from the European Commission and

UNHCR. Country guidance is based on common COI, analysed in accordance with EU legislation, CJEU jurisprudence and, where appropriate, the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). It also builds on the general EASO guidance on the assessment of applications for international protection (EASO practical tools) and takes note of the relevant UNHCR eligibility guidelines. To date, country guidance has been developed on Afghanistan (updated June 2019), Iraq (June 2019) and Nigeria (February 2019). A new development on Syria and updates to the guidance on Afghanistan and Iraq are envisaged in 2020.

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