

Salary & Expenses

MEPs get paid too much.

The allowances and expenses are too high.

The transparency and accountability mechanisms are pathetic.

Sinn Féin MEPs consistently vote to reduce salaries, allowances & expenses. We advocate, and vote in favour of, greater transparency and accountability of all payments received by MEPs.

Salary

The salary paid to MEPs works out at circa €1,200 net per week -this is the same for all MEPs. I draw down €615 to my personal account. From the balance I contribute €2,500 annually to Sinn Féin, the maximum allowable under SIPO rules. The remainder is put towards my personal political activity and constituency costs not covered or allowable by EP expenses as well as charitable donations. Some will go towards my future election campaigns. This is my personal choice because I think the salary is too high.

Our record in support of a reduction in salaries and expenses and our support for increased accountability is well known at EU level and is often praised by transparency activists. The role of Fine Gael in blocking these moves is also widely known, at EU level. They're not widely known at Irish level, because for some reason the Irish media don't see a story in it.

General Expenditure Allowance

The General Expenditure Allowance (GEA) is a payment received to cover office running costs and other constituency related activity. It is correctly considered the most controversial of allowances paid to MEPs - currently €4,513 per month.

The main problem is that it is completely un-vouched and there is no accountability mechanism.

For my part the GEA is paid into a separate bank account to which I and a member of my staff are signatories. All expenditure is receipted and in line with the guidelines and best practise laid down by parliament. The bulk of expenditure relates to the running and equipment costs of my constituency office in Carrickmacross. It is also used to pay for things such as public events I organise, printing costs, subscription to academic & news journals and website hosting.

Sinn Féin have, unlike other Irish parties, continuously voted in favour of greater transparency in relation to all aspects of MEPs' expenses and the receipt of public funds by elected representatives.

On every occasion that the matter has come before parliament we have voted in favour of greater transparency of the General Expenditure Allowance.

Sinn Féin's position is that this payment should be fully vouched and receipted and claimed retrospectively.

The European Parliament, is currently devising a mechanism whereby MEPs can voluntarily vouch and account for all expenditure - when that system is in place Sinn Féin will partake in it. Why only a voluntary scheme? Because MEPs from the largest political groups (those groups of which Fine Gael, Labour and Fianna Fáil are members) have resisted even the most minimal levels of mandatory accountability.

In fact, even when a majority of MEPs backed nominal improvements the Bureau of the European Parliament, that's a core group of the parliament president, the 14 Vice-Presidents (Yes, there are 14 Vice-presidents!) and 5 quaestors, rejected the proposals in spite of the majority plenary vote.

This is where Fine Gael have played a role in blocking transparency and accountability.

Have a read of this, for example: <https://euobserver.com/institutional/142274>

It seems amazing to me that, while a number of Irish newspapers have covered stories relating to the General Expenditure Allowance, not one has ever mentioned the role of Fine Gael in this regard.

Staff

I directly employ six people, three based in Brussels, three based in my constituency office. None are in any way related to me. Their salaries are paid by the European Parliament.

Expenses

The largest element of expenses relating to MEPs that are often detailed in media reports are air-travel costs (an unavoidable expense considering we live on an island). For info, the cost of travel tickets is paid directly by the Parliament, via a travel agency commissioned by parliament, to airlines so as such we are not 'refunded' as is often described as the monies don't come to us at any stage.

Expenses that are paid directly to MEPs include a daily subsistence allowance which is paid for each day that a MEP attends the parliament to cover costs of accommodation and other expenses while in Brussels or Strasbourg. Our position is that this payment should be only paid on production of receipts. The other expenses relate to travel costs within the constituency and are paid on the basis of the distances travelled within the constituency in the course of our work as MEPs.

The following expenses have been paid directed to me over the course of this EP term:

2014 (pt year):

Daily Subsistence allowance:	€16,720
Constituency travel:	€8,674

2015:

Daily Subsistence allowance:	€34,578
Constituency travel:	€13,570

2016:

Daily Subsistence allowance:	€33,201
Constituency travel:	€11,478

2017:

Daily Subsistence allowance:	€39,910
Constituency travel:	€10,253

2018:

Daily Subsistence allowance:	€38,655
Constituency travel:	€18,438

MEPs are also allowed to claim expenses to cover the costs of language courses and IT training. I have never claimed for these.

European Parliament votes:

Here are some of the votes relating to MEP finances that have been voted on in the European Parliament. This is not exhaustive.

24th October 2018

Amendment to EU 2019 Budget

Sinn Féin voted in favour
Fine Gael voted against.

