

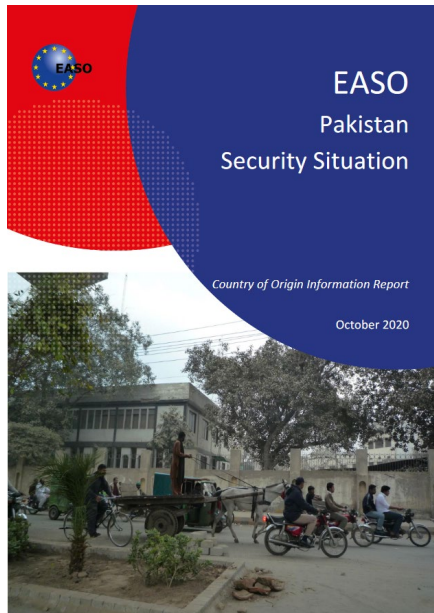
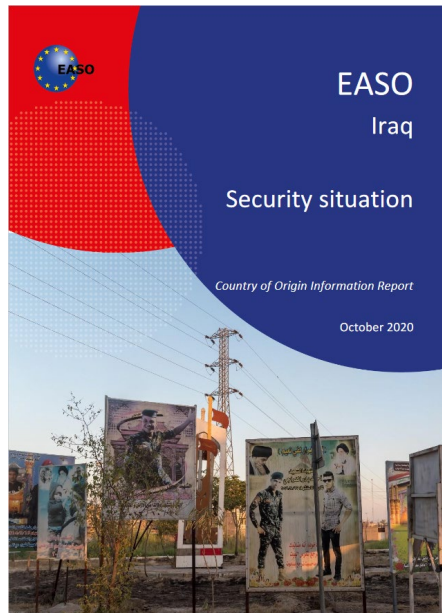
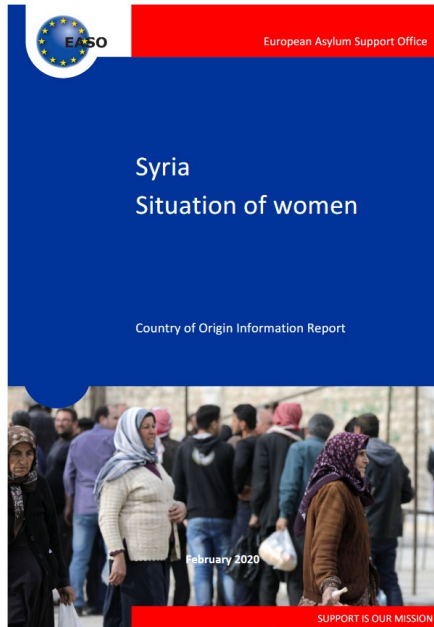
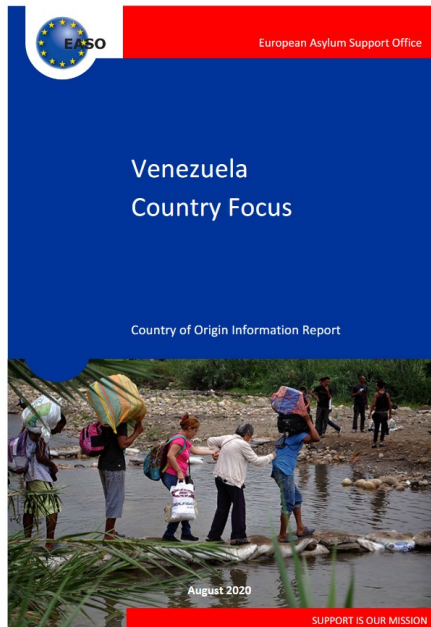


# EASO Country of Origin Information (COI)

**Carla Ramos**

Senior COI Officer, COI Sector, TCRU





Who are we?



How do we produce COI?



Main EASO COI products /  
How do we share them?







# COI and the CEAS

## Qualification Directive: Directive 2011/95/EU (recast)

### Article 4 - Assessment of facts and circumstances

3) The assessment of an application for international protection is to be carried out on an individual basis and includes **taking into account:**

(a) **all relevant facts as they relate to the country of origin at the time of taking a decision** on the application, including laws and regulations of the country of origin and the manner in which they are applied; ...

### Article 8 – Assessment of well-founded fear/serious harm & internal protection

**Member States shall at the time of taking the decision** on the application have regard to the **general circumstances prevailing in that part of the country and to the personal circumstances of the applicant in accordance with Article 4**. To that end, Member States shall ensure that precise and up-to-date information is obtained from relevant sources, such as the **United Nations High Commissioner for refugees and the European Asylum Support Office**.





# COI and EASO

## EASO Founding Regulation (EU) 439/2010, Art. 4 – COI

EASO shall ‘organise, promote and coordinate activities relating to information on countries of origin’

EASO is responsible for:

- **Gathering of relevant, reliable, accurate and up-to date information on countries of origin of persons applying for IP**
- **Drafting COI reports**
- **Developing common format and a common methodology**
- **Management and development of a COI Portal**
- **Analysis of information on countries of origin in a transparent manner with a view to fostering convergence of assessment criteria**



A large, 3D, blue logo of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is positioned in the upper left corner. The logo features the word 'EASO' in a bold, sans-serif font, surrounded by a circular arrangement of twelve five-pointed stars, similar to the European Union flag. The logo has a sense of depth and is set against a dark blue background with diagonal lines.

