



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

20th December 2018

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2018/295

Dear Requester,

I refer to your recently submitted request for information, made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, in which you requested the following:

- a) **The number of attempts made to access websites categorised as pornography from department computers or other devices on a month by month basis**
- b) **A breakdown of these figures by department**
- c) **A list of which teams, if any, have legitimate reasons for accessing, investigating or categorising pornographic websites**
- d) **The number of above access requests that were from teams with this legitimate reason for access**
- e) **An indication of how many appear to be purposeful requests, how many appear to innocent (embedded links and cookies etc), and how many are unclear.**
- f) **An outline of what action is being taken to improve the situation.**
- g) **The number of attempts that have been investigated and any management action taken**

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 26th November 2018.

All access to the internet in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is strictly filtered based on an acceptable usage policy. The Department uses third party software to ensure all sites categorised as pornography are blocked.

In response to parts a), b) and e) of your request, it is not uncommon for websites to be miscategorised as pornography. It is therefore not possible to accurately report the numbers.

Many of the blocked web requests are automatically generated by web pages without user intervention - for example through advertisements or pop-ups that load on a page. Some intentional requests may be made but access to all sites categorized as pornography is blocked. The web categorisation software is updated automatically.

As no teams have legitimate reasons for accessing, investigating or categorising pornographic websites, I consider parts c) and d) of your request answered.

For part (f), the Department has updated its Appropriate Use of ICT Resources Policy (2018) and reminded users of its importance. The policy states that "The Department is committed to a positive working environment and accordingly users must not access, request, download, or send sexist, illegal, sexual, pornographic, racist, profane, bullying, insulting, threatening, or otherwise offensive material". All staff are therefore aware that access to pornography is not permitted.

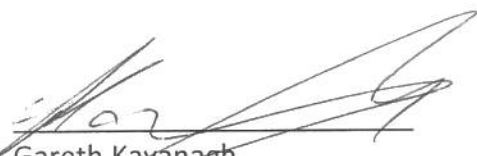
Finally, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade examines all formal complaints made to its HR Unit no matter what category they fall under. Complaints in relation to accessing websites categorised as pornography would be addressed under the Civil Service Disciplinary Code. In circumstances where a complaint of this nature is made, and where the complaint is found to be upheld by means of investigation, appropriate disciplinary action would be taken in accordance with the Code. HR has not conducted any investigations in relation to attempts to access websites categorised as pornography.

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,



Gareth Kavanagh
ICT Unit

Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade