
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>

E-mail: bien@basicincome.org

NewsFlash 18 **SPECIALISSUE BIENONLINE, NOVEMBER 2002**

BIEN's *NewsFlash* contains up-to-date information on recent events and publications related to BIEN or basic income more generally. It 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@basicincome.org.

This *NewsFlash* has been prepared with the help of Jurgen De Wispelaere, Ute Hausmann, Daniel Raventos, Yannick Vanderborgh and Karl Widerquist.

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1. EDITORIAL

We are delighted to announce the launching of BIEN's new web site, a major new step in the development of our network.

As you will see by clicking on <http://www.basicincome.org/>, the new site does not only look more professional, more elegant, more imaginative than the old one. It has also become far user-friendlier thanks to a handy search tool, and includes brand new components, such as a comprehensive list of books that can be ordered on line and (the first instalment of) an illustrated history of basic income. As you may also see, some work still needs to be done in order to integrate all parts of the old site, but there is already plenty to discover, enjoy - and improve. [Jurgen De Wispelaere](#), our newly elected web manager, gives more details below about what the new site offers and how it can best be used. He will be pleased to receive feedback and suggestions.

On behalf of all members of BIEN and of all those who will make use of our new site, whether on a regular or occasional basis, we want to thank Jurgen very warmly for his long and hard job so far and for his willingness to deal with the regular updating of this splendid new tool.

The Executive Committee

2. EVENTS

Sao Paulo (BR), 17 August 2002, O desenvolvimento da Idéia da renda básica ou renda de cidadania

Several hundred people attended a three-hour debate on the relevance of basic income for a country like Brazil, organised by the School of Economics of the Universidade de Sao Paulo (USP). The introductory lecture was given by Philippe Van Parijs (professor at the University of Louvain and secretary of BIEN), with comments by prominent politicians and academics, including Senator Eduardo Suplicy (who master-minded the event), Martha Suplicy (Mayor of the city of Sao Paulo), Aloizio Mercadante (deputy chairman of the Workers' Party PT), Paul Singer (Professor at the University of Sao Paulo), Antonio Maria da Silveira (professor at the University of Minas Gerais and first advocate of basic income ideas in Brazil) and others.

Medellin (CO), 20 August 2002, Tiene sentido el ingreso básico como proyecto mundial?

To celebrate its 20th anniversary, the Medellin-based Escuela Nacional Sindical, an institution devoted to the nation-wide continued education of Trade Union representatives, chose to organise a public event on basic income, in the form of a public lecture by Philippe Van Parijs (professor at the University of Louvain and secretary of BIEN). The event drew wide attention in the local press in this city of 3.5 million inhabitants. The Escuela published a little book of essays by Philippe Van Parijs on this occasion (*Hacia una concepción de la justicia social global*, Medellin: Fundacion Confiar) and intends to organise further activities on the topic. Further information: contact at [Jorge Giraldo](mailto:Jorge.Giraldo@esn.org.co)

Oberursel (DE), 27-28 September 2002, Das Menschenrecht auf Nahrung : Existenzsicherndes Mindesteinkommen als Staatenpflicht?

A seminar on an adequate basic income as a duty for governments in North and South, organised by the German section of FIAN, an international NGO campaigning for the universal "right to food". Further information: contact Ute Hausmann, FIAN Deutschland, Overwegstr. 31, D-44625 Herne, e-mail: u.hausmann@fian.de; <http://www.fian.de/mindeink.htm>.

Vitoria (ES) 13-14 December 2002, Renta Básica y garant'a de ingresos. Nuevas propuestas

A major two-day bilingual (Castilian/Basque) conference on basic income hosted by the Basque government. Speakers include Mikko Kautto (Helsinki), Chantal Euzéby (Grenoble), Miguel Laparra & Manuel Aguilar (Pamplona), Karel Van den Bosch (Antwerp), Daniel Raventos (Barcelona), José Antonio Noguera (Barcelona), Rafael Pinilla (Valencia) and Luis Sanzo (Basque Government). Further information: Luis Sanzo, Departamento de Justicia, Empleo y Seguridad Social, Gobierno Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz, e-mail: SanzoGLu@ej-gv.es

New York (US), 21-13 February, Second Congress of the U.S. Basic Income Guarantee Network

The U.S. Basic Income Guarantee Network will hold its 2003 meeting in conjunction with the Eastern Economics Association meeting in Manhattan on February 21-23 at the Crowne Plaza Manhattan Hotel, 1605 Broadway. Scholars of any discipline and activists are invited to attend. Everyone who attends must register with the EEA. Check the EEA website (<http://www.iona.edu/eea/>) for more information about registration. Contact Karl Widerquist at Karl@widerquist.com for any other information about the conference. The following presentations are already scheduled:

