

Circular No. 28/48

Negotiations and discussions with Foreign
Governments, International Congresses,
Conferences, Associations, Journals, etc.

A Dhuine Uasail,

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to request that the procedure laid down in this Circular may be observed in future.

2. Whenever a Department proposes to have any direct dealings official or semi-official, with any Government authority outside the State, or with any diplomatic, consular or official trade representative within the State, or to arrange for an officer or officers to go on a visit outside the State for official purposes, that Department should, at the earliest possible stage, consult the Department of External Affairs and also any other Department/s likely to be concerned. The Department should not proceed in the matter until the observations of the Department of External Affairs and any other Department/s concerned have been received.

3. When consulting Departments in accordance with the foregoing paragraph, the initiating Department should

I. furnish them with a full statement on the subject matter of the proposed negotiations or discussions, together with a copy of any communication that it is proposed to address the foreign authority or representative concerned;

II. intimate specifically any other Departments that are being consulted.

4. Where oral or personal negotiations are to take place, the necessity or the desirability of associating a representative of the Department of External Affairs with the negotiations should be considered. In every case in which negotiations are to take place at a centre abroad at which an Irish diplomatic or (career) consular officer is located, the visiting official should call on that officer as soon as possible after arrival at the centre abroad and acquaint him of the purpose of the visit and should keep him informed of the progress of the negotiations.

5. All proposals for representation at a congress or conference and for visits of officials outside the State should be submitted by the initiating Department to this Department in sufficient time beforehand for adequate consideration. The submission should contain particulars of the membership of the delegation or party, the length they are expected to be absent and the estimated expenditure involved; it should indicate also the views of the Department of External Affairs and of any other Department/s concerned. When the proposals have been approved, the initiating Department should advise the Department of External Affairs at the earliest possible date of the final arrangements and of the names and official description of the delegation.

To/
All Departments, etc.

6. The foregoing instructions will not apply where the Department of External Affairs and any other Department/s concerned have specifically agreed, in consideration of the purely routine or technical nature of the subject matter, that direct negotiations or discussions may take place with a particular foreign authority or its representative in this country.

7. Matters concerned with foreign trade should continue to be dealt with through the Foreign Trade Committee.

8. Official visits abroad must be restricted to essential occasions and the feasibility of utilising, with the consent of the Department of External Affairs, the services of any official representative of the State stationed within a reasonable distance of the conference place should always be considered as an alternative to sending a delegation from Dublin. In general, The Minister for Finance will not be prepared to accord his sanction for expenditure for this purpose unless it is clearly shown that the visit is either desirable on financial or economic grounds or is of real importance to the credit and prestige of the State. A delegation should be limited in number to the essential minimum.

9. The Minister's prior sanction is required for the payment of a subscription on behalf of the State to an international association or society and for foreign newspapers and periodicals. Sanctions for such payments will be given only in exceptional circumstances. The Department of External Affairs and any other Department/s likely to be concerned should be consulted in regard to proposals for payment of subscriptions to international or foreign societies, associations, etc., and the application for sanction for payment of such a subscription should indicate the views of these Departments. In addition, when the proposals are sanctioned, the initiating Department should advise these Departments as soon as possible of the arrangements made.

Travelling and Subsistence Allowances, etc.

10. For journeys outside the State travelling expenses and subsistence allowances may be paid in accordance with the arrangements approved from time to time by this Department.

Incidence of charge of travelling expenses

11. The expenses of a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary travelling outside the State should be defrayed from his from his Departmental Vote and where a person occupies more than one of those offices the expenses should be charged according to the service necessitating the journey. Where, however, a Minister or a Parliamentary Secretary attends a gathering on the general business of the State, the expenses will form a final charge on the Vote for the Department of the Taoiseach. In such a case the expenses should be met in the first instance from the Departmental Vote and recoupment claimed from the Vote for the Department of the Taoiseach.

12. The expenses of a civil servant travelling outside the State should be charged to the Vote on which his salary is borne, but where the cost of the service concerned is provided on another Vote of his Department the expenses should be charged to that Vote (e.g. a member of the headquarters staff of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs attending a conference in relation to wireless broadcasting or an officer of the Department of Industry and Commerce attending a conference about patents or copyright). Where an officer attends a congress, conference or similar gathering outside the State for the purposes of representing specially the interests of a Department other than his own, the expenses will fall to be met by the Department represented. In the case of a Civil Servant on loan (i.e., an officer assigned for duty to another Department for some definite or indefinite period) the expenses will be a final charge on the appropriate Vote of the Departments represented.

Journeys within the State

13. The provisions of paragraph 11 and 12 of this Circular will apply also as regards the expenses of journeys within the State.
14. Any question of doubt or difficulty in the interpretation of the Circular should be referred to this Department for consideration.
15. Finance Circular No. 18/35 is hereby cancelled.

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