

Italy row over ex-porn star's pension rights

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Cicciolina to get €39,000 a year for serving one term as an MP in Italy's Radical party.

She is famed for being the first woman to uncover her breasts live on Italian television, for recording a song entirely about the male organ, and for offering sex to Osama bin Laden (in return, she said, for giving up terrorism).

But now Ilona Staller, better known as Cicciolina, is the unlikely centre of a bitter row over the cost to ordinary Italians of the perks enjoyed by their country's tens of thousands of politicians. It emerged on Monday that the Hungarian, who starred in almost 40 hardcore pornographic movies, will soon be enjoying a €39,000-a-year (£34,000) pension, provided by the taxpayers of her adoptive homeland.

The stipend, which is for life, is her reward for labouring as a member of parliament for all of five years, from 1987 to 1992. Staller was elected for the libertarian Radical party and sponsored a number of mainly sex-related bills, including one to set up "love parks and hotels".

Her entitlement is no different from that of any other one-term politician in [Italy](#). But their pensions have come under resentful scrutiny at a time when politicians are seeking painful sacrifices from the rest of society to prevent a Greek-style debt crisis: last week, parliament gave final approval to an austerity package that includes an increase in VAT and provision for big cuts in income tax allowances.

Commenting on news of Staller's pension on the website of the daily Corriere della Sera, one reader said the country's politicians "got rich doing almost nothing" and cared little about "people who work: people who often struggle to make ends meet and pay their taxes by doing real work".

But the former porn star, who will start to get the pension in November when she turns 60, told the Guardian: "I earned it and I'm proud of it." She said that during her five years in parliament she had tabled 12 bills including measures to introduce sex education in schools, give prisoners conjugal visits and ban vivisection.

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None had made it on to the statute book, but in those days, she said, it required a couple of parliaments to get bills passed. "All politicians who are ex-members of parliaments get pensions for life and I think it is fair that I should too," Staller said.

According to one recent estimate, Italy's cohorts of politicians cost the taxpayers almost €1.3bn a year. With four levels of government – national, regional, provincial and municipal – the country has an inordinately large number of elected representatives.

But that has not stopped them from giving themselves a distinctly comfortable lifestyle. According to the Italian parliament website, the gross salary of a member of the lower house is €140,000 a year plus an attendance allowance of up to €42,000 and a contribution towards expenses of up to €63,000. They are also entitled to free public transport, free air and sea travel within Italy and exemption from motorway tolls.

Source: Guardian.co.uk