- Michael Lewis, Stony Brook University, NY, "Perhaps there can be too much freedom."
- Hilary Silver, Brown University, Providence, RI, "Social Exclusion and Basic Income"
- Allan Sheahen, Author, Van Nuys, CA, "Does Everyone Have the Right to a Basic Income Guarantee?"
- Amy Wax, Penn State University, PA, "The Political Psychology of Social Security: - Obstacles to Reform"

- James B. Bryan, Manhattanville College, NY "Targeted Programs v. The Basic Income Guarantee: An Examination of the Efficiency Costs of Funding Different Forms of Redistribution"
- Michael Samson, and Ingrid van Niekerk, Economic Policy Research Institute, Cape Town, South Africa, "Social Security Reform and the Basic Income Grant for South Africa"
- Thierry Laurent, and Yannick l'Horty, University Paris-Evry, France "Basic Income/Minimum Wage Schedule and the Occurrence of Inactivity Traps: Some Evidence on the French Labor Market"
- Steven Shafarman, Citizen Policies Institute, Washington, DC, "Globalization and Anti-Globalization: Is Basic Income the Answer?"
- Jason Murphy (coauthor John Buerck) Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, "Thinking Machines, Automated Administration, Citizen Participation, and a Guaranteed Income"
- Leland Gerson Neuberger, Boston University, Boston, MA, "Beyond Basic Incomes and Stakes: Toward the Ideals of Socialism without Public Ownership of the Means of Production"
- Buford Farris, Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, MO "A Real War on Poverty: Guaranteed Income Plus"
- José Luis Rey Pérez, Universidad Pontificia Comillas of Madrid, Spain, "Can we argue for a human right to Basic Income?"
- Karl Widerquist, University of Oxford, UK, "Who Exploits Who?"
- Andrea Fumagalli, University of Pavia, Italy, "Bioeconomics, Cognitive Work and Labor Flexibility: the Unequal Exchange"
- Leonardo Fernando Cruz Basso, Brazil, "Meritorious currency: a currency against famine"
- Jeffery Smith, Geonomy Society, "Predistribution"
- Stephen C. Clark, California, "The Basic Income Guarantee as the Foundation of a Sound Currency and a Free and open Market"
- Leland Gerson Neuberger, Boston University, "What Defeated a Negative Income Tax? Constructing a Causal Explanation of a Politically Controversial Historical Event"
- Steven Shafarman, Citizen Policies Institute, "Mobilizing Support for Basic Income"
- Theresa Funicello, Social Agenda, New York, NY, "Getting on a path to just distribution: The Caregiver Credit Campaign"
- Karen Kallmann, Black Sash, Cape Town, South Africa, "Mobilizing Civil Society for a Basic Income Grant"
- Bradley Nelson, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, "Democratic Ideals: An Argument for Basic Income"
- Almaz Zelleke, Independent Scholar, Brooklyn, NY, "Distributive Justice and the Argument for Basic Income"
- Harry F. Dahms, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, "Breaking the Glass Barrier: How Basic Income is a Qualitatively Different Social Policy Paradigm"

4. BIENONLINE (RE)LAUNCHED

At the 2000 Berlin Conference, the BIEN General Assembly decided that after 15 years BIEN's web site needed a serious overhaul. Over the past two years Jurgen De Wispelaere, with the help of Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght, designed a completely new site from scratch. The new site, branded "BIENOnline" is now finally operational and can be accessed at <http://www.basicincome.org/>. For the time being the old web site also remains active (users can choose which site to access on the home page) because the BIENArchive section is not fully updated yet. The old site will be phased out as soon as that section is complete.

Below you will find a brief overview of the main features of BIENOnline. We hope BIEN members and other users will find it easy to work with, and will benefit from improved accessibility and usability. Web sites are of course always in development, so suggestions, comments or criticisms remain welcome at j.de-wispelaere@lse.ac.uk.

BIEN'S WEBSITE 1996-2002: A BRIEF DIAGNOSIS

When BIEN's web site was first created in 1996, it served a fairly limited purpose. Its main goal was to double up as a storage facility for the information contained in the Newsletters. As years went by, two things happened. First, while basic income itself gained prominence in social policy debates, BIEN became more central to the cause of promoting basic income. Second, in tandem with the bi-monthly NewsFlashes started in January 2000, BIEN's web site became an indispensable channel of communication between members and the wider basic income community. BIEN's website now contains far more information than was ever anticipated and has become a key tool for anyone interested in finding out more about basic income.