# How are we organised?

## EASO COI Sector



# Third Country Research Unit (TCRU)

## Asylum Knowledge Centre



**17 staff:**

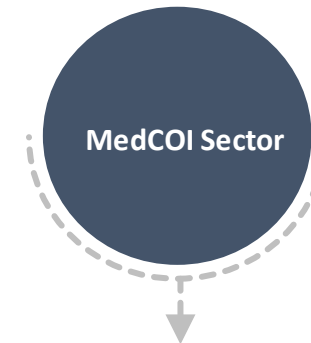
**11 Research Officers and  
Research Assistants**

**3 Senior Researchers**

**1 COI Portal Officer**

**1 Editor**

**1 Head of Sector**



# Country of Origin Information (COI) Sector

COI Production and Methodology

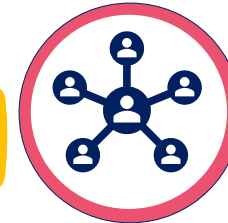


COI for Operations



**Country Desks**

Africa, Asia/Russia,  
MENA, Latin  
America, Horizontal



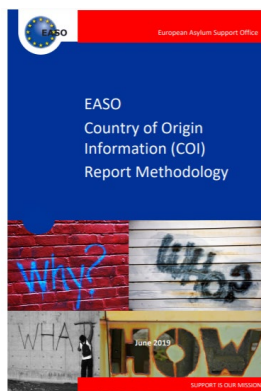
COI Networks



# COI Production and Methodology

## COI Methodology

EU+ common methodology, guides, and **training** on COI practices



## COI Production

COI reports, queries, factsheets, COI for country guidance



## Horizontal COI Expertise/ Support

Provision of COI advice/expertise/input to other EASO sectors with COI-linked activities

## COI Portal

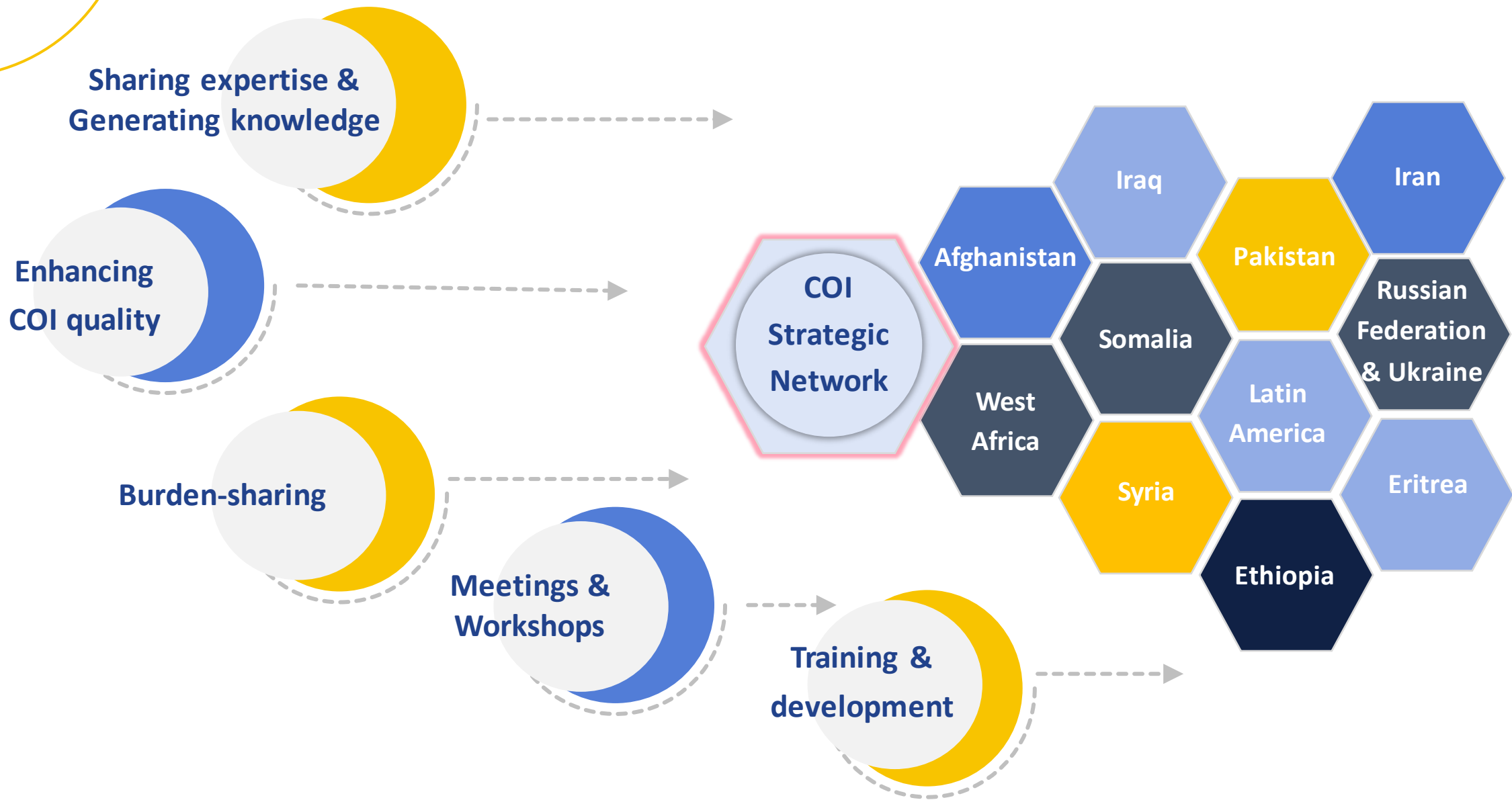
Common portal for EASO and EU+ COI products

