



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/2020/132

10 August 2020

Dear Requester,

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:

- *A breakdown of all the costs associated with Ireland's campaign for a seat on the United Nations Security Council.*
- *A copy of all correspondences from third parties in relation to Ireland winning a seat on the United Nations Security Council from June 17 to present.*

Due to Covid-19 measures, searches were limited to electronic records as remote working continues for officers of the Department.

Regarding the costs associated with Ireland's campaign for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, I have made a decision to grant your request in full.

The information requested regarding a full breakdown of costs of spending by the Department is included in schedule 1 attached. All costs paid up to 29 June 2020 have been included.

Costs contained in schedule 1 include costs for materials produced to coincide with the launch event in New York on 2 July 2018 and materials used throughout Ireland's Security Council campaign. Travel related to the promotion of Ireland's candidature is also included in this schedule. Bilateral and multilateral meetings, and other international fora engagements have been availed of by officials to promote Ireland's candidature, our commitment to the UN and multilateralism, and to outline the values we seek to bring to the work of the Security Council during those engagements.

The costs incurred by Ireland, at approximately €860,000, compares favourably with those of our competitors, Norway (estimated €2.8 million) and Canada (estimated €1.5 million).

Regarding your request for a copy of all correspondences from third parties in relation to Ireland's successful election to the United Nations Security Council from 17 June to 29 June, I have identified 42 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in schedule 2 attached. I have made a decision to part-grant your request. Schedule 2 contains a list of correspondence received and the nature of each letter. Correspondence listed at 7, 11 and 24 is released to you with personal data redacted under Section 37(1) of the FOI Act where appropriate.

I have decided to refuse your request for access to all other correspondence under Section 33(1)(d). In addition, I also refuse your request to access correspondence numbers 12, 16, 27, 28 and 33 under Section 33(2)(b)(i). Item 7 is provided to you with personal information redacted under Section 37(1) of the FOI Act as I am satisfied that the remaining information is already in the public domain.

33.-(1) A head may refuse to grant a FOI request in relation to a record (and in particular but without prejudice to the generality otherwise of this subsection, to a record to which subsection (2) applies if, in the opinion of the head, access to it could reasonably be expected to affect adversely-
[...]

(d) the international relations of the State.

(2) This subsection applies to a record that –
[...]

(b) contains a communication between a Minister of the Government or his or her Department or Office and a diplomatic mission or consular post in the State or of the State or a communication between the Government or an officer of a Minister of the Government or another person acting on behalf of such a Minister and another government or a person acting on behalf of another government –

- (i) other than where such information was communicated in confidence or relates to negotiations between the State and the other state in question or in relation to such a state, or is a record of that other state containing information the disclosure of which is prohibited by that state, or*
- (ii) other than a record containing analysis, opinions, advice, recommendations and the results of consultations or information the release of which, in the opinion of the head, could reasonably be expected to affect adversely the international relations of the State,*

in which case (that is to say, either of the cases falling within subparagraph (i) or (ii), the request shall be refused.

Section 33

While Section 33(1) provides for the exemption of records, I am still obliged to consider the harm that would arise in releasing records to which subsection (1) applies in assessing whether it would cause an adverse affect.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade operates in a complex and diverse international environment. A mutuality of confidence exists in the communication between this Department and our interlocutors. This is particularly the case in respect of diplomatic communications. I have considered the possibility and likelihood that the release of these records could result in negative consequences, and prejudice the ability of this Department to effectively discharge its functions and engage with outside interlocutors and stakeholders. To do otherwise would risk compromising the State's capacity to engage with international partners through diplomatic and other channels. I have therefore decided that refusals must be made for these reasons and I have applied the exemption as appropriate.

In relation to communications also refused under Section 33(2)(b)(i), the letters contain information provided in confidence or relate to negotiations between states or both. I have considered the harm in releasing these records in full and I am of the opinion that the release of the full correspondence may impact on the trust Ireland has established with other countries and consequently, adversely affect the international relations of the State.

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

Dara Coyne