

The IAGCI invites tenders to evaluate the UK Home Office Country Information Products

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) is part of the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration. Its purpose is to review the content of all Country of Origin Information (COI) produced by the UK Home Office. Country of Origin Information is used in procedures that assess claims of individuals for refugee status or other forms of international and humanitarian protection. It is also used in policy formulation.

The IAGCI reviews products to provide assurance to the Independent Chief Inspector that the content is accurate, balanced, impartial and as up to date as possible. COI is contained in:

CPINs are generated on an ongoing basis for the top 20 asylum intake countries, and commonly address a specific type of common asylum claim(s) or provide general information for several claim types. They are compiled from material produced by a range of recognised external information sources (news sources, academic literature, independent research reports, fact finding reports from UK government or from other governments). These documents also contain Home Office policy on the recommended position to be taken with respect to various types of claims, based on the available and accepted country information.

Information Request (IR) responses are made directly by case workers or others to the Home Office. These relate to information that is not covered in the CPINs. The IAGCI includes in its reviews a consideration of the COI included in a sample of (not more than ten) IR responses. Each IR response is typically a maximum of 2 pages in length.

Tender Details

IAGCI commissions country experts or experienced researchers to evaluate and report on the country of origin information contained in UK Home Office information products. At its next meeting, the IAGCI requires a country expert to review the use of country information used in the following CPINs (4 separate tenders, 1 for each country):

Tender 1: Albania

[Country policy and information note: people trafficking, Albania, March 2019](#)
(44 Pages)

[Country policy and information note: blood feuds, Albania, October 2018](#) (61 Pages)

Tender 2: Iran

[Country policy and information note: Christians and Christian converts, Iran, May 2019](#) (36 pages)

Tender 3: Vietnam

[Country policy and information note: trafficking, Vietnam, September 2018](#) (37 Pages)

For each tender, the expert is also asked to consider a selection of approximately 10 Information Request Responses, which will be provided by the Chair of IAGCI, and are an average of 2 pages long.

Description of work

Country Policy and Information Notes aim to provide an accurate, balanced and up to date summary of the key available source documents regarding the human rights situation, with respect to the issues selected for coverage, in the country covered. The purpose and scope of the reports are clearly set out in an introductory section of the document. Reviewers should evaluate the reports in this context and seek to identify any areas where they can be improved. Specifically the review should entail:

- assessing the extent to which information from source documents has been appropriately and accurately reflected in the CPIN Reports
- identifying additional sources detailing the current human rights situation in the country with respect to main grounds for asylum claims (which are noted in each CPIN Report)
- noting and correcting any specific errors or omissions of fact
- making recommendations for general improvements regarding, for example, the structure of the report, its coverage or its overall approach

Reviewers should follow these specific guidelines:

- the review should focus exclusively on the country of origin information contained within the document, and not pass judgment on the policy guidance provided
- the CPIN should be reviewed in the context of its purpose as set out above. It should consider the situation in the country up to the stated 'cut off' date for inclusion of information
- when suggesting amendments, rather than 'tracking changes' on the original CPIN, a list of suggested changes should be provided as part of a stand-alone review paper, and each report should be reviewed separately. A reporting template will be provided to reviewers (for reference please refer to most recent reviews on the [IAGCI webpage](#) for examples of the template)
- 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 (preferably Open Source). The Home Office may use foreign language source documents, but only if the information is considered essential and is not available in English

language source

Previous reviews of COI products can be viewed via the [IAGCI Webpage](#)

The selected reviewers will be requested to attend an IAGCI meeting at the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration in London, when their review will be considered. This meeting is due to take place in late December 2019. Alternative arrangements may be made, if attendance is not possible. Representatives from the UK Home Office will also attend 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 CPIN reports or other Home Office information products.

How to Apply

Researchers interested in conducting any of the reviews should submit:

- a one page letter demonstrating their expertise in human rights and/or asylum issues pertaining to the particular country or countries
- their c.v.

Payment for this work will be set at £2,000. Expressions of interest should be submitted to IAGCI@icibi.gov.uk by close of Friday 25 October 2019.

