



Our Ref: FOI/Req/20/173

15th October 2020

Mr Ken Foxe
ken@righttoknow.ie

Dear Mr Foxe,

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:

Copies of all inspection reports from Department embassies, chanceries, and residences in the period 1 Jan 2019 to date of receipt of the request.

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 16th September 2020.

Schedule of Records

I have identified 14 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached.

Findings, particulars and reasons for decisions to deny access

The Department's Strategy, Governance and Change Unit has responsibility, as directed by the Management Board, for periodically reviewing the Department's Missions abroad. Mission Reviews (formerly Inspections) provide an assessment of the performance of Missions in delivering on the Department's High Level Goals, to identify any operational difficulties facing the Missions and to make recommendations for the consideration of the Management Board to address any issues arising and promote best practice.

I have made a decision to part-grant 14 records. A number of redactions have been made to the 14 records which are part-granted. Where access has been refused, the records are exempt from release under the following sections of the Act, as follows:

- Records which contain matter relating to the deliberative processes of the Department have been redacted under Section 29.1 of the Act.
- Records which might prejudice the effectiveness of the mission review process, have a significant, adverse effect on the management of the Department, or disclose positions taken or to be taken for the purpose of negotiations have been removed under Section 30.1(a), 30.1(b), and 30.1(c) of the Act.
- Records which might prejudice or impair the security of a building or endanger the life or safety of any person, have been redacted under Section 32.1(a) and 32.1(b) of the Act.



- Records which might adversely affect the security of the State, matters relating to Northern Ireland or the international relations of the State have been removed under Section 33.1(a), 33.1(c), and 33.1(d) of the Act.
- Records which contain communication where such information was communicated in confidence or where the record contains analysis, opinions, advice, recommendations and the results of consultations or information which could reasonably be expected to affect adversely the international relations of the State; or information communicated in confidence from, to, or within, an international organisation have been removed under Section 33.2(b) and 33.3(c).
- Records which contain information given to the Department on the understanding that it would be treated as confidential, and where it is important that the Department continue to receive such information but may no longer do so if we were to disclose it, have been removed under Section 35.1(a) of the Act.
- Records which could prejudice the competitive position or negotiations of Irish firms or others have been removed under Section 36.1(b) and 36.1(c) of the Act.
- Records which would involve the disclosure of personal information have been removed under Section 37.1 of the Act.
- Records where premature disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to result in undue disturbance of the ordinary course of business generally; where access to the record could reasonably be expected to have a negative impact on decisions by enterprises to invest or expand in the State or where access to the record could reasonably be expected to result in an unwarranted benefit or loss to a person or class of persons, have been removed under Section 40.1(b), 40.1(c), and 40.1(d) of the Act.

In relation to the redactions made under Sections 29, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, and 40 of the Act, I have considered whether the public interest would be better served by releasing the records in question. Some of the factors I have considered include the right of access to information generally, contribution to the public debate, promoting understanding of the Department's work, and transparency around decision-making processes. I am satisfied that, on balance, the reasons set out under the related Sections of the Act, that the public interest is best served by refusing access rather than granting it.

In relation to redactions made pursuant to Sections 30, 32, 33 and 40, I have also considered the possibility and likelihood that the release of redacted records could result in negative consequences, and their likely severity. On balance, I am satisfied that the release of the records in question could incur significant, adverse consequences, as set out in the relevant Sections of the Act.

3. 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. 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, 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denise Tully". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Denise Tully
Deputy Director
Strategy, Governance and Change Unit