



**An Roinn Gnóthaí  
Eachtracha agus Trádála**  
Department of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade

Our Ref: Fol/Req/19224

Date 14/08/2019

Dear Ms.Pollak

I refer to the request which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

- 1. Copies of all correspondence between the Dept of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Justice regarding the use of overseas development aid funds on direct provision accommodation centres in Ireland (between July 2018-July 2019).*
- 2. Copies of all internal correspondence within the Dept of Foreign Affairs regarding the use of overseas development aid funds on direct provision centres in Ireland. (July 2018-July 2019).*
- 3. Briefing material for the Minister for Foreign Affairs over the past 12 months (July 2018-July 2019) regarding what ODA spending can be used for and whether direct provision can be included in that spending.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 31/07/2019.

I have identified 7 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant all of the records. Four of these records relate to correspondence between the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of Justice and Equality, and three relate to internal correspondence and documentation. Those elements that appear as redactions concern matters separate and distinct from the material sought in your FOI request.

The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has set out guidelines, accepted by OECD member states, including Ireland, on the criteria for determining which elements of government expenditures can be deemed eligible as ODA. In Ireland's case, approximately 70% of ODA is channelled through DFAT. The remaining 30% flows through other Government Departments, including the Department of Justice and Equality.

In 2017, the DAC agreed to clarify the reporting directives for assessing what may or may not be included as ODA under the category of expenditure known as 'In-Donor Refugee Costs'.

On foot of these new directives, an exercise was carried out by DAC experts working with Irish officials to determine whether existing expenditure under the Department of Justice and

Equality and other Departments' votes (budgets) could be categorised as in-donor refugee costs. That determination could then be included in Ireland annual reporting to the OECD DAC on eligible ODA expenditure in a given calendar year. Such reporting is done annually, in arrears. Further details on the DACs guidelines for reporting in-donor refugee costs can be found on the OECDs website [here](#).

In this context there are a very limited number of records in this Department which fall within the scope of your request. Most of the correspondence reflects the statistical exercise to calculate Ireland's 2017 in-donor refugee expenditure. I have applied the public interest test and while it is not clear that the word accommodation relates solely to direct provision I have made the decision that on balance it is better to release. However, given that it may relate to more than direct provision a certain caution in interpretation is required. Also applying the public interest test I have decided to not redact record number 6, which details the full amount of in-donor refugee costs attributed by Ireland as ODA for 2017. This calculation conforms with the OECD guidance and is comprised of expenditure from across Government Departments.

With regard to question number 3, no specific briefing was prepared for the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on the categorisation of direct provision accommodation or any other in-donor refugee costs as ODA. I note in this context that the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade has no function on the expenditures incurred by other government departments. DFATs only function is to ensure that the Department of Justice and Equality follow OECD DAC guidelines when it comes to attributing expenditure as ODA.

For the sake of good order and to avoid doubt, the only DFAT expenditure included in the reporting of in donor refugees costs is support given for the travel costs associated with the resettlement of refugees in Ireland under the UNHCR refugee scheme.

### **Right of Appeal**

Should you wish to appeal this decision, you may do so in writing to the Freedom of Information Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 76-78 Harcourt Street, Dublin 2 or by email to. A fee applies for an appeal for access to non-personal information; the level of this fee has been set at €30. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at [foi@dfa.ie](mailto:foi@dfa.ie), or 01-4082857.

You should make your appeal within 4 weeks (20 working days) from the date of this notification. However, the making of a late appeal may be permitted in appropriate circumstances. The appeal will involve a complete reconsideration of the matter by a more senior member of the staff of this Department.

Yours sincerely

Evan Cunningham, Economist, Policy Unit