<https://coi.easo.europa.eu/>





# COI Networks



# COI for Operations

## Tailor-made COI support:

- COI Helpdesk
- COI methodology
- COI production (reports, queries, ...)
- COI training
- COI meetings/workshops
- On-the-job coaching

Cyprus  
Malta  
Italy  
Greece

COI support under the  
umbrella of Operating Plans

Western  
Balkans  
Turkey

COI support under EASO  
external dimension strategy



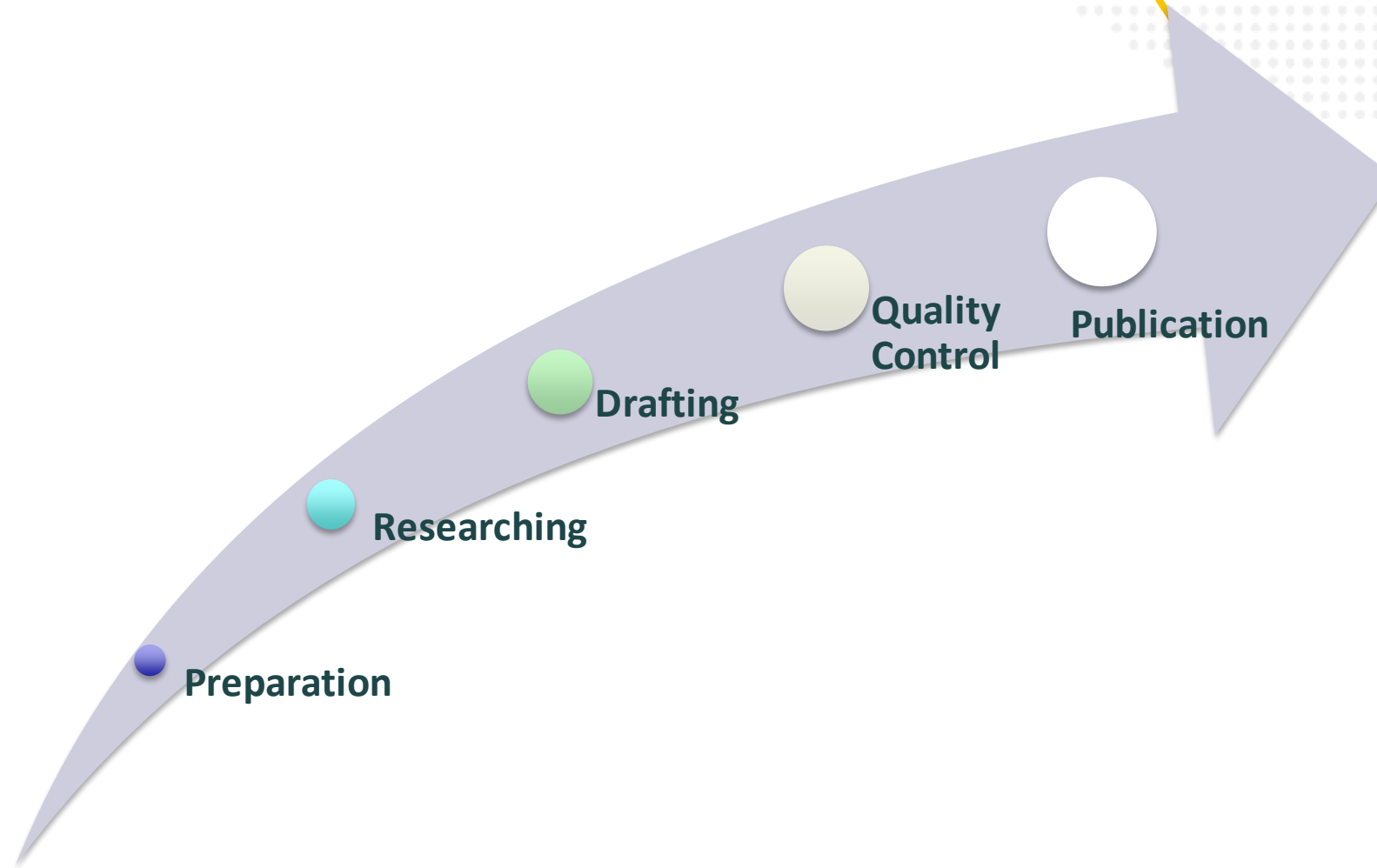
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# How do we produce COI?



