



European Migration Network

Ad-Hoc Query on storing COI in national databases

Requested by Finnish EMN NCP on 21st July 2010

Compilation produced on 16th November 2010

Responses from [Austria](#), [Cyprus](#), [Czech Republic](#), [Estonia](#), [Finland](#), [Germany](#), [Hungary](#), [Italy](#), [Latvia](#), [Lithuania](#), [Netherlands](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#), [Slovak Republic](#), [Slovenia](#), [Sweden](#) (16 in Total)

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1. Background Information

This is an enquiry posed to COI (Country of Origin Information) units of national Immigration Services.






In Finland an upcoming electronic case management system for immigration processes (UMA), will replace the Register of Aliens as soon as it is completed. The processing of residence permit, asylum and citizenship matters will be transferred to the new UMA electronic system. The increased efficiency of the new system is expected to shorten the processing times for all types of applications. Questions and answers concerning COI will also be transferred to UMA. The COI unit of the Finnish Immigration Service would like you to answer to the following questions **by 31st August 2010**:

1. In your country, when questions concerning asylum and other residence permit cases are posed by decision makers to COI researchers, are the answers systematically stored somewhere, for instance a COI database or another electronic system?
2. If yes, what are the advantages of storing questions in a common database/ system? Are there any disadvantages?



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3. Is the information stored in the database open for decision makers only? Please clarify whether the sphere of users is wider than the group mentioned above.

2. Responses






		Wider Dissemination?	<p>1. In your country, when questions concerning asylum and other residence permit cases are posed by decision makers to COI researchers, are the answers systematically stored somewhere, for instance a COI database or another electronic system?</p> <p>2. If yes, what are the advantages of storing questions in a common database/ system? Are there any disadvantages?</p> <p>3. Is the information stored in the database open for decision makers only? Please clarify whether the sphere of users is wider than the group mentioned above.</p>
	Austria	No	This EMN NCP has provided a response to the requesting EMN NCP. However, they have requested that it is not disseminated further.
	Cyprus	Yes	<p>1. In your country, when questions concerning asylum and other residence permit cases are posed by decision</p> <p>1. Answers to asylum related questions are not stored in a specific COI data base.</p> <p>2. N/A</p>
	Czech Republic	Yes	<p>1. We do have a COI database in which answers to any formal queries of decision makers are stored.</p> <p>2. The database is searchable and provides decision makers with instant access to the information.</p> <p>3. The COI database is accessible to decision makers dealing with the agendas of asylum and permanent residence.</p>
	Estonia	Yes	When processing an international protection application the decision maker also researches data concerning COI. All the necessary information is being researched in regards to a specific case. General up to date COI is stored in files with shared access for all decision makers but no special COI database or other electronic system exists.
	Finland	Yes	<p>1. In Finland, currently all such answers to decision makers, that include COI on an issue that has not been previously researched by our COI unit, or includes updated information on already researched issues, are stored in our COI database Tellus. In future, all answers to questions by decision makers will be stored in the upcoming electronic case management system for immigration processes (UMA).</p> <p>2. There are at least the following advantages in storing questions and answers to a common database/ system. Although staff changes and</p>

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			<p>expertise is lost by the departure of experienced persons, the researched information remains in the database for future researchers and decision makers to base their information on relevant COI issues. A variety of updated information on various topics in the database limits to a degree questions posed to COI researchers. In Finland's view, there are no major disadvantages. Challenges are posed by the enhancement of the database's properties, such as the search instrument, as well as determining the confidentiality of documents stored in the database.</p> <p>3. The information in the Tellus database can be accessed by the decision makers in the Finnish Immigration Service. The data is classified as open, confidential and secret. Tellus can currently be accessed on a limited basis also by other authorities dealing with migration issues, such as the police, the administrative courts and local registry offices.</p>
	Germany	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, they are stored in the database MILO. 2. Advantages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They are (or can be made) quickly available to the parties involved (decision-makers and judges). To lawyers access is granted on demand and specifically to the case only. - Later on, the inquiries and answers can be used in similar cases. <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The inquiries and answers need to be anonymized. - The database / system has to be able to handle detailed and diversified permission rights. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The individual inquiries and answers are available to the decision-makers resp. to the parties involved (see above) and – except for those to German embassies - to any MILO user with guest account. <p>Moreover, registered ECS project partners are granted access to inquiries and answers within the ECS project scope. Return-specific individual COI inquiries are also stored in MILO, most of them are also publicly available in a separate MILO area called ZIRF database (http://www.zirf.eu – under construction).</p>
	Hungary	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes, the answers are systematically stored in the COI Database managing by COI Unit (so-called Documentation Centre) It is own electronic database which is accessible to all OIN (Office of Immigration and Nationality) staff. The Database's task is to provide up to date information on countries of origin relevant mainly for the eligibility officers in refugee status determination. The COI Database has different subdirectories: COI documents (main sending countries); Other COI documents (less important countries); International materials/documents. The COI documents subdirectory contains the list of the main country of origin (focus countries) in Hungary. In each country file there are further subfiles and the responses to COI requests are stored here. 2. We think that storing queries in a common database has only advantage. Since we store the responses our colleagues in the different branch office can access to all COI materials. They are informed about the all requests and can use the information without special demand. And this COI Database is also very useful for us because we can filter the repetitive COI questions. 3. Each colleague of the OIN has own password to enter and use this service – but only two persons have so-called exclusive right to fill up the Database.





