Hello, Dear Klaus!

Here I’d like to talk about my thoughts, feelings and reflections on the situation in Latvia and the possible collection of signatures.

During the last signature collection period, I had no experience in organizing a collective to hold a signature collection campaign, but I was very enthusiastic about the idea of ​​UBI. I was approached by Jaanus from Estonia, who, I think, observed my enthusiastic activity. I agreed, because I had not seen anyone else who had undertaken to hold a signature collection in Latvia.

UBI is very important for Latvia. We have lived for a long time under Russian occupation, people were not evaluated, no one cared about them, many lived in poverty. When we regained freedom, we no longer knew how to appreciate and respect people. We feel it especially now, when many people live in poverty, and no one is trying to change anything significantly. The state-guaranteed minimum living wage this year is 166 EUR. Of course, no one can survive on this money if they get into a crisis, lose their job or become disabled. Qualified for this or other support is quite difficult.

There is no special association in Latvia that would talk about UBI – only our small neighbourhood association “Vecdaugavieši”. Each of us is very busy with our daily work and often there is not enough time even to meet each other. But we all support UBI.

During the previous signature collection, I worked only online, because at that time I was supported by only one member of the association (in fact, at that time there were only two of us in the association). She is a journalist. Then I wrote various articles myself, but she edited - to make them easier to understand. We were very lucky then, because we received a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway - European Economic Area (EEA) Fund for one year to collect signatures. Now – we have no funding for this purpose.

This year we also submitted a project to talk about UBI, the project was selected, but due to lack of money, we did not receive funding. However, time run very quickly. Three years of war in Ukraine have already passed, which also affects our economic situation – not for the better. At this moment uncertainty is increasing significantly because of Trump. The economy is becoming increasingly fragile and could collapse at any moment.

When the next signature collection starts, I would be ready to participate even without funding. Knowing that for these three years I have not been able to fully work to talk about UBI, a new signature collection could be a great stimulus to do something. We do not have our own network of UBI advocates, I have not seen any publications about UBI in the Latvian press, but during these three years we have become recognizable as an association, because we were active in our neighbourhood, organizing various events – walks with picnics, historical storytellings, we performed a short play. This has made us stand out and we have become popular, we are respected now as serious association.

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Now about my vision in brief. I think it would be useful for us to consider what our strategy will be, how we can structure our activities before collecting signatures – whether it happens or not, we still need to inform about UBI. I think that our association will again operate only in the online environment, because it requires fewer resources and can reach a larger audience than a face-to-face events.

The important thing is – how we can reach our audience, what information about UBI would be better used to attract the interest and support of citizens.

After the collection of signatures, even more UBI experiments have taken place, it has been calculated that a European UBI would cost only 2.71% of European GDP (https://basicincome.org/news/2024/12/new-study-proves-the-feasibility-of-a-european-basic-income/), I have noticed that even the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights Olivier De Shutter advocates the implementation of UBI (https://www.srpoverty.org/about/olivier-de-schutter/). This allows me to look with hope that by acting actively and wisely, we can attract more attention to UBI.

If the big EU countries can ensure that 1 million signatures are collected, then everything is fine, because the small countries may not collect as much as in the previous signature collection. Such a risk exists.

However, we need to inform about UBI anyway. The question is how, when, to whom and exactly what to say in our information about UBI. Do we do it individually, or do we create joint presentations and information, what to emphasize? Maybe some of us should organize more frequent meetings for sharing information and supporting?

To have a plan in mind, I wrote down my (possible) tasks to do regarding UBI outreach. They are as follows:

1. Prepare for different ways of presenting information – prepare audiovisual materials; create posts on social media; prepare articles to send to newspapers, magazines, portals, to followers.

2. Organize various meetings (at least in my neighborhood to practice speaking), using different formats – discussions, master classes, coffee or beer events, visiting other associations with presentations on UBI. We found the Conference on the Future of Europe handbook for organizing events and realized that it could also be used for UBI purposes (https://wayback.archive-it.org/12090/20230417090011/https://futureu.europa.eu/en/pages/our-guides). But as I said, it is unlikely that we will organize face-to-face events.

3. Provide support to members of our association, so that they can also talk about UBI, maybe create a working group; to learn new computer programs that can be used to create audiovisual materials; be a mentor to others; build a network of UBI supporters (like what Dear Ali did).

4. Start planning time for different activities – training, organizing meetings, picnics for UBI, and so on.

5. To send letters to different groups of people – citizens (on social networks), politicians, various NGOs, members of the European Parliament and Commissioners (each preparing information about UBI in the area under their supervision), members of the national parliament and city council, heads of institutions that shape social assistance policy, UN envoys from member states, and so on.

This is a huge task. We probably won’t be able to do it all, but we need to start with the simplest one – creating audiovisual material to post on social networks to speak about UBI.

We are a very small association, and there is little time. We will probably focus on preparing and sending information to others – associations, institutions and those who make decisions and create new policies. Previously, we sent our prepared articles not only to various media, but also to small libraries and municipalities in Latvia, so that information could also be received in rural areas. Rarely, but in some small municipalities, information was published. There was a good response from Latvians living abroad and Europe Direct points.

That is very brief reflection and thoughts. I think that emphasis should be placed on various areas, of which *human security is one of the most important* – especially now, when Trump shocked his allies with tariffs and Ukraine with blackmail.

For people not to fall into apathy even more, we must give people hope that UBI is possible to implement - all you need is the will to do it – let "no one is left behind".

With Greetings from Latvia!

Aija Lasmane