October 25 2017

Amendment to EU 2018 budget

Sinn Féin voted in favour
Fine Gael voted against

October 26 2016

Amendment to EU 2017 budget

19.10.2016

A8-0287/6

Amendment 6

Marco Zanni, Marco Valli
on behalf of the EFDD Group

Report

Jens Geier

General budget of the European Union for 2017 - all sections
2016/2047(BUD)

A8-0287/2016

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 89

Motion for a resolution

89. *Approves the changes in its establishment plan and corresponding budgetary appropriations to respond to additional needs of the political groups; fully compensates these reinforcements by reducing the appropriations in the contingency reserve and fitting out of premises budget line;*

Amendment

89. *Deplores the increase in expenditure relating to parliamentary assistance and the additional requests from the political groups; believes that the support to Members for the accomplishment of their parliamentary activities is already adequate; moreover asks for a reduction in the salaries, allowances and travel expenses of MEPs;*

Sinn Féin voted in favour
Fine Gael voted against

October 28 2015

Amendments to the 2016 budget

21.10.2015

A8-0298/9

Amendment 9

Marco Zanni, Marco Valli
on behalf of the EFDD Group

Report

José Manuel Fernandes, Gérard Deprez
General budget of the European Union for 2016 - all sections
11706/2015 – C8-0274/2015 – 2015/2132(BUD)

A8-0298/2015

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 97

Motion for a resolution

97. Reiterates the appeal for greater transparency regarding the general expenditure allowance for the Members; calls on the Parliament's Bureau to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs to the Parliament

Amendment

97. Reiterates the appeal for greater transparency regarding the general expenditure allowance for the Members; calls on the Parliament's Bureau to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs to the Parliament; *asks moreover for a reduction of MEPs' salaries, allowances and travel expenses;*

21.10.2015

A8-0298/8

Amendment 8

Marco Zanni, Marco Valli
on behalf of the EFDD Group

Report

José Manuel Fernandes, Gérard Deprez
General budget of the European Union for 2016 - all sections
11706/2015 – C8-0274/2015 – 2015/2132(BUD)

A8-0298/2015

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 90

Motion for a resolution

90. *Reiterates that, in order to ensure adequate support to the Members for the accomplishment of their parliamentary activities, a new balance is necessary between accredited parliamentary assistants and local assistants; takes note of the fact that the Secretary-General has made a proposal to the Bureau in order to achieve this goal; deplores that so far the Bureau has not yet decided in this regard; believes that a transition period should be respected when implementing the revision of the current rules; expects that the final decision will enter into force as of July 2016 at the latest, the end date of the*

Sinn Féin voted in favour

Fine Gael voted against

Amendment

90. *Deplores the increase of the expenditure relating to parliamentary assistance; believes that the support to Members for the accomplishment of their parliamentary activities is already adequate.*

On **25 October 2017** we voted on a series of amendments to the 2018 budget related to transparency of the GEA. I have included screen grabs of the amendments voted in the attached word doc. On these, **SF** voted in **favour of all**. **FG** voted **against all**. Independent MEPs voted in favour of some but not all.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+PV+20171025+RES-RCV+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

18.10.2017

A8-0299/7

Amendment 7
Indrek Tarand
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Report
Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth
General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

A8-0299/2017

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 80 a (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

80 a. Calls on the Bureau to make the following concrete changes concerning the general expenditure allowance:

18.10.2017

A8-0299/8

Amendment 8
Indrek Tarand
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Report
Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth
General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

A8-0299/2017

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 80 a - indent one (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- the general expenditure allowance should be handled in all cases in a separate bank account;

18.10.2017

A8-0299/9

Amendment 9
Indrek Tarand
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Report
Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth
General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

A8-0299/2017

Motion for a resolution
Paragraph 80 a - indent two (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- all receipts pertaining to the general expenditure allowance should be kept by Members;

18.10.2017

A8-0299/10

Amendment 10

Indrek Tarand

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Report

A8-0299/2017

Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth

General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 80 a - indent three (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- *the unspent share of the general expenditure allowance should be returned at the end of the mandate;*

18.10.2017

A8-0299/11

Amendment 11

Indrek Tarand

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Report

A8-0299/2017

Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth

General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 80 a - indent four (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- *checks on a 5 % sample of spending under the general expenditure allowance should be introduced by Parliament's internal auditing; the final results and the findings should be part of the annual report published by Parliament;*

18.10.2017

A8-0299/12

Amendment 12

Indrek Tarand

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

Report

A8-0299/2017

Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth

General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

Motion for a resolution

Paragraph 80 a - indent five (new)

Motion for a resolution

Amendment

- *Members should publish, on an annual basis, an overview of their expenditures, covered by the general expenditure allowance, by category (communication costs, office rental, office supplies, etc.);*

Amendment 43

Xabier Benito Ziluaga, Merja Kyllönen, Kateřina Konečná, Rina Ronja Kari, Marie-Pierre Vieu, Kostas Chrysogonos, Marina Albiol Guzmán, Javier Couso Permuy, Luke Ming Flanagan, Paloma López Bermejo, Ángela Vallina
on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group

Report

A8-0299/2017

Siegfried Mureşan, Richard Ashworth
General budget of the European Union for 2018 - all sections
11815/2017 – C8-0313/2017 – 2017/2044(BUD)

Motion for a resolution**Paragraph 80***Motion for a resolution*

80. Welcomes the creation of the Parliament's Bureau Working group on the general expenditure allowance; recalls the expectations of greater transparency regarding the general expenditure allowance and a need to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs to Parliament;

Amendment

80. Welcomes the creation of the Parliament's Bureau Working group on the general expenditure allowance; recalls the expectations of greater transparency regarding the general expenditure allowance and a need to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs to Parliament; ***stresses that the need for greater transparency regarding general expenditure allowances for MEPs makes it advisable for each MEP to submit end-of-year public reports of the accounts relating to those allowances; calls, in addition, for such public reporting to become mandatory as from 2019 following the revision of the Statute for***

Results of votes: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+PV+20171025+RES-RCV+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>
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