



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

Our Ref: FOI/Req/19/335

Aine Doyle  
Fianna Fáil Research Office,  
Leinster House,  
Dublin 2.

10 January 2020

Dear Ms. Doyle,

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:

*All invoices in relation to external consultancy services procured by the Department in 2019.*

I refer also to the acknowledgement of your request, which was sent to you on 5 December.

I have identified 9 records that fall within the scope of your request. The records are listed in the schedule attached. I have made a decision to part-grant all of the records.

Where access to certain information has been refused, this information has been exempted from release under section 36(1)(b) Commercially Sensitive Information and Section 37(1) Personal Information.

I have considered Section 36(1)(b) of the Act in making my decision not to release certain information contained in the invoices provided for consultancy services. Market suppliers enjoy a certain advantage in dealing with public bodies like the Department. The certainty of payment within a regulated time period and the guarantee of demand requirements are the obvious advantages. Considering this, a supplier may offer the Department a very competitive tender rate in comparison to other buyers. In such cases the breakdown of pricing information contained in the invoices could be seen to be commercially sensitive to the supplier and if such information was to be released, could impact negatively on future tendering pricing for the Department.

Tender pricing structure is examined as part of the evaluation of tenders and is carried out under a confidential assessment process. The release of the total value of a winning tender is subject to full public disclosure but the release of pricing structures could have the potential to prejudice a company's competitive position with future tenders with this Department and other Contracting Authorities, if details of its pricing strategy was obtained by one of their competitors.

When pricing information structure is provided by a Tenderer as part of a tender process, it is likely that there is an expectation that sensitive information of this type will be treated as being confidential. Tender information which is commercially sensitive generally remains confidential after the awarding of a contract. The release of this information could also reasonably be expected to have adverse business consequences for the Department. If the Department adopted the practice of releasing pricing structure information that would allow competing commercial organisations understand competitors pricing strategies, the Department may then receive tenders not priced at best market rates. The release of pricing structure information could also significantly damage the operation of a Value for Money (VFM) tendering system resulting in the payment of higher costs for contracted services which would not be in the public interest.

In weighing these adverse business consequences against the public interest, I have considered the right of the public to have access to information and the need for an open, transparent and accountable civil service. However, I am satisfied that the balance favours refusal rather than release of redacted information.

In some cases, Section 37(1) Personal Information applies where an individual has provided personal details such as home addresses, personal e-mail addresses and bank details.

Bank details which appear not to be in the public domain have also been redacted.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for two Votes - Vote 27 (International Co-operation) and Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade) and seeks to minimize expenditure on consultants. It commissions external expertise in line with national and EU procurement rules in areas where highly specialised skills are not available, in particular where independent evaluation of projects is required. During the course of their engagement, these consultants and experts may prepare reports and other analysis or documentation for the Department.

Listed below is a brief description of each consultancy up to the date of your request.

### **Vote 27 (International Co-operation)**

#### **Anne Nolan - Global Health and HIV and AIDS**

The Department engaged Ms. Nolan to provide consultancy services related to global health and in particular to provide analysis and input related to evolving global health and HIV and AIDS issues. Ms Nolan's work also focused on providing support for the development of relevant strategies related to global health and Ireland's new policy for International Development, A Better World.. Ms Nolan also provided assistance in the preparation of relevant input for various international events related to global health and HIV and AIDS.



## **Nutrition Works – Nutrition Technical Support**

This organisation provides professional expert technical services to the Development Cooperation and Africa Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in the area of nutrition. In particular Nutrition Works assisted the Department with analysis and input for Ireland's development cooperation policy and programme work on nutrition and in particular to provide technical guidance on how nutrition sensitive programming can be tailored to deliver on Ireland's policy and intervention priorities.

## **University of Limerick - Review of the Irish Aid Research Strategy**

The University of Limerick was contracted by the Department to conduct a review of the Irish Aid Research Strategy 2015-19 and to provide recommendations for research and learning within the development cooperation programme, in line with the implementation of Ireland's new policy for international development.

## **Brian Casey - Review of the Emergency Response Fund**

The assignment informed future decisions about investment in humanitarian pre-positioned financing and the management of the ERFS by the Humanitarian Unit in the Development Cooperation and Africa Division of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. External expertise and capacity was required to conduct this assessment to inform allocations to partners in 2019 and updates of guidelines and management systems.

## **Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs and Trade)**

### **Integrity 360 – Cyber Risk and Assurance**

This report was commissioned by the Department's ICT Unit to identify some of the top cyber risk areas for the Department and to set out recommendations to improve the security posture in the organisation with alignment to industry consensus good practice frameworks.

### **IManage Copy Print Service – Assesment for Managed Print Solutions tender**

IManage Copy Print Service are doing an Audit of the Department's current printing setup , as part of the departments plan to move to a Managed Print Solution. This audit is required by the Office of Government Procurement before tendering for Managed Print Solutions. As the onsite part of this audit has been completed, 50% of the contracted amount was paid in November 2019. The remainder of the contracted amount will be paid in 2020 when the report has been received. IManage Copy Print services was selected from an OGP Framework through a mini competition.

### **Red C - Japan Perceptions Study**

Research carried out in collaboration with Tourism Ireland to establish a baseline for knowledge and favourability of Ireland in Japan, and produce empirical information upon which to base future public diplomacy and other promotional initiatives.

## KITE - Alumni Network Feasibility Study

The Department engaged Dr. Maria Gallo of Keep in Touch Education to examine the potential for implementing an international alumni network for graduates of Irish education institutes. Our Irish Abroad Unit is now taking this forward and is working with other Departments and agencies to develop this in 2020.

## Red C- European Youth Research

Under Future Jobs Ireland 2019, Trade Division was tasked with preparing a “report on the perceptions and attractiveness of Ireland as a place to live and work amongst students and young adults across the European Union post-Brexit”. A tender was prepared through the Office of Government Procurement, and Red C Research was selected as the winning provider based on cost and relevant experience.

The final format used was an online survey that reached 8,000+ people in eight EU countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Romania, and Estonia). The deliverables included an executive summary, a full report and the final dataset. The deadline for this project was the end of Q4 2019. All deliverables were completed ahead of deadline and within 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@dfa.ie](mailto: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](mailto: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



Peter Downes

Freedom of Information Office