However, BIEN's old web site never kept up with these changes. One of the problems with the it was that pages and information were simply added without ever rethinking the structure of the site. As websites grow, they often outgrow their structure and redesign becomes inevitable. Web sites that do not keep up rapidly lose a clear structure and key information becomes inaccessible, out-of-date and even contradictory. This is what has happened with BIEN's old web site. The remedy: a radical overhaul by designing a new site from scratch and updating all information available.

BIEN SITE RESTRUCTURED

BIENOnline has been redesigned and restructured by taking into account three key principles: increasing accessibility, increasing usability and accommodating user heterogeneity.

Increasing Accessibility. Accessibility refers to ease with which one can access the site from outside: the effectiveness of a web site depends crucially on making it accessible by as many users as possible. *BIENOnline* has introduced a number of measures to improve user accessibility:

- *Introducing simple URL:* The new URL www.basicincome.org is easy to remember and immediately points out what the web site is about; it provides an identifiable marker for BIEN in the web community.
- *Invisible Key Words:* *BIENOnline* makes use of key words like "basic income", "citizen's income", "economic justice" and so on that are invisible to users but are picked up by search engines. This makes sure BIEN is listed at the top whenever users search the internet for BI related information (in addition to *BIENOnline* being listed with a number of professional search engines).
- *Low Graphics Site:* *BIENOnline* uses a lot of graphics to make it pleasing on the design front. But as graphics increase download times each page also has a low-graphics version for people who don't use broadband to access the internet. The low-graphics version has two additional advantages: it is printer-friendly and it makes the web site compatible with speech software to accommodate the needs of disabled users. Switching between high and low graphics versions can be done by one click (clicking the "print" or "screen" icons on each page).

Increasing Usability. The principle of usability refers to easy access to information once users enter the site. The usability of a web site depends on a number of key aspects: Is the information organised in a clear and straightforward manner? Is the information advertised in a clear and straightforward manner? Can the relevant information be easily accessed from one page to another?

- *Information Update:* The first step has been to cross-check all the information and make sure that all information is relevant, up-to-date, and clustered together at the most appropriate pages. For instance, one general conference page provides all relevant information about different conferences, including how to download available papers. In some cases this process still needs some updating (e.g., country reports and historical notes).
- *Information Headings:* Headings, key words and titles have been streamlined to make sure that each heading adequately reflects the information it contains.
- *Site Navigation:* Site navigation is of the utmost importance for making a web site user-friendly. On *BIENOnline* each page connects up to any other page through an extensive but very easy to use links section on the left hand side of each page (navigation reflects the

four-layer structure of *BIENOnline* - see below). The links are designed to minimize clicking as well as scrolling: in principle almost all relevant information can be accessed by clicking 2-3 times from the Home Page, and long pages break down in subsections to avoid having to scroll down to get to the correct information.

- *Quick Links Navigation*: Each page contains handy quick links to: Home Page, Search Engine, Sitemap, a direct email link to bien@basicincome.org, downloading the Latest *NewsFlash* and Latest Congress information. Quick links allow users to access key information with one click.
- *High/Low Graphics Mirror*: Each page offers a choice between the low and high graphics version of that page; both sites contain exactly the same information.
- *Sitemap*: *BIENOnline* contains an elaborated Sitemap allowing users a good overview of the structure of the site and one-click access to most pages.
- *Search Engines*: Two search engines improve usability; see below for further discussion.

Accommodating User Heterogeneity. *BIENOnline* users are a very diverse crowd. Some users have never heard of basic income and require easy access to basic information (what is basic income? what are the main arguments pro or contra?) or want to know more about BIEN or other organisations promoting basic income. Others have been researching or lobbying for basic income for decades, have been involved with BIEN for ages, and only want to be kept informed of the latest information. To accommodate user heterogeneity *BIENOnline* employs a structure with four key layers, which is reflected in the design of the home page and the navigation of subsequent pages:

- *About Basic Income*: This section contains introduction-level information about basic income and related policies: definition of basic income; concise historical overview of basic income; dynamic FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) list. This section is mainly geared at new entrants in the basic income community.
- *About BIEN*: This section contains information about BIEN itself. Like the section on basic income it provides introduction-level info about BIEN's history etc for new entrants. This section is also very useful for promotion purposes (background information for newspapers etc.). Regular users still may want to consult records of GA Minutes etc.
- *BIENResources*: This section contains regularly updated information about basic income events (including BIEN's Congresses) or links to basic income organisations. It keeps a record of all past Newsletters and NewsFlashes which can be downloaded in pdf format.
- *BIENArchive*: This section is similar in idea to the Annotated Survey section before, but very different in outlook and structure. It contains regularly updated subsections on publications (organized by author, date, language), congress papers (Amsterdam, Berlin and Geneva), national debates and historical notes. For easy use it has its own search engine and operates a one-click system allowing to move from one page to another efficiently. *BIENArchive* is a major tool for (advanced) BI researchers.