# EASO COI Production Process

EASO COI Report Methodology 2019



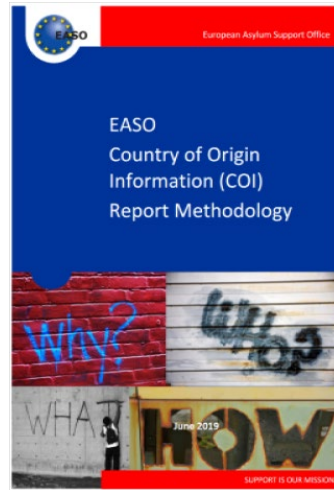


# COI production models

- Joint production
- ‘Europeanisation’
- In-house drafting
- Outsourcing

# Common COI production

How?

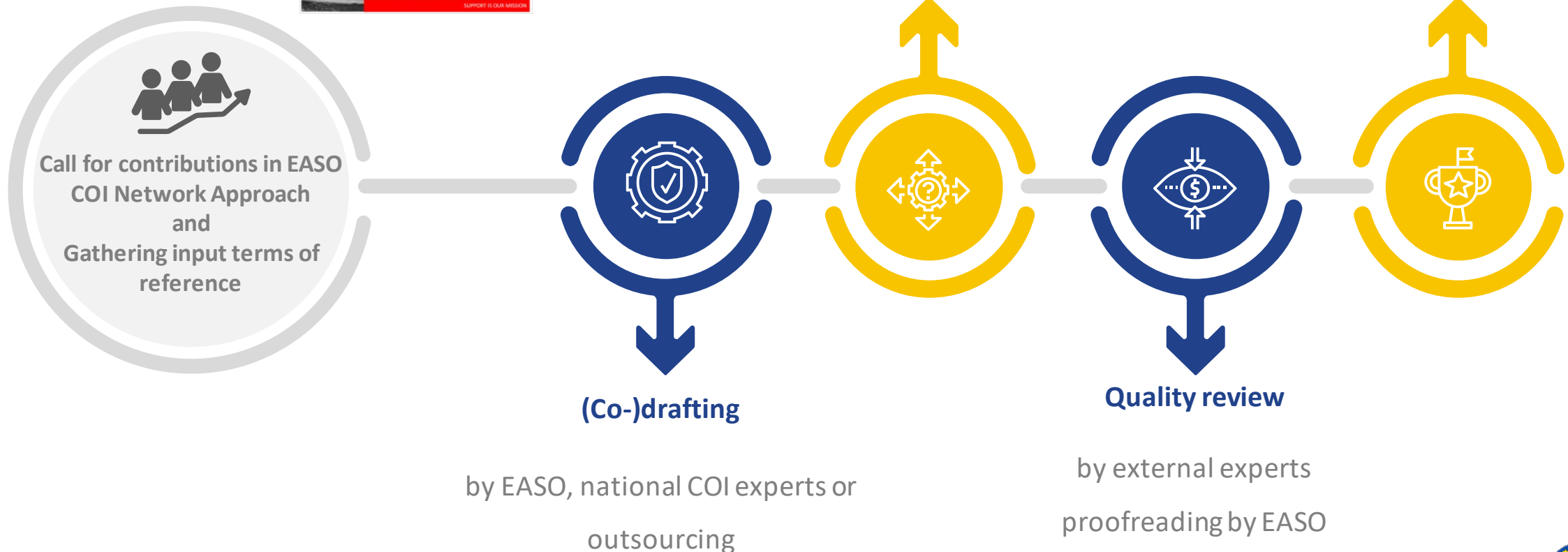


## Peer review

by national COI experts, UNHCR  
or civil society organisations

## Publication

by EASO



# Main challenges in common COI production

## COI production

- Defining ToR
- Multiple drafters / harmonisation
- Language
- National practices/EASO COI methodology

## Other challenges

- Conflicting processes
- Available resources

There are no exact figures as to the number of ISIL fighters operating in Iraq today. Some estimates put the numbers at between 10,000 and 15,000 operating in Iraq<sup>66</sup>, whereby some 500 to 1,000 fighters operate in the western desert areas<sup>67</sup>, whilst the rest are believed to have regrouped in the Hamreen mountain range in the north-eastern parts of the country, which extends from the governorate of Diyala, crossing the northern part of Salah al-Din governorate and into the southern parts of the governorate of Kirkuk<sup>68</sup>.

#### X.1.2.2 White Flags

Other remnant groups appear to be building new militant fractions in the Hamreen Mountains. One such group goes under the name of the "White Flags". Armed with weapons accumulated from years fighting along ISIL, these fighters are also finding shelter in the folds of the mountain ridge<sup>69</sup>. The group is said to be an alliance of former ISIL militants and disgruntled Kurdish militias (with no former connection to the Peshmerga forces) who were pushed out of the multi-ethnic (Kurd-Turkmen) town Tuz Khurmatu<sup>70</sup>.

