

## **What funding do the political parties receive and spend to support women in politics?**

### **Summary.**

Between 2007 and 2009, political parties received over €15 million under the Electoral Acts, one of the purposes of which is to 'promote the participation of women in politics'. Of this €15 million, the parties chose to spend less than a third of a million (€323,364), or 2% on the promotion of women. The two largest parties spend the least on promoting women, both spending less than 0.5% of the money available to them on this purpose. Sinn Fein and Labour both spend around 8% of the fund on promoting women in politics. Parties spend the overwhelming portion of this funding (over 75%) on 'General Administration'.

### **Background of funding**

Political parties receive state funding from two main sources: The Parliamentary Leaders Allowance and The Electoral Act funding. Both these payments go directly to the parties to carry out their work as parties and are in addition to the wages of TDs, Senators, their own staff and certain staff allocated to the parliamentary party in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The annual income and expenditure of these funds must be audited and reported to the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) and is reported on their web-site. The total funding received by all parties currently amounts to around €14 million a year: over €8 million under the Parliamentary Leaders Allowance and almost €6 under the Electoral Act.

[Section 18 of the Electoral Acts](#) sets out the purposes for which political parties are allowed to use this funding stream. Section 18b states that this funding includes "*provision in respect of expenditure by the party in relation to the promotion of participation by women and young persons in political activity*".

Each year, each party must report on how it spent the previous year's funding under each of the six headings set out by the legislation: (a) general administration; (b) research, education and training; (c) policy formulation; (d) activities of branches etc; (e) promotion of participation of women; (f) promotion of participation of young people.

It is worth noting that the legislation does not require political parties to distribute its funding among these headings, they are free to spend it all on one or more headings, while drawing down none of it for other purposes.

### **Summary of expenditure 2007 –2009.**

Accounts are made public in April each year, so the expenditure figures for 2010 are not yet available. Returns for 2007,2008 and 2009 were reviewed.

Pattern of expenditure are fairly consistent for each of the political parties, with the exception that in 2007 Fianna Fail spend no money under this heading. Over the three years the Green Party and Fine Gael spending the lowest proportion of this funding on the promotion of women, closely followed by Fianna Fail. None of these parties ever spent more than 1% of their funding on promotion of women. Sinn Fein and Labour have similar expenditure patterns, spend between 6% and 9% of the funding on the promotion of women.

The largest expenditure heading in the returns is for 'General Administration' which amounts to around 75% of reporting expenditure. It represents a higher proportion of spending in Fianna Fail, and lower in Fine Gael, which spends a significant proportion on 'co-ordination of activities of the branches and members.

**Table 1: Reported Annual Expenditure of Political Parties under Electoral Acts 2007-2009**

Parties	** 2007 **			** 2008 **			** 2009 **		
	Total	Promotion of Women	%	Total	Promotion of Women	%	Total	Promotion of Women	%
Fianna Fail	1,586,402	-	0%	1,674,453	12,377	1%	2,833,220	16,946	1%
Fine Gael	1,420,551	15,867	1%	1,545,630	785	0%	1,574,916	1,121	0%
Labour	730,115	42,040	6%	613,574	54,630	9%	631,805	58,807	9%
Sinn Fein	472,018	32,298	7%	487,432	40,957	8%	494,873	45,858	9%
Green Party	348,851	678	0%	370,592	500	0%	375,621	500	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,557,937</b>	<b>90,883</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>4,691,681</b>	<b>109,249</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5,910,435</b>	<b>123,232</b>	<b>2%</b>

**Table 2: Reported Total Expenditure of Political Parties under Electoral Acts 2007-2009**

Parties	Total spend over 3 years	Total spend on promoting women over 3 years	%
Fianna Fail	6,094,075	29,323	0.48%
Fine Gael	4,541,097	17,773	0.39%
Labour	1,975,494	155,477	7.87%
Sinn Fein	1,454,323	119,113	8.19%
Green Party	1,095,064	1,678	0.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,160,053</b>	<b>323,364</b>	