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

Successful bids will be notified by Monday 28 October 2019. Final reviews are due by the close of Monday 25 November 2019 and will be discussed at the IAGCI meeting in late December 2019 (precise date to be confirmed).

£88 million to help unleash the productive power of the UK economy

- £88 million new government investment to help close the productivity gap between UK and major world economies and turbocharge British businesses
- investment will help power the next generation supercomputers which could improve business efficiencies, including providing up-to-the-minute weather forecasts
- funding will help kickstart the UK's largest and most ambitious productivity institute, helping examine how to boost productivity levels across the country

Levels of productivity across certain sectors in UK manufacturing, like

aerospace, are among the highest in Europe, but overall UK productivity still lags behind major global economies and certain sectors, including chemicals and textiles, find it harder to grow.

By adopting new technologies and more efficient business practices, the productivity of businesses, particularly small ones, could be increased. This will help them to scale up and expand into new markets – boosting competition and ultimately benefiting consumers with lower prices or better quality products and services.

£43 million in government investment will support top researchers and analysts to explore how to turbocharge UK productivity levels through a new ambitious productivity institute; tackling barriers such as productivity imbalances between sectors and regions, poor management practices and skills investment.

Experts will work closely with businesses to power the UK towards a more competitive and resilient economy, as well as the public sector and policymakers, aiming to deliver benefits for both businesses and consumers. Increased productivity can drive up wages, lower prices of products and improve working conditions.

The announcement comes as ministers visit new infrastructure projects across the country to highlight government investment in connectivity. Infrastructure is one of the 5 foundations of productivity highlighted in the Industrial Strategy and the Prime Minister has been clear that this government will level up infrastructure across the country with new road and rail investment and full fibre broadband.

Business Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Productivity matters – if we produce more, we can earn more, as individuals and as a society.

Today's investment will allow us to develop pioneering software to harness the power of supercomputers and create a state-of-the-art Productivity Institute.

A further £45 million will be specifically invested by the government into the development of cutting-edge supercomputer software, set to transform whole sectors from agriculture and advanced aerospace to Formula One and pharmaceuticals with hyper-accurate weather predictions – helping them plan come rain or shine and in turn boost their productivity.

Involving the Met Office, this radical development could mean businesses will receive up-to-the-minute weather forecasts, so they are not 'caught in the rain' and can focus on delivering their products and services effectively and efficiently. This knowledge could help farmers protect crops for consistent food supplies, help airports keep flights running – and businesses can foresee the impact on infrastructure that cause downtime like flooding, for example.

With the potential to provide more accurate predictions, supercomputers are helping businesses plan methodically. Research software engineers and scientists will work together to futureproof the UK against the fast-moving changes in supercomputer designs, pushing the boundaries of science and preventing compatibility issues or lags – which could pose a threat to disciplines such as weather and climate prediction, to complex aircraft design and drug development.

Named 'ExCALIBUR', the project will ensure the UK can meet the scientific and engineering challenges of the future with maximum efficiency and safeguard future industry productivity.

Met Office Director of Meteorological Science, Simon Vosper, said:

The ExCALIBUR project will establish a national capability in scientific computer software that mirror the real world, accelerating advances in a wide range of important areas that rely on cutting edge computer technology: from climate prediction to drug research and nuclear fusion.

Professor Jennifer Rubin, Executive Chair of Economic and Social Research Council, said:

Raising productivity is arguably the greatest economic challenge of our time, and is needed to increase wages and living standards, and to ensure benefits can be spread across sectors and regions.

This significant investment in understanding what will drive improvements in productivity is an important opportunity for research to make a contribution to improving quality of life and economic performance.

The £88 million funding forms part of the government's [Strategic Priorities Fund \(SPF\)](#), and follows the government reaffirming its commitment to invest at least 2.4% of GDP in R&D by 2027. The government has made making boosting productivity and increasing earning power a priority – making the most of untapped potential right across the UK.

