



[REDACTED]

13 September 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: FOI2022/00268

Thank you for your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request received on the 15 August in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I'm looking for the following data, in electronic format:

*The number of endorsement requests for a Global Talent visa application UKRI *received* every month (please separate data by month) for Russian citizens between the start of the program and end of July 2022.*

*The number of endorsement requests for a Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa application UKRI *received* every month (please separate data by month) for Russian citizens between 2012 and when the program ended.*

Our response

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) does hold some information relevant to your request. Please see the information below.

UKRI holds information on the first part of your request in relation to the Global Talent visa. Information on the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa is not held, as UKRI was not an endorsing body for the former Tier 1 Exceptional Talent scheme.

We consider that the information held on numbers of endorsement requests for a Global Talent visa application, on a monthly basis from the start of the program in February 2020 to 31 July 2022 would fall under the exemption at section 38(1) of the FOIA. Section 38(1) states that information is exempt information if its disclosure would, or would be likely to: (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or (b) endanger the safety of any individual. This is a qualified exemption which is subject to a Public Interest Test to determine if the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

Providing the number of endorsement requests for Global Talent visa applications would lead to the disclosure of information likely to endanger the physical and mental wellbeing of the individuals concerned, as well as their safety. As the numbers per month are small disclosure would be likely to ignite alarm, stress and anxiety in those affected, thereby further endangering their emotional, psychological, and mental wellbeing, as well as endangering their physical safety if they were to be targeted by malicious actors. There is therefore a causal link between the potential disclosure and the stated endangerment, and risk to mental health and physical safety.

Factors in favour of disclosure

- It would further the understanding and participation in the public debate of issues arising in relation to the public sector's response to the war in Ukraine.
- It would promote accountability and transparency by public authorities for decisions taken with regard to support for Russian citizens in the research and innovation communities.

- It would promote accountability and transparency in allowing individuals, organisations and other bodies to understand decisions made by public authorities which relate to government policy with regard to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the implications for research and innovation communities.

Factors in favour of withholding the information

- UKRI “believes freedom to work without fear of reprisals is essential and international collaboration is vital in addressing the global challenges we all face.” The numbers in question are small and given the sensitivities and security issues for those affected, UKRI will not be disclosing the requested information to protect the safety and security of researchers.
- Ensuring the safety of Russian researchers working and studying through regular established means in the UK with a UK research organisation, is paramount and UKRI has [publicly stated](#)¹ that nothing should change for these individuals. Releasing the information requested would go against UKRI's publicly stated intent and subject these individuals to potential targeting by those with malicious intent.
- This is a highly sensitive time, and UKRI needs to support and protect individuals. UKRI has been public in its support of researchers and has stated that the “nationality of academics and researchers is irrelevant unless an individual has been sanctioned”. The government has also published information on those subject to sanctions.
- Should this information be disclosed it is likely to cause unjustified scrutiny of the relevant individuals, due to the resulting significant media attention, which in turn would risk a further endangering of the physical and mental health of those affected.
- Disclosure would be likely to increase the risk of harm by providing information which could result in attempts by motivated individuals to access the identities of the affected parties, raising their anxiety and endangering their mental wellbeing. As the request was for monthly data, that would refer to a small number of individuals making the likelihood of identification greater.
- UKRI's duty of care to these individuals is not trivial, given the ongoing war in Ukraine and the associated geo-political tensions and protecting the safety and wellbeing of those affected and the integrity of the global talent visa process is of paramount importance to UKRI as an organisation; we believe it is in the public interest to ensure applicants are treated with fairness and respect, and that there are appropriate and robust structures and processes in place to ensure identities are protected without fear of being identified or targeted.

We therefore do not consider that disclosure into the public domain via the FOIA would be appropriate and, having considered the balance of the public interest in releasing and withholding the information, we have concluded that the public interest in favour of maintaining the exemption at section 38 health and safety outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance

Email: foi@ukri.org or infogovernance@ukri.org


Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/news/ukris-response-to-the-russian-governments-invasion-of-ukraine/>

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


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