



07/02/2019

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2020/004

Dear Mr Higgins,

I refer to the request of 04 January 2020 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department.

I note also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 13 January and your agreement to an extension of 31 January 2020.

The answer to your request for all is as follows:

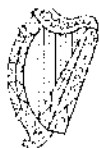
- 1. The total amount of money spent by the Department on flights and the total number of flights taken by the Department in 2017, 2018 and 2019 broken down by year.*

The table below shows the amount of money spent by the Department in each of the years broken down by year and by Headquarters and Missions abroad:

ANNUAL FLIGHT COST			
	2019	2018	2017
Headquarter Costs	2,027,849	1,754,147	1,535,050
Mission Costs	972,791	939,036	745,697
Total	3,000,640	2,693,183	2,280,747

The Department undertakes a significant number of foreign trips and staff assignments each year. The Department's accounting system records all payment transactions relating to flight expenditures, including refunds and adjustments. These are all individual transactions and not linked directly to the details of a specific trip or the number of flights. The determination of the exact number of flights for each given year would require the examination of such a volume of records as to cause substantial and unreasonable disruption to the work of this unit. Therefore in accordance with section 15. (1) (c) of the Act I am refusing the exact figure for the number of flights. However a rough assessment indicates that there are in excess of 5,000 transactions in the Department's accounting system for each of the relevant years.

- 2. A breakdown of all flights made by the Department's Ministers during 2017, 2018 and 2019 and the destinations that were travelled to.*



A breakdown of the flights made by the Department's Minister are set out in the attached schedules:

- Schedules A lists the flights made by Minister for Foreign Affairs Charles Flanagan and Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs Simon Coveney as part of their official duties.
- Schedule B lists the flights booked and paid for by this Department by for the Ministers of State for EU Affairs Dara Murphy and Helen McEntee in the course of their duties for this Department. As Ministers of State they may have been made flights for other Government Departments for which there is no record.
- Schedule C lists the flights made by Ministers of State for International Cooperation Joseph McHugh and Ciarán Cannon as part of their official duties.

The Department complies with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform guidelines on official travel. The central aim of the Departmental travel policy is to minimise official travel costs and to achieve value for money for expenditure necessarily incurred, consistent with the effective discharge of official duties.

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@dfat.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@dfat.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

Brian Hanniffy

Finance Division

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