



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/2019/326

Gráinne Ní hAodha  
The Journal

4 December 2019

Dear Ms Ní hAodha,

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

- 1. Documentation or correspondence relating to the decision-making process on how many election observers are to be sent from Ireland to the Ukraine and Belarus to monitor their respective elections this year.**
- 2. Copies of calls or correspondence where roster members were informed that they were to be sent to missions in Ukraine (July) and Belarus (November).**
- 3. Copies of any complaints or appeals received concerning selection decisions to send or not to send election observers to any foreign election this year, sent from 1 January - 6 November 2019 (to date).**
- 4. The total spent on sending election observers this year to date, broken down in the form: the country/ the number of Irish observers sent/the remuneration or expenses paid to each.**

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 15 November 2019.

I have identified seven 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, redacting the records in part where required under the sections detailed below and in the attached schedule:

- Under section 37 FOI Act (as interpreted by section 2 FOI Act) (relating to observers' professional histories; observers' email addresses; and details of Department staff leave); and
- Under section 29 FOI Act (the names of those on the roster will be published once security vetting has been completed and verified).

Using the numbers in your request, I have answered each part of your request below:

1. Enclosed and in the attached schedule you will find the two eSubmissions which document the approval process for sending observers to Ukraine, and Belarus respectively (Documents Nos. 1 and 6). Also enclosed are three emails relating to the decision-making process on sending observers on the election observation missions (Documents Nos. 3, 4 and 5)
2. Enclosed and in the attached schedule you will find the email sent to the observers wherein they were told they had been selected to take part in the election observation mission to Ukraine on 31 March 2019 (Document No. 2). There was no relevant email for the Belarus election observation mission as two members of staff as focal point observers were nominated. The Department did not nominate observers to participate in the OSCE mission observing the parliamentary elections in Ukraine in July 2019.
3. I have spoken to the relevant colleagues and searched through the relevant folders, and have found no complaints or appeals from roster members concerning selection decisions to send or not to send election observers to any foreign election this year. From time to time, roster members have asked whether the Department intends to send or had sent observers on a given mission in 2019.
4. The total missions, the sending agency (OSCE or EU), the country and the number and type of observers is attached in Document No. 7. The total spent on sending election observers this year to date is €164,272. A breakdown of payments per country/mission and observer will be prepared following the completion of 2019's missions. To give you some background now - Observers are volunteers and are not paid a salary. For OSCE missions, flights are covered by the Department; for EU missions these are covered by the EU. There are two types of payment they will receive:
  - a. For OSCE missions, observers are expected to pay a number of expenses when in the country. These includes costs such as an interpreter, driver, accommodation, meals etc. The OSCE sets the amount required in its Information Sheet for observers, and these costs are transferred by the Department to the selected observer(s) in advance of the mission. In the case of EU election observation missions, the costs are provided by the EU to the selected observer(s); and
  - b. An observer sent on an EU or OSCE mission will receive from the Department a payment of €600 once in any 12-month period (regardless of how many missions) to cover pre-departure expenses such as medical check-up,

vaccinations, transport to/from Dublin airport, where necessary overnight hotel costs prior to a flight, visa costs, materials or equipment or any other expense related to the mission. (Members of the Department's staff do not receive this payment when they are sent as observers).

### 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](mailto: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](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



Claire Kerschensteiner

Civil Society & Development Unit, Development Cooperation and Africa Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade