

[News story: 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 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. COI is information 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 UK Home Office COI products to provide assurance to the Independent Chief Inspector that the content is as accurate, balanced, impartial and as up to date as possible. COI is contained in:

- a Country Policy and Information Notes (CPINs); and
- responses to information requests

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, etc.). 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 upon 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 (3 separate tenders, 1 for each country):

Tender 1: Democratic Republic of Congo

[Country policy and information note: women fearing gender-based harm or violence, Democratic Republic of Congo, June 2017](#) (36 Pages)

[Country policy and information note: opposition to the government, Democratic](#)

[Republic of the Congo, November 2016](#) (32 Pages)

Tender 2: Iran

[Country information and information note: Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation, Iran, December 2017](#) (69 pages)

Tender 3: Turkey

[Country policy and information note: Kurdish political parties, Turkey, August 2017](#) (33 Pages)

[Country policy and information note: Kurdistan Workers' Party \(PKK\), Turkey, August 2017](#) (29 pages)

For each tender, the expert is also asked to consider a selection of approximately 10 Information Request Responses (each is 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. Reviews 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 on the [ICIBI website](#)

The reviewers selected to review the CPINs for the above-named countries will be requested to attend an IAGCI meeting at the Office of the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration, when their review will be considered. This meeting is due to take place in April 2018. 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:

Payment for this work will be set at £2000. Expressions of interest should be submitted to the IAGCI Chair, Dr Laura Hammond laura.hammond@soas.ac.uk

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

Reviews will be commissioned by Friday 23 February 2018.

Final reviews will be required to be submitted by 20 March, 2018. The reviews will be discussed at a meeting of the IAGCI in April 2018.

[News story: Hayling Island people smuggler guilty](#)

Vladyslav Kurtoglu, 50, was convicted of assisting unlawful immigration at Portsmouth Crown Court. His co-conspirator, Dmytro Kruik, 29, had earlier pleaded guilty to the same offence.

The men, both Ukrainian nationals of no fixed UK address, were caught when their yacht 'The Tazik' was intercepted by a Border Force Coastal Patrol Vessel (CPV) near Hayling Island on 20 May 2017.

The yacht was sailing towards the UK from Barfleur, France, when the CPV hailed the vessel and escorted it into Sparkes Marina. Kurtoglu was confirmed

as the captain with Kruik as his deck hand. Kruik told officers that they had come to the UK on what he said was "just a trip". Border Force officers carried out a search of the vessel which revealed that there were 6 additional Ukrainian men on board.

Kurtoglu and Kruik were arrested by Border Force officers and the case was passed to Immigration Enforcement's Criminal and Financial Investigation (CFI) team. The 6 other Ukrainian men on the yacht were arrested and later removed from the UK.

When officers examined Kruik's phone they discovered a video he had filmed of a reconnaissance route from a harbour side in Barneville-Carteret to a nearby car park. Investigators believe that the car park was where the illegal entrants were dropped off, under the cover of night, before boarding the yacht. In the clip, Kruik can be heard commenting on the fact that there are no security cameras covering the area. The video was dated 21 April 2017, a month before the men were arrested. Officers also discovered paperwork on board the yacht which showed that it had been registered and insured using false details.

Kurtoglu claimed in his defence that after he purchased the yacht, he planned to hold his 50th birthday party on board. He wanted to employ the Ukrainians as crew for the event, so had sailed from Barfleur to the middle of the channel to assess their seafaring abilities. He then claimed that a huge storm had moved in and the yacht had also developed engine problems. Becoming frightened, he said the Ukrainian crew turned on him and threatened to throw him overboard unless he brought them to the UK.

This story was disproved by evidence from a marine engineer who examined the engine of the Tazik yacht and concluded that it was running smoothly. The Met Office provided a marine weather report for the day in question which showed that conditions at the time were calm.

Lyn Sari, from CFI, said:

The video on Kruik's phone is indicative of the planning and organisation that went into this attempt. I cannot think of a reason why you would record such a film and comment approvingly on the lack of security cameras unless your intentions were criminal.

Kurtoglu's unlikely defence was readily undermined by mechanical and meteorological evidence. The reality was that these men were engaged in a quite deliberate attempt to undermine the UK's immigration laws.

My officers work closely with other law enforcement partners, such as the National Crime Agency who provided valuable assistance with this investigation, to bring people smugglers like Kurtoglu and Kruik to justice. Anyone involved in this kind of offending should understand that the consequences are considerable.

The judge also ordered the forfeiture of the yacht, which will now be sold and the proceeds returned to the public purse.

Border Force works closely with the marine community to gather intelligence about threats to the UK's coastline.

Where people witness suspicious activity near the coastline and require immediate assistance, they should call 999. If an emergency response is not required, the activity should be reported to local police on 101, or anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Press release: Government announces support for Lebanon in fight against terror

Through a long-standing project, worth £63 million since 2012, the UK is helping the Lebanese Armed Forces to contain internal threats and secure Lebanon's border with Syria.