Together it is hoped these measures will make *BIENOnline* more user-friendly and also more effective in promoting basic income across Europe and beyond. The best way to get familiar with these improvements is of course to simply try them out

NEW FEATURES

Apart from the design and a significant restructuring of existing information, *BIENOnline* also has a number of new features. These are briefly outlined below.

News@BIENOnline. This new feature on the Home Page highlights a few key issues that BIEN wants to draw attention to: this ranges from new events, a new significant publication, important evolutions in national debates, deadlines for conferences and so forth.

Two Search Engines. One of the important new features in *BIENOnline* is the use of two (!) search engines:

- Search *BIENOnline* covers the whole site and can be accessed from a special page by hitting the quick link [Search BIENOnline](#).

- Search *BIENArchive* covers the list of publications, congress papers (starting with Amsterdam 1998), historical notes and country reports; this search engine features on the left-hand navigation of each *BIENArchive* page.

The rationale underlying the use of a separate search engine for research material is that it allows researchers to focus on publications without being bothered by "noise" (elements that are not research-related).

Both Search engines are powered by Atomz.Com, one of the best professional engine software companies (used by Amazon to search their database). It is also free below 500 pages, provided we use their logo on the search results page. Search results appear on a page hosted by Atomz.Com which uses the *BIENOnline* template: although the page is hosted on a different server it is virtually indistinguishable from our own pages and users can easily link up to any other page on BIEN's server.

Atomz.Com also provides regular reports of searches carried out on our site. They are set to monthly frequency and to highlight often-used key words. I will copy search reports to all EC members and they could even be included in each *NewsFlash*.

BIEN joins Amazon Partners. BIEN has joined the Amazon Partners scheme, which basically means that we have a list of recent books on basic income on our site that link directly to the corresponding pages at Amazon. Amazon then pays a certain percentage each time users buy books through our website.

A regularly updated listing of recent books is found at <http://www.etes.ucl.ac.be/BIEN/Books.htm>; the same list is also displayed on the right-hand side of each *BIENArchive* page. The main reason for joining this scheme is not the opportunity to earn some cash; it is rather to provide a service to people interested in BI and BI authors alike by notifying users of new books that have appeared in four different languages (so far): English, French, German and Spanish. The selection of books is based on a list of books from the past decade which was cross-checked for availability through Amazon. We would like to regularly update this section, so suggestions in any of these four (and possibly later more) languages are always welcome. We shall assess the usefulness and possible drawbacks of this service and decide in due course whether to continue with it.

Electronic Submission Form. *BIENOnline* for the first time uses Online Subscription Forms to accommodate its ever growing list of members. At the moment this feature only operates for people interested in joining BIEN as regular or life members.

The main advantages of online submission of information are: standardisation of information which facilitates administration, it is user friendly for those who submit as well as those who process information, and it is possible to include fail-safe mechanism which prevent the omission of information or the submission of false information.

After evaluating the use of this electronic form in the next 6 months or so, BIEN might consider extending this device in due course to include some of the following:

- subscription to BIEN's e-mail list
- comments/suggestions of BIEN members to the EC
- submission of papers for BIEN Congress
- Congress and accommodation registration at BIEN Congress
- submission of basic income links & events

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

A web site is a very dynamic tool and in a sense is never 'finished'. Here are some thoughts on how we may further improve *BIENOnline*, or integrate it with other aspects of BIEN. These are very much provisional thoughts whose sustainable feasibility needs to be thoroughly investigated and discussed before their being actively pursued.

Update country reports. As basic income or related policies are becoming increasingly visible, the section on National Debates and Country Reports is in need of regular updating; it would be worthwhile to investigate ways in which that information gets filtered through from national groups and associations in a clear format.

Making BIENOnline "inclusive". In the web community there is increased attention to non-standard users: for instance people with visual disabilities who use special software to access web information. Since BIEN has a firm commitment towards social inclusion, its web site should cater for these special needs. In the next few months changes will be made (often invisible to ordinary users) to make BIENOnline fully compatible with special guidelines in this area.

