



27/02/2019

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2019/045

Dear Mr Blaney,

I refer to the request of 24 January 2019 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 4 February 2019. Please accept my apologies for the delay in answering.

The answer to your request for all is as follows:

***Following the publication of this information by the department:
The airline costs incurred by Ministers and staff of the Department, across both
Votes, in the year ending 31
December 2018 , including in the network of overseas Missions, was €2,650,469,
may I ask the department for a breakdown of all the travel undertaken in 2018 that make up
the costs referred to above***

The cost referred to above were in answer to a Parliamentary Question (ref 2693/19) answered on 22 January 2019. It was noted in that reply that those cost were “*provisional and subject to audit*”. Since then these have been finalised and the revised costs as of 27 February 2019 amount to €2,693,183, subject to audit.

A breakdown of the travel undertaken in 2018 that make up the costs across both Votes, by Headquarters (HQ) and the network of Missions is attached in Schedule 1.

... the comparable figure for airline costs in the years 2011 to 2017 inclusive

Comparable figures for airline costs are included in Schedule 1 (attached). These are the audited totals across both Votes.

..... the 2018 information to be presented in tabular form showing expenditure by each month

This information is attached in Schedule 2.

.. a breakdown of the 2018 information in tabular form showing each individual trip costs and the persons (or department rank/position) availing of flights on each trip

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 staff member or grade. A rough assessment indicates that there are over 5,000 transactions in the relevant accounts in the Department’s accounting system and this would



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contain personal data that would need to be redacted. It would be therefore be a huge administrative task to undertake the extraction and redaction of this information for personal data. I am attaching instead a breakdown by HQ section and overseas mission of the total flight costs for 2018. This breakdown is attached in Schedule 3.

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

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Finance Division

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