



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/19/318

29th November 2019

Dear Ms. Órla Ryan

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:

'Details of the gifts received by Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Simon Coveney and the Ministers of State at the Department by foreign dignitaries and heads of state to date in 2019 (1 November).

I am looking for a breakdown of the gifts received and from whom they were given.

I am also looking for a breakdown of gifts given by the Ministers or Ministers of State to foreign dignitaries and heads of state on their visits here or on trips made by the Minister or Ministers of State abroad to date in 2019 (1 November).'

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 12th November 2019.

I have identified four records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant four of the records.

I have attached an Excel spreadsheet document of the combined records on four tabs which outlines the gifts given by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development and the Minister of State for European Affairs at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It also includes the record which outlines the gifts received by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade. This includes a description of the gift and details of the recipients or the presenter of gifts between the 1st January 2019 and 1st November 2019 as requested.

It is standard practice to exchange modest gifts between Ministers and visiting dignitaries during ministerial and other high level visits. Gifts presented by Ministers of the department are sourced in Ireland or are of Irish interest and are purchased on a basis of the most

economically advantageous cost savings arrangements, value for money and high quality products. The nature of the gift is given particular care to ensure that it respects the culture and relevant requirements of the recipient. The exchange of gifts provides a platform to promote Irish craftsmanship and goods internationally and helps to strengthen the economic and cultural links between the countries involved.

Under section 15 of the Ethics in Public Office Act (1995) gifts presented to office holders valued in excess of €650 are deemed to be gifts to the State and must be recorded accordingly following valuation through the Office of Public Works. Neither the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development nor the Minister of State for European Affairs received such gifts in the period requested from 1st January 2019 to 1st November 2019.

Furthermore, there is no requirement to retain lists of modest gifts of the type customarily presented to office holders of this Department. As such, your request for details of gifts received by the Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development and the Minister of State for European Affairs falls for refusal under Section 15 (1)(a) as the record does not exist. However, a list of gifts received by the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade is being retained by his office and is also included in the attached Excel document from the 1st January to the 1st November 2019. This includes a description of the gift and details of those who offered the gift.

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 foi@dfa.ie. 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, 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



Claire Thompson