



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

*Human Resource Directorate
WH.G.104
King Charles Street
SW1A 2AH
Brian.dorrington@fco.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/fco*

Mr Ben Hammersley
My e-mail to request-174125-5d4385d8@whatdotheyknow.com

20 September 2013

Dear Mr Hammersley

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 - REQUEST REF: 0772-13

Thank you for your request dated 21 August 2013 under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) asking for the following information:

- Details of the language skills possessed by the staff of the FCO in the UK, referenced by current department. For example, something like "Russia and Central Asian department, three people speak Russian, two French, and one Armenian." etc. I am specifically interested in full time staff based in London, and not Locally Engaged staff based on post.

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

I can confirm that the FCO does hold some information relevant to your request.

The information you have requested is not readily available from central records. Our central Human Resources records include information on language qualifications of staff who have completed formal training with the FCO, as well as some other information on skills where staff have registered these. Where staff have not updated their records, the information is not comprehensive.

To provide numbers per department would entail detailed work to cross-check records of skills of all staff who have registered a language skill against the department they work in, as well as further checks with staff who have not registered their language skills. With nearly 3,000 staff in the UK this would exceed the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit. The limit has been specified in the Freedom of Information and Data Protection (Appropriate Limit and Fees) Regulations 2004. For central government the appropriate limit is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one or more persons spending 3 ½ working days in determining whether the Department holds the information, and locating, retrieving and extracting it. Your request as presently formulated is widely-framed and I

estimate that it will take more than 3 ½ working days to locate, retrieve and extract this information. In these circumstances we are not obliged under the Act to comply with your request. You may therefore wish to refine your request to narrow its scope to bring it within the appropriate limit. You may wish to refine your request to how many officers have declared a language or to how many officers have declared a particular language.

However, in the spirit of openness we will check to see what information can be collated cost-effectively and will supply this to you outside of the FOIA. We plan to send you a more substantive reply in October.

I appreciate that this is not the reply you may have hoped for. If you wish to request a review on any aspect of our response, please write to the FOI and DPA Team, K4.10 – K4.13, King Charles Street, London, SW1A 2AH. Alternatively, you can e-mail the FOI and DPA Team at: foi-dpa.imd@fco.gov.uk. Please be aware that you have 40 working days to ask for a review from the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of your complaint, you may then apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by the FCO. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Brian

Brian Dorrington
Knowledge Management Officer
Human Resource Directorate



We keep and use information in line with the Data Protection Act 1998. We may release this personal information to other UK government departments and public authorities.