



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs

Our Ref: FOI/Req/2021/135

Catherine Burton

23 July 2021

Dear Catherine,

I refer to your recently submitted request for information, made under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, in which you requested the following:

With regard to the government's LGBTQI strategy to promote the visibility of LGBTQI community:

- (1) Please provide any records you hold regarding plans to provide gender neutral toilet facilities in the workplace,**
- (2) Please provide any records you hold of discussions around whether people who are transitioning to their preferred gender will be permitted to use the toilets that matches their preferred gender and whether this practice will only apply to holders of a gender recognition certificate.**
- (3) Please provide any records you hold regarding any risk assessments that you carried out on your toilet proposals, including**
 - (a) records of staff consultation on these proposals, and**
 - (b) records of the outcome.**
- (4) Please provide any records that you hold regarding the use of disabled toilets as gender neutral options for your department/office.**

I also refer to the acknowledgement of this request which was sent to you on 5 July 2021.

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

As way of a more detailed response, please find below a summary response on the questions you raised.

The Department is fully committed to ensuring that our staff and workplace are representative and reflective of the people and society we serve. Under Goal 5 of our [Statement of Strategy 2021-2023](#) we committed to embed a culture of dignity and respect in the workplace, emphasising gender, equality, diversity and inclusion. Similarly, the Department's Human Resources Strategy 2019-2022 has a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion as one of its four pillars, underscoring its commitment to the development of this agenda.

Within the Department, a Sub-Committee of the Management Board on Gender Equality, Equality and Diversity was established in 2012 to as a key governance structure for the consideration of equality and

diversity issues. In December 2019 this structure was formally expanded to include the support of six voluntary staff Working Groups – on Gender, LGBT+, Social Inclusion, Disability, New Irish & Ethnic Diversity, and Parents & Carers. Throughout 2021, the staff led LGBT+ Working Group under the Sub-Committee has run a lunchtime talk series with speakers invited to present on a topic relevant to the LGBT+ Community. These talks have focused on Trans Rights in the Workplace; Irish LGBT+ History; LGBT+ Media visibility; and a workshop on the ABCs of LGBTQ+.

The Department also runs broad training under the umbrella of Diversity and Inclusion which has included a specific training session on an LGBTQI+ topic. The Department's Management Board also recently completed Inclusive Leadership training and further D&I training is being rolled out across the Department including with a focus on LGBTQI+.

As part of the Department's efforts to embed a culture of diversity and inclusivity, a number of years ago Human Resources in (verbal) consultation with our Property Management Unit decided to make all single occupancy bathrooms gender neutral. The signs currently in use were introduced following (verbal) communication with Belong To (www.belongto.org). The Office of Public Works (OPW) is also currently in the process of fitting out two new premises for the Department – in Bishop's Square and in Balbriggan. Provision is being made for accessible toilets in both buildings which will be gender neutral. As well as the accessible toilets in Bishop's Square, a gender neutral toilet is also being provided. We will also shortly be renovating some toilet facilities in Iveagh House, our Department's headquarters, which will include accessible/gender neutral toilets.

The Department of Foreign Affairs permits officers to use the bathroom which aligns with their gender identity. Under the Department's HR Strategy, the Department is also currently working on a new Guide to support Transgender Colleagues. This guide will include a reference to bathroom use.

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, 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 (€10 for medical card holders). A copy of the medical card should be provided to avail of the reduced fee. For methods of payment, please contact FOI Unit at foi@dfa.ie, or 01-4082618.

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

Patrick McDonagh

Human Resources