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			Note: Our Database is under development presently. Increasing its capacity and developing its structure it will be more user friendly.
	Italy	Yes	This information is not available from the NCP
	Latvia	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We do not have special COI unit therefore decision makers are responsible for COI searching themselves and mostly there are no special documents with COI questions and answers. All COI materials used in particular cases are stored in Country folders within network share on the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs's file server and these folders are accessible only for staff dealing with asylum issues. 2. Even if we have only Country folders and not special database, specific COI stored there is often used repeatedly during decision making process in several asylum cases with similar background and country of origin and it helps to save time for COI searching. 3. Stored information is available only for staff dealing with asylum issues.
	Lithuania	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yes. The COI unit regularly prepares notes on countries of origin (sometimes on general information about the country of origin, other times in replying to questions posed by decision makers). These notes do not have confidential information and therefore are stored on the intranet of the Migration Department under the Ministry of the Interior. 2. The advantage is that decision makers can browse the existing notes and find needed information. In this way decision makers do not address the COI unit several times with the same questions; and if the information is already gathered in some note, the decision makers save time. We do not see any disadvantages. 3. The sphere of users is much wider: the intranet of the Migration Department is accessible to the employees of the Ministry of the Interior and bodies under the Ministry.
	Netherlands	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Yes, answers on such questions are stored in a database 2) The biggest advantages of storing the answers is re-use of information. Sometimes the answer of another question can be found in the answer of a former question. The new –sometimes – same question is then easily answered. A disadvantage could be that the newest insights aren't included in the re-use of the answer. We make sure that the answers we store have an "answer date". As to validate the answers for reuse. 3) The answers are stored in a database open for all INDco-workers., decionmakers, policy makers and so on.
	Poland	Yes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All the requests related to the situation in countries of origin, which are posed to the COI unit/researchers of the Office for Foreigners, Poland, are stored in COI database/system. One of the moduls of the COI database/system provides for its users the possibility to pose a question through the system. In case the request is sent by other institution by e-mail or fax or is asked by phone, it is written in into the system by the contacted researcher or by the manager of the COI unit. The same applies to the situation when the need for certain information related to the countries of origin is requested orally by the head of the office or by one of directors. Of course answers to these queries prepared by the COI unit/researchers are also stored in COI database/system. 2. There are big advantages of having the possibility to send the requests via the COI system and to store them in it. It allows the users for better control over the process of answering the questions and for better communication between those who ask the questions and COI researchers (those who ask see at what stage the process is at certain moment; they can add some information or made a comment; COI researchers also have better control over the possessed by them requests to be answered). Such resolution is also very

