

Telefón }
Telephone } D/L +353 1 4082690

Tagairt }
reference } Fol/Req/2015/055



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

Baile Átha Cliath 2
Dublin 2

Monday, 20 July 2015

Our Ref: FoI/Req/2015/055

E-mail:

Dear Mr. Patterson,

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:

- 1) The amount the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade pays on rent for each Irish Embassy, where the property is not state owned, in the years 2011,2012,2013,2014 and 2015.
- 2) If the prices that the department pays for rent on each Irish Embassy is higher or lower in one year compared to the other year, the reasons for that.
- 3) The steps that the department or agents on its behalf take to ensure that the best value is sought on the rent paid for Irish Embassies.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 18th June 2015.

I have identified one record that falls within the scope of your request. I am issuing you with an extract of this department's account for the years 2011-2015. The figures listed in the extract for 2015 will be the figures that we have paid to 25 June 2015. The record is listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to grant the record as it is an extract of our account and is directly relevant to your question, please be advised that A6CHANRENT is the code we use to describe rent paid for our office buildings outside the state.

The office premises rented abroad by the Department are key platforms for providing services to our citizens and promoting Ireland's interests and values abroad. They are venues which allow us to capitalise on trade, economic and cultural opportunities.

By making the best use of office accommodation, the Department keeps costs such as hiring event venues to a minimum. Events held at the embassy/consulates are generally more successful in attracting the type of high-level participants necessary to improve our trade and political relationships than those held in a hotel function room.

The prices that the department pays for rent on each office premises can vary from one year to another. This may be due to currency fluctuations, renegotiation of rents, changes in space rented, local market forces or due to terms of a lease for example indexation.

The steps that the department takes to ensure that the best value is sought on the rent paid for Irish Embassies are as follows

- when we are first renting a property our staff (in conjunction with the relevant divisions in HQ) negotiate strong leases, using local agents and lawyers to ensure that we test the market thoroughly and ensure best value for the money in the market.
- We maintain a lease register that enables us to monitor well in advance lease renewals to ensure we test the market when a lease comes up for renewal.

- We negotiate to achieve rent reductions and to prevent rent increases, as well as keeping under review the space required, with savings being pursued aggressively.
- Where possible we co-locate with other Irish Agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, IDA etc.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

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

Kerry O'Sullivan

Facilities Management Unit