



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

Peter Bodkin,

23 May 2019

**FOI/Req/2019/166: 2017 audit of funding granted to the Football Association of Ireland under the Emigrant Support Programme**

Dear Peter,

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:

**A copy of all records that relate to a 2017 audit of funding granted to the Football Association of Ireland under the Emigrant Support Programme.**

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 7 May 2019.

I have identified a total of 30 records that fall within the scope of your request and have listed same in the attached schedule. I have made the decision to grant 27, partially grant 1 and refuse 2 of these records.

In 2016, following a tender process carried out under a Multi Supplier Framework for the Provision of Audit and Accountancy Services to Government Departments, ASM Ltd (Belfast) was awarded the contract to undertake audits of specified organisations awarded grants under the Emigrant Support Programme. Following the 2017 Emigrant Support Programme audit schedule three reports were compiled, each covering a separate jurisdiction.

In this regard, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) was included in these reports. The reports also included a section containing an action plan for each organisation to implement their recommendations.

As required by the Freedom of Information Act 2014, I am obliged to make specific considerations as regards the public interest where access has been refused under specific sections of the Act.

**Section 30 – Functions and negotiations of FOI bodies**

For records exempted under Section 30 of the Act, I am satisfied that the premature release of the recommendations and management action plans (Action Plan) element of the 2017 Audit of grants awarded under the Emigrant Support Programme material would prejudice the effectiveness of

audits conducted on the Department's behalf and that it would also prejudice the availability of further similar information contained in future audits.

I have considered the right of the public to have access to information and the need for an open and accountable civil service. I am satisfied that the balance favours refusal rather than release.

**Section 35 – Information received in confidence**

With regard to information refused under Section 35 of the Act, this relates to information given in confidence on the understanding that it would be treated as confidential. This is also a mandatory exemption. I have considered your right to access information however I am satisfied that releasing the information would impair future sources of such information and impair the workings of this Department without any countervailing benefit to the broader public interest.

**Section 36 – Commercially sensitive information**

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 the Action Plan contains 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.

**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](mailto: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](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



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Abdul Wahab Al Dakar  
Deputy Director  
Irish Abroad Unit