

European Citizens' Initiative

FIRENZE, 12th Nov. 2012

Title of the ECI:

Unconditional Basic Income(UBI)
Exploring a pathway towards emancipatory welfare conditions in the EU

Subject matter:

Asking the Commission, to encourage cooperation between the Member States (according to Art 156 TFEU) aiming to explore the UBI as a tool to improve their respective social security systems.

Objectives:

In the long run the objective is to offer to each person in the EU the unconditional right as an individual, to having his/her material needs met to ensure a life of dignity as stated by the EU treaties, and to empower participation in society supported by the introduction of the UBI. In the short term, initiatives such as "pilot-studies" (Art 156 TFEU) and examination of different models of UBI (EP resolution 2010/2039(INI) §44) should be promoted by the EU.

Relevant Provisions of the Treaties

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU): Article 156

(TEU Art. 2+3; TFEU Art. 5+156, Charter of Fundamental Rights Art. 1+2, 5+6, 15, 21, 34)

Contact details of the members of the Citizens' Committee

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Sources of support and funding

A free online-collection system will be provided by the EU-Commission. All activities related to supporting the ECI are based on volunteering.

ANNEX

The persons presenting the proposal for our ECI are citizens out of 15 EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, United Kingdom), different in their cultures, languages, social interests and political and religious / philosophical background, but sharing the common view presented here as a long term solution.

The Unconditional Basic Income does not replace the welfare state but does complete and transform the same from a compensatory into an emancipatory welfare state.

The emancipatory Unconditional Basic Income is defined by the following four criteria: **universal, individual, unconditional, high enough to ensure an existence in dignity and participation in society.**

Universal: In principle every person, irrespective of age, descent, place of residence, profession etc. will be entitled to receive this allocation. Thus we claim a European-wide, guaranteed, unconditional basic income.

Individual: Every woman, every man, every child has the right to a basic income on an individual basis, and definitely not on a couple or household basis. The Unconditional Basic Income will be independent of their circumstances: of marital status, cohabitation or household configuration, or of the income or property of other household or family members. This is the only way to ensure privacy and to prevent control over other individuals. It enables individuals to make their own decisions.

Unconditional: We regard basic income as a human right which shall not depend on any preconditions, whether an obligation to take paid employment, to be involved in community service, or to behave according to traditional gender roles. Nor will it be subject to income, savings or property limits.

High enough: The amount should provide for a decent standard of living, which meets society's social and cultural standards in the country concerned. It should prevent material poverty and provide the opportunity to participate in society. This means that the net income should, at a minimum, be at the poverty-risk level according to EU standards, which corresponds to 60% of the so-called national median net equivalent income. Especially in countries where the majority have low incomes, and therefore median income is low, an alternative benchmark (e.g. a basket of goods) should be used to determine the amount of the basic income, to guarantee a life in dignity, material security and full participation in society.

As a result of current employment patterns and inadequate income maintenance systems (conditional, means-tested, not high enough), we regard the introduction of the Unconditional Basic Income essential in order to guarantee fundamental rights, especially a life in dignity, as set forth in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

Above all, the Unconditional Basic Income will help to prevent poverty and grant freedom to each individual, to determine his or her own life, and strengthen the participation of all in society.

The Unconditional Basic Income will help to avoid social divisions, debates based on envy and abuse and their consequences, as well as superfluous costly, repressive and exclusive controlling and inspection bureaucracy. As a transfer payment free of discrimination and stigmatization, the Unconditional Basic Income prevents hidden poverty and different types of illness.

The Unconditional Basic Income brings about social freedom, helps citizens to identify with the European Union and ensures their political rights. It supports the realisation of fundamental rights. "The dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right in itself but constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights." (official explanation on article 1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union).

The introduction of the Unconditional Basic Income and possible introductory steps are within the respective areas of responsibility of the Member States of the European Union.

There are number of studies showing different ways of financing an Unconditional Basic Income. We do not suggest any specific one in this ECI.

Attachment

Treaty on European Union (TEU)

„Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union“ 2010/C83/01 (30th March 2010)

Article 2

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The Unconditional Basic Income as defined by its four criteria realizes all of the values listed above. It provides material security and full participation in society without conditions – combined with equality of all individuals.

Article 3

3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance.

It shall combat social exclusion and discrimination, and shall promote social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.

It shall promote economic, social and territorial cohesion, and solidarity among Member States.

