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**Decision by MEPs to increase their allowance by €1,500 a month
'scandalous' – McKenna**

This week's decision by MEPs to increase their assistants/support allowance by over 8.5% has been strongly criticized by the Ireland's EU monitoring group the People's Movement. The movement's chairperson, Patricia McKenna, said the decision by MEPs to increase their already generous allowance is a scandal.

McKenna, a former MEP, said: 'MEPs already receive more than €17,000 per month for assistants and now they want to increase it by a whopping €1,500 a month under the guise of extra work load. I cannot believe that MEPs have the audacity to argue that this increase is to compensate for the extra work of the Lisbon Treaty considering that they argued the Lisbon Treaty would make the EU more efficient not more expensive.'

'This decision would indicate that the Lisbon Treaty was not in fact about making the EU more efficient but instead more expensive to the taxpayers. It is absolutely scandalous that, at a time when workers are being told to tighten their belts and accept cutbacks and increased levies, MEPs can vote to increase their own budget at taxpayers' expense' she said.

McKenna continued: 'There is no justification, especially in the current economic climate, for this increase as MEPs already receive a very generous assistance allowance. Using the Lisbon Treaty as an excuse is farcical. Not one single MEP supporting the Lisbon Treaty in last year's referendum warned that the treaty would result in a further burden on the already hard stretched taxpayer. Instead they claimed that Lisbon was all about making the EU more "efficient" not more expensive.'

She said: 'The EU institutions are totally out of touch with ordinary people and have no regard for how taxpayers' money is spent. If further evidence of this is needed then look at the European Commission's decision to take EU member states to court over their refusal to back a pay rise for EU civil servants. This court case, backed by all 27 commissioners, is ludicrous – particularly at a time when member states have been applying pay freezes to their national civil servants. EU civil servants already enjoy massive salaries: for instance, a senior director general can receive over €17,000 per month, plus all benefits such as family allowances, expatriation allowance, installation allowance, travel expenses, removal expenses, daily subsistence allowance, as well as very low taxes. Many people in Ireland have to live for a year on what they get in one month.'

'A reality check for Brussels is well overdue and this increase for MEPs must be opposed' concluded McKenna.

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