#### X.1.2.3 Other non-State armed groups

Aside from ISIL, other smaller militant jihadist armed groups are also present in Iraq, which form part of what the BBC called the 'Sunni insurgency' in 2014. The main ones are Jamaat Ansar Al-Islam (JAI) (mainly based in Ninewa), the Naqshbandi Order (Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia, JTRN), Jaysh Al-Mujahideen (JAM) (mainly near Hawija), Islamic Army of Iraq (mainly in Diyala and Salah al-Din)<sup>71</sup>. JTRN is the second largest insurgent group after ISIL; its ideology 'espouses a blend of the banned Baathist Party's ideology (...) and Naqshbandi Sufi Islam' while emphasising jihadist language<sup>72</sup>. It included remnants of the Saddam Hussein-era army and drug smugglers<sup>73</sup>. It has created front groups of Baathists and has operated in parts of Anbar and Falluja<sup>74</sup>.

A new group called the Khawbaksh has also emerged in 2018, calling itself a 'Kurdish volunteer' group active against PMUs in the areas around Tuz Khurmatu and Kirkuk with links

<sup>66</sup> Markusen, M., Center for Strategic & International Studies, *The Islamic State and the Persistent Threat of Extremism in Iraq*, November 2018 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/islamic-state-and-persistent-threat-extremism-iraq>.

<sup>67</sup> Reuters, *Islamic State makes comeback in Iraq with switch to guerrilla tactics*, 24 July 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-security/islamic-state-makes-comeback-in-iraq-with-switch-to-guerrilla-tactics-idUSKBN1KE0MH>.

<sup>68</sup> Reuters, *Islamic State makes comeback in Iraq with switch to guerrilla tactics*, 24 July 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-security/islamic-state-makes-comeback-in-iraq-with-switch-to-guerrilla-tactics-idUSKBN1KE0MH>.

<sup>69</sup> BuzzFeed News, *The new face of ISIS in Iraq calls itself the White Flags*, 1 April 2018 <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/borzoudaragahi/isis-iraq-white-flags-syria-new-name#wmEvymwYp>.

<sup>70</sup> Middle East Eye, *No surrender: 'White Flags' group rises as new threat in northern Iraq*, 31 January 2018 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraq-islamic-state-white-flag-hashd-al-shaabi-1282818812>.

<sup>71</sup> BBC News, *Iraq crisis: Key players in Sunni rebellion*, 14 July 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28053496>.



#### ACCORD 2

Meaning 500, not the rest of the 10,000-15,000, as it seems in the text

Nevine Abou-Gabal

Done

#### ACCORD 2

Deleted: w



#### ACCORD 2

were? If you write are, you need a source for it that is not from 2014.



#### ACCORD 2

mentioned by BBC in 2014 were



#### ACCORD

Is there a more recent source that indicates that these groups are still active in 2018? If not, mention that no information could be found whether they are still present in Iraq.

Nevine Abou-Gabal

Not to my knowledge? Not in 2018, there may be some remnants, but I have not seen any reports.



#### ACCORD 2

Was in 2014

Nevine Abou-Gabal

Noted



#### ACCORD 2

This source is from 2018, however it does not refer to any of the above-mentioned groups, so it is misleading to connect it in the text like it is done. This source mostly talks about Khawbaksh and similar groups (which you refer to in the next paragraph)

Nevine Abou-Gabal

I opt to leave it. I think it is good to mention the other insurgency groups, although they have not been active since 2014, there are no indications that they have disappeared.



#### ACCORD 2

Now again 2014, connection with "it" does not work here, referring to different groups than the source from 2018 above

Suggestion: treat the whole paragraph above as historical (2014), take out the 2018 source, say that no new information could be found, then introduce the new group below

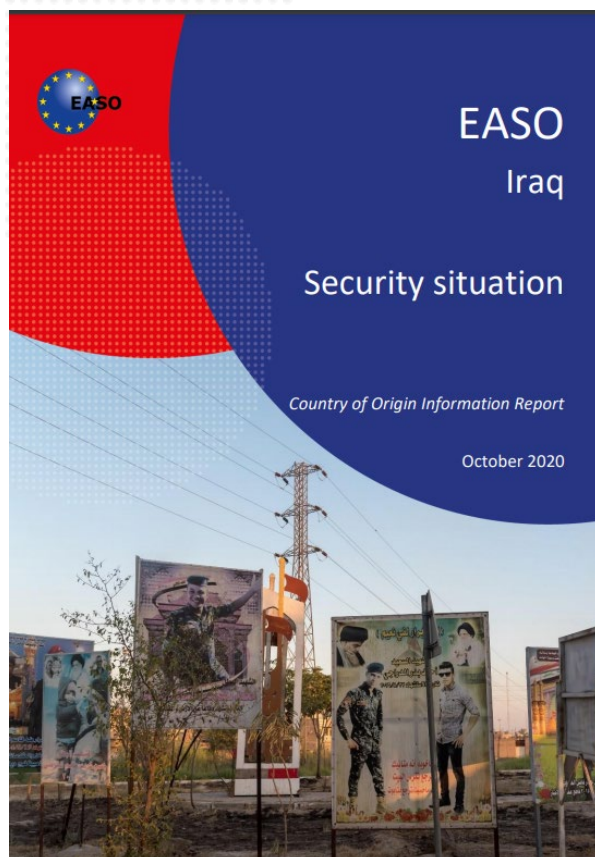
Newer information about AAI can be found here, but mostly related to attacks in Iran <http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2018/10/isis-second-resurgence.html>

Nevine Abou-Gabal

Done, did not refer to the ISW link since it takes up AAI in Iran.

