



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/20/098

10 July 2020

Dear Mr Murphy,

I refer to the request of May 10 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

- *The total amount of people the Department of Foreign, or Irish embassies around the world, have helped to return to Ireland due to the coronavirus pandemic - with a breakdown by country.*
- *The total amount of money the Department of Foreign Affairs has spent on repatriating Irish citizens from abroad back to Ireland due to the coronavirus pandemic, to include commercial flights, charter flights, hotel costs, etc. I would like a breakdown by each of these categories, and other categories, if applicable. In the case of charter flights, please provide the cost of each flight, where it was flying from, and how many people were on each flight.*

Responses to both components of your request are outlined below.

The total amount of people the Department of Foreign, or Irish embassies around the world, have helped to return to Ireland due to the coronavirus pandemic - with a breakdown by country.

To date, the Department of Foreign Affairs has advised or assisted over 8,000 people to return safely to Ireland as part of the consular response to the COVID-19 crisis. From the outset, priority was given to helping those who are normally resident in Ireland to return home safely, on commercial flights wherever possible and, where not possible, on flights chartered by the EU and other partners. In a limited number of cases, people returned by ship.

In a few exceptional cases – where there were significant groups of Irish citizens, with no alternative options to leave, and in circumstances that made them particularly vulnerable - we chartered planes ourselves, bringing back 93 Irish people from Peru on 29 March, 68 from India on 4 April, and 95 from Nigeria on 11 May. These flights, which were arranged in close cooperation with partners, also facilitated the travel of citizens from other EU and EEA Member States, and were supported through the EU “Union Civil Protection Mechanism.” This is the first time that Ireland has arranged flights using this mechanism.

Over 1,000 people were assisted to return home on special repatriation flights organised by our EU and international partners. In addition, thousands of people received advice or assistance to return home on commercial flights. Advice and assistance with commercial flights included: block bookings made by Embassies on commercial flights; provision of letters of support for citizens; engagement with airlines/ travel agencies on behalf of citizens; and/or direct contact by the Missions with people who were provided with advice and guidance on booking with commercial airlines. A number of people on cruise ships were also provided with advice and assistance, some of whom returned by ship.

Given the volume and varying nature of the queries received by Missions, and the fact that staff were themselves working remotely at the time, it is not possible to provide exact figures and therefore a broad estimate by region has been provided for numbers who received advice or assistance to return home:

Europe	2000+
Middle East	400+
Africa	1000+
ASEAN/Asia Pacific	1000+
Australia/ New Zealand	2300+
LAC	1000+
US/Canada	900+

As of July 9, the dedicated advice centre in Dublin for COVID-19 related travel queries has received over 13,000 calls since it was established. A breakdown of calls by country, based on the location of the person, is provided below. This is in addition to the thousands of calls received by our Missions overseas from citizens in distress or seeking advice.

Afghanistan	7
Albania	8
Algeria	11
Andorra	2
Angola	4
Antigua and Barbuda	5
Argentina	60

Armenia	1
Australia	859
Austria	41
Azerbaijan	2
Bahamas	2
Bahrain	1
Bangladesh	14
Barbados	7
Belarus	5
Belgium	89
Bolivia	10
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Brazil	52
Bulgaria	11
Burkina Faso	1
Cabo Verde	1
Cambodia	10
Cameroon	10
Canada	139
Central African Republic	1
Chile	18
China	53
Colombia	9
Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)	8
Costa Rica	2
Cote d'Ivoire	2
Croatia	40

Cuba	8
Cyprus	15
Czech Republic	24
DRC	2
Denmark	30
Dominican Republic	9
Ecuador	2
Egypt	10
El Salvador	1
Equatorial Guinea	3
Estonia	4
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	2
Finland	10
France	282
Gabon	2
Gambia	1
Georgia	3
Germany	241
Ghana	13
Greece	31
Grenada	2
Guatemala	1
Guinea	2
Guinea-Bissau	1
Honduras	7
Hungary	25

Iceland	2
India	127
Indonesia	22
Iran	1
Iraq	12
Ireland	5136
Israel	6
Italy	185
Jamaica	7
Japan	31
Jordan	2
Kazakhstan	4
Kenya	2
Kuwait	7
Kyrgyzstan	1
Laos	6
Latvia	19
Lebanon	3
Lithuania	19
Luxembourg	10
Malaysia	10
Maldives	7
Mali	1
Malta	22
Mauritius	6
Mexico	37
Moldova	11

Monaco	1
Mongolia	2
Montenegro	1
Morocco	27
Mozambique	2
Myanmar	1
Namibia	1
Nepal	9
Netherlands	164
New Zealand	215
Nicaragua	4
Niger	1
Nigeria	159
North Macedonia	2
Norway	9
Oman	1
Pakistan	43
Panama	4
Papua New Guinea	1
Peru	83
Philippines	37
Poland	173
Portugal	163
Qatar	12
Romania	48
Russia	11
Rwanda	3

Saint Lucia	1
Samoa	1
Saudi Arabia	20
Senegal	3
Serbia	6
Seychelles	1
Singapore	9
Slovakia	16
Slovenia	4
Somalia	1
South Africa	102
South Korea	5
Spain	741
Sri Lanka	6
Sudan	8
Sweden	41
Switzerland	62
Syria	2
Tanzania	10
Thailand	117
Togo	1
Trinidad and Tobago	3
Tunisia	4
Turkey	30
Uganda	4
Ukraine	15
UAE	77

UK	1619
US	878
Uruguay	5
Venezuela	3
Vietnam	47
Zambia	2
Zimbabwe	10
Information not provided	439

The total amount of money the Department of Foreign Affairs has spent on repatriating Irish citizens from abroad back to Ireland due to the coronavirus pandemic, to include commercial flights, charter flights, hotel costs, etc. I would like a breakdown by each of these categories, and other categories, if applicable. In the case of charter flights, please provide the cost of each flight, where it was flying from, and how many people were on each flight.

The Department has chartered 3 flights to date. A breakdown of these costs is provided below:

<i>Location</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Number of people facilitated to return to Ireland</i>
<i>Peru; Lima</i>	<i>€330,300</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>India; Goa/New Delhi</i>	<i>€349,203</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Nigeria; Lagos</i>	<i>€210,300</i>	<i>95</i>

The above charter flights were arranged under the terms of the EU Union Civil Protection Mechanism which allows for partial co-financing of flights. In addition, all passengers on charter flights are required to pay a contribution towards the costs of the flights.

The Department agreed special arrangements with commercial airlines in relation to 2 flights. A breakdown of these costs is provided below:

<i>Location</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Number of people</i>
<i>Australia; Perth</i>	<i>€389,192</i>	<i>166</i>
<i>Venezuela (to Bogota)</i>	<i>€12,000</i>	<i>4</i>

The Department has also provided 106 stranded citizens with an emergency loan for repatriation and related supports. These costs total €134,642 to date and mainly cover the costs of repatriation on commercial flights and repatriation flights organised by other countries. Of that total figure, €5,256 has been provided to assist 15 citizens with hotel and subsistence costs.

All citizens who receive an emergency repatriation and/or assistance loan must sign an agreement to repay that loan within 6 months.

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

Ronan Cunniffe
Consular Directorate