

7 August 2012

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0761-12

Thank you for your request dated 18 July 2012 under the Freedom of Information Act.

You asked that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) should provide:

1. The total amount of money paid to all trade unions for financial years a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12. Where possible please provide a list of total payments made to each different trade union. However if this disaggregated information is not available please continue to provide a total figure for trade union payments. In response to this question, please only include direct payments to the unions from your organisation, not membership dues deducted from staff salaries.
2. Please state:
 - a. Which trade unions your organisation provide staff time to work on trade union duties and / or activities (sometimes called 'Trade Union facility time') in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.
 - b. The number of full time equivalent staff that were provided for each trade union in i) 2010-11 and ii) 2011-12.
3. Does your organisation automatically deduct trade union subscriptions from staff salaries in the payroll process in order to pass them on to the union? If so, how much did your organisation charge each union for this service in a) 2010-11 and b) 2011-12?

I can confirm that the FCO does hold information relevant to your request. Taking each of the questions in turn:

1. The FCO does not pay any money to any trade unions. Members of staff who belong to a trade union pay their own subscriptions. These are either deducted from their salaries and paid to the unions or paid directly by the staff in the form of direct debits. Union membership is a private matter between staff members and unions.
2. a) The FCO provides facility time to three trade unions: Public and Commercial Services Union; Diplomatic Service Association (part of the First Division Association); and Prospect.
b) The FCO (including FCO Services) had 8.5 full time equivalent trade union posts in 2010-11 and 2011-12. This is broken down as follows:
2010-11: 5 full time equivalent Trade Union Secretariat posts; 2 full time equivalent Public & Commercial Services Union posts; 1 full time equivalent Diplomatic Service Association post; and 0.5 full time equivalent Prospect post.
2011-12: 4.5 full time equivalent Trade Union Secretariat posts; 2 full time equivalent Public & Commercial Services Union posts; 1 full time equivalent Diplomatic Service Association post; and 1 full time equivalent Prospect post.
3. The FCO deducts trade union subscriptions from staff salaries as part of the payroll process where authorised by staff to do so. The FCO does not charge trade unions for this service.