Nevine Abou-Gabal





## Acknowledgements

EASO would like to acknowledge the following national asylum department as co-drafter of this report, together with EASO:

**Belgium**, Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, Cedoca (Centre for Documentation and Research)

EASO would also like to acknowledge **ARC**, the Asylum Research Centre, as co-drafter of this report.

The following departments and organisations have reviewed respective parts of this report:

**Denmark**, Ministry of Immigration and Integration, The Danish Immigration Service

**Finland**, Finnish Immigration Service

**France**, Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA), Information, Documentation and Research Division

**ACCORD**, the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, and

**ARC**, the Asylum Research Centre.

All parts of this report have been reviewed by at least one reviewer. **ARC**, who acted as co-drafter and as reviewer, reviewed parts drafted by other co-drafters.

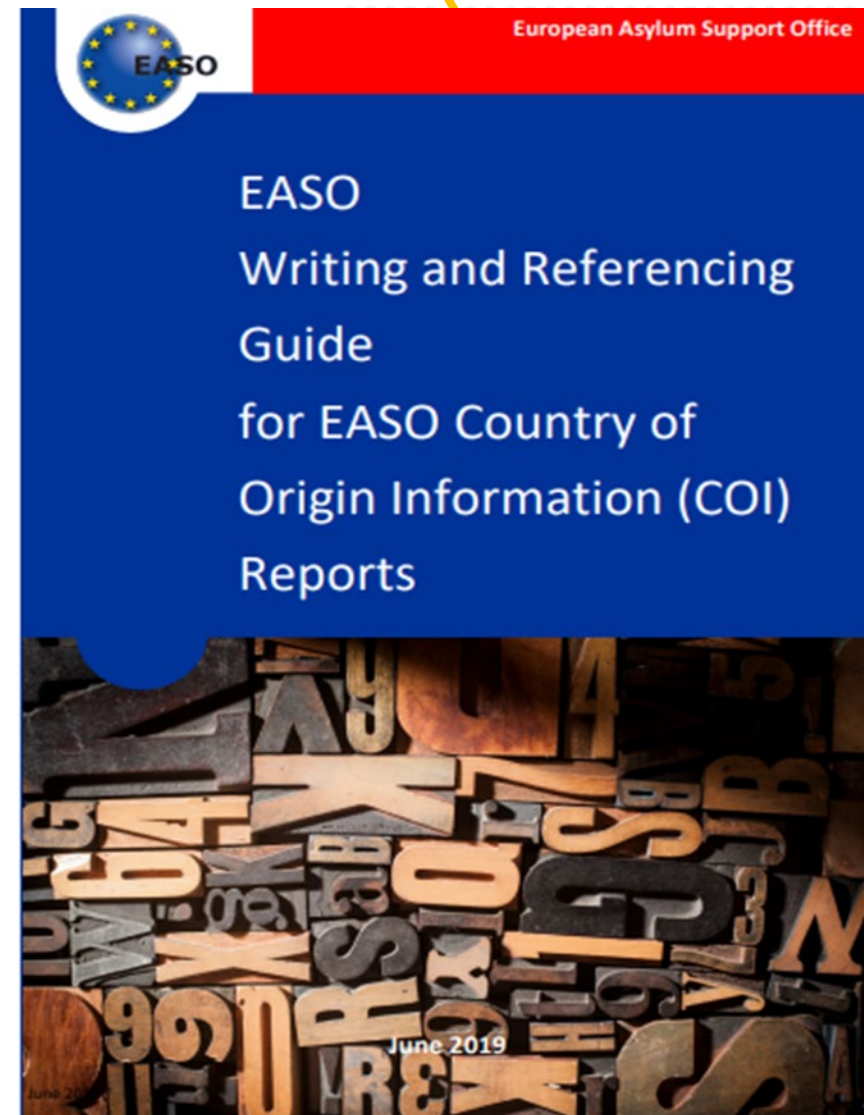
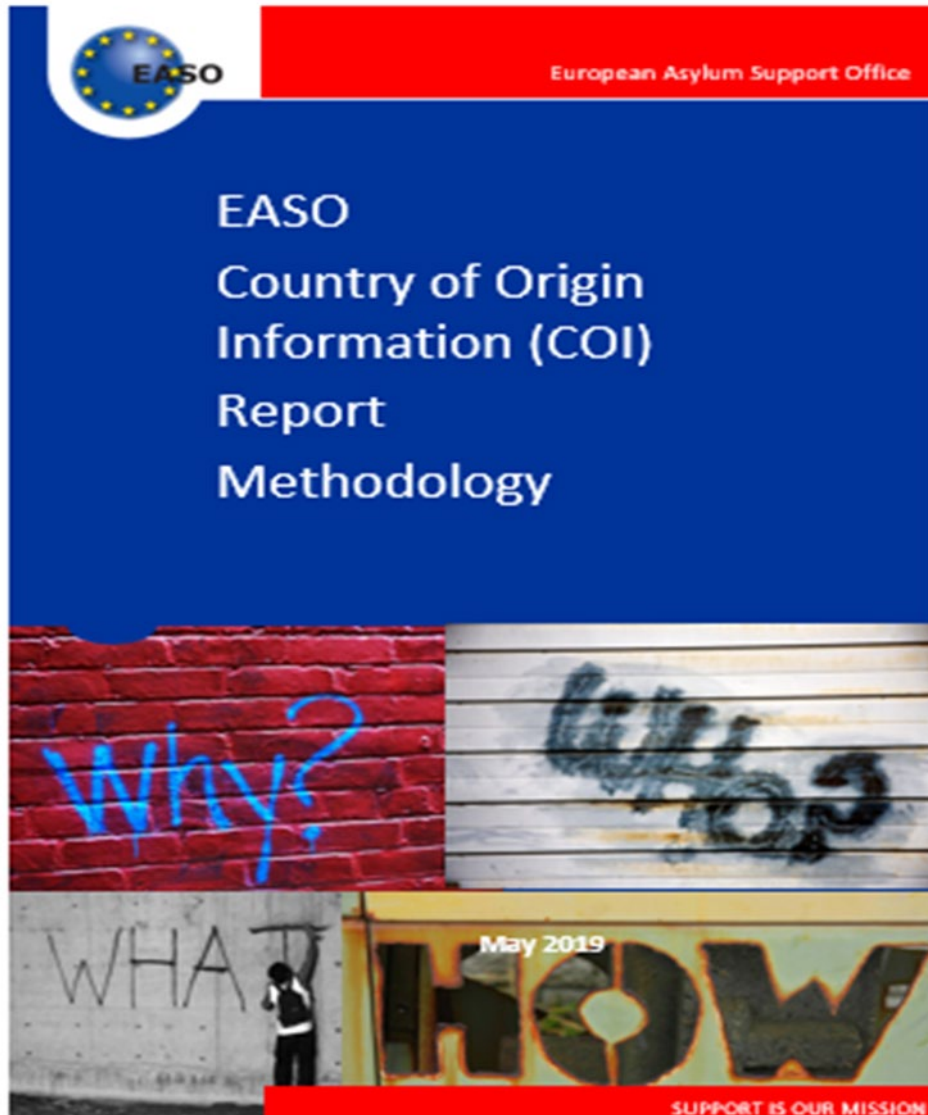
The review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EASO.

