



Information Policy & Compliance
bbc.co.uk/foi

Vincent Aleck
Via email: request-12111-17c8ce25@whatdotheyknow.com

15 June 2009

Dear Mr Aleck,

Request for Information – RFI20090730

Thank you for your request of 17th May 2009 under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 seeking the following information:

Please provide a breakdown by year for the last 10 years, or all the years records are available, showing:

- a) BBC's expenditure on, and*
- b) the number of hours of programming broken down by period (e.g. "Monday-Friday 7-9pm", "Sunday before 9am" – please use your own scheme here if easier)*

of religious programming of the following classes: 1) Christian beliefs 2) Jewish beliefs 3) Muslim beliefs 4) Hindu beliefs 5) Secular beliefs 6) Other religious beliefs - specified if information available

I shall respond to each of part of your request in turn.

Expenditure on religious programming broken down by faith/belief

In response to the first part of your request asking for the BBC's expenditure for the last 10 years, broken by the above referenced faith/belief groups, the BBC will not be providing you with the information you requested as we consider that it is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ("the Act"); further, even if the information was covered by the Act, it would be exempt from disclosure under section 43(2) of the Act because to do so would prejudice the commercial interests of the BBC.

In addition, even if the information were covered by the Act we consider that it would be exempt under section 12 of the Act because to deal with your request would take more than two and a half days. This is because religious programmes are produced by more than one internal BBC department



(eg Religion and Ethics in Manchester, BBC Scotland, BBC Wales, BBC Northern Ireland, Multiplatform, Radio Networks 2, 3 and 4 and the World Service). In addition, the Independent sector makes programmes for many of our Networks and whilst programmes may be categorised by faith by individual departments and this information is therefore held by the BBC (but only if an individual department does so and not all do) the number of programmes for a particular category of faith or belief is not amalgamated or calculated by the BBC. We are allowed to refuse to handle the request if it would exceed the appropriate limit which has been set by the Regulations (SI 2004/3244) as being £450 (equivalent to two and a half days work, at an hourly rate of £25).

Scope of the Act

Information held by the BBC and the other public service broadcasters is covered by the Act only where it is information held for purposes “other than those of journalism, art or literature” (see Schedule I, Part VI of the Act). This means that the BBC is not obliged to supply information held for the purposes of creating output or which is closely associated with such creative activities. The BBC considers that this includes information about the costs involved in creating its output, including information about the cost to the BBC of producing a particular programme or the allocation of cost to particular categories of programming.¹

Hours of coverage of religious programming broken down by faith/belief

In relation to the second part of your request asking for a breakdown of the hours of coverage for the last 10 years by faith belief I can confirm that the information you requested is not covered by the Act, for the reasons explained above.

In addition, I can confirm that even if the information were covered by the Act, it would take more than 2.5 days to retrieve it, and would therefore be exempt under Section 12 of the Act. This is because the hours of religious programming by faith/belief across a time period is not information which is collated by the BBC and to extract the information would therefore involve a wholesale trawl of the full scheduling information held by the BBC in order to identify religious programming across these different categories.

However, outside the scope of the Act I am happy to volunteer the following information which may be of interest and which is published in the annual report 2007/8 (the latest year available to date). Across BBC 1 and 2 the commitment to hours of religious programming was 112 hours and the actual was 135. On Radios 2 and 4, the commitment was 370 hours and the actual was 409.

I am also happy to tell you that the internal Religion and Ethics department in Manchester produced programmes which dealt with multi-faiths in the following numbers in addition to those which dealt with single faiths.

2004/05	38.5hrs Television	255hrs Radio
2005/06	45.5 hrs Television	255hrs Radio

¹ For more information about how the Act applies to the BBC please see www.bbc.co.uk/foi Please note that this guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive legal interpretation of how the Act applies to the BBC.

2006/07	41.25hrs Television	255hrs Radio
2007/08	24.5hrs Television	255hrs Radio
2008/09	9.5hrs Television	255hrs Radio

The drop between 2007/08 and 2008/09 was in the main caused by the cancellation of an in-house programme (Heaven and Earth) and it's replacement being made by an Independent company and hence not included in this department's figures.

Appeal rights

The BBC does not offer an internal review when the information requested is not covered by the Act. However, if you are not satisfied with our response, you do have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner. The contact details are: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF, telephone 01625 545 700 or see www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk. In the event of a finding by the Information Commissioner that the Act does apply in this case, should you then wish, the BBC is prepared to undertake an internal review of our decision that retrieval of the information requested would exceed the appropriate limit and therefore be exempt under Section 12.

Yours sincerely,

Aileen Spankie
Head of Production
BBC Manchester and Birmingham