

4 July 2012

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0631-12

Thank you for your email of 6 June 2012 in which you asked:

“How many international payments has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office made per month for the last year?”

What value of international payments has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office made per month for the last year?”

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested. I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to your request.

However, due to the way the FCO's accounts are structured, it would not be possible to provide the requested information in the required level of detail without creating a bespoke report. The FCO reports at a consolidated level in Sterling (GBP) and breaking down the data into such a level of detail would take the request above the cost threshold for central government departments specified in the Freedom of Information Act, currently set at £600.

This is because the FCO operates in 154 currencies globally with the transactions recorded in separate data sets worldwide.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request.