# Main EASO COI products / How do we share them?

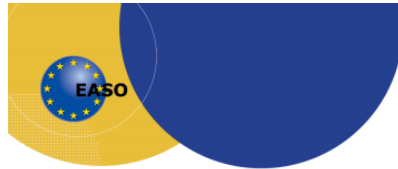




# EASO COI methodology



# Main EASO COI products



## COI QUERY

Country of Origin	SOMALIA
Main subject	<a href="#">Situation of the Gabove minority group in Somalia, especially in Somaliland and Puntland</a>
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <a href="#">What is the treatment of the Gabove minority group in Somalia, especially in Somaliland and Puntland?</a></li><li>2. <a href="#">What is the situation of returnees belonging to the Gabove minority group in Somalia, especially in Somaliland and Puntland</a></li></ol>
Date of completion	30 March 2021
Query Code	Q5-2021
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A

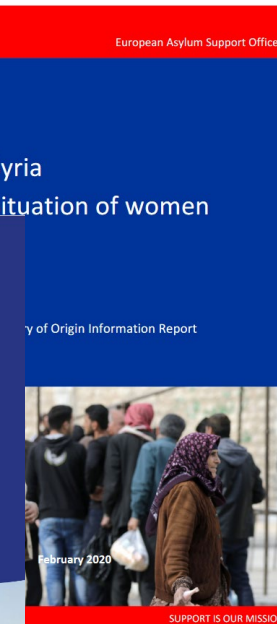
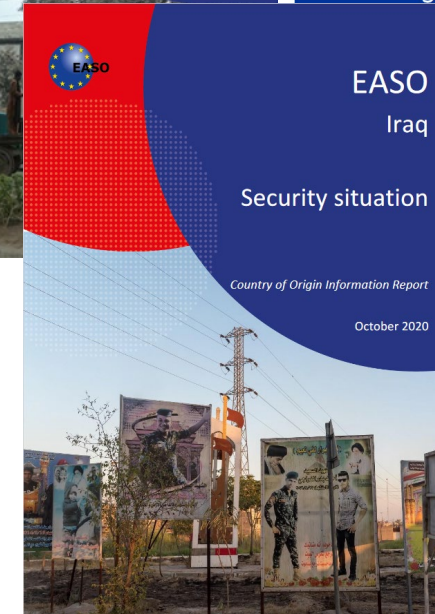
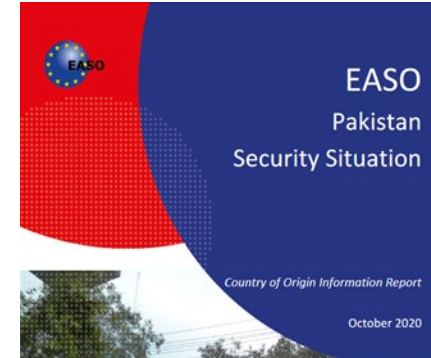
### Disclaimer

This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#) and [EASO Writing and Referencing Guide](#).