The UK is helping to build 75 border watchtowers and forward operating bases along the border, and training and equipping thousands of troops.

Today the Government has announced to Parliament that, as part of the project, it has placed a further order for £320,000 worth of communications equipment for the border watchtowers.

Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt said:

The UK is committed to working with Lebanon and our partners around the world to tackle head on the global threat from terrorism and violent extremism.

We are steadfast in our support to the brave men and women of the Lebanese army who have successfully repelled Daesh from Lebanese territory.

We firmly believe that Lebanon's security and stability are in the interests of all across the region and beyond, including the UK. I am proud of the impact our contribution is making.

Press release: Government outlines next steps to make the UK the safest place to be online

- New review launched into online laws
- Code of practice will set new standards for online platforms
- [New guide for teachers](#) to develop children's online safety skills

The Prime Minister has announced plans to review laws and make sure that what is illegal offline is illegal online as the Government marks Safer Internet Day.

The Law Commission will launch a review of current legislation on offensive online communications to ensure that laws are up to date with technology.

As set out in the [Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper](#), the Government is clear that abusive and threatening behaviour online is totally unacceptable. This work will determine whether laws are effective enough in ensuring parity between the treatment of offensive behaviour that happens offline and online.

The Prime Minister has also announced:

- That the Government will introduce a comprehensive new social media code of practice this year, setting out clearly the minimum expectations on social media companies
- The introduction of an annual internet safety transparency report – providing UK data on offensive online content and what action is being taken to remove it.

Other announcements made today by Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) Matt Hancock include:

- A new [online safety guide](#) for those working with children, including school leaders and teachers, to prepare young people for digital life
- A commitment from major online platforms including Google, Facebook and Twitter to put in place specific support during election campaigns to ensure abusive content can be dealt with quickly – and that they will provide advice and guidance to Parliamentary candidates on how to remain safe and secure online

DCMS Secretary of State Matt Hancock said:

We want to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online and having listened to the views of parents, communities and industry, we are delivering on the ambitions set out in our Internet Safety Strategy.

Not only are we seeing if the law needs updating to better tackle online harms, we are moving forward with our plans for online platforms to have tailored protections in place – giving the UK public standards of internet safety unparalleled anywhere else in the world.

Law Commissioner Professor David Ormerod QC said:

There are laws in place to stop abuse but we've moved on from the age of green ink and poison pens. The digital world throws up new questions and we need to make sure that the law is robust and flexible enough to answer them.

If we are to be safe both on and off line, the criminal law must offer appropriate protection in both spaces. By studying the law and identifying any problems we can give government the full picture as it works to make the UK the safest place to be online.

The latest announcements follow the publication of the [Government's Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper](#) last year which outlined plans for a social media code of practice. The aim is to prevent abusive behaviour online, introduce more effective reporting mechanisms to tackle bullying or harmful content, and give better guidance for users to identify and report illegal content. The Government will be outlining further steps on the strategy, including more detail on the code of practice and transparency reports, in the spring.

To support this work, people working with children including teachers and school leaders will be given a new guide for online safety, to help educate young people in safe internet use. Developed by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety ([UKCCIS](#)), the toolkit describes the knowledge and skills for staying safe online that children and young people should have at different stages of their lives.

Major online platforms including Google, Facebook and Twitter have also agreed to take forward a recommendation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) to provide specific support for Parliamentary candidates so that they can remain safe and secure while on these sites. during election campaigns. These are important steps in safeguarding the free and open elections which are a key part of our democracy.

ENDS

Note to editors:

Included in the Law Commission's scope for their review will be the Malicious Communications Act and the Communications Act. It will consider whether difficult concepts need to be reconsidered in the light of technological

change – for example, whether the definition of who a ‘sender’ is needs to be updated.

The Government will bring forward an Annual Internet Safety Transparency report, as proposed in our Internet Safety Strategy green paper. The reporting will show:

- the amount of harmful content reported to companies
- the volume and proportion of this material that is taken down
- how social media companies are handling and responding to complaints
- how each online platform moderates harmful and abusive behaviour and the policies they have in place to tackle it.

Annual reporting will help to set baselines against which to benchmark companies’ progress, and encourage the sharing of best practice between companies.

The new social media code of practice will outline standards and norms expected from online platforms. It will cover:

- The development, enforcement and review of robust community guidelines for the content uploaded by users and their conduct online
- The prevention of abusive behaviour online and the misuse of social media platforms – including action to identify and stop users who are persistently abusing services
- The reporting mechanisms that companies have in place for inappropriate, bullying and harmful content, and ensuring they have clear policies and performance metrics for taking this content down
- The guidance social media companies offer to help users identify illegal content and contact online, and advise them on how to report it to the authorities, to ensure this is as clear as possible
- The policies and practices companies apply around privacy issues.

Education for a Connected World: A framework to equip children and young people for digital life is available on the [UKCCIS page of GOV.UK](#).

- Guidance is given on eight different aspects of online education: self-image and identity, online relationships, online reputation, online bullying, managing online information, health, wellbeing and lifestyle, privacy and security, and copyright and ownership.
- The Framework has been developed by members of the UKCCIS Education Working Group.
- UKCCIS is a group of more than 200 organisations drawn from across government, industry, law, academia and charity sectors working in partnership to help keep children safe online.
- The UKCCIS Education Working Group brings together ten leading organisations in online safety in education: Barnardo’s, CEOP (the child protection command of the National Crime Agency), Childnet, Department for Education, Kent County Council, the NSPCC, Parent Zone, the PSHE Association, South West Grid for Learning and the UK Safer Internet Centre. It focuses on how education settings in the UK are responding to the challenges of keeping their pupils safe online.

Supportive statements:

Jonathan Baggaley, CEO of the PSHE Association said:

We're delighted to have supported the development of the UKCCIS framework. Education plays a critical role in preparing young people for the opportunities and challenges of this rapidly changing digital world. The UKCCIS framework provides an invaluable tool for teachers, supporting them to plan a developmental curriculum which will help children to thrive online.'

Ken Corish, Online Safety Director at South West Grid for Learning said:

Children and young people use technology in empowering and sophisticated ways in online environments that have become increasingly complex. Our approach to educating in this area requires a sophistication to match; it should resonate; be relevant and prompt the outcomes that affect cultural change.

This UKCCIS framework has been designed to identify those opportunities for anyone shaping their teaching in this area from very young children right through to young adults. It brings the current online technology landscape into one document and maps those opportunities against age/developmental stage.

We think it is both challenging and relevant and hope it assists in creating online technology education that makes a difference.

Barnardo's Chief Executive, Javed Khan said:

Barnardo's welcomes this framework for educators to help children and young people of all ages stay safe and have a positive experience online.

The fast-moving digital world puts increasing pressures on children which can affect their self-image and make them vulnerable to potential bullying and grooming online.

This UKCISS framework should be used by the tech industry to incorporate age appropriate safeguards into their apps and platforms to help prevent abuse happening.

Press release: New review launched of press sustainability in the UK

The UK has always benefited from a strong, well established and diverse press sector. However over the past decade the way in which people consume news has been transformed.

Many UK newspapers have a strong online presence but falling print circulations and changes to advertising trends have caused the press sector to experience declining revenues. Latest figures show that around two thirds of local authority areas don't have a daily local newspaper.

The review will investigate the overall health of the news media, looking at the range of news available and how the press is adapting to the new digital market – including the role and impact of online platforms such as Facebook and Google, and the digital advertising supply chain.

DCMS Secretary of State Matt Hancock said:

Robust high quality journalism is important for public debate and scrutiny – but as print circulations decline and more readers move online, the press faces an uncertain future.

This review will look at the sustainability of the national, regional and local press, how content creators are appropriately rewarded for their online creations, and ensure that the UK has a vibrant, independent and plural free press as one of the cornerstones of our public debate.

A key focus of the review will be the local and regional press, who face an uncertain future. The review will also assess the operation of the digital advertising supply chain including funding flows and its role in creating or reducing value for publishers. It will also look at 'clickbait' and low quality news and if there is more that can be done to tackle this issue and undermine any commercial incentives associated with it.

Also within the review's remit will be an examination of how data created or owned by news publications is collected and distributed by online platforms.

A panel of experts will be appointed in the coming months to lead the review.

As well as identifying challenges, the review will make recommendations on what industry and government action can be taken, with a final report expected in early 2019.

David Dinsmore, News Media Association chairman, said:

The NMA welcomes this announcement today on behalf of the national, regional and local news media industry. This review acknowledges the importance of journalism in a democratic society, the vital role that the press takes in holding the powerful to account and producing verified news which informs the public.

Viable business models must be found that ensure a wide variety of media are able to have a long and healthy future. Through digital platforms, news content is more widely consumed than ever before but the revenues to sustain the investment in that quality content are challenged. This review on a sustainable future is very welcome.

Notes for Editors

1. Recent estimates suggest that current average annual revenue per digital media user is only c.£15, compared to c.£124 per print media user: ["UK News Media: an engine of original news content and democracy – A study on the economic contribution of the UK news media industry"](#), Deloitte, December 2016
2. An estimated two thirds of Local Authority Districts in the UK now not served by a local daily newspaper: ["Monopolising local news: Is there an emerging local democratic deficit in the UK due to the decline of local newspapers?"](#), Gordon Ramsay and Martin Moore Centre for the Study of Media, Communication and Power, May 2016
3. Panel members are yet to be decided and will be made up of individuals with experience in some of the core sectors under review, bringing a range of voices and expertise to the process.
4. The review will not address politically motivated disinformation and propaganda.