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10,000 European Union officials better paid than David Cameron

More than one in five European Union officials earn above £142,000, the salary paid to the British Prime Minister



Leaked documents have revealed that over one in five EU official earns more than David Cameron Photo: REUTERS

By Bruno Waterfield, Brussels

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More than one in five European Union officials takes home more than David Cameron gets from his £142,000 salary, leaked documents show.

The take-home pay of the Brussels-based commission's staff is inflated by their special low tax rates, which mean they pay less than half the tax that a British worker on a similar salary would incur.

Details of European officials' generous pay and perks have come to light on the day that voters in Britain and across the EU take part in elections to the European Parliament. Mr Cameron has made reform of the EU a central part of his agenda for those elections and next year's general election, promising a British referendum on EU membership.

The EU has repeatedly refused to publish information of the net income of its 47,000 staff, making it

impossible for taxpayers to know the true pay levels of European civil servants. But leaked staff documents have revealed the net pay received by EU officials thanks to generous allowances and deductions for tax, pensions and sickness insurance.

Mr Cameron is paid a gross salary of £142,500. After paying his taxes, National Insurance and pension contribution, Mr Cameron takes home about £81,350.

The Coalition has set the Prime Minister's salary as the upper limit for Whitehall pay, with only a small number of senior officials getting more.

But in Brussels, even mid-ranking administrators can take home more cash than the Prime Minister. The leaked papers show that EU officials in the "AD 11" grade, a middle management group, have gross earnings of £112,090, including expatriation and household allowances. But because they pay just 13.4 per cent in tax, they take home £83,357 in net pay.

Those with children will earn substantially more with allowances totalling £7,000 per child each year, meaning many officials with families on lower grades will also earn more than Mr Cameron.

More than 80 per cent of EU officials get a 16 per cent of salary top-up as a perk to compensate them for living in Brussels or Luxembourg for their entire working lives, as well as for household allowances. For an AD11 middle manager, the two allowances are worth more than £1,300 a month.

Officials employed before staff reforms in 2004 are also eligible for additional benefits, taking the number of EU civil servants better paid than Mr Cameron to more than 10,000.

"The fact that most Europeans will this week either not vote at all or vote for parties that want to abolish the EU highlights the growing disconnect between the voter and the European institutions," said Chris Howarth, senior policy analyst at the Open Europe think tank.

"One immediate action that could establish some goodwill would be for the new European Commission to tackle the issue of overpaid and undertaxed EU bureaucrats."

However, the commission insists the salaries were needed to attract candidates from western European countries. It claims there has been a recruitment crisis, with Britain, for instance, accounting for 12.3 per cent of the EU's population but providing only 1.9 per cent of its officials.

"Our headache is maintaining a broad geographical balance," said a spokesman. "We're struggling to attract the brightest and best from richer member states, particularly the UK."

Nigel Farage, the leader of Ukip, said the high levels of pay showed that Mr Cameron's EU reform agenda was not working. "He just tinkered and failed. The only way to save our country's money

and our democracy is to exit the EU," he said.



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