



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**EuD-E**

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**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 0349-14, 0350-14 and 0351-14**

Thank you for your email of 23 March 2014 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*I was wondering if you could tell me the Embassies that currently have in-house chefs; If so the average salary of the chefs; the embassies that currently use agency chefs; the estimated cost of same in 2012 and 2013*

*Also could you provide me a list of allowance Embassy staff can claim; The number of personnel that claimed each allowance and cost of same in 2012 and 2013; If all allowances are available to all grades within the Embassy; if not could you indicate what allowances are available to which grades of staff*

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.

Figures quoted are gross salaries.

Country	Response
France	The British ambassador's official Residence in Paris employs a team of four kitchen staff. The average, taking the salaries of the four staff, total monthly gross salary is €3,794.
Germany	A chef is employed at the ambassador's residence on a salary scale which ranges between €3,118 and €4,412 per month.
Spain	In 2012, two chefs were employed at the ambassador's residence and in 2013, one chef was employed. The salary band ranges between €2,081 and €2,815.50 per month.
Denmark	The Embassy employs one chef. The Embassy does not use salary bands,

	and salary details of the individual in question are withheld under Section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act (which relates to the protection of personal data).
Italy	The British Ambassador's residence in Rome employs one full-time chef. The salary band is between €2,535.60 and €3,702.91 per month (basic salary and living-in allowance).
Belgium	The residence in Brussels, which for entertainment purposes is shared by the bilateral Embassy and our missions to EU and NATO, employed two full-time chefs in 2013. Chefs have a salary range of between €2,286.10 and €3,564.25 per month. The residence has employed no agency chefs since at least April 2013.

As noted in the above table, some of the withheld information is personal data. It is our view that disclosure of this information would breach the first data protection principle, which states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. Section 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act therefore apply. It is the fairness aspect of this principle which we think would be breached by disclosure in this case. In such circumstances section 40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. We do not therefore have to apply the public interest test.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) undertakes a vast range of activities to establish and maintain diplomatic contacts throughout our network of over 260 overseas posts, as well as diplomatic activity in the UK to promote British interests. This includes meetings and events hosted for political and business delegations (including those in support of UK Trade and Industry) which range in size from large trade delegations to small working lunches with key senior contacts. Any such spending is undertaken for business reasons and expenditure on hospitality is kept under close scrutiny to ensure value for money and effectiveness.

On the second part of your question, the FCO pays staff allowances to UK-Based staff when serving overseas (but not Locally-Engaged staff) who have a requirement to spend periods of time living and working abroad during their careers, often in dangerous and challenging environments. A career made up of frequent moves of home has an impact not just on the member of staff but on their families too. FCO allowances compensate them for the additional cost of maintaining a standard of living comparable to the UK, and for the range of additional costs resulting from frequent changes of job, location and environment.

As part of our commitment to continuously ensuring value for money for the taxpayer, the FCO regularly reviews the allowances we pay to staff at overseas posts. We conducted a fundamental review of our overseas allowances in 2009/10 to ensure they remained both fit for purpose and an appropriate charge to public funds. As a result of changes introduced in 2011/12, we are now saving more than £8 million per year.

We also keep individual allowances under regular review, for example, the Cost of Living Addition (COLA) is reviewed twice a year in March and September. As a result of the last review, 70 overseas posts saw a decrease in their COLA as a result of changes in the pound/local currency exchange rate and/or local inflation index.

Allowances paid are:

- Transfer Grant - this is a lump sum payment intended to cover a range of incidental expenditure associated with being posted overseas (e.g. replacing household items, buying extra luggage). It is paid for each posting lasting 12 months or more, e.g. a move from the UK to a post overseas, a relocation to the UK at the end of a posting overseas, and a move from one post abroad to another.
- Cost of Living Addition (COLA) - paid to compensate staff for the additional cost of maintaining a standard of living comparable with that in the UK while living and working overseas. COLA rates vary from one country to another, and by family circumstances. They are calculated for the FCO (and for many other organisations that post employees abroad) by an independent commercial company, Employment Conditions Abroad (ECA). The company provides similar advice to a range of international firms and multinationals.
- Diplomatic Service Compensation Allowance. There are 3 elements to this allowance:
  - i) Diplomatic Service Allowance - paid to all Diplomatic Service staff at all posts, according to grade and family status, to compensate staff for the range of additional costs that result from the career-long disruption caused by frequent changes of location, and any indirect representational expenses.
  - ii) Hardship - paid to all staff at qualifying posts to compensate them for the additional costs of maintaining quality of life at our most difficult posts. Hardship is based on a location ranking scoring system prepared by an independent organisation, Employment Conditions Abroad (ECA) International. ECA gathers data from expatriates and independent sources, and looks at a number of factors including climate, pollution, health, isolation, security and social tension.
  - iii) Spouse Pension Compensation - is payable to those Diplomatic Service staff whose spouses or established partners have a long term commitment to full global mobility. It recognises the impact this has on the spouse's ability to follow a career and to contribute to a UK pension scheme. Spouse pension Compensation is paid monthly to married accompanied staff or those accompanied by an established partner provided that their spouse/partner meets a number of criteria.
- Travel Package – this is an accountable allowance for staff and their qualifying dependants to use for transfer and fare paid leave journeys during substantive postings overseas of 12 months or more. It is based on fare paid journey entitlements, which are valued twice a year (April and October). Staff have flexibility in how and where they travel during a posting provided it is within the ceiling of the value of their travel package.
- Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) - the FCO meets the school fee costs of children who accompany their parents overseas where there is no suitable free English language based education system. Where staff cannot have their children with them, or prefer to have their children remain at school in the UK to provide stability and continuity of education, the FCO contributes towards the cost of standard term fees for

children at boarding school, up to a ceiling amount. The CEA ceiling is reviewed on an annual basis.

- Language Allowances - paid to officers where their role requires them to speak the local language. In order to qualify the officer has to pass exams at the level set out on their job description.

During 2012/13 the number of FCO UK Based staff serving in each country were:

Country	2012*	2013
Belgium	100	98
France	40	34
Germany	20	23
Denmark	10	6
Italy	15	14
Spain	15	15

*\*For operational and security reasons all figures in 2012 have been rounded to the nearest five.*

A number of other Government Departments may have staff based in our missions overseas. These numbers do not include non-FCO staff based in these countries.

As allowances are paid dependent upon family circumstances and, additionally, are subject to in-year adjustments we are unable to provide you with the total value paid over the period requested.

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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