



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

Our Ref: Fol/Req/2019/182

3 July, 2019

Dear Ms. Phelan,

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:

- *The annual price paid for Ms Geraldine Byrne Nason's rent as Ambassador to the Permanent Mission to the UN in New York.*
- *Her annual salary.*
- *The annual cost in relation to staff, if they exist without identifying any individual, including chef, driver/chauffeur, house keeper/cleaner, gardener etc for the Ambassador.*
- *Geraldine Byrne Nason's annual entertainment allowance as Ambassador.*
- *Geraldine Byrne Nason's cost of living allowance as Ambassador.*
- *Without identifying any family members, the annual cost of international school fees for her children, if any.*
- *The make, model and year of car (not reg) provided to Geraldine Byrne Nason as Ambassador that she uses.*
- *If Mrs Byrne Nason or her family have availed of private chauffeuring throughout her duties as Ambassador, what type of vehicle it was and at what cost.*
- *The cost of the Ambassador's hotel stays while on business for the State in 2018 and so far this year.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request which was sent to you on 17 June, 2019.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade comprises headquarters at home and diplomatic, consular and representative offices or missions abroad. 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, and providing frontline consular services to Irish citizens overseas. They also support Irish culture and enhanced visibility for Ireland overseas, including via our diaspora and community networks. Working with the State Agencies, Missions advance Ireland's trade, tourism, education and investment objectives. They are critical to the organisation of Ministerial-led Trade Missions and the Saint Patrick's Day programme of promotional visits and events, both of which allow for the development of contacts and influence with business and political leaders. These and other promotional

activities help to advance our values and extend our influence on matters of interest to us. They enhance our outreach and our global visibility.

The Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations plays a central role in promoting Ireland's values and foreign policy interests at the United Nations. It led the development and adoption of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development as co-facilitator, together with Kenya, of the intergovernmental negotiations. Ireland will continue to show leadership as the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] are implemented, both at home and across the world.

Ireland, through its Mission to the UN, has built a formidable and highly recognised international reputation built on Ireland's contribution, inter alia, to peacekeeping, disarmament, human rights, development and gender equality. Ireland has just relinquished a successful term as the Chair of the Commission on Status of Women (CSW). The Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations is also actively engaged in promoting Ireland's campaign for a seat on the UN Security Council in 2021/2022.

Official accommodation and residence staff

Official accommodation provides a platform to promote Ireland's political, economic and cultural interests and values, to develop strategic stakeholder relationships, and to represent Ireland in international organisations.

The official accommodation for the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York is owned by the State. There is, therefore, no annual rental cost. Two locally-employed staff members are engaged to work both at the offices of the Permanent UN Mission and the State-owned official residence in support of official functions and to maintain the State-owned property, at a combined salary cost of €88,681 in 2018. This permits the State to host a wide variety of official engagements at significantly less expense than hiring or using hotels, restaurants and/or meeting rooms.

Salary

Maintaining a permanent team of diplomatic and consular officers experienced in international affairs is vital to derive the maximum benefit from Ireland's international engagement and to protect our citizens abroad. All posted officers are civil servants; they are paid by the State according to the salary scales determined by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and, as PAYE workers, are subject to the normal tax and social security obligations of civil servants.

In keeping with the demands of the senior level policy and management responsibilities of the role, as well as the high level of out-of-hours and weekend commitment required, the position of Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations in New York has traditionally been held at Assistant Secretary or Second Secretary General level. Pay scales for the civil service are freely available in the public domain at <https://circulars.gov.ie/pdf/circular/per/2019/05.pdf>.

Entertainment allowance

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade does not provide individual entertainment allowances. Since 2017, a Promotion and Outreach fund in each diplomatic mission can be used for representational, cultural and economic and public diplomacy activities. The Promotion and Outreach funding model underpins the Promoting Ireland programme. The principal objective of this funding is to support the High Level Goals set out in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 (Our People; Our Place in Europe; Our Values; Our Prosperity; and, Our Influence) and, specifically, our efforts to raise Ireland's international profile by supporting local and regional trade and economic initiatives and cultural activities. The Statement of Strategy may be found at <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebstitemedia/aboutus/DFAT-Statement-of-Strategy-2017-2020.pdf>.

School fees

Support for school fees allows the children of posted officers to continue their education without undue disruption or disadvantage where it would otherwise be very difficult. Difficulties may arise, for example, due to the language environment, differing educational systems or the lack of availability of local schools of equivalent standard to Irish schools. This support is only provided where the officer can provide evidence to demonstrate that it is required to meet these criteria and represents good value for money compared to similar options available locally.

There are no school fee costs associated with the role of Permanent Representative at present.

Mission Vehicle

The official mission vehicle at the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations in New York, which is driven by an official mission driver, is a 2011 Mercedes E350/4matic. No official vehicle or driver is exclusively assigned to Ms Byrne Nason nor is it a personal service for the Ambassador. This vehicle is used for airport transfers, official travel of Ministers and delegations, as well as for day-to-day operations and deliveries in New York. No private chauffeuring expenditure was undertaken by Ms. Byrne Nason.

Hotel costs

2018	
Delivery of keynote speech at UCD seminar on 'Contribution of EU Research and Innovation to the UN SDGs', Brussels, 21-22 May 2018	€223
2019	
Nil expenditure to date	

Cost of living allowance

In common with other diplomatic services, Ireland has a system of allowances in place to defray certain additional costs associated with moving and living overseas for officers who are assigned abroad to serve the State in an official capacity. The cost of living allowance, which only becomes payable at posts with a higher cost of living than Dublin, is based on independently sourced data and subject to annual review.

I am refusing your request in respect of Ms. Byrne Nason's cost of living allowance under Section 37 (1) - i.e. "a head shall refuse to grant an FOI request, if in the opinion of the head, access to the record concerned would involve the disclosure of personal information".


As officers' family circumstances are amongst other factors taken into consideration in the calculation of allowances, I deem that the release of such material would include personal information and could jeopardise the right to privacy.

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


Karen Miller