

Chairs' report for the BIEN General Assembly in Lisbon 2017

At the last BIEN congress in Seoul the chairs set out a vision for BIEN.

The goals BIEN would seek to strive towards include

- 1 Functioning better on an ongoing basis, with more regular meetings and congresses
- 2 Consolidate BIEN as a legal organisation
- 3 Promoting outreach activities through and with affiliates
- 4 Diversifying outreach by engaging public bodies and other societal actors
- 5 Continuing to consolidate our web presence and BI News and Features
- 6 Democratising BIEN, by looking to introduce new election procedures, amend the General Assembly (GA) process, making affiliates' and activist activities more visible at congresses, and organise task forces and participate in other activities that connects the BIEN Executive Committee (EC) and societal actors.
- 7 Begin a more concerted fundraising effort in support of the above

In the past year BIEN's EC has worked towards all of these goals. Below is a brief status report and an outline of next steps.

1. In the past year the BIEN EC has held more frequent (monthly) meetings, which have enabled the EC to reach more quickly to ongoing developments. We have our first annual congress this year, and an unprecedented number of applications from affiliates to host future congresses. The BIEN EC has experienced several changes in leadership. One new recruit, Hal Hodgson had to step down when he was appointed as an editor for *The Economist*, which entailed a conflict of interest. We are pleased to announce Hodgson was replaced as co-secretary with Malcolm Torry, who was co-opted as a nonvoting member of the EC. The EC has since decided to appoint Torry to the position of General Manager (GM), which meant he stood down as co-secretary. He acts as GM at the EC's discretion. Torry has been a great resource in both ensuring administration of paperwork and oversight of financial operations. Coincidental with Torry taking up his position, in June Karl Widerquist asked the EC for permission to step down into a Vice-Chair role, which meant Louise Haagh became sole Chair, as ratified by the EC. Torry has advised that he feels a sole chair and a Vice Chair may operate more efficiently for day-to-day management, by cutting down email volume and duplication, and creating a clear communication structure. We are trying out this model for this year, in the presumption there will be an election in 2018 for two chairs, and they will decide duties between them - including whether they want to operate as chair/vice-chair, or as co-chairs. Depending on the experiment this year, they may choose to declare intention to operate in one way or another before the election. The appointment of a GM will be reviewed each year by the EC.
2. The BIEN EC asks the GA in Lisbon to ratify a new constitution which will move its registration from Belgium to the United Kingdom. A decision to set up BIEN as a legal organisation was made at the Montreal Congress in 2014. After considering various locations, we chartered BIEN in Belgium, largely as the bank account was there. We have had some logistical problems operating the bank account in Belgium—where we no longer have any EC members. The problems are long-standing, in the sense that for many years we have had to call on Philippe Van Parijs and Yannick Vanderborght to undertake a number of transactions in the name of the treasurer or

secretary. Unfortunately, they have been unavailable at crucial moments that have caused serious logistical problems. For example, we currently have no official bank account. We been unsuccessful in recruiting Belgian residents to take on the full, official role of treasurer or secretary. In view of the changes to the day-to-day running of BIEN and the long-standing logistical problems operating in Belgium of mainly a financial nature, the EC decided to recommend legalising BIEN in Britain, where our current chair and new GM is located, where we have someone willing to join the EC as treasurer, and where there is a larger population to draw on for future members. Although our charter in Belgium was for an "international" non-profit, it is really for a Belgian organization with international operations. It does not fit well for an international organization without its key leaders in Belgium. We have made an application to the charity commission, and have the support of a number of the trustees of the Citizens' Income Trust (CIT). Daily oversight of finance will be possible, enabling us to begin fundraising which has had to be put on hold. Financial reporting to the authorities will be eased with the joint experience of Malcolm and the treasurer of the CIT - Mark Wadsworth, a trained accountant, who has offered to help.

3. Several members of the BIEN EC have been active in outreach among affiliates round the world, by supporting local affiliates' activities, when requested. Jenna as outreach coordinator has organised an ongoing coordination effort on line between affiliates (see report attached). We have made efforts to collate information about affiliates' membership and activities, to get a clearer sense of the organisation BIEN has become. We intend to build on that effort in the next year. We are excited to have grown our presence in Asia and Africa, and keeping active within our sustained presence in Latin America, Europe, and the Anglo-file countries. The organisation of several parallel sessions and hosting of the UBIE congress adjacent to BIEN's congress this year is part of an ongoing effort to raise affiliates' profile and participation.
4. EC members have been active throughout the year in activities organised by affiliates, both national and regional, as well as through engagement with other societal groups across Europe (including with an EU-funded project involving Gilda Farrell and Samuel Thirion in the United Kingdom, France, Romania and Portugal). The engagement with European public bodies directly or through funded projects has been ongoing now since 2010. This effort has enabled BIEN to connect with other grass-roots groups engaged in building alternative development in Europe ground up. We are excited to have Gilda Farrell, who was previously head of the Council of Europe's Early Warning and Research Division, active at the Lisbon congress. Affiliates across the world have also engaged directly with more societal actors, from political parties to trades unions, in their activities. The BIEN Lisbon congress is hosting a series of outreach sessions, and we hope to sustain this effort in future congresses.
5. The *Basic Income News* team has done a splendid job this past year in growing the level of news reporting and features (see the report). The News and Features team is the process of an ongoing effort to increase the quality and professionalism of our news and features presence, as reflected in its present work in establishing a set of editorial guidelines.
6. The chairs set the goal in 2014 to democratise several aspects of BIEN's operation. Ensuring a growing presence of affiliates and activists at congresses is one part in

