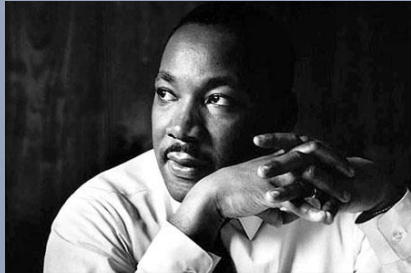




**“To guarantee a life in dignity,  
material security and  
full participation in society”**

# **Unconditional Basic Income (UBI): A trade union goal?**

**by Ronald Blaschke, Berlin, 24 May 2014**



**Martin Luther King**

**“Where do we go from here:  
Chaos or community?” 1967**

**“Two conditions are indispensable if we are to ensure that the guaranteed income operates as a consistently progressive measure.**

**First, it must be pegged to the median income of society, not at the lowest levels of income. To guarantee an income at the floor would simply perpetuate welfare standards and freeze into the society poverty conditions.**

**Second, the guaranteed income must be dynamic; it must automatically increase as the total social income grows.**

**[....]**

**Without these safeguards a creeping retrogression would occur, nullifying the gains of security and stability.”**



**Michael Opielka/Heidrun Stalb**

**"The guaranteed basic income  
is an essential, but is not  
enough" (1986)**

**“A basic income must be sufficient, so that poverty is eliminated  
and participation at the socio-cultural life is guaranteed.  
A low basic income would actually mean forced labour.”**

# Structure

## Chapter 1

Terms and definitions

## Chapter 2

Should every human being have an Unconditional Basic Income?

- a) Is this a central issue for trade unionists?
- b) How should the UBI scheme be designed?

## Chapter 3

Thoughts on the way forward

**Links/Websites**

# Chapter 1

## Terms and definitions

Two types of minimum income:

- **basic / minimum security provisions** (also known as basic social allowances, basic security, welfare benefit, social assistance ...)
- **unconditional basic income**

# Chapter 1

## Terms and definitions

### basic / minimum security provisions

- **(social-administrative) means-tested**
- **not individually guaranteed**
- **associated with forced labour or services in return (a breach of human rights and international law)**
- **do not (usually) guarantee material security (existence) and participation in society, do not eradicate poverty and hidden poverty**

# Chapter 1

## Terms and definitions

### Unconditional Basic Income (UBI)

- **not (social-administrative) means-tested**
- **guaranteed individually to everyone**
- **without pressure to engage in work, forced labour or services in return**
- **unconditionally guarantee material security (existence) and participation in society**

**Please note: Other forms of income (wage ...) can be full added to the unconditional basic income.**

# Chapter 1

## Terms and definitions

**The “European Citizen’s Initiative Basic Income” and the network “Unconditional Basic Income Europe (UBI E)” defined UBI as an amount of money**

- **paid on a regular basis to each individual**
- **unconditionally (not means-tested, without forced labour or services in return)**
- **universally (everywhere, everyone)**
- **high enough to ensure a material existence and participation in society**

**Please note: “European Citizen’s Initiative Basic Income” were promoted/supported by Bulgarian Trade Unions (CITUB) and many trade unionists.**



# Chapter 1

## Terms and definitions

### partial basic income (attachment 2)

- **partial basic income is *partial* because it *does not* meet that criterion of unconditional basic income:  
“high enough to ensure a material existence and participation in society”**



“The guarantee of a basic income below the minimum has the function to force the unemployed people to accept dirty, low-jobs on the cheap. This corresponds to the neo-liberal position the advocates of Milton Friedman.” (André Gorz, 2000)

“Inadequate minimum income guarantees are a subsidy to the employer: they enable him to pay his employees less than the living wage for the work they do.” (André Gorz, 2003)

# Chapter 1

## Terms and definitions

### poverty

- **poverty means here “income poverty”**  
**= a life in dignity and participation in society is not possible**
- **poverty risk threshold is defined by the EU:**  
**“risk of poverty threshold is 60 per cent of median**  
**equivalised net income”** (net = without costs for health, care and old pension)

### **poverty risk threshold in Europe in 2014 (projected, single):**

**France – above EUR 1080 net/month**

**Belgium – above EUR 1060 net/month**

**Germany – above EUR 1030 net/month**

**UK – above EUR 1000 net/month**

**Poland – above EUR 300 net/month**

**Romania – above EUR 120 net/month**

**Note: If median income in the country is low,  
check with basket of goods and services.**

## Chapter 2a

Should every human being have an Unconditional Basic Income?  
Is it a central issue for trade unionists?

Yes, because UBI

- **eradicates income / hidden poverty** (attachment 1) **and material precariousness**
- **combats forced labour (freedom to choose which work/job people want to do)**
- **encourages individual reduction and general redistribution of working time**
- **strengthens the bargaining power of wage earners and trade unions (UBI = “daily paid strike pay”)**
- **gives people freedom to choose to play their part, without coercion, in shaping society and the world of work (democracy)**
- **gives economic independence within the family and partnerships**

## Chapter 2b

# Should every human being have an Unconditional Basic Income? How should a UBI scheme be designed?

### An Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) should be

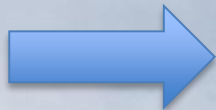
- **high enough to ensure a material existence and participation in society**
- **combined with minimum wage and equal pay for women**
- **combined with the expansion of public infrastructure and services (health, care, education, public transport ...)**
- **combined with reduction and redistribution of labour time (by law and collective bargaining)**
- **combined with ecological transformation of society and economy**
- **combined with re-democratizing of society and economy**
- **financed by redistribution of wealth from rich to poor**

## Chapter 3

### Thoughts on the way forward

**Steps to introduce UBI are possible for each life-time stage:**

- **adequate basic income for all children (childhood / youth)**
- **adequate guaranteed income for training and study, independent of own and parent's income/asset (= without means-testing) (trainee / students)**
- **abolition of forced labour and individualisation of existing basic / minimum security provisions, adequate level (unemployed)**
- **adequate basic income for sabbatical (employed)**
- **adequate universal basic pension (pensioner)**



**Steps are supported by many allies and help to gain acceptance the UBI within society.**

## Links / Websites

### **Alliance “Unconditional Basic Income Europe”**

<http://basicincome-europe.org/>

or

<http://ubie.org/>



### **Netzwerk Grundeinkommen Deutschland**

(information, material, lectures, models and basic approaches of basic income...)



German: <https://www.grundeinkommen.de/>

English: <https://www.grundeinkommen.de/services/english-page>

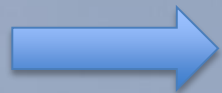
French: <https://www.grundeinkommen.de/services/page-francaise>

**Thank you.**

# Attachment 1

## hidden poverty

- **poverty due to non-take-up of (supplementary) basic / minimum security provisions**



**caused by *conditionality* of social cash transfers**

**Conditionalities deter people from taking up their entitlements.  
Some causes are:**

- **shame to be a poor man in public view**
- **entitlement is unknown**
- **important cause: conditional transfers systems are repressive and bureaucratic**



## Attachment 2

### A partial basic income

- does not eradicate income poverty and hidden poverty
- does not remove the coercion to engage in work
- does not allow people to play their part, without coercion, in shaping society and the world of work
- does not make for economic independence within the family and partnerships
- does not independent of social bureaucracies
- can be used for neo-liberal goals: reduction/abolition of welfare benefits and social minimum standards
- frightens off a lot of potential allies