



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Office of the National Director of Human Resources  
Health Service Executive  
Dr. Steevens' Hospital  
Dublin 8

**All queries to:**  
Tel: 045 880410  
Email: [employeerelations@hse.ie](mailto:employeerelations@hse.ie)

**HSE HR Circular 024/2009**

**30<sup>th</sup> July, 2009.**

**To: Each Member of Management Team, HSE;  
Each Assistant National Director, PCCC, HSE;  
Each Assistant National Director, NHO, HSE;  
Each Assistant National Director, Finance, HSE;  
Each Assistant National Director, HR, HSE;  
Each Hospital Network Manager, NHO, HSE;  
Each Local Health Office Manager, PCCC, HSE;**

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**Re: Foreign Travel Policy Guidelines 2009**

Dear Colleagues,

The Department of Health & Children have advised that the Department of Finance have issued revised instructions in respect of foreign travel. I have attached these regulations and write to advise that these revised regulations should be brought to the attention of all employees with immediate effect.

The HSE are required to confirm that these revised regulations are being implemented and to so confirm as part of the reporting procedure prescribed in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (Ref par 13.1(ii)).

Please bring this revised foreign travel policy guidelines 2009 to the attention of all employees and subsidiary companies and funded organisations.

The importance of ensuring economy and value for money in all travel arrangements should be borne in mind at all times.

Any enquiries in respect of this circular should be directed to the Office of the Assistant National Director of Employee Relations, Health Service Executive, Oak House, Millennium Park, Naas, Co Kildare 045 880410 or email [employeerelations@hse.ie](mailto:employeerelations@hse.ie)

Yours sincerely,

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**Séan McGrath,  
National Director of Human Resources.**

Enc.

## **FOREIGN TRAVEL POLICY GUIDELINES 2009**

### **General Issues**

1. The general principles governing all travel are those set out in Circular 11/1982, mainly:

*'Travelling and subsistence allowances are payable only in respect of necessary absence from headquarters. All travelling duties should be planned so as to reduce the total amount of travel to the minimum consistent with efficiency. All official travel should be by the shortest practicable routes and by the cheapest practicable mode of conveyance.'*

2. Departments<sup>1</sup> have delegated sanction to apply the rules and regulations concerning travel and subsistence including foreign travel set out in the circulars and other instructions issued from time to time by the Department of Finance. While the Department of Finance has responsibility for policy on foreign travel it does not have a direct role in the application of that policy in each State agency and body. Departments should ensure that State bodies and agencies coming within their remit are aware of their responsibilities with regard to travel including foreign travel as set out in part 17 and appendix V1 of the revised Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

***(<sup>1</sup>: References to Department(s) should be regarded as applying also to Office(s).)***

3. Expenditure on foreign travel and subsistence (whether recouped by a third party or not) should be strictly appraised and monitored. It is the duty of Heads of Departments to ensure that only essential travel is undertaken and that the number of officers travelling on official business is kept to a minimum consistent with the business needs of Departments.
4. Departments should ensure as a general principle that the best value or money is obtained. In respect of each official trip undertaken, consistent with the requirements of official business.
5. Departments must use the services of the travel agent as provided for under their travel contract with that travel agent. Departments must be prepared to use the services of all carriers operating out of Ireland

### **Class of Air Travel**

6. The nomenclature used to designate different classes of air travel varies between airlines and changes over time. The main classes relevant to travel out of Ireland are described briefly in Appendix 1.
7. The following principles should apply in relation to the class used:
  - a. It is expected that Departments will use economy class travel including internet (low-cost carriers') fares for short-haul flights.

Cheaper restricted fares should be used where the travel abroad is regular and predictable and changes to travel are unlikely to occur.

Departments will be responsible for any additional charges which may be incurred by an Internet/economy class ticket holder as a result of having to change flight times etc. for official business reasons, but the value should be assessed against the (usually low) risk of having to change the flight..

There are a range of fully flexible economy fares, but these should be used only where it can be shown that the flexibility provided and the extra cost of the ticket are warranted compared to the potential cancellation cost of a restricted internet/economy ticket.

Premium economy class travel may be used (where available) or long-haul flights where the additional flexibility afforded is considered necessary for the effective discharge of official business. Business class travel should be confined to limited situations where the Head of the Department is satisfied that the additional cost can be justified in relation to the length of the flight and the official business to be conducted.

As a general rule first class travel should not be used. If it is considered that there are very exceptional circumstances where the use of first class travel is justified for business reasons, the written permission of the Head of Department should be obtained beforehand and the reason justifying it should be recorded.

