



Our Ref: Fol/Req/20/084

10 July 2020

Dear Ms Ní Aodha,

I refer to the request of April 30 which you have made under the Freedom of Information Act 2014 for access to records held by this Department, as follows:

- *The number of chartered flights sent to return stranded Irish citizens home from countries which went into lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.*
- *The cost of these chartered flights, and how many citizens were returned.*
- *How many Irish citizens made contact with the DFA Covid-19 phone number from 1 January - 1 April 2020. How many of these queries related to repatriation, another government's Covid-19 advice, or healthcare professionals wanting to return home.*
- *From which five countries did the majority of queries arise, and could we get five samples of correspondence from each country Irish citizens were writing/calling from.*

Responses to each of these four components are outlined below.

- *The number of chartered flights sent to return stranded Irish citizens home from countries which went into lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

The Government of Ireland organised three chartered flights to assist Irish and other citizens to return to Europe. These flights were from Peru, India and Nigeria.

- *The cost of these chartered flights, and how many citizens were returned.*

The cost of these chartered flights and number of citizens returned was as follows:

Location	Cost	Number of people facilitated to return to Ireland
<i>Peru; Lima</i>	<i>€330,300</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>India; Goa/New Delhi</i>	<i>€349,203</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>Nigeria; Lagos</i>	<i>€210,300</i>	<i>95</i>

- *How many Irish citizens made contact with the DFA Covid-19 phone number from 1 January - 1 April 2020. How many of these queries related to repatriation, another government's Covid-19 advice, or healthcare professionals wanting to return home.*

As of July 9, the dedicated advice centre in Dublin for COVID-19 related travel queries has received over 13,000 calls since it was established and approximately 5,000 webchats. A breakdown of calls by country, based on the location of the person, is provided below. This is in addition to the thousands of calls received by our Missions overseas from citizens in distress or seeking advice.

Afghanistan	7
Albania	8
Algeria	11
Andorra	2
Angola	4
Antigua and Barbuda	5
Argentina	60
Armenia	1
Australia	859
Austria	41
Azerbaijan	2
Bahamas	2
Bahrain	1
Bangladesh	14
Barbados	7
Belarus	5
Belgium	89
Bolivia	10
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Brazil	52
Bulgaria	11

Burkina Faso	1
Cabo Verde	1
Cambodia	10
Cameroon	10
Canada	139
Central African Republic	1
Chile	18
China	53
Colombia	9
Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)	8
Costa Rica	2
Cote d'Ivoire	2
Croatia	40
Cuba	8
Cyprus	15
Czech Republic	24
DRC	2
Denmark	30
Dominican Republic	9
Ecuador	2
Egypt	10
El Salvador	1
Equatorial Guinea	3
Estonia	4
Ethiopia	4
Fiji	2
Finland	10

France	282
Gabon	2
Gambia	1
Georgia	3
Germany	241
Ghana	13
Greece	31
Grenada	2
Guatemala	1
Guinea	2
Guinea-Bissau	1
Honduras	7
Hungary	25
Iceland	2
India	127
Indonesia	22
Iran	1
Iraq	12
Ireland	5136
Israel	6
Italy	185
Jamaica	7
Japan	31
Jordan	2
Kazakhstan	4
Kenya	2
Kuwait	7

Kyrgyzstan	1
Laos	6
Latvia	19
Lebanon	3
Lithuania	19
Luxembourg	10
Malaysia	10
Maldives	7
Mali	1
Malta	22
Mauritius	6
Mexico	37
Moldova	11
Monaco	1
Mongolia	2
Montenegro	1
Morocco	27
Mozambique	2
Myanmar	1
Namibia	1
Nepal	9
Netherlands	164
New Zealand	215
Nicaragua	4
Niger	1
Nigeria	159
North Macedonia	2

Norway	9
Oman	1
Pakistan	43
Panama	4
Papua New Guinea	1
Peru	83
Philippines	37
Poland	173
Portugal	163
Qatar	12
Romania	48
Russia	11
Rwanda	3
Saint Lucia	1
Samoa	1
Saudi Arabia	20
Senegal	3
Serbia	6
Seychelles	1
Singapore	9
Slovakia	16
Slovenia	4
Somalia	1
South Africa	102
South Korea	5
Spain	741
Sri Lanka	6

Sudan	8
Sweden	41
Switzerland	62
Syria	2
Tanzania	10
Thailand	117
Togo	1
Trinidad and Tobago	3
Tunisia	4
Turkey	30
Uganda	4
Ukraine	15
UAE	77
UK	1619
US	878
Uruguay	5
Venezuela	3
Vietnam	47
Zambia	2
Zimbabwe	10
Information not provided	439

The Department uses a case management system (Cabhair) to record queries which require more complex and sustained forms of consular assistance. The primary purpose of this system is to ensure that all information related to a consular case is stored and accessed, in compliance with GDPR, by case officers assisting Irish citizens. The secondary purpose is to record depersonalised data on the type of cases encountered to assist in the strategic planning of the Department. This ensures that staff are able to respond appropriately to requests for assistance. The system has no way to identify a caller's occupation or the detail of what advice was requested unless each of the thousands of files are read individually with a manual record kept of the detail.

The consular response to COVID 19 was on an unprecedented global scale. In addition to responding to the needs of our citizens, our staff were also working remotely without access to their normal office environments. This, combined with additional staff seconded from across the Department led to officers being required to use other methods to record consular data, in particular for the high number of queries received by telephone and e-mail.

The Department is continuing to collate data and ensure that it is appropriately recorded in Cabhair. As of July 8, 2020, there are approximately 7548 cases recorded for the year to date in Cabhair. Of these, approximately 90% were primarily COVID 19 related. In general, half of the assistance provided was specifically concerned with repatriating to Ireland. The other half was on immigration, health, medical support and other issues relating to return.

• *From which five countries did the majority of queries arise, and could we get five samples of correspondence from each country Irish citizens were writing/calling from.*

As per our phone call of July 7, this information will be provided separately.

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

Ronan Cunniffe
Consular Directorate