
BIEN The Basic Income European Network

BIEN was founded in 1986 and aims to serve as a link between individuals and groups committed to or interested in basic income, and to foster informed discussion on this topic throughout Europe.

Link to BIEN Online at <http://www.basicincome.org>

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BIEN's *NewsFlash* contains up-to-date information on recent events and publications related to BIEN or basic income more generally. The *NewsFlash* is mailed electronically every two months to over 800 subscribers throughout Europe and beyond, and simultaneously made available for consultation or download at [BIEN Online](#). Requests for [free subscription](#) or [items for inclusion or review](#) in future *NewsFlashes* are to be sent to BIEN's secretariat: Philippe Van Parijs, 17 rue de Pavie, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, E-mail: bien@etes.ucl.ac.be.

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1. EDITORIAL

The organisation of BIEN's 9th Congress has now received the official backing of both the International Labour Organisation and the Canton of Geneva. It will take place in the building of the ILO from Thursday the 12th to Saturday the 14th of September 2002, i.e. one week earlier than previously envisaged.

In the meantime, things are progressing on other fronts. For example, the special issue of the *Boston Review* on basic income has been republished as a book with a foreword by Nobel laureate Robert Solow. And the Spanish basic income network is holding its inaugural conference in Barcelona on 8-9 June, while a policy document to be discussed at the Spanish Socialist Party's next congress puts basic income squarely on the table.

The Executive Committee

2. EVENTS

BARCELONA, 8 June 2001: Primer Simposio de la Renta Básica

This first conference organised by Spain's new Basic Income network consists in three sessions. An academic session will be chaired by Jordi Mundó (Universitat de Barcelona), with the participation of Magda Mercader and José Antonio Noguera (both Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Luis Sanzo (Social Security Department of the Basque Government) and Imanol Zubero (Universidad del País Vasco). A second session, focused on Trad Unions and social movements, will be chaired by Anna Alabart (Universitat de Barcelona), with the participation of Joan Coscubiela (Catalan Trade Union CCOO), Mercè Darnell (Càritas, Barcelona), Ciriaco Hidalgo (Trade Union UGT), José Antonio Pérez (ATTAC-Madrid), Diego Rejón (Trade Union CGT) and Iñaki Uribarri (Basque Trade Union ESK). And the final, political session will be chaired by Maite Montagut (Universitat de Barcelona) with the participation of Miguel Candel (EUiA), Anjeles Iztueta (EA, member of the Basque Government), José Luis López Bulla (IC-V, Catalan regional deputy), Carme Porta (ERC Catalan regional deputy), Jordi Sevilla (PSOE, national deputy). The debates will be concluded by economists Rafael Pinilla and Daniel Raventós (Barcelona), two of the driving forces behind the Red Renta Básica.

CALGARY, 17-20 June 2001: Tenth Biennial Canadian Social Welfare Policy Conference

The third plenary session of this major Canada-wide conference on social policy will be introduced by Daniel Turp, professor at the Faculty of Law of the Université de Montréal and member of Canada's House of Commons for the Bloc Québécois from 1997 to 2000, with a keynote lecture on "A Guaranteed Income: A Synthesis Between Individual and Collective Rights"

BUENOS AIRES, 25-27 June 2001: "Precariedad laboral, vulnerabilidad social y seguridad socioeconómica"

An international seminar on job precariousness, social vulnerability and socio-economic security, with the participation (among others) of Lena Lavinas (ILO), academics Dani Raventos (Spain), Laura Pautassi, Alberto Barbeito, Ruben Lo Vuolo, Roberto Gargarella (Argentina) and politicians Senator Eduardo Suplicy (Brazil) and Deputy Elisa Carrió (Argentina).

BOGOTA, 3-6 July 2001: "Subsidios focalizados vrs renta basica universal: los desafios de un nuevo modelo de política social"

An international seminar on targeted benefits versus universal basic income, with the participation (among others) of Senator Eduardo Suplicy (Brazil) and Ruben Lo Vuolo (Argentina). For further information, contact Andres Hernandez at ahernand@uniandes.edu.co

GENEVA, 12-14 September 2002: Ninth Congress of the Basic Income European Network

Preparation is well under way, under the leadership of Guy Standing (GuyStanding@compuserve.com), co-chair of BIEN and director of the ILO's InFocus Programme on Socio-Economic Security, with the collaboration of Bridget Dommen-Meade (bdommen@hotmail.com) and Lena Lavinas (lavinias@ilo.org). Please note the change of date, which will enable us to use the most suitable rooms at the ILO.