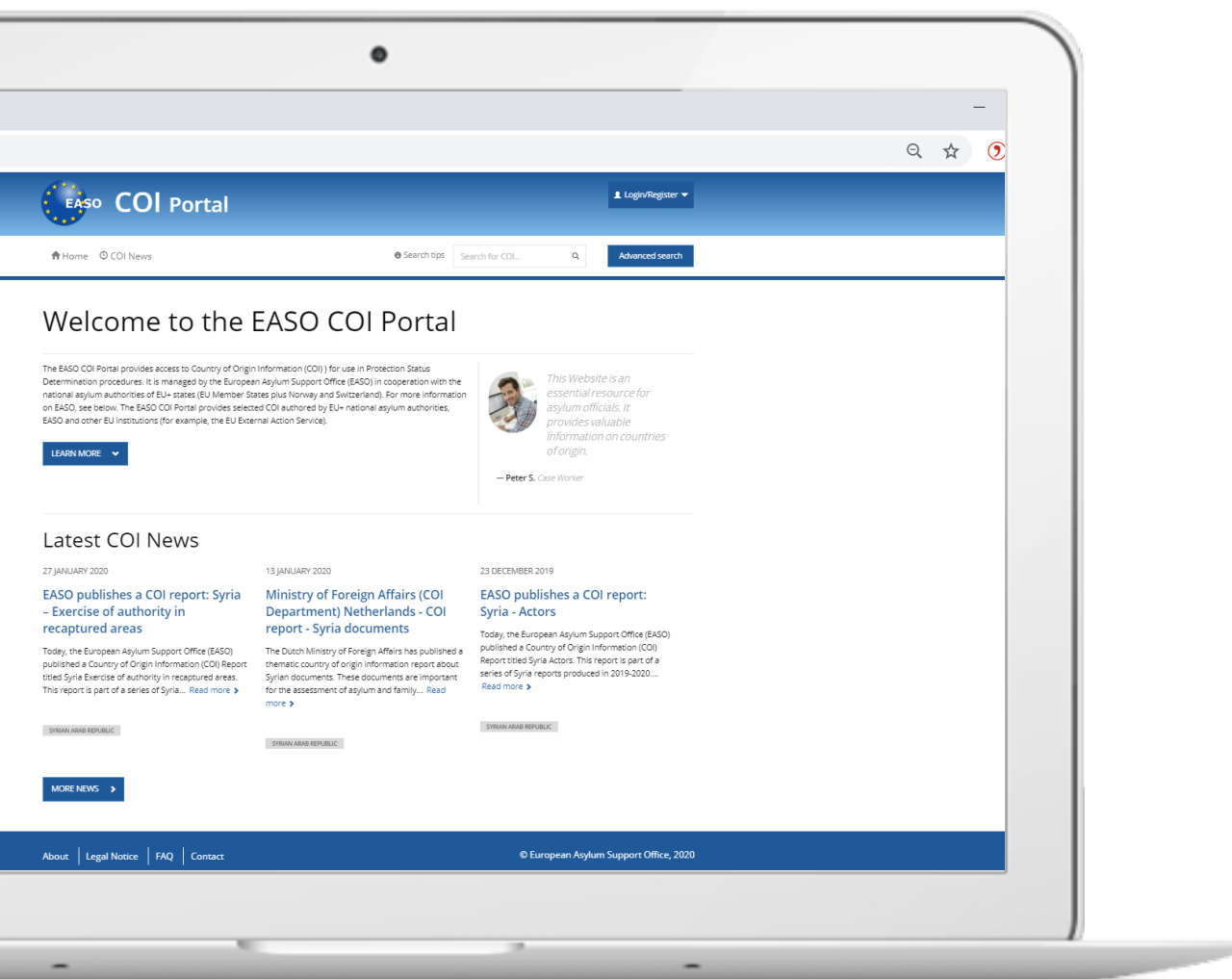
The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision-making authorities. The answer was finalised on 30 March 2021. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.







# EASO COI Portal

<https://coi.easo.europa.eu/>

## What it is

Gateway to selected information on countries of origin to assist asylum practitioners

## What it provides

- EASO COI products (reports, queries, ...)
- EU+ countries COI products
- EU institutions COI



<https://coi.easo.europa.eu>



## EASO COI Portal



## COI Portal

Login/Register ▼

[Home](#) [COI News](#)

Search for COI...

Advanced search

Search tips

## Advanced Search

Search by keywords

Keywords

*You can leave this empty*

Countries of origin

Choose countries of origin

*Start typing or click to see the complete list*

Publication date

From:



To:



*You can fill out any of the fields*

Document type

Response to COI Query

*Start typing or click to see the complete list*

Document source

EASO

*Start typing or click to see the complete list*

Document language

Choose your languages

*Start typing or click to see the complete list*

Clear

Search



### COI QUERY

Country of Origin	SUDAN
Main subject	Armed groups, Security situation, Internal displacement situation
Question(s)	Armed groups, including structure, relationship with other actors, areas of presence and operation, and activities; security incidents, including perpetrators, targets, number of casualties and geographical distribution of events
	See <a href="#">Table of Contents</a> .
Date of completion	13 October 2020
Query Code	Q24-2020
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	N/A

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The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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# THANK YOU

[www.easo.europa.eu](http://www.easo.europa.eu)

COI Sector  
Third Country Research Centre