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			<p>convenient for the manager of the COI unit. It allows him/her to control how many requests are sent to the COI unit and how many are answered (also in relation to certain COI researcher and certain period of time or in relation to certain country of origin, etc.).</p> <p>3. The main users of COI database are case workers. They have full access to the content of this database. Access to the COI database, although limited, have also workers of other departments of the Office for Foreigners, as well as workers of some units of other institutions, like Council for Refugees (II instance – deals with appeals against decisions of the Office for Foreigners) or Migration Policy Department of the Ministry of Interior and Administration.</p>
	Portugal	Yes	<p>1 / 2 .Portugal does not have a COI Unit. All the COI research is made on an individual basis by the caseworker and the information is stored on the individual asylum file.</p> <p>3. There is no database.</p>
	Slovak Republic	Yes	<p>1. Employees of the Migration office of MoI of the Slovak Republic (MO) who process information on countries of origin receive the topical questions in written form. These questions are stored in COI department of the MO and thus serve for better overview of this department, for its own needs and as a statistical data. Although the MO has COI electronic database, questions in it are archived together with processed answers and this database serves only for internal needs of the Migration Office.</p> <p>2. N/A</p> <p>3. Originally this database should have served also for the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic (courts of appeal) with the possible perspective to integrate the Bureau of Border and Alien Police in the future (in the frame of planned joint Immigration and Naturalization Office; taking into account the need of information e.g. for reviewing the possibility of migrants' return). Currently the access to the database have employees processing COI information, asylum decision makers (in main premises of the MO and also in selected asylum facilities) and other MO employees who store there data such as reports from travel duties or from media monitoring, statistical overviews etc.</p>
	Slovenia	Yes	<p>We do not use COI database or any other application for COI request.</p>
	Sweden	Yes	<p>1. The Swedish Migration Board uses a system/database for this type of information named “Lifos” (<i>which basically is short for ”COI-system” in Swedish</i>). This “information system”/database exists in two versions: One available via the Migration Board’s internal network (the intranet), and another version available for the public on the Internet.</p> <p>In Lifos the templates used for forwarding questions look somewhat different depending on whether the request for information comes from an internal- or external question maker. Hence one template is used for the intranet version of Lifos, and another template for the Internet version of Lifos. Either template is filled in and sent electronically to an email address at the Migration Board’s COI-unit. The question is then answered by staff/experts at the CIO-unit – sometimes in collaboration with other experts at the Migration Board with relevant expertise on the specific country in question. If required, questions may also be forwarded to the relevant embassy.</p> <p>All questions and answers are systematically stored in an electronic filing system/catalog at the Migration Board’s CIO-Unit.</p>

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			<p>Answers which are more general in character and appropriate/suitable for publication are published via Lifos (thus available via the Internet and/or the intranet). The questioner always receives an answer directly via email – even if only limited/inconsiderable or no information could be established/attained. The questioner is furthermore contacted in case of any possible uncertainty and/ or doubtfulness concerning the question.</p> <p>A special template is used, including a disclaimer explaining the circumstances regarding the answer. EU’s CIO-guidelines are followed for the presentation of the answers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. One advantage with publishing the answers at Lifos is that the information can be reached by many. Moreover, this information provides support for uniform decisions, and the decisions in turn become based on information which sources have been critically reviewed. Furthermore, the amount of questions forwarded to the CIO-unit with a similar meaning/content decreases. 3. (See also the answer to question 1 above.) Answers to questions are generally published at the “open” Lifos on the Internet. It is therefore possible for assistants, for instance, to view and assess information that forms the basis for a decision. <p>Questions and answers that are <i>not</i> published via Lifos are found at the Migration Board’s CIO-unit’s special electronic filing system/catalog. This information is of use in case the same/a similar question is posed at several occasions.</p>
	<p>United Kingdom</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Beyond its specific country reports COIS also provides a request service for its users (both asylum and non-asylum decision makers). The responses to which, in addition to being provided to the individual requesting, are retained and published on an internal (UKBA) database. Responses are located under the Country they relate to and can be further searched by subject matter. 2. Main advantage of storing information in a shared/common database: allows for maximum coverage on what generally become the main themes from specific countries; it may assist in decreasing the requirement for repetitive requests on the same or similar theme/issue (resource implications); it allows decision makers the opportunity to make faster decisions with the often specific information already to hand. Main disadvantages of storing information in a shared/common database: requires careful management ensuring information remains current with previous responses being archived accordingly; Ensure volume requests and published responses are managed for ease of reference. 3. The information contained within the internal database is accessible to all internal users with decision makers (both asylum and non-asylum) being the substantial users; in addition to these Policy colleagues may also refer to this information. It is hoped that in the coming months COIS will be able to publish some of its COI Responses on the Home Office website to sit along side COIS Country Reports. Once this is achieved the responses will be accessible to anyone with access to the Home Office website.
