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Charity bosses' salaries exceed €100k

By Catherine Shanahan

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AN Irish Examiner survey of the pay packages earned by the heads of leading charities shows most are on salaries ranging from €100,000 to €150,000.

Of 24 charities canvassed for details of remuneration packages awarded to chief executives, the highest salary was paid by Enable Ireland to its chief executive, Fionnuala O'Donovan.

Ms O'Donovan earns €156,340, despite having waived a pay increase of 2.5% in 2008, and despite taking a further cut in January 2010 to bring her salary into line with the public service cut of 10%.

Kathleen McLoughlin, the chief executive of the Irish Wheelchair Association, was the next-best paid, at €146,191, more than she would earn as a principal officer in the civil service, the grade she was seconded from. She is paid at assistant secretary level, at the top point of the scale.

Justin Kilcullen, the chief executive of Trócaire, was on the same salary but took a 9% pay cut in 2011.

Of those who gave a specific figure rather than a salary range, the lowest-paid chief executive is Jonathan Irwin, head of the Jack and Jill Foundation, which provides care and support for children with severe neurological problems. He is on €88,200.

The survey also revealed:

- * Charities have generally not granted a pay increase in the past year.
- * Three chiefs executive have a company car.
- * Expenses are vouched and relate mainly to travel.
- * Bonus payments are rare, although the Irish Hospice Foundation paid its chief executive €17,800 last year.

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* Six charities — Arthritis Ireland, Bóthar, Unicef Ireland, the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Simon Communities of Ireland and Special Olympics Ireland — refused to reveal details.

Sheila Nordon, the executive director of the Irish Charities and Tax Research, a membership organisation of charities, said that good practice was for charities to include an overall salary figure in their annual reports, as well as a threshold for the maximum amount staff earn.

"Fundamentally, charities depend on public trust and that is the greatest asset a charity has," she said.

Hans Zomer, director of Dóchas, a network of Ireland overseas development agencies, said that while people should demand high quality services from charities, "at the same time they should acknowledge that quality comes at a price".

"Too often, the view is taken that charities are run on a wing and a prayer, and while that may have been the case 20 years ago, now most charities are run as professional businesses, and some are the size of significant companies," he said.

"We think it is very important that the sector is run professionally, by professionals and along professional standards, and that good people are hired to do the job. And remuneration levels should reflect that."

However, he said, Ireland was "way behind" in terms of regulation of the sector, despite the previous government passing a Charities Act in 2009, most of which has not come into effect.

A report released last week by 2into3, a professional services firm focused on the needs of the not-for-profit sector, found that the average cost of raising €1 was 15.4c.

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