

Dear UBIE Core Group,

we would like to summarize and express once more our opinion concerning the coordination of the International Basic Income Week (IBIW):

In principle, we have no objection against BIEN coordinating IBIW. However, from our point of view, this only makes sense under certain conditions, which we would like to explain here.

1. Concerning the date:

It is important for us to keep the already established date of the 38th calendar week for the International Basic Income Week. This does not mean that certain regional or continental groups should not occasionally use other dates, for example in the context of BIEN congresses such as the one in Korea in 2016 or the one in Portugal this year, or in the context of referendums or other political events.

2. Concerning the coordination task:

A) BIEN has a different definition of Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) than UBIE: so far it does not include the criteria that UBI should be “high enough to provide for a decent standard of living, which meets society’s social and cultural standards in the country concerned. UBI will prevent material poverty and provide the opportunity to participate in society and to live in dignity”. This can lead to the pursuit of basic income for completely different objectives, ranging from emancipatory to neoliberal goals. This also has potential implications for a call for participation drawn up by BIEN. A call referencing the definition of BIEN may also be understood as a call for social cuts, firstly, because UBI is not defined with the “high enough” criteria, and secondly, because nothing is said about how UBI relates to existing social regulations. The UBI definition by UBIE does not only define the amount of UBI, but also clarifies how UBI should relate to the existing welfare system. “Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) is an amount of money, paid on a regular basis to each individual unconditionally and universally, **high enough to ensure a material existence and participation in society. UBI is a step towards an emancipatory welfare system.**” The long version is even more explicit: “We emphasise that UBI shall not replace the compensatory welfare state but rather complete and transform it into an emancipatory welfare system.”

This crucial difference, as well as other problems listed below, make us draw your attention to the difficulty of having BIEN drawing up a general call for participation or another document relating to IBIW with reference to BIEN’s current UBI definition.

This remark on the different definitions (and thus the possibility of pursuing completely different objectives under the heading of basic income) has absolutely

nothing to do with imposing on countries or basic income networks what kind of path and which steps they adopt on their way to a full basic income that is high enough to guarantee not only a material existence but also participation in society. A poor country in Africa, if it is not supported by the wealthy in the country or by rich countries, but rather continuously plundered by them, may only introduce a partial basic income or only a basic income for the elderly first. In principle, other steps towards UBI, such as adequate minimum living allowances without sanctions, a basic income for children or the elderly or as a sabbatical, are not contradicting the basic income idea. Therefore, we do not understand the comments of Anja in the last e-mail to us. Even in our UBIE charter, we have stated clearly: “Different justifications and methods of implementation shall not prevent us from cooperating.” This is even more true on a global scale.

However, the goal has to be clear and has to be stated clearly: namely, that every human being has the right to a dignified life, and that this right is to be secured by an unconditional cash transfer that, set at an amount according to the respective national standards of the country one is living in, guarantees material existence and participation in society. Unfortunately, BIEN does not define this objective. Therefore, UBIE also submitted a joint proposal to change BIEN’s UBI definition at the last general assembly in Seoul in 2016 (http://www.basicincome.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/5.c.-Statute-proposal-2016-05-21_BIEN-final-5.pdf).

B) It is not only this circumstance that makes us argue that the possible coordination of the International Basic Income Week by BIEN should be limited to a purely formal level. Worldwide there are big differences concerning current political issues to which basic income becomes related. In Europe, for example, the debate about basic income is or (can be) linked to the discussion about a “social Europe” with certain minimum standards or to the debates about a social-ecological transformation, about digitization or about working time reduction. In African or Asian countries, on the other hand, topics such as a transition to (unconditional) cash transfers in the fight against hunger, or the struggles for free access to clean water and agricultural land are (or can be) connected to the demand for a basic income. An international action week for basic income, which does not relate to these regional or continental contexts, is powerless. A call for participation that lists all these possible references would not only be long, but probably also incomprehensible to many.

For these reasons, we urge that UBIE should transfer the formal coordination of the International Basic Income Week to BIEN, firstly, without calling into question the established date, and secondly, without imposing substantive orientations that contradict the established IBIW definition of an emancipatory UBI with its four criteria (<https://basicincomeweek.org>), for example BIEN should not provide any calls or press releases that include its unclear UBI definition. Anything else would run the risk of being ignored, not accepted, or even fiercely criticized by regional and continental groups.

The potential of formal coordination is that BIEN offers a service-oriented platform which gathers the different calls for participation, web and social media representations, reports, dates and contacts of the different regional and continental groups. Such a platform would be helpful both for networking and learning about the current issues and priorities, as well as about the different policy strategies of these groups. This approach would also do justice to the complexity and diversity of reality.

We are looking forward to your reactions and thoughts on our proposal. We also ask the core group of UBIE to have the members of UBIE decide beforehand about a communication with BIEN which aims to transfer the coordination of IBIW from UBIE to BIEN.

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