



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**Western Balkans and Enlargement**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

13 May 2016

Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

Dear

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: FOI 0361-16**

Thank you for your email of 31 March 2016 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

*My topic is the recognition of Kosovo and, in particular, the question of why states decide to recognize Kosovo or not. My research question is: why did similar countries like the United Kingdom and Spain come to a different decision regarding the recognition of Kosovo in 2008?*

*I am particularly interested in documents and statements regarding the British decision on the recognition of Kosovo in 2008. The actual decision was made on the 18th of February 2008. I was wondering if you could help me with accessing or receiving official data that explain and mention the British position regarding the independence of Kosovo? Furthermore, I would like to ask if you have any other tips and interesting data that you would like to share in order to help me with comparing the position of the United Kingdom and Spain towards the independence and recognition of Kosovo?*

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.

Please find attached the information that the FCO can release to you. Some of the information has been withheld using section 27 – international relations. Section 27 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test.

Some of the information within the scope of your request is exempt under Section 27(1) of the Act as it relates to Government to Government discussion with other States and international organisations (in this instance, with the US, Serbia, the EU and its Member States, and Russia). Releasing information shared with the UK could undermine the UK's and the EU's role in the recognition of Kosovo's independence – one of the UK's top foreign

policy objectives in the Western Balkans. If we want to continue to play an influencing role, then our bilateral relationships with other partners need protecting. The effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between Governments. This relationship of trust allows for the free and frank exchange of information on the understanding that it will be treated in confidence. If the United Kingdom does not respect such confidences, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered. The States concerned may be reluctant to share sensitive information with the UK Government in future and may be less likely to respect the confidentiality of information supplied by the UK Government to them, to the detriment of UK interests. We recognise that there is public interest in this particular subject, and that there continues to be debate concerning the recognition of Kosovo's independence. But, for all the reasons mentioned above, we consider that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

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Yours sincerely,

Western Balkans and Enlargement Department



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