3. GLIMPSES OF NATIONAL DEBATES

AUSTRIA: SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS OPEN TO BASIC INCOME

The leader of Austria's Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), Alfred Gusenbauer, launched a discussion forum (Netzwerk Innovation) in order to develop a basis for his party's future

political projects. A first interim report was published on 5 April 2001. As a result, the party's new election programme now proposes to introduce a nationally unified needs-oriented basic security (bedarfsorientierte Grundsicherung) in replacement of the social assistance programs which are now governed by the regions (Länder). This national guaranteed minimum scheme would remain means-tested, but the interim report also puts the proposal of a universal basic income on the agenda. In the chapter on "Fighting Poverty and Minimum Security" basic income is explicitly mentioned: "In this context the idea of a basic income, which, by virtue of being a universal benefit, offers material security to all members of society, is an option which, in a long-term perspective, should not be taboo." After the Greens and the Left-Liberal Party "Liberales Forum", the SPO thus becomes the third Austrian party in Austria to be explicitly involved in the Basic Income debate. The SPO's interim report is available on the homepage of its "innovation network": www.netzwerk-innovation.at.

BRAZIL: A FEDERAL MINIMUM INCOME SCHEME

On 11 April 2001, the Brazilian Government took an important step in the direction of a minimum income guarantee. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso signed into law a bill approved by the Brazilian National Congress creating a conditional income guarantee called the Guaranteed Minimum Income Program. The level of the guarantee is modest: 15 Brazilian Reals (or about 8 Euros), per child and per month, for each child aged 6 to 15 up to a maximum of 45 Reals per family for families earning less than half of the Brazilian minimum wage of 180 Reals (about 100 Euros). The minimum wage in Brazil is not a legally binding wage floor but a reference point for inflation adjustments, and many people make considerably less than the minimum. Thus, even this modest guarantee level could make a substantial difference for many Brazilian families. It is estimated that 167,000 families will be eligible in the city of Sao Paulo alone. The benefit is conditional on the children attending school. Benefits will be paid directly by the Federal Government, but municipalities will be responsible for registering the families and verifying the presence of children in school. There is some concern with how the program will interact with existing programs at the state and local level, some of which also take the form of a conditional income guarantee. But Sao Paulo Mayor, Marta Suplicy and others have been promoting the idea of coordinating federal, state, and local programs.

CANADA: THE SUPREME COURT AND THE RIGHT TO AN INCOME

According to "Workfare-Fight, the list for fighting workfare internationally", the Supreme Court of Canada has agreed to hear, probably in the Autumn of 2001, a claim by Quebec welfare claimant Louise Gosselin to a right to an adequate level of social assistance for those in need. Quebec is the only jurisdiction in North America to include social and economic rights in its human rights legislation. This will be the first case in which the Supreme Court considers this provision in the Quebec Charter. More significantly, it will also be the first case in which the Court will consider whether the right to "security of the person" in the Canadian Charter prohibits cuts to welfare which deny recipients basic necessities and whether the guarantee of equality includes substantive obligations to provide adequately for disadvantaged groups relying on social assistance. For more information: <http://www.icomm.ca/workfare/>.

IRELAND: REPORT PUBLISHED, GREEN PAPER PROMISED

The Prime Minister (or Taoiseach) has promised that the Government's long awaited Green Paper on Basic Income will be published in the Autumn of 2001. This Green Paper was promised by the present government when it came into office in 1997. But publication was delayed until the Working Group on Basic Income, which was set up by virtue of the National Agreement "Partnership 2000" (1997), had completed its report. This report was published on 2 March 2001 and was widely discussed in the Irish Parliament on 10 April 2001. In a letter to the Justice Commission of the CORI (Conference of Religious of Ireland), the most active pro-BI lobby in Ireland, "the Taoiseach acknowledged that the studies provide a very valuable input to the analysis and debate about Basic Income. He went on to state: "Such a debate is extremely desirable as we consider the best way to achieve shared goals in respect of poverty and the pursuit of social inclusion. It was for this reason that the Government committed itself to the publication of a Green Paper, which would stimulate a wider public debate and thus advance the policy process." (Quote from Justice Commission's Newsletter, "Contact", May 2001, p.1). For more information:

<http://www.cori.ie/justice/>. Copies of the report are available on the Irish Government's website at: <http://www.irlgov.ie/taoiseach/publication/default.htm>.

