

## Press release: 'Strictly', vampires and sausages – 2018's oddest requests from Brits abroad

British people asked the FCO for advice about Strictly Come Dancing, vampires in Poland and vegetarian sausages in 2018.

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The FCO has released details of some of the oddest enquiries it received in 2018, to highlight what it can and cannot do to help Brits in trouble abroad.

Ten of the more unusual enquiries received included:

1. A caller in the USA asking which contestant had been voted off Strictly Come Dancing the previous night.
2. A man asking where he should send a 5-foot piece of wood that he'd found on a beach that he thought may be from a British warship from the 1700s.
3. A caller in the Netherlands who had just watched Braveheart and had some questions about the plot.
4. A person in Italy asking the embassy to help arrange their wedding, recommend a florist and get them tickets to see the Pope.
5. A caller in the Canary Islands requesting that we persuade his hotel to give him a different room as a stray cat had "broken into" his existing one and peed on his bed.
6. A man enquiring if there were vampires in Poland because a woman he met online asked what blood type he was before they met for their first date.
7. A man in New Delhi asking what time the British High Commission opened, as he'd heard we sold vegetarian sausages and wanted to buy some.
8. A man in Kuwait asking if any of our staff wanted to adopt his puppies.
9. A caller asking if we could provide a list of women in Argentina who he might be able to marry.
10. A man requesting we speak to massage parlour in Bangkok on his behalf, as he fell asleep during a massage and felt he shouldn't have to pay for it.

While the FCO can't help with the types of problems listed above, we can help British people in trouble while they're abroad in a number of ways,

including:

- Getting in touch with family or friends for you if you can't contact them yourself;
- Providing details of local services like lawyers, interpreters and doctors;
- Offering information on how to transfer money if you need to make payments;
- Issuing emergency travel documents;
- Visiting people in hospital or who have been imprisoned.

So far in 2018\*, the FCO has received more than 330,000 calls from British people who needed our help. This included more than 3,400 people who had been hospitalised and 4,900 who had been arrested. We issued more than 29,600 emergency travel documents to help people who had lost their passports make onward journeys.

The work of the FCO's consular staff was also featured on [Inside the Foreign Office](#) which aired on BBC 2 in November.

An FCO spokesman said:

I can regretfully confirm that the Foreign Office isn't able to offer advice on vampires, rogue stray cats or 'Strictly' contestants. And our capacity to deploy veggie sausages remains sadly lacking.

But in all seriousness, getting into trouble abroad can be daunting and upsetting. If you find yourself in an emergency in another country, contact the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate and our consular staff will do everything they can to help.

- If you are in the UK and worried about someone overseas, you can call the FCO in London on 020 7008 1500.
- If you are a British person who is overseas and needs help, you should call the nearest British Embassy, High Commission or Consulate: Contact details are here: [contact details](#).
- \*Figures are from January – November 2018 (inclusive).
- We recommend people read our travel advice before going abroad. It is available here: [FCO Travel Advice](#).

## Further information

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## Press release: Minister for Middle East statement on the sentencing of Nabeel Rajab in Bahrain

Minister Alistair Burt has expressed concern about the sentencing of Nabeel Rajab.

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Minister for the Middle East Alistair Burt responded to the ruling.

Minister Burt said:

I am concerned about the upholding of the five-year sentence given to Mr Nabeel Rajab, in addition to the two-year sentence he has served.

The UK urges Bahrain to protect freedom of expression for all its citizens, in line with their international commitments.

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# News story: UK trade and investment in 2018: behind the numbers



More businesses than ever are seeking expansion opportunities overseas, International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox MP said today (Monday 31st December) as he celebrated a successful year for trade and investment.

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox MP, said:

2018 has been a year to celebrate our successes in trade – with record highs in investment and exports. In a year where we launched our Export Strategy, our GDP continues to grow at a quicker rate than the Eurozone, and employment is at a rate we haven't seen for more than 40 years.

With exports reaching £626bn we look forward to 2019. Overseas trade will continue to play a crucial part in economic growth and my international economic department will do all it can to support UK businesses to expand their operations overseas.

- £626bn – The demand for UK goods and services overseas continued to grow, as exports in the year to October 2018 rose to £626bn.
- Trade beyond the EU – There has also been a clear shift in who we trade with, as whilst ten years ago more than half of our exports went to the EU, 54.2% now go to non-EU countries.
- 0.6% – GDP growth in the third quarter this year was significantly greater than the Eurozone (0.6% from 0.2%) And the economy is now 17.8% bigger since 2010.
- £114bn – The US remained the UK's top single export destination, with exports increasing to £114bn in the year to 2018 Q3.
- £59bn – Goods exports from the Northern Powerhouse increased by 2.1% in the year to 2018 Q3.
- £56bn – Goods exports from the Midlands Engine increased by 6.1% in the year to 2018 Q3.
- 110,000 – The number of VAT-registered businesses exporting goods in the UK increased by 1.5% to 110,000 in 2018 Q3 compared to the same quarter in the previous year.

- 10.4% – Over the past year some of the world's fastest growing economies have shown a growing interest in British produce, as exports to ASEAN increased by 10.4% in the year to end 2018 Q2.
- £5bn – Foreign investors are feeling more confident than ever placing their money in UK companies. The UK's vibrant tech sector has received over £5bn in venture capitalist funding between June 2016 and June 2018, more than France, Germany and Sweden combined.
- 75,698 – 2017/2018 saw 75,968 new jobs created as a result of Foreign Direct Investment, as the UK remained the top destination for FDI in Europe.

## **Notes to editors**

- In August, the Department for International Trade launched its ambitious new Export Strategy, seeking to move exports as a percentage of GDP from 30% to 35%.
- The strategy set out a range of support which will help businesses make the most of significant export opportunities around the world.
- Fastest growing export destinations only include markets with export values equal to or greater than £1bn.

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