

Our Ref: FoI/Req/16/006

Stephen Dempster
BBC Spotlight

Dear Mr. Dempster,

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. What is the total funding the Department of Foreign Affairs has allocated/provided to community organisations in Northern Ireland – both under the Anti-Sectarianism Fund and Reconciliation Fund – over the last 10 years, including this financial year 2015-2016*
- 2. A list of all the organisations who have received Department of Foreign Affairs aid through these funds, for community work in Northern Ireland over the last 10 years, and the total amount each organisation has received. Or if it is easier, the lists for each of the last 10 years, of the organisations who got funding through these funds in each year and how much they got in each year.*
- 3. A breakdown of how much money has been allocated to community organisations in loyalist/unionist communities.*
- 4. A total of the amount of funding allocated to Charter NI in east Belfast in the last 10 years under these funds.*
- 5. A total of the amount of funding allocated to Lower Shankill Community Association in the last 10 years under these funds.*
- 6. What audits were done of the funding to Charter NI and Lower Shankill Community Association to ensure funding had been spent correctly or to assess the outcome of funding?*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 27 January 2016.

The Reconciliation Fund awards grants to organisations working to build better relations within and between the traditions in Northern Ireland, the North and South, and Ireland and Britain. Supporting civil society organisations is a key pillar of the Government's work to further peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

In relation to Questions 1, 2, 4 and 5, I have compiled lists of organisations in receipt of funding from the Anti-Sectarianism Fund and Reconciliation Fund, with the amount received and broken down on a year-by-year basis, for the years 2006-2011. Information for grants awarded from 2012 onwards is publicly available on the Department's website: <https://www.dfa.ie/about-us/funding/reconciliation-fund/>, in the 'Previous Grants' section.

In reference to Question 3, as we do not allocate grants on the basis of community identity, nor categorise applications according to such a parameter, I am unable to provide a breakdown as requested. It is fair to say, however, that groups from across the community are well represented amongst our partners. I would also note that the majority of the projects supported by the Fund operate on a cross-community basis.

In relation to Question 6, the grants awarded to Charter NI and Lower Shankill Community Association have not been individually audited, however, all financial and narrative reports required following the completion of projects have been received. All partners awarded grants under the Reconciliation Fund receive these grants under stringent conditions designed to ensure accountability and value for money. Partners are required to comply with the grant aid criteria specified in the letter of offer, including completion of a narrative report and financial report outlining the activities carried out, the costs involved, and progress towards the objectives of the project, and detailing how the grant has contributed to the achievement of some, or all, of the Reconciliation Fund key objectives; and, submission of a signed copy of either: (i) The organisation's accounts, (where the grant is less than €12,500 or equivalent) or (ii) The audited financial statements of the organisation (where the grant exceeds €12,500 or equivalent). More generally, the Reconciliation Fund is subject to the Department's robust financial controls, which are audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office. These controls include an appropriate system of budgeting and regular expenditure reviews by senior management of expenditure performance against budget.

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

Eleanor Farrell