SPAIN: SOCIALISTS CONSIDER BASIC INCOME

According to an article by economist Joaquim Estefanía published in El País of Sunday 27 May 2001 (<http://www.elpais.es/suplementos/domingo/20010527/cronica.html>), the document prepared for the July 2001 political congress of Spain's socialist party (PSOE), currently in the opposition, proposes the introduction of a universal and unconditional "citizenship basic income" (renta básica de ciudadanía). The document seems to be clear about the difference between such a basic income and both a means-tested "insertion income" and a negative income tax, but the details of the proposal are not known. Its author is the national deputy from Castellón and former national minister Jordi Sevilla, currently the PSOE's secretary for political economy and employment. Basic income already featured in the programme with which Rodríguez Zapatero won the leadership of the PSOE in 2000.

UNITED KINGDOM: BLAIR PROPOSES A MODEST BASIC ENDOWMENT FOR EVERY BABY

According to The Times (London) of 30 April 2001, Tony Blair launched his idea of a baby bond of 500 Pounds (about 750 Euros) "in an attempt to bridge the wealth gap between rich and poor". The money would be invested until the child reached 18, when it could be drawn on for approved purposes: "By the time they're ready to start life on their own, every child in every family in every home across the country will have a sound financial platform which could help pay for lifelong learning, training, owning that first home, setting up a business," Blair proclaimed. *The Times* explicitly attributes the paternity of the idea to Yale law professor, one of the keynote speakers at BIEN's 2000 Congress: "It was an American, Bruce Ackerman, who came up last year with a more ambitious version of the "baby bond" scheme. In his book *The Stakeholder Society*, Ackerman proposed that the US government give every young American \$ 80,000 on reaching 21." And an early version of it is correctly attributed to the first formulator of a basic-income-type proposal: "The idea was first mooted by Thomas Paine, the left-wing British writer, in the 18th century. Paine wanted to give every 18-year-old Pounds 15 (equal to about Pounds 1,500 today), paid out of inheritance tax. Here is the story of how it got into Labour's Manifesto for the June 2001 election: "But it was LeGrand who brought the proposal home to new Labour. Six months ago he published a paper suggesting a Pounds 10,000 capital grant. In the same week, the Institute for Public Policy Research, a Blairite think tank, outlined a "baby bond" plan. Blunkett, the education and employment secretary, championed this idea in Whitehall, having discussed it with Robert Reich, Bill Clinton's labour secretary. He had to battle on two fronts: first against Treasury mandarins who were appalled at the cost and secondly against Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's powerful special adviser, who disliked the idea that the state should lay down the purposes on which the matured bonds could be spent. Blunkett and Brown himself are said to have no such qualms. "Why shouldn't we limit the things this money can be spent on if it's us handing out the money?" said one minister." Under the plan, the state would set up trust funds for the 700,000 children born every year. The initial grants would range from Pounds 250 for the children of better-off families to up to Pounds 500 for the poorest. In addition, it would be topped up by three sums of Pounds 50-Pounds 100 as the child grew. Eventually it might be worth more than Pounds 5,000. The conservatives objected further that the scheme is complicated and relies on means-testing. "Part of Gordon Brown's model is that he is trying to boost the income of the poorest people. But people are trapped just above poverty."

4. PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

ROBEYNS, Ingrid. "An Income of One's Own", in *Gender and Development* 9(1), March 2001, pp.82-89. Address: Wolfson College, Cambridge CB3 9BB, UK, ir214@hermes.cam.ac.uk

A succinct but well-informed presentation of the case for basic income in both the North and the South, with special attention given to gender relations. "For women", the article concludes, "basic income is definitely more promising than policies of 'workfare'. Workfare focuses exclusively on getting

women into formal employment, whereas basic or participation income schemes acknowledge the worth of unpaid caring work [...]. At the same time, women would benefit most if such a policy would be implemented together with policy measures that combat gender inequities and challenge gender roles. I would defend this 'package' as my favourite vision of a gender-just society."

SCHROEDER, Doris. "Wickedness, Idleness and Basic Income", in *Res Publica* 7, 2001, 1-12. (Author's address: Centre for Professional Ethics, University of Central Lancashire, Preston PR1 2HE, UK, dschroeder@uclan.ac.uk)

Those who argue that basic income leads to an unfair distribution of burden between "lazy idlers" and "honest taxpayers" have to face three questions. Is the distribution of onerous or unpleasant work fair? Is the distribution of work burdens between paid and unpaid workers equitable? Is the distribution of work between the employed and the unemployed fair? According to Doris Schroeder, the answer to all three questions is "no", and the "idleness" argument against basic income therefore rests on unfounded premises.

VAN PARIJS, Philippe, *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch?*, Boston: Beacon Press "New Democracy Forum", 2001, 138p., ISBN 0-8070-4713-9. (Address: Chaire Hoover, 3 Place Montesquieu, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be)

An elegant republication of the *Boston Review's* recent special issue on basic income in a series edited by the BR's editors Joshua Cohen (MIT) and Joel Rogers (Wisconsin), with a new foreword by MIT economist and Nobel laureate Robert Solow. The lead piece ("A Basic Income for All") and the reply are by Philippe Van Parijs (professor at Louvain University and Secretary of BIEN). Comments have been written by Gar Alperowitz (Washington), Anne Alstott (Yale), Elizabeth Anderson (Michigan), Brian Barry (Columbia), Fred Block (Univ. of Pennsylvania), Ronald Dore (LSE), Peter Edelman (Georgetown), William Galston (Maryland), Robert Goodin (Canberra), Katherine McFate (Rockefeller Foundation), Claus Offe (Berlin), Edmund Phelps (Columbia), Wade Rathke (ACORN), Emma Rotschild (Cambridge) and Herbert A. Simon (Carnegie Mellon). According to Robert Solow's foreword, "Van Parijs and his respondents debate fundamental questions about the goals of social arrangements and how social policy can help create the sort of society we want to live in - about how to correct for poverty amidst plenty, and how to ensure that everyone gets a fair share of the benefits of social cooperation. While the market for redistributive social policy in the United States today remains limited, public debates about these important questions should be kept alive. This volume is a refreshing opening to that discussion."

FRENCH

MONGEAU, Serge . *La simplicité volontaire, plus que jamais...*, Montréal: Editions Ecosociété (<http://www.ecosociete.org/>), 1998, 264p.

Groups and individuals committed to "voluntary simplicity" believe that over-consumption stands at the centre of some of the social and ecological problems faced by our planet. Increasingly popular in the US and Canada, this somewhat heterogeneous movement promotes alternative ways of living, and attacks advertising broadly conceived (see the famous Canadian "Adbusters" - <http://www.adbusters.org/>). In this new edition of his best-selling book on Voluntary Simplicity (first published in 1985), the Quebecois Serge Mongeau similarly argues for thinking globally while acting locally through a "simple living". Chapter XII on "A needs-focused economy") advocates a Citizen's Income ("Revenu de citoyenneté") as a way to value unpaid work and useful (non profit-oriented) activities (pp.195-197).

SWEDISH

KILDAL, Nanna ed., *Den nya sociala frågan. Om arbete, inkomst och rättvisa*, Göteborg (Sweden): Daidalos, 2001, 251p, ISBN 917173135-0. (Editor's address: Nanna.Kildal@sefos.uib.no)

Edited under the title "The New Social Question" by Nanna Kildal, professor of social policy at the University of Bergen (Norway), this is the most extensive Scandinavian collection on basic income so far. Following the editor's lucid and synthetic introduction, it includes translations of recent substantive contributions by some of the most prominent contributors to the European debate on basic income - Claus Offe (Berlin), Guy Standing (Geneva), Joachim Mitschke (Frankfurt), Anthony Atkinson (Oxford), Philippe Van Parijs (Louvain) and Jorn Loftager (Aarhus). As a useful supplement to this up-to-date anthology, Bo Rothstein (professor of political science at the University of Göteborg) contributed a thorough discussion of the relationship between basic income and Scandinavia's universalist welfare state. And the book closes with a Swedish version of the 1997 *Political Studies* debate on basic income and reciprocity between Stuart White (Oxford) and Philippe Van Parijs (Louvain).

