

Abolish income poverty at last!
Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

*Letter from UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative)
to Members of European Parliament, dated: 12th of September, 2022*

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Call to Members of the European Parliament,

By Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative (UBI-EI)

Brussels, 12th of September, 2022

1.	We ask the Members of the European Parliament to work towards to ensure that the European Commission takes resolutions, papers and statements of the European Parliament and the European Commission seriously and that their fundamental statements are reflected in the European Commission's proposal for a recommendation on minimum income.
2.	We call on the Members of the European Parliament to make sure that the introduction of Unconditional Basic Incomes and steps towards an Unconditional Basic Income in every EU Member State will be a part of the European Commission's proposal for a recommendation on minimum income.
3.	We expect that the members of the European Parliament will evaluate the European Commission's proposal on the minimum income politically and, if necessary, will work to ensure that the principled statements contained in the above resolutions, papers and statements are reflected in specific regulations on an adequate minimum income and in proposals for the establishment of Unconditional Basic Incomes in all member states.

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Excerpt from the **Manifesto of Ventotene**

”The almost unlimited potentiality of mass production of goods of prime necessity through modern technology, allow everyone to be guaranteed, at relatively low social cost, food, lodging, clothing and that minimum of comfort needed to preserve a sense of human dignity.

Human solidarity turned towards those who succumb in the economic battle ought not, therefore, be shown with same humiliating forms of charity that produce the very same evils it vainly attempts to remedy.

Rather it must take a series of measures which unconditionally guarantee a decent standard of living for everyone, without lessening the stimulus to work and to save.

In this situation, no one would any longer be forced by misery to accept unfair work contracts.“

Known as the "["Manifesto of Ventotene"](#)", it was written mainly by the anti-fascist [Altiero Spinelli](#) in 1941 while in political captivity. Later, Spinelli was a member of the European Commission and the European Parliament. He is considered one of the founding fathers of the EU. In the writing "["For a Free and United Europe. Project of a Manifesto"](#)", as it was actually called, the ideal of European federalism and European integration was outlined. The main building of the European Parliament is named after Altiero Spinelli.

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Dear Members of European Parliament,

in the third quarter of 2022, the European Commission intends to present a proposal for a European Council Recommendation on rules for adequate minimum income in the EU (see [here](#)).

In recent years, the European Parliament and the European Commission have adopted and published resolutions, papers and statements on adequate minimum income and basic income (see annex).

1. Fundamental statements in the above-mentioned resolutions, papers and statements (see annex)

1.1 Amount of minimum income

By default, the amount of the national minimum income has to ensure an income that is above the relative poverty line (above at-risk-of-poverty threshold of 60% of national median equalised net income). This level of the respective national minimum income is to be checked with suitable reference budgets (basket of goods and services and others) with regard to the actual safeguarding of the sufficient means of income to ensure material existence and enable participation in society, if necessary, adjusted upwards.

1.2. Eligibility on minimum income: concerning person

There is an individualised right to a poverty-preventing minimum income. It is individually guaranteed.

1.3. Eligibility regarding to income and wealth of a person

In the understanding of the EU bodies the minimum income is means-tested. But: Means-tested social transfers have a stigmatising character and provoke concealed poverty (non take up). Empirical evidence for several EU-countries suggests that non-take-up of existing means-tested

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social benefits is a widespread problem in the EU (see for example [here](#)): Existing means-tested social transfer systems does not achieve in many cases these persons, who have an entitlement of social transfers, and exclude many persons from the social system - due to the means-testing social transfer system. Therefore means-tested social systems are not suitable for effective poverty protection. That is the background for the statement from Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, on his visit to the European Union (25 November 2020 to 29 January 2021): “Guaranteeing entitlements that parents and children may claim before independent bodies can significantly reduce the rates of non-take-up, which is largely attributable to the stigmatisation and shame experienced by people in poverty; universal guarantees, rather than means-tested support schemes, also have proven to be more effective. [...] In attempting to assuage political fears of chronic dependency on social assistance, such conditionalities may end up leading to higher rates of non take-up and to worsening the poverty trap. Minimum income schemes should uphold the principles of universality and equality in protection that are at the core of any system of guaranteed income.” (see [Olivier De Schutter, 2021](#))

1.4. Eligibility on minimum income: without forced labour or service in return

Forced or compulsory labour is defined as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” (see [ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930, No. 29, Article 2](#)) Any reduction or denial of the minimum income because of refusal of labor or services in return is a penalty. Taking up labor or service in return under threat of punishment is not voluntary (see [Max Kern, 2008](#); lawyer at the International Labour Office from 1966 to 2002, was for many years head of the Forced Labour Section of the Standards Department, the secretariat of the supervisory bodies of the ILO for verifying the compliance of member states with international standards). A minimum income scheme must not violate the ILO Forced Labour Convention, which is binding under international law, must not also reduce or deny the minimum income in the case of failure to take up labor or a service in return. Furthermore: Any reduction or denial of the minimum income for a person violates the human right to social security and would plunge the person

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concerned into poverty and expose him or her to social exclusion. Human rights are unconditional rights!

We ask the Members of the European Parliament to work towards to ensure that the European Commission takes resolutions, papers and statements of the European Parliament and the European Commission seriously and that their fundamental statements are reflected in the European Commission's proposal for a recommendation on minimum income.

2. Unconditional Basic Income as a minimum income for everyone

UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative) is an initiative composed of UBI advocates from different European countries, who contributed to the design, initiation and execution of the two separate ECI Campaigns for UBI, held in 2013-2014 and 2020-2022 (<https://europa.eu/citizens-initiative/en>).

The goal of our UBI-EI is the introduction of Unconditional Basic Incomes in every country in Europe and the world. *UBI (Unconditional Basic Income) is the sum of money paid regularly, unconditionally and universally to all individuals, high enough to ensure their material existence and participation in society. UBI is a step towards an emancipatory welfare system.*

The call for introduction of Unconditional Basic Incomes in the EU was supported by around 300 000 EU citizens under the European Citizens' Initiative Unconditional Basic Income (see <https://eci.ec.europa.eu/014/public/#/screen/home/disabled>).

Furthermore: On the Online-Plattform of the Conference on the Future of Europe was “one of the most frequently suggested mechanisms to make Europe more inclusive and socially fair is guaranteeing an Unconditional Basic Income throughout the EU“. (see Final Report Platform, May 2022, p. 44: <https://futureu.europa.eu/pages/reporting>)

Abolish income poverty at last!
Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

*Letter from UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative)
to Members of European Parliament, dated: 12th of September, 2022*

An Unconditional Basic Income is

- **a type of minimum income, which secures the means of income to ensure material existence and participation in society and eliminate income poverty.**
- **an individually guaranteed type of minimum income.**
- **an universal type of minimum income. Not only stigmatising and non take up of social transfers would be effective combated, also the income poverty and the social exclusion, which is caused by income poverty.**
- **an unconditional type of minimum income. Not only the income poverty and the social exclusion, which is caused by income poverty, would be combated, also forced labour.**

These are the reasons, why we demand – in reference to the resolutions, papers and statements from the European Parliament and European Commission (see annex) – to develop the minimum income as a basic income: regularly paid to each person, unconditionally, universally, individually and in amount which is high enough to ensure material existence, enable participation in society and eliminate income poverty.

These are the reasons why we call the Members of the European Parliament to strive that the introduction of Unconditional Basic Incomes in their countries and steps towards an Unconditional Basic Income in every EU Member State will be a part of the European Commission's proposal for a recommendation on minimum income.

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Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

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to **Members of European Parliament**, dated: **12th of September, 2022**

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*Letter from UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative),
To Members of European Parliament, datet: 12th of September, 2022*

Annex

Resolutions, Papers and Statements of the European Parliament and the European Commission

- **European Parliament: Resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU (2008/2034(INI))**
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52008IP0467>

The European Parliament “7. Agrees with the Commission that social assistance in most Member States is already below a level which makes poverty a risk; insists that the central objective of income support schemes must be to lift people out of poverty and enable them to live in dignity; calls on the Commission to examine whether an unconditional basic income for all could be an effective tool for combating poverty;“

The European Parliament “8. Calls on the Commission to provide a detailed report on whether welfare provision in the Member States (inter alia, minimum income schemes and related benefits, unemployment, invalidity and survivors' benefits, statutory and supplementary pension schemes, early retirement benefits) provide for incomes above the Union's at-risk-of poverty threshold of 60% of national median equalised income;“

The European Parliament “9. Suggests that the Commission should consider establishing a common method of calculating the minimum subsistence amount and the cost of living (a basket of goods and services) in order to ensure comparable measurements of the poverty line and define the criterion for necessary social intervention;“

The European Parliament “13. Considers that the risk of falling into poverty is greater for women than for men, particularly in old age, because social security systems are often based on the principle of continuous remunerated employment; calls for an individualised right to an adequate minimum income which is not conditional on employment related contributions;“

Abolish income poverty at last!
Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

Annex

*Letter from UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative),
To Members of European Parliament, datet: 12th of September, 2022*

- **European Parliament: Resolution of 20 October 2010 on role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe (2010/2039(INI))**
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52010IP0375>

The European Parliament “having regard to International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions Nos 26 and 131 on minimum wage fixing and Nos 29 and 105 on the abolishment of forced labour,“

The European Parliament “J. whereas the risk of falling into extreme poverty is greater for women than for men, particularly in old age, because social security systems are often based on the principle of continuous remunerated employment; whereas an individualised right to a poverty-preventing minimum income should not be conditional on employment-related contributions,“

The European Parliament “X. whereas the role of social protection systems is to ensure the level of social cohesion needed for development guaranteeing social inclusion and mitigating the social repercussions of the financial crisis, which implies a national poverty-preventing individually guaranteed minimum income,“

The European Parliament “34. Believes that the various experiments with minimum incomes and with a guaranteed basic income for everyone, accompanied by additional social integration and protection measures, show that these are effective ways of combating poverty and social exclusion and providing a decent life for all; therefore calls on the Commission to prepare an initiative to support further experiments in the Member States, taking into account and promoting best practices, and ensuring various individually guaranteed poverty-preventing adequate minimum and basic income models as a means of fighting to eradicate poverty and guarantee social justice and equal opportunities for every individual whose need can be established on the basis of the relevant regional yardstick, in keeping with the subsidiarity principle, and without calling into question the specific situations in each Member State; takes the view that this Commission initiative should lead to the drawing-up of an action plan, designed to accompany the implementation of a European initiative on minimum income in the Member States, in accordance with different national practices, collective bargaining and Member States' legislation,“

The European Parliament “36. Believes that the Commission initiative on a guaranteed minimum income should take account of Recommendation 92/441/EEC, which recognises ‘the fundamental right of the individual to sufficient resources in respect of human dignity’, while insisting that the central objective of income support schemes should be that of taking people out of poverty and allowing them to live a decent life, decent invalidity and retirement pensions

Abolish income poverty at last!
Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

Annex

*Letter from UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative),
To Members of European Parliament, datet: 12th of September, 2022*

being included; with this in view, recommends that the Commission consider establishing a common method for calculating a minimum survival income and a cost-of-living minimum (a ‘shopping basket’ of goods and services), with a view to ensuring the availability of comparative measurements of poverty levels and establishing means of social intervention;“

The European Parliament “40. Criticises Member States where minimum income schemes do not meet the relative poverty threshold; reaffirms its demand to Member States to remedy this situation as soon as possible; demands that good and bad practices be addressed by the Commission in the evaluation of national action plans;“

The European Parliament “41. Points to major age discrimination regarding minimum income schemes, such as setting the minimum income for children below the poverty threshold or excluding young people from minimum income schemes due to a lack of social security contributions; stresses that this undermines the unconditionality and decency of minimum income schemes;“

The European Parliament “44. Calls on the Commission and the EU Member States to examine how different models of unconditional and poverty-precluding basic incomes for all could contribute to social, cultural and political inclusion, taking especially into account their non-stigmatising character and their ability to prevent cases of concealed poverty;“

Footnote 10: “The national poverty threshold is set at 60% of the national median income, [...]“

- **European Parliament: Resolution of 24 October 2017 on minimum income policies as a tool for fighting poverty (2016/2270(INI))**
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52017IP0403>

The European Parliament “having regard to International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions Nos 29 and 105 on the abolition of forced labour, ILO Convention No 102 on social security, and ILO Recommendation No 202 on social protection floors.“

“F. whereas according to the methodology developed by Eurostat, the at-risk-of poverty threshold is set at 60 % of national median equivalised disposable income (per household, after social transfers); whereas given the existing divergences between Member States and different national social policies, this percentage should be considered together with other indicators such as reference budgets; whereas income is an indirect indicator of living standards and a reference budget reflects the diversity of consumption patterns and the cost of living across Member States;“

Abolish income poverty at last!
Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

Annex

*Letter from UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative),
To Members of European Parliament, datet: 12th of September, 2022*

The European Parliament “20. Reiterates its position, as expressed in its resolution of 20 October 2010, on the role of minimum income in combating poverty and promoting an inclusive society in Europe;“

The European Parliament “24. Stresses that minimum income schemes should ensure an income that is above the poverty line, prevent severe material deprivation, and lift households out of such situations, and should be accompanied by the provision of public services such as health, education and childcare;“

The European Parliament “39. Believes that Member States, when setting adequate minimum income schemes, should take into account the Eurostat at-risk-of poverty threshold, set at 60 % of national median equivalised disposable income (after social transfers), together with other indicators such as reference budgets; considers that reference budgets could be used to better tackle poverty and to test the robustness of the level of minimum income and of the above-mentioned threshold, while respecting the subsidiarity principle;“

- **European Commission: Reflection Paper on the social dimension of Europe, COM (2017) 206 final of 26 April 2017**
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0206>

Page 23: “At the same time, all countries are led to innovate in a national or European context. From the testing of universal basic income in Finland to the roll out of a guaranteed minimum income in Greece, there is a growing tendency to try out new models to fit new realities.“

- **“The new European Consensus on development ,Our world, our dignity, our future““**

Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission, June 2017 (2017/C 210/01)

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A42017Y0630%2801%29>

“37. To combat inequality, the EU and its Member States will also support efficient, sustainable and equitable social protection systems to guarantee basic income, prevent relapses into

Abolish income poverty at last!
Develop Minimum Income as Unconditional Basic Income!

Annex

Letter from **UBI-EI (Unconditional Basic Income – European Initiative)**,
To **Members of European Parliament**, *dated:* **12th of September, 2022**

extreme poverty and build resilience. They will assess the determinants of and trends in economic and social inequalities and will strengthen their tools and approaches to make them more effective in addressing inequality. The EU and its Member States will mainstream the reduction of inequality in their development cooperation and support innovative social practices.“