BIENArchive database-driven. In due course we might consider abandoning the listings approach in the BIENArchive sections and turn them completely database-driven. The main advantage would be to render fine-tuned searches and browsing even easier; it would also significantly improve maintenance of the listings. A database-driven section could allow for external users to submit information through specially designed electronic forms, which would be automatically processed once approved by a BIEN administrator. This is of course a long-term plan, but one which current web technology could easily support.

Web discussion forum. As part of an overall policy of promoting basic income a web discussion forum with regularly updated issues might be useful. There are many servers that provide free facilities.

BIEN Congress assistance. BIENOnline aims to improve its assistance to local conference organizers in two ways. First, by standardizing BIEN Congress web pages it makes it easier for users to find relevant information. Second, by making congress page templates available in advance BIEN can provide more efficient assistance to local conference organizers, ensuring that web information will be posted more quickly. Web page templates will be designed in consultation with past and present congress convenors.

Promoting new organisations. BIEN wants to assist other national and international networks in getting off the ground. Apart from promoting networks in the links or events sections, BIEN could provide a special section in which new organisations can introduce themselves to the wider community.

4. 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);
- Dr Stuart Duffin (Stuart.Duffin@SINE.org.uk), communication co-ordinator, with support from Jurgen De Wispelaere (J.De-Wispelaere@lse.ac.uk).

HONORARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Prof. Edwin Morley-Fletcher (m-fletcher@cnel.it)
- Prof. Robert J. van der Veen (vanderveen@warwick.ac.uk)
- Dr Walter Van Trier (Walter.VanTrier@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be)
- Dr Steven Quilley (steve.quilley@ucd.ie).

RECOGNISED NATIONAL NETWORKS

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SWITZERLAND - BIEN Switzerland

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UNITED KINGDOM - Citizen's Income Study Centre

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BIEN'S LIFE MEMBERS

Link to <http://www.basicincome.org/> to find out how to become a Life Member of BIEN

James Meade (+)	Michael Opielka (DE)	Nicolas Bourgeon (FR)
Gunnar Adler-Karlsson (SE)	Lena Lavinás (BR)	Marja A. Pijl (NL)
Maria Ozanira da Silva (BR)	Julien Dubouchet (CH)	Matthias Spielkamp (DE)
Ronald Dore (UK)	Jeanne Hrdina (CH)	Frédéric Jourdin (FR)
Alexander de Roo (NL)	Joseph Huber (DE)	Daniel Raventos (ES),
Edouard Dommen (CH)	Markku Ikkala (FI)	Andres Hernandez (CO)
Philippe Van Parijs (BE)	Luis Moreno (ES)	Guido Erreygers (BE)
P.J. Verberne (NL)	Rafael Pinilla (ES),	Alain Tonnet (BE)
Tony Walter (UK)	Graham Taylor (UK)	Stephen C. Clark (US),
Philippe Grosjean (BE)	W. Robert Needham (CA)	Wolfgang Mundstein (AT)
Malcolm Torry (UK)	Tom Borsen Hansen (DK)	Evert Voogd (NL)
NN (Geneva, CH)	Ian Murray (US)	Frank Thompson (US)
Andrew Williams (UK)	Peter Molgaard Nielsen (DK)	Lieselotte Wohlgenannt (AT)
Roland Duchatelet (BE)	Fernanda Rodrigues (PT)	José Luis Rey Pérez (ES)
Manfred Füllsack (AT)	Helmut Pelzer (DE)	José Antonio Noguera (ES)
Anne-Marie Prieels (BE)	Rod Dobell (CA)	Esther Brunner (CH)
Philippe Desguin (BE)	Walter Van Trier (BE)	Irv Garfinkel (US)
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David Macarov (IL)	Bernard Berteloot (FR)	Margit Appel (AT)
Paul Metz (NL)	ean-Pierre Mon (FR)	Simo Aho (FI)
Claus Offe (DE)	Angelika Krebs (DE)	Francisco Ramos Martin (ES)
Guy Standing (CH)	Ahmet Insel (FR)	Brigid Reynolds (IE)
Hillel Steiner (UK)	Alberto Barbeito (AR)	Sean Healy (IE)
Werner Govaerts (BE)	Ruben Lo Vuolo (AR)	Maire Mullarney (IE)
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Yoland Bresson (FR)	José Iglesias Fernández (ES)	Jean-Paul Zoyem (FR)
Richard Hauser (DE)	Daniel Eichler (DE),	GianCarlo Moiso (IT)
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Carlos Farinha Rodrigues (PT)	Ingrid van Niekerk (ZA)	Lowell Manning (NZ)
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