5. THREE BOOKS FROM THE EIGHTIES

Three books in three different languages recently brought to our attention by their respective authors show early many of today's arguments for basic income had been systematically and persuasively articulated - and how easy it has been to overlook or forget them.

BOSS, Gilbert. *Les Machines à penser. L'homme et l'ordinateur*. Zurich: Editions du Grand Midi, 1987, 201 p., ISBN 2-88093-105-3 (Author's address: gboss@vif.com, <http://www.vif.com/users/gboss/>)

The second chapter (on "the robots' social challenge") of this book written by a professor at Laval University (Québec) presents the idea of an "automatic wage", paid to all, whether workers or not, rich or poor, funded by a tax on robots and machines.

OYEN, Else (Ed.) (1981), "GMI - Garantert Minsteinntekt i Norge", Oslo -Bergen - Tromso (Norway): Universitetsforlaget, 222p. (Editor's address: CROP, Fosswinkelsgate 7, N-5007 Bergen, Norway; tel: +47 55 58 97 39, crop@uib.no.)

Edited by Professor Oyen, who is now the coordinator of a worldwide Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (<http://www.crop.org>), this collective book by Norwegian researchers, administrators and politicians looks at different aspects of guaranteed basic income schemes. It includes a whole chapter on the Negative Income Tax experiments in the USA, as well as detailed calculations of the cost of the proposal in the Norwegian context.

SHEAHEN, Allan. *Guaranteed Income. The Right to Economic Security*. Los Angeles: GAIN Publications, 1983, 278p. ISBN 0-910725-03-9. (Author's address:

A highly readable introduction to basic income in the form of a negative income tax proposal of about 10.000 US\$ per year to every adult, gradually phased out (with a 67% effective marginal rate) as earnings increase, until they reach the break-even level of 15.000 US\$. 117 questions about basic income are grouped into 18 chapters and answered step by step

6. NATIONAL NETWORKS

OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED BY BIEN

- *Citizen's Income Study Centre*
Director: Stuart Duffin
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- *Vereniging Basinkomen*
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OTHER EUROPEAN GROUPS

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- *Association pour l'instauration d'un revenu d'existence (AIRE)*
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Website: <http://www.vobs.at/asav/pax1.htm>
- *Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Sozialhilfeinitiativen (BAG-SHI)*
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Website: <http://www.geocities.com/~ubinz/>
- *Organisation advocating support income in Australia (OASIS)*
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Website: <http://www.satcom.net.au/supportincome>
- *BIEN Brazil (Basic Income Earth Network)*
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- *American Basic Income Network*
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Provisional website: <http://www.fes.uwaterloo.ca/Research/FW>

OTHER RELEVANT WEBSITES

- <http://www3.sympatico.ca/tim.rourke/bi.html>: "A quick seminar on what Basic Income is all about, so that people can then get up from the computer screen and go and do something about it." Contact: Tim Rourke at tim.rourke@sympatico.ca
- www.petitiononline.com/qd4e/petition.html: All those who support the idea of some kind of (partial) basic income, or participation income, at the European level are invited by the Swedish basic income supporter Mats Hoglund to sign this petition and send comments. Contact: Mats Hoglund at vivantinternational@hotmail.com
- <http://www.jaspersbox.com>: The site includes several essays on various aspects of money, a basic income plan funded by a non-confiscatory method (Excalibrator) and a novel ("Daily Bread: The Story of Jasper's Box.") about a group of ATM machines that mysteriously appear and begin to distribute an equal daily dose of money to any and all. Contact: Stephen C. Clark at stephen.c.clark@worldnet.att.net

7. MORE ABOUT BIEN

BIEN's EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Prof. Ilona Ostner (lostner@gwdg.de), co-chair;
- Dr Guy Standing (GuyStanding@compuserve.com), co-chair;
- Alexander de Roo MEP (aderoo@europarl.eu.int), treasurer;
- Prof. Claus Offe (coffe@sowi.hu-berlin.de), research coordinator;
- Prof. Philippe Van Parijs (vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be), secretary, with support from Yannick Vanderborght (vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be)
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HONORARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Prof. Edwin Morley-Fletcher (m-fletcher@cnel.it)
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- Dr Steven Quilley (steve.quilley@ucd.ie).

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF BIEN

Membership of BIEN is open to anyone who shares its objectives. The individual membership fee is 25 Euros for 1999-2000 or 100 Euros for life membership. BIEN Members receive hard copies of the Newsletter, are kept informed of relevant meetings, seminars and research projects and have voting rights at BIEN's General Assembly held every second year in conjunction with the Congress. A broad membership strengthens BIEN in its efforts to put basic income on academic and political agendas. It also provides much appreciated support to the unpaid activity of the Executive Committee and gives BIEN a firm basis for the funding of its modest running costs. A full statement of accounts is submitted to the General Assembly. To become a BIEN member, please fill out the *Membership Subscription Form* or download the *Individual Membership Form* which are both on the BIEN web site (<http://www.etes.ucl.ac.be/BIEN/JoinBien.htm>). An acknowledgment will be sent upon receipt. For further questions, e-mail BIEN at bien@etes.ucl.ac.be.

BIEN'S LIFE MEMBERS

James Meade (+), Gunnar Adler-Karlsson (SE), Maria Ozanira da Silva (BR), Ronald Dore (UK), Alexander de Roo (NL), Edouard Dommén (CH), Philippe Van Parijs (BE), P.J. Verberne (NL), Tony Walter (UK), Philippe Grosjean (BE), Malcolm Torry (UK), NN (Geneva, CH), Andrew Williams (UK), Roland Duchatelet (BE), Manfred Füllsack (AT), Anne-Marie Prieels (BE), Philippe Desguin (BE), Joel Handler (US), Sally Lerner (CA), David Macarov (IL), Paul Metz (NL), Claus Offe (DE), Guy Standing (CH), Hillel Steiner (UK), Werner Govaerts (BE), Robley George (US), Yoland Bresson (FR), Richard Hauser (DE), Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy (BR), Jan-Otto Andersson (FI), Ingrid Robeyns (UK), John Baker (IE), Rolf Kuettel (CH), Michael Murray (US), Carlos Farinha Rodrigues (PT), Yann Mouliez Boutang (FR), Joachim Mitschke (DE), Rik van Berkel (NL), François Blais (CA), Katrin Töns (DE), NN (New York, US), Gérard Degrez (BE), Michael Opielka (DE), Lena Lavinias (BR), Julien Dubouchet (CH), Jeanne Hrdina (CH), Joseph Huber (DE), Markku Ikkala (FI), Luis Moreno (ES), Rafael Pinilla (ES), Graham Taylor (UK), W. Robert Needham (CA), Tom Borsen Hansen (DK), Ian Murray (US), Peter Molgaard Nielsen (DK), Fernanda Rodrigues (PT), Helmut Pelzer (DE), Rod Dobell (CA), Walter Van Trier (BE), Loek Groot (NL), Andrea Fumagalli (IT), Bernard Berteloot (FR), Jean-Pierre Mon (FR), Angelika Krebs (DE), Ahmet Insel (FR), Alberto Barbeito (AR), Ruben Lo Vuolo (AR), Manos Matsaganis (GR), José Iglesias Fernández (ES), Daniel Eichler (DE), Cristovam Buarque (BR), Michael Lewis (US), Clive Lord (UK), Jean Morier-Genoud (FR), Eri Noguchi (US), Michael Samson (ZA), Ingrid van Niekerk (ZA), Karl Widerquist (US), Al Sheahen (US), Christopher Balfour (AND), Jurgen De Wispelaere (UK), Wolf-Dieter Just (DE), Zsuzsa Ferge (HU)

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