this. The setting up of task forces to enable ongoing communication within BIEN is another. A third is to enable more transparent election processes. This year we have a proposal to operate secret balloting for the first time for the 2018 BIEN congress elections. We also propose to ensure candidates put up bios in good time on the web, to facilitate informed elections.

7. Effort to organise new fundraising have bene put in place. A proposal is before the GA this year for yearly membership fees to help with fundraising. And we will ask those who have paid a lifetime membership fee to become regular donors. Fundraising will get going in earnest once the consolidation of new bank account and legal registration is complete, which we hope is achievable in the last part of 2017. A goal for the coming year is to work up a set of guidelines about future funding destinations, including a set of aims to clarify how BIEN can support presence of BIEN members and officers who otherwise might find it difficult to participate in BIEN congresses

Further notes on implications of a Charity Incorporated Organisation model constitution for BIEN:

During the coming year the EC, assisted by a working group established for the purpose, will need to work on a set of internal rules. The new constitution allows a wide variety of possibilities, and how those possibilities are interpreted and used might benefit from being codified so that their interpretation and use conforms to BIEN custom and practice, and to decisions taken by General Assembly meetings, including decisions relating to the AISBL.

For instance, the constitution provides for postal, electronic and proxy votes: provisions which could either be left flexible, and used as required, or be subject to a set of rules. This GA will be taking a decision about elections by postal or electronic means, and future GAs or the EC might ask for other decisions to be made in this manner. Again, decisions as to which decisions should be made in these ways could be left to the GA or EC to make as circumstances require, or a set of rules could be constructed.

The constitution enables the EC to add additional members if it wishes. BIEN's EC has added *nonvoting* members in the past to enable a member of the local organisation committee of the next congress to join the EC. A set of rules might state the circumstances under which additional members can be added.

A requirement of the CIO model constitution that we have out in for with the Charity Commission that does change our practice is to hold annual GAs and elections for one-third of the board of trustees - in effect our EC, as we can still call it. In practice however this change does not impinge much on our current practices. We now have annual congresses which makes it feasible to hold annual elections. The terms of trustees will be slightly longer, three years, which improves continuity on the board. Trustees can run for re-election, just as EC members now can.

The CIO allows us scope to elect a board without functions, but equally we can choose not to do that and continue our current practice of candidates running for specific functions.

This is a stipulation we can and aim to incorporate into the internal laws of BIEN. We can continue to have a set of internal laws running alongside the by comparison slimmer CIO constitution. Similarly, we can give the International Board specific roles, such as acting as an advisory board between GAs.

Summing up, the CIO model is on key points less stipulative than the AISBL, into which we incorporated our previous rules as best we could. By contrast with the AISBL, therefore, the CIO gives us the option - within its remit - to work to a set of separately elaborated internal laws. Obviously, these laws must be of a nature that they do not violate the CIO constitution in terms of British law. But not having to change the CIO every time we make a change to our internal laws and practices is quite helpful.

We intend to set down a committee to adapt from the AISBL the relevant articles in a form compatible with British law to constitute our internal laws to work alongside the CIO constitution. Its composition will be of no more than 5 persons, to include Louise Haagh as chair, and Malcolm Torry as General Manager, and 1 or 2 other persons among those who volunteer to the task by contacting the chair.

In terms of areas of the AISBL we will seek to incorporate within a set of slimmed down internal laws are the subject matters dealt with under the current Articles 20, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 28 of the AISBL constitution, in a way that is compatible with British law.

These are simply examples of the areas to which the working group might turn its attention.

It is possible to seem to apply to amend the CIO constitution on key points at later dates. The Charity Commission often does allow this. We opted for a simple as possible model in the first instance. We are very happy to hear suggestions for future actions from members. At this GA we seek approval of the CIO in the form submitted which we believe is the most likely to be approved in the short term. This is important to establish a registration that will be able to function on a day-to-day basis, including a functioning bank account, as soon as possible. We also seek - for that purpose, ratification of the appointment under a prospective CIO of four additional trustees and a new treasurer, accepting the resignation of Andrea Fumagalli for personal reasons.

At the Part 1 of the GA to be held on Monday 25th September between 18.15 and 19.15 we will announce times that we will be available - together with Malcolm Torry - to take any questions and suggestions and help clarify specifics pertaining to the proposal of moving the legal registration. There will be little time to discuss details at the GA Part 2, so we ask that anyone with detailed questions attempt to see us during those set times.

For further detail, please see the documents already circulated with the GA agenda.

Louise Haagh (Chair) and Karl Widerquist (Vice-Chair)

17 September 2017