

"Just like in ancient Rome": What the 8,185 European parliamentarians earn compared to their citizens / survey in 27 EU countries proves that politicians earn up to 2,000 percent more

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Italian representatives who treat themselves to a free haircut at taxpayers' expense may be the least inexplicable considering former Prime Minister Berlusconi's bunga bunga mentality. But how does a Maltese delegate manage to consume 240 liters of free petrol per month that are granted to him by the taxpayers for his parliamentary activity on his tiny little Mediterranean island with only 122 sq mi in area? (table 5, appendix).

Do they possibly circle around their island with a private motor yacht? As a Member of the European Parliament (henceforth referred to as MEP) they certainly could afford it at least. The internationally established German consumer portal for price checks Preisvergleich.de (translated: price comparison), has now set up a survey and identified MEP's salaries in relation to ordinary citizens respectively. Astonishing results were revealed.

Furthermore Preisvergleich.de presents an interesting income ranking of the parliaments of the 27 EU member countries. All details of MEP's salaries referred to in this study have been based on the latest taxable base salary plus potential allowances, attendance fees and the estimated refunds for secondary residence. However, it does not include all allowances. For example, allowances for the office or staff are not included in.

Following the EU salary outline (graphic attached) in the 27 EU countries, a total of 8,185 parliamentarians are discharging their parliamentary mandate: 7,433 parliamentarians in the national parliaments of their respective countries and 752 MEPs (as of the 2009 European elections, now 754 MEPs) in the Strasbourg EU Parliament. Due to their salaries, the parliamentarians cost a total of 781 million EUR paid by 500 million EU citizens – overall 620 million in their national parliaments plus 160 million per year for the EU Parliament.

Their salaries come in cash from 500 million EU citizens. A total of EUR 781 million of taxpayers' money is paid per year – which equals a total of 620 million in their national parliaments plus 160 million per year for the EU Parliament.

An average monthly salary and other allowances of 17,827 Euros is received by an MEP equalling 213,924 Euros a year. A MEP's salary adds a base fee and additional extras such as allowances, attendance fees and travel expenses. In addition, the costs for offices and staff for the plenary members of the European Parliament make up an amount of up to 21,209 Euros per month or up to 254,508 Euros per year. It must be mentioned that there were some cases in the past few years in which these amounts were claimed for employees, even though they had no longer been working for the deputies. A scandalous approach according to the slogan: "The stupid Europeans are meant to do the job by paying without questioning."

One MEP comes into having 1,069,622 Euros during the 5-year legislative session adding up outlined allowances (appendix, table 2). This amount, taken as a basis, means that a parliamentarian in the European Parliament meanwhile earns 878 percent more than normal citizens (21,844 Euros gross per year) – Euro crisis aside. Basically the income levels in the 27 EU member states are drastically different between politics and citizens. A Bulgarian for example

earns an average monthly gross income of only 829 Euros whereas a citizen from Luxembourg generates a rather high monthly average income of 3,725 Euro (tables 1 and 2 in appendix).

The following survey results show the huge income disparities between the EU citizens battered by the economic crisis and their EU parliamentarians, concluding with one thesis only: We are dealing in Brussels and some national parliaments of the EU countries with conditions similar to ancient Rome because just like in the former Roman Senate none of these "new class EU senators" are controlled in any way. For example, MEPs of France have a salary of around 740 percent higher than the salary level of the average French (25,469 Euros annually).

Even based on the average of all 27 EU parliaments, there are huge differences between politicians and citizens. A member of the French Parliament (National Assembly) meanwhile earns on average 157,524 Euros annually (monthly: 13,127 Euros). That equals 518 percent more than an ordinary citizen (details in tables 1 and 2 in appendix). The situation in Germany is quite similar: Here, the members of the German parliament in Berlin get around 150,432 Euros per year, representing a monthly fee of 12,536 Euros. This is 44 times as much as the earnings of an average German. In Britain, members of the House of Commons get 94,656 Euros per year (7,888 Euros per month), which is at least 252 percent above the average monthly British citizen's income (2,242 Euros). There are also striking differences in Italy. While the 946 parliamentarians in Rome can be looking forward to be earning about 114,600 Euros per year (9550 Euros a month), the average salary of ordinary Italians is only 1,992 Euros per month, equaling 379 percent less.

The 27 EU national parliaments cost a total of 2.79 billion Euros during one legislative session with France being the leader. Adding up each deputy's income in the French "Assemblée Nationale", the taxpayer is in charge of paying 545 million Euros in total (table 1, appendix). Following Italy's "Camera dei Deputati / Senato della Repubblica" (434 million Euros) and the German Bundestag (373 million Euros) as well as the "House of Commons" in London (308 million Euros).

Another result of the survey: The needier an EU country, the more significant the differences between normal income and parliamentarian income: A Bulgarian, for example, would have to work 108 years to earn the salary of a respective deputy during a single five-year term. A Pole needs 78 years of work, an Italian 45 years, a Brit 40 years and a German would have to work 39 years. The EU citizens' average workload is 55 years (table 2).

Especially severe is the situation in Slovakia: The earnings of MEPs there are 1,190 percent higher than those of ordinary citizens. And in bankrupt Greece at least the Greek MEPs continue to earn good money: 890 percent more than their citizens. Leaders are the already mentioned Bulgarians: The politicians in the European parliament dispatched by the Balkan state get a salary 2,051 percent higher than the average citizen of Bulgaria (chart in appendix and tables 1 and 2).

The high salaries of elected officials in Brussels are based on a decision by the EU taken three years ago. Back then the decision was made to unify the remuneration of all MEPs. It is simply based on one income with the highest award of parliament - these were the German and the Italian MEPs. Ever since, MEPs have been earning almost 100,000 Euros per year more than their comparable counterparts in the U.S. Congress, which earn around 11,102 Euros per month.

Still, the American MPs get incredible 90,000 Euros as monthly allowance for office, staff costs and consultants. However, the U.S. law offers a lot more transparency to its citizens: Every three months, the 535 MPs in the U.S. Congress have to present and back up their actual expenditure to controlling. It is then officially published via Internet - available to all citizens (http://disbursements.house.gov/2012q3/2012q3_singlevolume.pdf).

As a result of the survey set up by the German consumer portal "Preisvergleich.de", it can be said that in contrast to the assertions of both the European Parliament and EU national parliaments, there is not much of actual transparency in the methods and inner structures of remuneration of the 8,185 European parliamentarians. The extreme differences in pay structure between politicians and citizens are very serious. There is at least as much need for discussion on this issue as on the EU's plan to cap the manager salaries of public companies.

Preisvergleich.de - Background facts

The consumer portal Preisvergleich.de (2.36 million users per month, AGOF Internet facts February 2013) offers numerous online comparisons on all matters concerning insurance and energy tariffs.