1. About the Strategic Priorities Fund:

- the Strategic Priorities Fund supports high quality multidisciplinary research and development priorities
- this is the second wave of funding
- the SPF Wave 2 total programme funding allocation is £496.8 million

2. About the programmes:

- Transforming Productivity: National Institute of Excellence (ESRC) ESRC with Innovate UK HMT, BEIS, DWP and MHCLG

Funding requested: £42.2 million over 6 years.

Location(s): This funding is to create an institute that creates a national capability for productivity. HEIs, Institutes, PSREs will be able to bid for funding. The location of the Institute and any partners will be announced following a competitive process.

This SPF will invest in an ambitious, strategically driven, world class institute to provide a systematic understanding of what is required to solve the UK's productivity challenges. The institute will provide a convening hub for wider research as well as undertaking its own research, bespoke analysis and evaluations. The Institute will also design and test interventions: translating findings and scaling-up solutions in collaboration with business and policy-makers. The institute will be driven by high profile leaders; combining permanent academic researchers and analysts with seconded world-leading experts, drawing in outstanding fellows from relevant research, public and private sector organisations with an interest in understanding and improving productivity.

The project will be delivered with £30 million funding for the Productivity Institute and £11 million for open research calls.

- Harnessing Exascale Computing: Exascale Computing Algorithms and Infrastructure Benefiting UK Research: 'ExCALIBUR' (Met Office and EPSRC)

Met Office and EPSRC with STFC, UKAEA, NERC and MRC

Funding requested: £45.71 million over 5 years Location(s): The intention is to build a national capability through calls which are open to HEIs, Institutes, PSREs and/or businesses across the UK.

Fast-moving advances in supercomputer architectures will render current scientific simulation codes redundant. This poses a significant threat across a range of disciplines from weather and climate prediction, through complex aircraft design and drug development, to frontier science fields including cosmology. The UK must harness the power of those advances in architecture to meet the scientific and engineering challenges facing society and mitigate the risk of this threat. Present approaches to scientific computing are not adequate to that task.

ExCALIBUR will design cutting-edge algorithms and software for the efficient solution of scientific problems on future generation supercomputers. A multidisciplinary cohort of research software engineers and scientists will work together to future-proof the UK against the fast-moving changes in supercomputer designs.

This will be delivered through knowledge integration activity between software engineers (£0.75 million), a scoping workshop to establish high priority use cases which will be developed through a mixture of open calls, commissioned research and single tenders (£5-7 million each), a second wave of use cases (~£2 million each), funding for disciplines with emerging

requirements for high-performance algorithms (£3 million), cross-cutting research activities to drive impact (£10 million) and capital funds to develop proof-of-concept systems with new computer architectures in partnership with industry (£4.5 million).

Government loans to build new schools alongside new homes

Housing developers will be given loans so they can deliver thousands of school places up front, so they are ready for communities before new properties are finished.

To meet the rising demand for more places at good schools, and help families get on the property ladder, the Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has today (Thursday 10 October) said up to £20 million per school would be made available to builders.

It means new school places are financed and delivered up-front – rather than builders having to wait for new homes to be built and sold before having the money to build the development. The loan will be charged at interest, and repayable once new homes are sold.

The scheme will incentivise developers to build more properties in the areas most in need – including on sites that have stood empty for a long period of time.

The new schools will build on the 921,000 new school places created nationwide since 2010, leaving the Government on track to deliver a million new places by the end of the decade, and rising standards in schools – with 85% of schools now judged good or outstanding, up from 68% in 2010.

It also helps boost the viability of new housing estates, particularly those led by small and medium sized developers where cashflow is a significant issue.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, said:

We want to offer parents across the country a good choice of local schools for their children that suits their talents and needs, and we're already on track to create one million new school places nationwide this decade.

But we know that in some cases, building schools and properties at the same time so they are ready for new communities can be challenging for housing developers. That's why we are launching

these loans today, to help parents secure a good school place for their child at the same time as moving into a new family home.

Housing Minister Rt Hon Esther McVey MP said:

It's only right that infrastructure is delivered up front – including thousands of new school places – which supports existing communities and the new homes which we need building.

