



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Human Resources Directorate
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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04 August 2014

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0170-14

Thank you for your email of 12 February asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

In response to your offer to supply geographical expenditure guides it would be very helpful if I could receive guides for the following countries:

- 1) *China*
- 2) *South Korea*
- 3) *Netherlands*
- 4) *France*
- 5) *Germany*
- 6) *Kazakhstan*

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

Attached are the Geographical Expenditure Guides for each of the requested countries. Please note, that these are guides, and not entitlements. They are designed to help staff and management budget for the cost of overseas trips. Some information has been redacted from the released documents under section 43(2) of the Act as its disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of any person. This exemption requires the application of a public interest test.

The use of this exemption was carefully considered. The factors in favour of disclosure of this information including the general public interest and greater transparency and accountability, were carefully weighed against the general need to allow business-people

and commercial organisations the space to conduct their lawful business competitively and without fear of disclosure of sensitive commercial information. In this case after such consideration we believe that the public interest in releasing this information, with a limited portion redacted, outweighs the public interest in withholding it.

As mentioned in our previous reply to you dated 11 February, the FCO has strict guidelines on expenditure in accordance with the Civil Service Management code. We are committed to ensuring that travel is as cost effective as possible and continually look for ways to get better value from our spend on travel in the context of our wider work on reducing overheads and resources devoted to corporate services. Where possible and appropriate, we encourage secure video-conferencing around the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) network in a further effort to reduce the number of flights needed. However, face to face meetings are a vital part of diplomatic work and this necessarily involves travel.

The FCO does not pay any subsistence fees and instead staff can claim the actual costs for reasonable expenditure while travelling for example: breakfast, lunch and dinner costs. Any expenses a member of staff claims must be defensible as reasonable, and stand-up to internal and external challenge. In addition to this, all expense claims submitted have to be backed by receipts and checked by the member of staff's manager or budget holder.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless it is exempt. The information we have supplied to you may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

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I hope you are satisfied with this reply.

Yours sincerely,

Human Resources Directorate



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