



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

Area 4A, Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

T: 03459 33 55 77  
[helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra)

Mr Andreas Pavlou  
[request-402945-](#)  
[20b9404f@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:20b9404f@whatdotheyknow.com)

Our ref: RFI 9013  
22 May 2017

Dear Mr Pavlou,

**REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: NUMBER AND COPIES OF ANY RESEARCH  
CONDUCTED ON THE EFFECTS OF LEAVING THE EU**

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 24 April 2017, about the number and copies of any research conducted on the effects of leaving the EU. We are handling your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs).

The EIRs apply to requests for environmental information, which is a broad category of information defined in regulation 2 of the EIRs. Public authorities are required to handle requests for environmental information under the EIRs. They give similar access rights to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

We want to be as open as possible in answering requests for information. The FOIA itself also requires us to provide reasonable advice and assistance to those seeking to make such a request. The EIRs also require us to provide advice and assistance to help people obtain the information they are looking for and make good use of the EIRs. Unfortunately, your request is very broad and could cover a large amount of information. Gathering it together would therefore involve a significant cost to the Department.

Section 12(1) of the FOIA allows us to refuse a request for information if we estimate that the cost of complying with the request would exceed the appropriate limit, which currently stands at £600. On the basis of our estimates, we consider that the cost would exceed this limit and, as such, we are refusing your request.

In addition, by virtue of regulations 12(1) and 12(4)(b) of the EIRs Defra may refuse to disclose environmental information if the request for the information is manifestly unreasonable and, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.



We consider that your request is manifestly unreasonable under regulation 12(4)(b) on cost grounds and, having carried out the above public interest test, we have concluded that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest falls in favour of maintaining the exemption.

In reaching our decision with respect to the public interest, we considered the following matters:

We recognise that there is a public interest in disclosure of information concerning the impact of leaving the EU. Defra is amongst those Government Departments whose work is most closely linked to and impacted by EU activity, legal frameworks and funding.

On the other hand, there is a strong public interest in withholding the information you have requested. It is not held centrally by the Department, and we would therefore be required to contact multiple business areas within the department to determine whether they hold any information that would be relevant to the request, which would be costly and time consuming. We estimate it would require Defra to take well in excess of 24 hours' worth of work to locate, retrieve and extract any information relevant to your request.

Regulation 9 of the EIRs requires public authorities to provide advice and assistance to applicants where reasonable. We have therefore provided details below to assist you to formulate a request that can be handled at less cost.

The best way we can help you is to ask you to consider narrowing down your request to focus more clearly on the precise information you are seeking. You could, for example:

- As the request covers the work of a number of business areas, consider asking for information on one business area within Defra only. Please note that if you were to request information on Environmental Standards, the response would be considered under the EIRs.
- Request information within a short and specific time period for the work of one business area.

Please note that if you modify your request, we will handle it as a new request and so the 20-working-day deadline for responding to requests would then commence from the date that we receive the modified request.

We attach an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service that you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact the address below.

Yours sincerely,

**Mark Shotton**  
**EIRs/FOI Case Officer**  
**Information Rights Team**  
[InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

## **Annex**

### **Complaints**

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to Nick Teall, Head of Information Rights, Area 4A, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: [InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk)) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF