



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

Craig Farrell

Our Ref:FOI/Req/2017/056

12 April 2017

Dear Mr. Farrell,

I refer to your recently submitted request for information, made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, which has been revised as follows:

Foreign Service Allowances for 2014, 2015 and 2016 for all posted staff, total number of staff posted in 2016 and the number of these that are Heads of Mission.

premises costs, salaries and allowances, and other costs, in tabular form for the years 2016 and 2015 for operating embassies, consulates, chanceries and other diplomatic representation.

A list of the embassies, consulates, chanceries and other diplomatic premises overseas which are owned by the State, and their estimated value

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

I have identified three records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule below. I have made a decision to grant access to all three records.

Schedule

	Record Description	Granted/Part-Granted/Refused
1.	Total amount of Foreign Service Allowance paid to staff posted overseas 2014-16	Granted
2.	Overseas properties owned by the state	Granted
3.	Mission Costs	Granted

At present, Ireland's diplomatic network includes 61 Embassies, 7 multilateral missions, 11 Consulates General and one Representative office. A system of concurrent, or secondary, accreditations allows us to manage relations with a wider range of countries than those where we have missions. In a number of overseas locations chanceries, official accommodation or both have been acquired where the Government considers that the State should be represented and where there is clear advantage to owning, rather than renting, accommodation. The State currently owns 33 properties overseas in addition to a property in Belfast. The combined value of the properties as per the Appropriation Account 2015 is €156,544,000. However, it should be noted that such valuations are subject to currency fluctuations and the volatility of the global property market.

Missions abroad perform a wide range of functions in pursuit of Ireland's foreign policy interests, including advancing government policies, in particular with the EU and the UN, providing frontline consular services to Irish citizens overseas, supporting Irish culture and enhancing Ireland's visibility overseas. This work helps to cement our values and extend our influence on matters of interest to us, enhancing our global visibility and outreach.

Missions are instrumental to the organisation and conduct of Ministerial-led Trade missions and the Saint Patrick's Day programme of promotional visits and events both of which are crucial in maintaining contacts and influence with business and political leaders. In partnership with the State Agencies missions advance Ireland's trade, tourism, education and investment objectives. The success of these collaborative promotional activities conducted in priority markets is illustrated by the impressive growth in relevant trade figures over recent years. For example, it is estimated that the Irish food and drink sector grew by 2% in 2016 to reach €11.5bn, representing growth of over 41% since 2010. Total overseas visitor numbers have grown every year since 2010 and last year grew by 10% to a record 9.5 million visitors. Exports by Enterprise Ireland client companies have also shown impressive growth in recent years surpassing the €20bn mark for the first time last year.

Maintaining a permanent corps of officers experienced in international affairs is vital to derive the maximum benefit from Ireland's international engagement. In relative terms, the Irish foreign service is modest in size: 54 of Ireland's missions abroad have one or two diplomatic officers, while only 12 have more than three. In addition to the Department's own staff who undertake postings, we oversee the posting of officers from all Government Departments and other offices to Ireland's mission network. The number of Irish officials posted to our diplomatic missions as of September 2016 is 380; higher than in 2014 or 2015. The number of accompanying family members is 392.

Each of our 80 Missions is led by a Head of Mission. Depending on the nature of the Diplomatic Mission the Head of Mission may be Ambassador, Consul General or Representative and the grades of officers serving as Head of Mission ranges from First Secretary upwards. All our diplomats are civil servants; both when based at HQ and abroad they are paid the standard salary for their grade as determined by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which is subject to the normal taxation and social security obligations of civil servants. In common with most diplomatic services, this Department further supports officers who are assigned abroad to serve the State in an official capacity through a system of Foreign Service Allowance. This is to assist officers in defraying the

additional costs to officers and their families of moving and living abroad. Allowances are based on independently sourced data. In line with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform sanction, Foreign Service Allowances are required to be reviewed once a year, or more often in locations that experience substantial fluctuation in key economic indicators on currency and exchange rates. The components of the allowance system are:

Cost of Living Allowance (COLA), which is designed to estimate and defray costs associated with a higher cost of living at the post abroad. The Department uses the services of an independent firm to provide cost of living indices for the various locations required. COLA only becomes payable at posts with a higher cost of living index than Dublin.

Local Post Allowance (LPA), which assists mainly with the additional indirect costs arising from the representational role of officers. This allowance which varies according to marital status and grade is payable at all locations abroad. Officers serving in designated "hardship" posts may also be currently entitled to a hardship allowance as part of their LPA.

Children's Foreign Allowance (CFA), which compensates an officer for the additional costs incurred with regard to qualifying children at post.

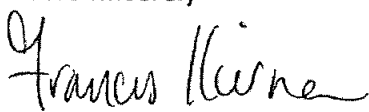
Other business costs associated with the operation of each mission include staff costs, operational office costs, premises rental and/or maintenance and other overheads. Local staff salaries in missions abroad are reflective of the prevailing labour market conditions in the host country. A number of missions manage significant programmes on behalf of Irish Aid. The effective implementation of the aid programmes often entails additional management and oversight costs to meet technical requirements in specific programme areas and these costs are included in the overall figures.

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



Frances Kiernan