8. With regard to premium economy and business class travel, Departments should undertake an annual evaluation of the type of trips taken and ensure that in all situations in which premium/business class travel was utilised, this was warranted by the circumstances prevailing. The need for additional flexibility afforded by such fares should be weighed against the savings which would accrue from using economy class fares.
9. Departments should not pay the travel costs of persons who have no direct connection with the Department and have no role in the official business being conducted during a trip other than in exceptional circumstances where a specific invitation is extended by a host country for a special occasion and the appropriate Minister has certified that attendance is in the public interest.
10. In no circumstances is it permissible to "trade down" premium tickets to enable another person who is not a member of the staff of the department to travel free of charge or at a reduced rate. If for any reason it is decided to downgrade the class of travel the saving must be returned to the Department.

### **Frequent Flyer Points**

11. It is the responsibility of each Department to ensure that frequent flyer points are not allowed to influence decisions taken in relation to the carriers used for official business.

### **Subsistence**

12. The subsistence allowance rate appropriate to any period of twenty-four hours is the overnight rate appropriate to the place where the night is spent or in the rare case where the officer is travelling over land at night the 'elsewhere' rate for the country in which the officer is at midnight.

13. Officers are not entitled to claim subsistence where the cost was not incurred or where the accommodation and/or meals are provided free of charge.
14. The time occupied on a journey by air (or other mode of transport) for which the fare covers the cost of meals and an accommodation cost is not incurred will not reckon for the purposes of the payment of subsistence allowance. (However, officers may claim €10 for incidental expenses under the Civil Service regulations)
15. Where the conference rate applies (or where an overnight limit is not specified) Departments/Offices should ensure that the standard of hotel used is not extravagant, unless the officer is required to stay in a particular hotel for business reasons. In general three or four, star hotels should be used.

### **Value for Money**

16. Value for money assessments should be carried out at regular intervals (3 to 5 years) in respect of the most frequently travelled routes. The assessment should cover all carriers operating on routes out of Ireland and should examine all aspects of the different options available from carriers (e.g. the suitability of the schedules, whether the schedule offered by a particular carrier would reduce the number of overnight stays abroad and thus achieve savings on subsistence and on official time, the quality of the service on the route etc) Where recoupable expenditure is involved the assessment should be carried out by reference to the cost to the recouping authority of the various options evaluated.
17. Departments should ensure on an ongoing basis that the appointed travel agent provides a full list of all available fares for all destinations per the relevant service level agreement. Spot checks should be carried out from time to time to ensure that the most economical fares consistent with business needs are being used by staff and to compare the fares offered by the travel agent with those available on the internet.

### **Travel officer**

18. Each Department should designate a travel officer at AP or HEO level who will be responsible for travel matters generally. In particular the officer will be responsible for ensuring that all assessments, value for money etc. are carried out. He or she will also be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Department's travel policy and for liaising with the company appointed to handle the Department's foreign travel business.
19. Please bring these instructions to the notice of all travelling officers in your Department. These instructions should also be applied in all bodies and agencies under the aegis of your Department and they should be brought to the attention of such bodies in writing. Departments should seek reassurance about compliance with these guidelines from those bodies as part of the annual reporting procedure prescribed in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.
20. Individual officers should make any enquiries to the appropriate unit of their own Department. Any queries from Departments/Offices about this circular should be emailed in the first instance to [Travel.Policy@finance.gov.ie](mailto:Travel.Policy@finance.gov.ie).
21. These guidelines now supersede those which were issued in March 1998, circular letter 2/1987 which was revoked previously and Circular 3611971.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Travel Classes**

1. Some air craft provide four travel classes as follows:
  - i. First Class
  - ii. Business / Executive Class
  - iii. Premium Economy
  - iv. Economy Class
  
2. First class is always the premier deluxe cabin on the aircraft – generally seats a limited number of passengers. No airline offers it on flights out of Ireland at present.
  
3. Three Cabin Aircrafts offer
  - i. Business / Executive Class. This is a level between First Class and Economy. Business class (executive class) fares are generally offer increased checked baggage allowance, lounge access, premium on board service, choice of menu, last on/ first off. Airlines may call their Business / Executive class by different names, for example:
    - a. Delta – Business Elite
    - b. Continental – Business First
    - c. Aer Lingus – Premier
    - d. US Airways – Envoy

There are some of the transatlantic carriers operating out of Ireland with a business class. Flights operated by Aer Lingus within Europe / UK are all economy class.

- Some airlines offer a level between business and economy – this is premium economy. This generally gives a bigger seat than in economy – but the same meal / same ratio of attendants to passengers and no lounge access.
  
- Economy Class. This is generally the most economical way to travel. This is the most restrictive, less onboard, longer check-in times etc.

There can be some differences in terminology in particular countries.