

News story: The IAGCI invites tenders for a thematic evaluation of the UK Home Office Country Information Products

Background

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information \(IAGCI\)](#) is part of the Office of the Chief Inspector of the UK Home Office. Its main purpose is to review the content of all Country of Origin Information (COI) produced by the Home Office to help ensure that this is as accurate, balanced, impartial and up to date as possible. COI is information used in procedures that assess claims of individuals to refugee status or other forms of international and humanitarian protection. It is also used in policy formulation. The full Terms of Reference for the IAGCI and minutes of earlier meetings are available on its [website](#).

The IAGCI focuses on particular Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs) produced by the Home Office. CPINs are produced regularly on the top 20 asylum intake countries. They focus on particular themes that are identified as being common grounds for asylum claims made in the United Kingdom. CPINs are compiled from material produced by a range of recognised external information sources. They also contain guidance on interpreting Home Office policy. However, the IAGCI's mandate is to consider only country of origin information and not to comment on policy positions that may be contained in CPINs.

As well as focusing upon individual CPINs, the IAGCI is concerned to examine the way that particular 'cross-cutting' themes are dealt with across all of the countries that the Home Office issues reports on. In the past such 'cross-cutting' reports have been commissioned on gender issues; sexual orientation and gender identity; children and return issues.

In 2014, a thematic review was done of the [Home Office's treatment of sexual orientation and gender identity issues](#). At its next meeting to be held in May 2019, the IAGCI will again consider the way that these themes are covered in each of the countries about which there is a recent report.

The person(s) commissioned to undertake this project will be an experienced researcher with expertise on protection issues pertaining to sexual orientation and gender issues and some knowledge of asylum and human rights issues. They will not be expected to be an expert on all countries concerned, but some expertise in at least some of the countries will be an advantage.

The review should aim to provide a brief assessment of the coverage of sexual orientation and gender identity in each CPIN regarding:

1. completeness – the extent to which relevant available information on sexual orientation and gender identity issues has been reflected in the CPIN. Additional publicly-available sources should be identified where appropriate
2. accuracy and balance – whether relevant information from source material has been accurately and appropriately reflected in the CPIN, noting any specific errors or omissions

The review should provide a brief comparative summary, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the different reports.

The 2014 review of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity provided recommendations for best practice for country information notes. The reviewer should consider the extent to which these recommendations are still valid and whether the recommendations made in the previous review have been adopted. If necessary, the reviewer should recommend any changes in best practice that should be made.

While there is room for individual discretion in the way the researcher approaches the task and prepares a review, it would be helpful for IAGCI if some specific guidelines were followed:

1. The CPIN should be reviewed in terms of the situation in the country up to the stated 'cut off' date for inclusion of information in the report
2. A template for the report format will be provided to the reviewer. All suggested changes should be provided as part of the review paper
3. Any suggestions for additional information (or corrections to information in the document) must be referenced to a source document for the Home Office to be able to use it. If no published source is available to support the suggested information, the reviewer may supply a letter providing the information for use as a source document

The reviewer will be requested to attend the IAGCI meeting at which their review will be considered. The UK Home Office will also be represented at the meeting to provide responses to comments and recommendations made in the review.

Reviews commissioned by IAGCI may be used as source documents for future CPINs and other country of origin information products.

Researchers interested in completing this review should submit:

- a letter demonstrating their expertise with respect to issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity, human rights and asylum
- their c.v.

Payment for this work will be set at £5,000. Expressions of interest should be submitted to IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk by close of Tuesday 26 March 2019.

We are only able to accept expressions of interest individuals and not from institutions or consultancy groups.

Successful bids will be notified by 29 March 2019. The final review will be

due by the close of 29 April 2019 and will be discussed at the IAGCI meeting in May 2019.

Speech: A lack of results and accountability: monitoring corruption cases in Kosovan prosecutorial and judicial systems

Dear Mr. Tahiri, Dear Ms. Haxhiu, Dear Mr. Musliu, Dear Mr. Qalaj, Dear Mr. Çoçaj, Dear Mr. Hyseni,

Honorable Court Presidents, Chief Prosecutors, Judges, Prosecutors, representatives of public institutions, media, civil society,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This event, in comparison with others, has so many panelists.

Allow me to thank KLI for their work to-date on this British Embassy funded project. And I hope you will allow me to speak a little more directly today. This is because of my affection for Kosovo.

The British Embassy and I have consistently followed the developments in the justice system in Kosovo. A lack of results, impunity, lack of response and lack of accountability remain key issues. This is noted in both domestic and international reports.

One might wonder, why? Why is serious crime not being punished in Kosovo? All of you here deal with this issue daily. Please, do tell us and your citizens why corruption is not being punished. Where is the problem? Why is it that there hasn't been a single high-profile case of corruption or organised crime where the outcome was effective imprisonment? Why do Kosovo's citizens and Kosovo's international partners see corruption, while the prosecution doesn't?

Are we dealing with a lack of courage, a lack of competence or the system captured by politics or interests of certain groups? I think that neither is acceptable for the people of this country, on whose behalf you deliver justice. It is not acceptable for the international community either. We have invested heavily in this country. We are working hard and we all want Kosovo, as a country, to succeed. We do not want to accept failure.

This country needs to have accountability. Here I am talking about the prosecution. The competences of the prosecution system are highly

decentralised when allocating responsibility for failure and very centralised when claiming achievements. Where is the accountability? Can we know the address to which citizens may complain? Where the concerns of citizens should be addressed?

Are there any conditions for success? Laws have improved continuously. But, laws do not currently effectively combat corruption and organised crime; and neither do the working conditions of prosecution offices and courts. Also, we all know that you are the most highly paid officials in Kosovo.

Of course, we continue to call on politicians not to influence the justice system, including the appointment of prosecutors and judges, chief prosecutors and court presidents who are obedient or susceptible to blackmail. They should remain independent because this is the only way to achieve results, fight criminality, and deliver justice for the citizens.

With us today is the Minister of Justice who launched a review of the entire justice system. We consider this process to be very important and have been supporting it for two years now. I hope that this process will yield recommendations that will be properly addressed, instead of having yet another Strategy in a drawer overflowing with various justice system strategies.

You hold the responsibility. It is up to you alone, no one else. I have said it before, but I shall repeat it again – the international community has a very clear demand for Kosovo – Kosovo cannot be a haven for corruption and organised crime.

Having a country in Europe, such as Kosovo, where corruption proceeds can be laundered and safe haven is provided for criminal phenomena, poses a risk not only for the Kosovan society but also for us and for Europe. Now I have a question. What do you think, how long can Kosovo continue to have the support of the international community, while it continues to prove lacking in fighting organised crime and corruption?

It is time for officials with dubious integrity to leave their positions and be prosecuted for their actions. In this regard, we welcome initiatives in the Kosovo Police to bring the police officers with integrity into key positions, and we expect them to prove themselves in combating criminality, especially corruption and organised crime.

Such changes are needed in the police, the prosecution and the judiciary. They should be led from officers with integrity in leadership positions. The reach of politics should be kept away from the police, the prosecution, the judiciary, and the independent public institutions.

I will not talk any longer because time is running out. Time is running out for Kosovo and the justice system as well. I have stated several times before that there are judges and prosecutors who should and can become the new heroes of Kosovo. They just have to prove themselves.

News story: Tony Juniper CBE appointed as Natural England chair

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has today confirmed Tony Juniper CBE as the new Chair of Natural England.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Tony will bring great experience and passion to Natural England from a career dedicated to conservation from his role at WWF to advising the Prince of Wales.

Natural England has a key part to play in the government's 25 year plan for the environment and ensuring we can protect nature for future generations.

That is why I am looking forward to working with Tony as he leads the organisation and ensures Natural England can continue delivering the government's environmental priorities.

Tony Juniper said:

Natural England's vital role in defending and enhancing our nation's natural environment has never been more important. It is a real honour to have been appointed as the new Chair and I am very much looking forward to working with the Natural England teams and many partners across the country in delivering the biggest possible positive impact that we can.

Natural England's work is very wide ranging, from protecting our National Nature Reserves to advising farmers and from opening England's new coastal path to ensuring greater public access to our wonderful natural areas.

