



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

Our Ref: FOI/Req/15/115

Mr Mark O'Regan

News Reporter

Irish Independent

Independent House

27-32 Talbot Street

Dublin 1

11<sup>th</sup> December 2015

Dear Mr O'Regan

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. All correspondence concerning the amount spent on furniture and its transport by the Department, including missions abroad, from 2011 to date.
2. The original purchase price paid for properties overseas owned by the state, and the current valuation of each property.
3. A list of vehicles purchased by missions in 2014 and to date in 2015, and all servicing/cleaning costs incurred.
4. Full-time cooks employed at the Official Residence of Missions abroad from 2014 to date
5. Itemised breakdown from 2011 to date on expenditure on household items costing €500 or more in the Department's headquarters and missions abroad.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

I have identified 5 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. The information set out in the attached records has, in the main, been extracted from the Department's financial management system. I have made a decision to grant the records.

This Department is responsible for two Votes – Vote 28: Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Vote 27: International Cooperation. Departmental locations in Ireland include headquarters in Dublin, spread

over six locations in the city, Cork and Limerick. On foot of a Government decision in January 2014 to expand the diplomatic network a total of 8 new missions, three Embassies and five Consulates General have been opened. The expansion of the network is specifically designed to support Ireland's foreign trade and inward investment, and takes account of the Review of the Government's Trade, Tourism and Investment Strategy.

At present, Ireland's diplomatic network includes 61 Embassies, 7 multilateral missions and 12 Consulates General and one Representative office. In addition to their country of residence, several Ambassadors are accredited also to further countries on a non-residential basis which enhances the cost-effectiveness of our external representation. Our 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; economic, trade and cultural promotion; frontline consular services to Irish citizens overseas; and programme management, particularly in Irish Aid priority countries. The establishment of 8 new missions and maintenance and up keep of existing missions necessarily incurs costs including the purchase of fixtures and fittings. Officers at Headquarters and missions engaged in purchasing of goods, services or works must always have regard to value for money considerations when obtaining the most advantageous price available consistent with quality and fitness for purpose. This also applies to the purchase of vehicles for official use. Missions source the best available quotes from vehicle suppliers, which includes diplomatic discounts. When sanctioning the purchase of vehicles for Missions abroad, consideration is given to the climate, terrain, safety and security issues which prevail in the host country.

#### 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@dfat.ie](mailto: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

FOI Officer