



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

Our Ref: FoI/Req/2019/245

Date 11 September 2019

Dear Ms Walsh,

I refer to the request which you have made on 8 August 2019 under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

- **Copies of the complaints made about the Irish Honorary Consul in Kiev received by DFAT since 2015**

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 28 August 2019.

I have identified 20 records that fall within the scope of your request and these records are listed in the attached schedule. I have made a decision to part-grant the release of all of the records. Personal information has been redacted from all records under Section 37(1). In addition to the copies of complaints which were received by the Department, I have also released any written replies which issued from the Department and these records are also listed in the schedule attached where applicable.

While Section 37(1) Personal Information is a mandatory exemption I am still obliged to consider whether the public interest would be best served by releasing the records in full. I have taken into account the benefit to the public to be given access to correspondence in a manner which demonstrates transparency and accountability of the Department. I have considered whether releasing the personal information would provide any additional benefit in this regard. I have weighed this against the right of individuals to have their personal information remain private and have found that there is a clear prerogative for this information to remain private.

Please note that visa applications received by the office of the Honorary Consul in Kyiv are processed by the Visa Office in Moscow, which is managed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, Department of Justice & Equality. Any complaints received directly by the Embassy in Moscow or the Embassy in Prague in relation to the Honorary Consul in Kyiv have been listed in the schedule. However, correspondence sent directly to the Visa Office in Moscow has been deemed outside of the scope of this request, as these records are not held by the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

Honorary Consuls are an important element of the Irish State's global engagement and play a vital role in providing consular assistance to Irish citizens, particularly when there is no resident Embassy. As with all of our Honorary Consuls, the Honorary Consul in Kyiv is appointed on an honorary basis and the position is neither salaried nor pensionable.

As you will appreciate, the office of the Honorary Consul in Kyiv is an extremely busy office, dealing with approximately 3,000 visa applications each year, in addition to a wide range of consular assistance cases, often involving highly sensitive, personal matters. The Embassy of Ireland in Prague, which is accredited to Ukraine on a non-resident basis, and is the supervising Mission for the Honorary Consul in Kyiv, engages regularly with the office of the Honorary Consul in Kyiv. Quality customer service is a key priority for the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade and it is expected that, when dealing with members of the public, Honorary Consuls will adhere to the Department's customer service standards, as outlined in our Customer Service Charter. All complaints in relation to the service provided by any of our Honorary Consuls are thoroughly investigated.

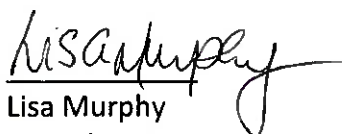
You may wish to be aware that as part of the Government's Global Ireland 2025 strategy, a resident embassy is scheduled to open in Ukraine in 2020/2021.

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


Lisa Murphy
Consular Division