As Chair, my aim will be to celebrate, protect and deepen the impact of Natural England's excellent work, not only for the sake of our wildlife and beautiful landscapes, but also for the huge benefits that our success brings for society.

Lord Blencathra, Deputy Chair of Natural England, said:

All of us in Natural England are excited that we will be led by Tony Juniper, one of the UK's most outstanding environmental

champions. Over three decades he has developed a strong track record of working for a more sustainable environment.

We are all looking forward to being inspired to achieve even greater things under his leadership and give a tremendous lift to the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The appointment follows the [EFRA and EAC committees' joint report](#) into Tony's suitability for the role, published on the 1 March, and a [public hearing with the committees held on the 26 February](#).

All appointments are made on merit and political activity plays no part in the selection process.

There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be made public. Tony made a political declaration to the Efra and EAC Committees in which he declared that he was a member of the Green Party, but he did not declare any significant political activity in the past five years. Following the hearing with the Committees Tony has confirmed he will not remain a member of the Green Party whilst he is Natural England Chair.

Tony will take up the role on the 23 April.

Tony Juniper biography

- Tony Juniper CBE is currently Executive Director for Advocacy and Campaigns at WWF-UK and President of Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts and is standing down from these positions with confirmation of his appointment. He is a Fellow of the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership and former advisor to the Prince of Wales.
- He began his career working as an ornithologist with Birdlife International and for many years worked with Friends of the Earth, most recently as Executive Director and Vice Chair of Friends of the Earth International.
- He is a prolific author publishing many books, including the award-winning best seller 'What has Nature Ever Done for Us?'
- In 2017 Tony was recognised for his services to conservation with a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

Natural England

- Natural England is a non-departmental public body, set up under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.
- Natural England is the government's statutory adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide.
- Its general purpose as set out in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.
- Natural England plays a key role in delivering the environmental priorities of central government, including the government's 25 Year

News story: Cumbrian firm boosts project academy

A small Cumbrian company is helping to provide specialist training as part of the Project Academy for Sellafield.

News story: Cumbrian firm boosts project academy

Cumbria Operation and Maintenance Services (COMS) has developed a course in pre-operations & commissioning, which they are providing to prospective project professionals in the area.

The Cleator Moor based company specialises in pre-operation, engineering and maintenance, and was co-founded by Dave Garratt & Cliff Woodman in 2014.

Dave is a former Sellafield Ltd employee having honed his skills at the Sellafield nuclear site for more than 30 years, while Cliff spent many years in the pharmaceutical sector.

Andy Smith, pre-operations capability lead from Sellafield Ltd said:

It's great to have Cumbrian companies helping to develop the next generation of project professionals, not only for Sellafield, but the UK.

Course feedback so far is 100% positive and 100% recommended if you want to understand pre-operations and commissioning and how it can help project and task delivery.

This is a great example of collaboration between supply chain and Sellafield Ltd in both development and delivery, drawing on the skills of both to produce something better than either could have achieved alone.

The expertise that exists in COMS shows that Cumbria and the UK

remain at the forefront of project education and skills.

Business Director for COMS, Cliff Woodman said:

We are proud to be supporting the Project Academy for Sellafield and the University of Cumbria in the development and delivery of the Commissioning and Pre Ops Fundamentals Awareness course.

It has allowed us to couple our pre-operations & engineering expertise with our training capability to produce a quality product to support project delivery on Sellafield site – and hopefully beyond.

Also, through our success on this contract, we are very pleased to have been recognised as a competent & leading supplier of operations, maintenance and engineering services to Sellafield Ltd.

The Project Academy for Sellafield is the first of its kind in the UK.

It was launched three years year ago to help increase project capability across the country, and now has more than 1300 students on its books.

Delivered by the University of Cumbria, it is now becoming the gold standard model for project training, replicated by companies across the world.

Since formation in 2014, COMS now have more than 40 employees providing specialist services across West Cumbria. The company is now exploring opportunities to export skills across the nuclear sector and other industries.

[You can find the Prospectus for the Project Academy for Sellafield here](#)