



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

8 November 2016

**Europe Directorate - Internal**  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London SW1A 2AH

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

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0625-16**

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 28 June 2016. In your request you asked for:

*Could I please have all correspondence between the British Embassy, Dublin and any member of the Irish Government regarding the UK's referendum on EU membership from 1 January 2016 until present.*

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 within the scope of your request is exempt under Sections 27(1) and (2) of the Act as it relates to confidential Government to Government discussion with other States and international organisations (in this instance, Ireland). Section 27(1)(a) of the FOIA recognises the need to protect information that would be likely to prejudice relations between the United Kingdom and other states if it was disclosed.

The application of s.27(1)(a) requires us to consider the public interest test arguments in favour of releasing and withholding the information. We acknowledge that releasing information on this issue would increase public knowledge about our relations with Ireland. However, s.27 (1) (a) recognises that the effective conduct of international relations depends upon maintaining trust and confidence between governments. If the United Kingdom does not maintain this trust and confidence, its ability to protect and promote UK interests through international relations will be hampered, which will not be in the public interest. The disclosure of information detailing our relationship with the Irish Government could

potentially damage the bilateral relationship between the UK and Ireland. This would reduce the UK government's ability to protect and promote UK interests through its relations with Ireland, which would not be in the public interest. For these reasons we consider that, the public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

Some of the information you have requested, is personal data relating to third parties, the disclosure of which would contravene one of the data protection principles. In such circumstances sections 40(2) and (3) of the Freedom of Information Act apply. In this case, our view is that disclosure would breach the first data protection principle. This states that personal data should be processed fairly and lawfully. It is the fairness aspect of this principle, which, in our view, would be breached by disclosure. In such circumstances, s.40 confers an absolute exemption on disclosure. There is, therefore, no public interest test to apply.

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Yours sincerely,

Northern and Central Europe Department



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