# Northern Ireland Executive Office's Brussels bill exceeds £6 million since Brexit



The Northern Ireland Executive Office (TEO) located in Brussels has racked up an astonishing bill exceeding £6 million since the United Kingdom voted to exit the European Union in 2016, raising serious questions about the financial prudence of the new administration. This startling figure was revealed by the Executive Office in response to an Assembly Written Question (AWQ) posed by TUV MLA Timothy Gaston.

Operating as an ostensible representation for the Northern Ireland Executive, the Brussels office has been a costly venture that seems more focused on posturing than on delivering tangible benefits for the region. Despite persistent budget fluctuations, the annual expenditure for maintaining this office has hovered stubbornly around £800,000 each year. In the most recent financial year, 2023/24, we saw a slight dip to £760,480, but this is merely a token gesture compared to the staggering £6,740,324 spent on the office since the Brexit referendum.

Since its inception in 2008, the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels has squandered over £15 million of taxpayer money. The peak year for expenditures since the Brexit vote was 2021/2022, when costs ballooned to £923,248. The office, which is staffed by a burgeoning workforce of 11 individuals, along with two representatives from Invest NI, represents a financial burden that taxpayers are being forced to shoulder without the transparency they deserve.

The core objectives of this lavishly funded office include promoting Northern Ireland’s engagement with Europe and enhancing its image within European institutions. Yet, with little to show for such exorbitant spending, it’s hard to see how these goals justify the financial outlay.

Timothy Gaston has rightfully highlighted the concerns surrounding the Brussels office's expenditures, stating that the "spend on the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels - over £6.7 million since the UK voted to leave the EU - will doubtless cause many to raise eyebrows." His demand for more transparency couldn't be more crucial, as the public deserves to know how their hard-earned money is being used. He also pointed out the stark contrast with the situation surrounding InterTrade UK—a sensible initiative designed to address challenges stemming from the Protocol without the unnecessary overhead of dedicated offices or bloated budgets.

In light of this financial debacle, Gaston has confirmed his commitment to further investigate this alarming expenditure in the Executive Office Committee. The public has a right to demand accountability from their elected officials, especially when it comes to the reckless handling of funds that could be better spent addressing the pressing needs of the people. The Executive Office has yet to respond to these critical revelations, and as the people of Northern Ireland watch the current government flounder, the call for fiscal responsibility and transparency has never been more urgent.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/office-northern-ireland-executive-brussels> - This URL provides information about the role and objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive Office in Brussels, including promoting Northern Ireland’s engagement with Europe and enhancing its image within European institutions.
* <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6554f071544aea0019fb2de2/E02963077_Executive_Office_ARA_2023_Web_Accessible.pdf> - This report includes details about the Executive Office’s activities, including the use of digital platforms and strategic partnerships to promote Northern Ireland's interests.
* <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/execoffice/eqia-teo-spending-plans.PDF> - This document discusses the financial challenges faced by The Executive Office, including budget reductions and the need for cost-saving measures in non-ringfenced areas.
* <https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Corporate/Annual%20Reports/AnnualReport2023-24.pdf> - This report highlights financial challenges faced by various Northern Ireland bodies, including budget reductions and the impact on operational capabilities.
* <https://nihrc.org/assets/uploads/publications/E03149682-NIHRC-ARA-23-24_Web-Accessible.pdf> - This report discusses the financial management and challenges faced by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, which is also funded by the Executive Office.