I welcome this support being made available today – helping medium and large sized house builders deliver new schools as they deliver the homes we urgently need.

The Developer Loans for Schools programme, launched in partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, will give parents even more choice of a good school place through a pilot, running from 2019 to 2021, in areas that meet specific criteria, including:

- Demand for more good school places;
- An approved application to open a new free school before the loan changes hands;
- Planning permission to build extra homes;
- Demonstrable value-for-money of the project;
- Early funding required for the school as part of housing developments; and
- The borrower must be a UK-registered company and must own the site.

Housing developers are already expected to contribute to the costs of new schools to help meet the need arising from new housing, but can struggle to raise the funds to get schools ready in time for families moving to new developments. The new loans will help plan mixed-used developments – which offer new homeowners an entire community as well as a new home – more effectively.

Developers interested in taking part in the pilot programme, which will initially offer around 10 loans to successful bidders can express their interest and submit their project proposals to the Department for Education from October 2019 – all projects will need to demonstrate value for money, affordability, and must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the prospectus also published today.

The new loans build on the [Department's guidance](#) published earlier this year which aims to support local authorities to secure contributions from developers to fund school places that their new housing developments create, outlining how local authorities can negotiate the funding and land required from developers for new schools and school expansions.

It also follows updated [Planning Practice Guidance](#) which ensures that funding for schools is properly considered when housing developments are planned.

The Government also recently announced £14bn for primary and secondary schools in England between now and 2022/23 – delivering on the Prime Minister’s pledge to increase school funding to give all young people the same opportunities to succeed regardless of where they live or go to school.

First ‘State of the Nation’ report marks World Mental Health Day

Friendship, school and a good night’s sleep have all been named as key factors in a young person’s happiness, in the government’s first ever State of the Nation report on children’s mental wellbeing.

More than four in five young people aged between 10 and 24 say they are happy with their lives, in research published to mark World Mental Health Day today (Thursday 10 October), rating themselves happiest with their family and friends, their health, their school and their appearance. Bullying, including cyberbullying, remains a key reason for unhappiness or poor wellbeing, especially among teenage girls, while sleep and leisure time were also reported as important factors.

The landmark research fulfils a government commitment to bring together the best evidence on children and young people’s wellbeing, identifying trends and drivers so that the right support is in place to help them fulfil their potential.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The pressures young people face today both in and out of school are vastly different to those their parents and grandparents experienced, so we need to listen to what they have to say and act on it.

That’s why our new compulsory new health and relationships education will teach pupils from an early age how to build their resilience, notice changes in their wellbeing and how to form healthy relationships, starting with their friends at school. We are also ramping up professional mental health support in schools so that when there is a problem, help is available quickly.

It’s encouraging that the overwhelming majority of children say they are happy, but we have a responsibility to do better for those that aren’t. We have given teachers the power to tackle bad behaviour like bullying so that school is a safe place for every child to thrive, but today’s report helps shine a light on where to focus these efforts.

With recent NHS data finding almost a quarter of older teenage girls (22.4% of 17-19 year olds) have an emotional disorder, the first State of the Nation report looks further into teenage girls' mental and emotional health and finds being bullied, particularly online, is a primary link to poor wellbeing.

Seeing their friends and feeling safe in their neighbourhood also has an impact on their ability to concentrate and enjoy day-to-day activities. The report also found that one in five young people aged 16 to 24 years old said they had experienced high levels of anxiety even while also rating their happiness and wellbeing as high.

It comes as the Education Secretary visits Chosen Hill School in Cheltenham, one of the 1,600 schools which volunteered to begin delivering the government's new Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) before it becomes compulsory in all secondary schools from September 2020. Relationships education and health education will also become compulsory from primary school age.

The new RSHE curriculum is designed to equip children early-on with the knowledge they need to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, health and relationships, as well as preparing them for adult life in a changing world, so that fewer older children and teenagers feel unprepared and anxious.

