



Department  
for Exiting the  
European Union

Freedom of Information Team  
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Tim Kerby  
Via: request-497669-25117220@whatdotheyknow.com

Our ref: DEX001312

13 August 2018

Dear Tim Kerby,

I refer to your request, where you asked:

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"Part 1: - Details of any polling, opinion survey, focus groups or similar studies carried out with members of the public between the initial referendum and the date of this request, along with results of these studies that look into public opinion on Brexit in general or specific opinions regarding negotiation points (eg freedom of movement, customs agreements etc).

- Details of any similar studies carried out with business or industry bodies
- Plans for any future studies of this nature

Part 2: In addition, please could you detail what performance indicators of the UK economy you are tracking and whether you are studying the effects of the negotiations on these indicators. Please also detail what you intend to track long term to monitor the impact of Brexit. "

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I can confirm the Department for Exiting the European Union (DExEU) holds some information relevant to your request. The Department does not hold any information relevant to part 1 of your request.

Information relevant to part 2 of your request is exempt under section 35 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (the Act). Section 35 is a qualified exemption and is subject to a public interest test (PIT). This test is used to balance the public interest in disclosure against the public interest in favour of withholding the information, or the considerations for and against the requirement to say whether the information requested is held or not. We must carry out a PIT where we are considering using any of the qualified exemptions in response to a request for information. The 'public interest' is not the same as what interests the public. In carrying out a PIT we consider the greater good or benefit to the community as a whole if the information is released or not. The 'right to know' must be balanced against the need to enable effective government and to serve the best interests of the public. The Act is

'applicant blind', this means that we cannot, and do not, ask about the motives of anyone who asks for information. In providing a response to one person, we are expressing a willingness to provide the same response to anyone, including those who might represent a threat to the UK.

I recognise there is a public interest in the disclosure of information and that openness in government may increase public trust and engagement with government. Furthermore, there is a public interest in understanding the information the Department utilises during the formulation and development of policy due to the impact of our policy relating to our exit from the EU will have on the lives of citizens.

However, there is a strong public interest in policy making associated with our exit from and future relationship with the EU being of the highest quality and being fully informed by a consideration of all options. It is important that policy officials can exchange views on available options and openly discuss and understand potential implications, especially on live issues. In releasing the information in scope of the request, we will indicate the areas of the economy the Department is monitoring. The result of this disclosure will impact on the safe space utilised by policy officials and Ministers to consider all relevant information to assist in the formulation and development of policy. The impact on the safe space could result in officials not being able to consider all of the available options. Furthermore, this will inhibit the free and frank advice provided to Ministers. This will undermine the effective formulation and development of policies which may play a key part in our negotiation strategy regarding our exit from and future relationship with the EU, or create unintended consequences which could potentially jeopardise policy formulation or development in the future.

I have determined that in all circumstances of the case, public interest favours withholding the information we hold within the scope of your request over releasing.

Under section 16, the Department can provide advice and assistance to assist a requester in their search for information. You may be interested to know that the Office of National Statistics may hold some information relevant to your request as they are the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and its recognised national statistical institute. Furthermore, the Office of Budget Responsibility examines and reports on the sustainability of the public finances and produces two Economic and Fiscal Forecasts per financial year, which include the fiscal impact of Government policy where it can be quantified with reasonable accuracy..

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If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the FOI team. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request or wish to request an internal review, you should write to [foi@dexeu.gov.uk](mailto:foi@dexeu.gov.uk) or:

Freedom of Information Team (internal review)  
Department for Exiting the European Union  
9 Downing Street  
SW1A 2AG

You should note that DExEU will not normally accept an application for internal review if it is received more than two months after the date that the reply was issued.

If you are not content with the outcome of your internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the complaints procedure provided by DExEU. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

The Information Commissioner's Office  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely,

**Freedom of Information Team, DExEU.**