It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

An Unconditional Basic Income, supporting the reduction and redistribution of working hours, will facilitate a new form of full employment. The Unconditional Basic Income combats the social exclusion and discrimination, inherent in the current income maintenance systems. We believe that an Unconditional Basic Income promotes to achieve the goals of the EU as to attain full employment, combat social exclusion and discrimination and support social justice and social protection (Art. 3 Para 3 TEU).

In addition the UBI promotes the rights of children, solidarity between generations and between Member States. Therefore we take the initiative and ask the EU-Commission to be active within the framework of its authorization in the area of social policy (Art. 151 ff TFEU) in accordance with Article 156 preserving the rights of the Member States.

Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)

„Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union“ 2010/C83/01 (30th March 2010)

Article 5

(3) The Union may take initiatives to ensure coordination of Member States' social policies.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The social policies of the Member States can be coordinated in order to combat social dumping. The common measure for all would be the introduction of the Unconditional Basic Income according to the four defined criteria. The responsibility for adapting the existing national social system to the Unconditional Basic Income lies with the Member States.

Article 156

With a view to achieving the objectives of Article 151 and without prejudice to the other provisions of the Treaties, the Commission shall encourage cooperation between the Member States and facilitate the coordination of their action in all social policy fields under this Chapter, particularly in matters relating to:

- employment,*
- labour law and working conditions,*
- basic and advanced vocational training,*
- social security,*
- prevention of occupational accidents and diseases,*
- occupational hygiene,*
- the right of association and collective bargaining between employers and workers.*

To this end, the Commission shall act in close contact with Member States by making studies, delivering opinions and arranging consultations both on problems arising at national level and on those of concern to international organisations, in particular initiatives aiming at the establishment of guidelines and indicators, the organisation of exchange of best practice, and the preparation of the necessary elements for periodic monitoring and evaluation. The European Parliament shall be kept fully informed.

Before delivering the opinions provided for in this Article, the Commission shall consult the Economic and Social Committee.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

According to the Article 156 the EU-Commission can encourage cooperation between the Member States by using the UBI as a tool to improve their social security systems

Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

„Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on Functioning of the European Union“ 2010/C83/01 (30th March 2010)

Article 1

Human dignity

Human dignity is inviolable.

It must be respected and protected.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The dignity of the individual must include the opportunity of living freely and responsibly within society. The Unconditional Basic Income grants freedom to each individual and a life in responsibility by removing existential and administrative constraints as well as exclusion from social life.

Article 2

Right to life (1)

Everyone has the right to life.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

This human right to life is undisputed. Within our present economic system, life depends on obtaining material existence through funds. Of course, one could also obtain this using vouchers. The users of such vouchers would be discriminated against compared with individuals who are free to decide how to use their finances from different sources of income. The legal right to a Unconditional Basic Income transfer payment ensures a dignified life with the opportunity to participate in society, and also fulfills the right to a life of justice, free from discrimination.

Article 6

Right to liberty and security

Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The Unconditional Basic Income supports the free choice of personal life-style, the arrangement of one's social relations and whether to engage in social and economic cooperation. With freedom comes responsibility in solidarity. In addition to the protection provided by the current social insurance systems and social services, the UBI is the best guarantee of financial security during times of illness and unemployment.

Article 15

Freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work

1. Everyone has the right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen or accepted occupation.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The Unconditional Basic Income makes it easier to practise a freely chosen, or at least acceptable, occupation. Under many current income maintenance systems, the need for material goods and services in order to survive, together with various administrative constraints, restricts one's freedom of choice of occupation and forces one to accept unsuitable paid work.

Article 21

Non-discrimination

1. Any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.

2. Within the scope of application of the Treaties and without prejudice to any of their specific provisions, any discrimination on grounds of nationality shall be prohibited.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

The UBI avoids discrimination and promotes autonomy by providing material and financial security for every person

Article 34

Social security and social assistance

(1) The Union recognises and respects the entitlement to social security benefits and social services providing protection in cases such as maternity, illness, industrial accidents, dependency or old age, and in the case of loss of employment, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.

(2) Everyone residing and moving legally within the European Union is entitled to social security benefits and social advantages in accordance with Union law and national laws and practices.

(3) In order to combat social exclusion and poverty, the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent existence for all those who lack sufficient resources, in accordance with the rules laid down by Union law and national laws and practices.

Reasons for Unconditional Basic Income:

An Unconditional Basic Income is the best method of fulfilling the fundamental right to financial security and social support, in addition to each country's respective social insurances and social services. Everybody will receive it and therefore no one will be excluded or discriminated against. This is in contrast to the stigmatizing character of many current income maintenance systems, which discourage many potential applicants with legal entitlement from taking up their benefits, and this low take-up increases social exclusion.