Chosen Hill School is also a Mental Health Trailblazer school, in one of the first 25 areas bringing in specialist Mental Health Support Teams [announced](#) last December. Part of the government's Green Paper on transforming children and young people's mental health provision, each of these teams will support around 20 schools and colleges in their area, helping speed up access to specialist services and building on support already in place from school counsellors, nurses, educational psychologists and the voluntary sector. These specialist teams will be rolled out in an additional 48 areas of the country.

Staff for these teams have been training since the start of the year, and build on significant mental health support already in place, including training programmes that bring together the expertise of NHS professionals and school and college staff, those that train senior mental health leads in schools and those that offer mental health first aid training to improve how young people are supported during the school day.

The State of the Nation report, which collated the responses of more than 7,000 young people aged from 10 to 24, identified trends that reinforce the government's emphasis on mobilising mental health awareness and support in schools, including:

- 94% of children felt happy with their family, 91.6% happy with their friends and 94.5% felt they had good or very good health;
- Most young people are happy with their lives, with 82.9% reporting high or very high life satisfaction;
- Age is a clear factor of wellbeing: being older was associated with

lower wellbeing;

- Young females were more likely to report that they were recently anxious than males.
- Bullying had the strongest link to teenage girls' emotional wellbeing across adolescence, with seeing friends and getting enough sleep also rating highly;
- There are marked gender differences with experiences of cyberbullying: females report higher rates than males;
- Women report lower satisfaction with their leisure time than men; and
- Social media did not have a strong association with teenage girls' psychological health.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock said:

Looking after our mental health must start at a young age – and our children should feel valued, supported and listened to. It is encouraging this report finds the majority of our young people are happy, but our mental health is an asset – just like our physical health, so it is vital children get the support they need.

We are training a new dedicated mental health workforce in schools and colleges across the country, to ensure quicker access to a range of support and treatments, as well as teaching pupils what good mental health and physical health looks like.

We are also transforming services through the NHS Long Term Plan – backed by an extra £2.3 billion a year – so that 345,000 more children and young people have access to mental health support by 2023/24.

The report delivers on a commitment made last World Mental Health Day to publish an annual report designed to better understand patterns and issues in young people's mental health, alongside guidance for schools to help them measure their students' wellbeing and make sure appropriate support is in place.

This guidance is being developed in consultation with experts from across government and in the charity sector. It will help schools navigate the resources and tools available to them to assess the impact of the pastoral activity they provide for their pupils, as well as advising on any other steps they can take to boost their pupils' mental health and wellbeing, including when and how to seek further specialist support to ensure pupils get the right support at the right time.

Professor Peter Fonagy, CEO of the Anna Freud Centre, says:

I very much welcome this survey and we need to absorb all its findings. It's heartening that four out of five children are happy. However, we cannot ignore the fact that one in five children are not. We should be pleased that so many young people are resilient

to the pressures of 21st Century life, and be both prepared to stand by and support those who struggle.

The high level of satisfaction with family relationships is particularly encouraging, given the effort that successive governments and the voluntary sector have made to support good parenting over the past decade. The survey is also important in highlighting the importance of the community in which our children live and study in determining their potential to achieve happiness.

These findings should remind us that everyone has a role to play in promoting good mental health – and at the Anna Freud Centre, we are playing a key role in this by working with over one million children in schools.

[PM call with President Trump: 9 October 2019](#)

The Prime Minister spoke to President Trump this evening. The leaders expressed their serious concern at Turkey's invasion of north east Syria and the risk of a humanitarian catastrophe in the region.

The two leaders also discussed the tragic death of Harry Dunn. The Prime Minister urged the President to reconsider the US position so the individual involved can return to the UK, cooperate with police and allow Harry's family to receive justice.

The President said he was fully aware of the case and deeply saddened by what has happened, and he expressed his condolences to Harry's parents. The leaders agreed to work together to find a way forward as soon as possible.

On trade, the Prime Minister underlined his disappointment at the US announcement of tariffs against UK and EU exports in the Airbus-Boeing dispute, which will harm a number of industries including Scotch Whisky. He pressed the President not to impose the tariffs.