

Our Ref: Fol/Req/17/045

Teach na hAbhainn  
23-27 Sráid Anraí  
Luimneach

Cormac McQuinn  
Irish Independent,  
Independent House,  
27-32 Talbot Street,  
Dublin 1,  
D01 X2E1

Riverstone House  
23-27 Henry Street  
Limerick

5 April 2017

Dear Mr McQuinn,

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

- **Copies of all applications for Irish Aid/Department of Foreign Affairs funding made by Mísean Cara in the years 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017.**
- **Copies of all responses by Irish Aid/The Department of Foreign Affairs to applications for funding made by Mísean Cara in the same years.**
- **Copies of all Strategic Plans submitted by Mísean Cara to Irish Aid/Department of Foreign Affairs in the same years.**
- **Copies of any correspondence to/from Irish Aid/Department of Foreign Affairs and Mísean Cara on the subject of the Mísean Cara's strategic plans failing to match the agency's plans as set out in applications for funding during the same years.**
- **Copies of any documents enclosed/attached to the above correspondence.**

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on the 7th March.

As responding officer, I have identified 40 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the attached schedule and are listed chronologically. I have made a decision to grant access to 24 records and part-grant access to 16 records.

The schedule attached lists the documents that the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade consider relevant to your request. It describes each document and refers to the sections of the FOI Act where applicable. Where records have been part granted, the material has been redacted in accordance with Section 36(1)(b) and Section 37(1) of the FOI Act.

### **Public Interest Test**

I have considered Section 36 of the Act in making my decision not to release certain information. Access to certain confidential information is essential in order to allow the Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade to execute its functions. In certain instances, such information may also be of a commercially sensitive nature. In this case, I am satisfied that these documents contain commercially sensitive information, the release of which could reasonably be expected to have adverse business consequences for the organisation.

In weighing these adverse consequences against the public interest, I have again considered the right of the public to have access to information; the need for an open, transparent and accountable civil service and the need for decision-making processes to be adequately scrutinised. I am satisfied that the balance favours refusal rather than release on this occasion.

Under Section 37, I have considered the public interest in the context of the public right to access information to ensure the scrutiny of decision making processes. However, I am satisfied that on balance the broader community interest is best served by protecting the privacy of officers and refusing access to the relevant record.

### **Background Information**

In relation to your request for information, I would like to set out additional background information on Misean Cara relevant to this request.

During the time period specified in your Freedom of Information request (2014-2017), Misean Cara did not submit an application for funding or submit a Strategic Plan. Misean Cara submitted an application for funding in 2013 which spanned the period 2013-2015, a copy of which, and associated correspondence, I have decided to release. Following consideration and review, this application by Misean Cara was approved for funding for the period 2013-2015 inclusive.

In 2013, Misean Cara submitted their 2013-2016 Strategic Plan to Irish Aid and I have also included that in the release of documents. This plan is also available on the Misean Cara website at this link [http://miseancaraire.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Strategic\\_Plan\\_2013-2016.pdf](http://miseancaraire.wpengine.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Strategic_Plan_2013-2016.pdf)

In 2015 as required by the Memorandum of Understanding between Irish Aid and Misean Cara, a mid-term review of the Strategic Plan was undertaken by Misean Cara. Upon completion of the review, following a request from Misean Cara, a one year extension was granted. This extension was agreed to enable Misean Cara to develop a new strategic plan for the period 2017-2020. For your information, I am attaching a copy of the request from Misean Cara to extend the MOU by one year and correspondence related to same.

Misean Cara is planning to submit a new application for 2017 onwards. This application has not yet been received. Irish Aid expects Misean Cara to submit a new Strategic Plan in 2017.

### **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](mailto: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@dfa.ie](mailto: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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harriet Sexton Morel". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Harriet Sexton Morel  
Higher Executive Officer