

Chairs' report

The year 2017-18 has seen significant developments and new challenges in the organisation of BIEN.

Congresses

The organisation of annual congresses begun with the Lisbon congress in 2017 has continued, along with the tradition of a day dedicated to local issues. The Tampere Finland Congress has made other important innovations, including to facilitate child-care at the congress. The Congress hosts have followed the BIEN target of gender and regional balance among plenary speakers.

Legal registration

As discussed and approved at the 2017 GA, BIEN has moved its registration to a charitable educational trust status in the United Kingdom. This has enabled putting our financial affairs and daily operation on a sound footing. 2017 also saw the appointment of Malcolm Torry to General Manager which has facilitated the daily management of BIEN in coordination with the Chair. The role of Chair and Co-Chair is a formal distinction required by the charity commission, but in practice chairs and c-chairs can switch roles and have done. In 2017 Karl Widerquist asked to step down to a position of lesser responsibility, leading to the appointment of Louise Haagh as Chair. The executive committee has continued to have regular monthly meetings in which all matters of BIEN's governance are discussed and agreed by consensus or a vote.

Membership, Elections and Governance

A process of changing elections to the BIEN executive committee has taken place. For the first time in BIEN's history elections are by secret ballot of the entire membership, facilitated by postal voting in addition to the ballot taking place at the annual GA. A process of posting bios of candidates has been followed. We are still learning and there is more to be done. The proposal for internal rules approved by the Executive Committee recommends a delimitation of terms for the Executive Committee going forward, and a process of electing unopposed candidates. A new membership form has been implemented in line with our legal status, to allow compilation of basic information about and dates of members joining.

Research and Education positions

As part of the ongoing adaptation of BIEN as a network the Chair has taken steps to broaden out the functions within the Executive Committee, with the opening of several new positions, to recognize the important role of BIEN in promoting education and being a repository of research, information and news. In addition to the continuing excellent news service provided by Basic Income News, the creation of two research manager positions is intended to help

spearhead a new BIEN blog set up by the Chair, the Basic Income Navigator, which the remit to encourage and post themed critical debates on the topic of basic income from a wide spectrum. The research managers will also be charged with strengthening BIEN's pages as a research repository and a search engine, and – with the Outreach team - facilitating educational and public debate events in collaboration with the EC, affiliate networks and other interested parties, e.g. universities, charities or civil organisations.

Outreach

In addition to the two new research manager positions the Chair has opened an additional Public Outreach position. The existing Affiliate Outreach taskforce set up by the Chair in 2016 has had tremendous success in forging an ongoing dialogue and point of contact among affiliates. An additional Outreach position will work to build bridges to other actors and civil society, to strengthen mutual dialogue and learning in society. There is a growing need for this kind of outward engagement with influential social actors in the current environment of public visibility of but limited knowledge about basic income. The intention is to convey to a wider audience the existence of a critical dialogue about basic income and promote awareness of the plurality of approaches that exist, and of issues with which basic income connects. BIEN can play an important role in moving the public debate beyond media slogans and polemical signposting towards more fruitful direct debate, based on practical social or/and research-facilitated knowledge. One of the ideas that has been floated and may be followed up is the hosting of a specific Civic Forum panel at BIEN congresses for this purpose. The Executive Committee has approved match-funding for this, as fundraising allows. In addition, BIEN can act as a bridge to international organisations and for a where many of its individual members are already present in different capacities.

Funding and Fundraising

A new fundraising position has been set up along with Assistant Treasurer (AT). The intention for now is that at least one of the two treasurer positions should be (as far as possible) occupied with a person operating easily within the UK, given the location of BIEN's headquarters there. The fund-raising position will involve the development of new fundraising strategies, involving a distinction between clearly earmarked activity and general funding, with the elaboration of a set of rules that ensures maximum transparency for members, and compliance with legal expectations associated with registered charity accounts. The Executive Committee has approved a travel funding policy for its officers, based on an annual business plan, which will determine the funding available on an annual basis. The expectation is to offer support towards the travel of every officer at least for one trip every two years to a BIEN Congress, taking into account distance of travel, and in accordance with BIEN's financial position. Under British charity guidelines, the funding for travel will fall under the rubric of administrative expenses which in a normal financial year should not comprise more than 50 % of spending, with the other 50 % dedicated to other (educational) activities. During the registration process this past year, and complications in moving funds

and bank accounts, fundraising has taken a back seat, awaiting legal registration. The task of the next EC will be to develop a set of sustainable, transparent and clear objectives for fundraising, expenditure and ensuring the sustainability of BIEN's capital fund. In accordance with the GA resolution that accompanied the transfer of 10K Euros into BIEN's capital account from the proceeds of the Berlin BIEN Congress in 2000, the present EC has approved and written into the minutes that BIEN shall reserve this fund, and any borrowing against it shall be restricted to any amount that future EC's can expect to recapitalise in the same year.

Future Challenges

The public visibility of basic income and of BIEN since 2016 has raised a number of challenges. BIEN's tradition as a platform for plural debate and the commitment to remain neutral among competing policy proposals and ethical perspectives comes up against the enthusiasm to press for practical steps to realise basic income in the real world. The idea that BIEN should become a global movement that campaigns for basic income directly has wide appeal. On the other hand, a concern is that it would be difficult for BIEN to then remain a vehicle for plural debate, and so keep to its tradition. There is clearly value in capitalising on BIEN's reputation to campaign as the opportunity for realising a variety of near or partial basic income schemes, or schemes that contain one or more features of a basic income, may usher in steps that lead to basic income coming into being in a legal sense. On the other hand, there is also value in retaining BIEN's more detached position to enable BIEN now to really capitalise on its reservoir of practical and research-based knowledge to offer a critical and informed take on debates around the world. Were BIEN to put its official name to particular campaigns it may lose influence in the second sense. It is not obvious that BIEN will lessen its influence or the chances that a basic income scheme may be understood or and implemented by retaining a detached position. At the same time, the lively state of the Basic Income debate makes it essential that a wide range of different approaches should be available right across the educational and campaigning spectrum

Two additional considerations are very important. First, it is possible for BIEN members and affiliates to campaign, as long as it is not in BIEN's name. Second, BIEN as a legal educational charity is prevented from campaigning.

. BIEN is a registered charity with an educational purpose and so cannot involve itself in active campaigning, and in particular cannot engage in political campaigning.

In the process of registering BIEN as a legal charity, we had a series of internal discussion in response to the charity commission's rejection of our initial application on the basis of some features of our web-pages. It has forced us to think carefully about how to best channel both of what now seems to be two clear opportunities and tendencies delineated above within the wide world of those interested in our committed to basic income. It is clear that to remain a legal charity BIEN cannot campaign. What is less clear is how to positively channel educational activities that border on campaigning, or/and actual specific campaigns. At the GA affiliate session we will do a brainstorm about this, as there are several suggestions on the table. For example, during the year discussions took place in the Executive Committee about the

possibility of facilitating the establishment of a parallel global campaigning organisation, and this possibility was discussed with the organisers of the International Basic Income Week. Nothing further has come of these discussions so far, but we would very much like to see a new global campaigning organisation established, and for BIEN to form a strong partnership with it, in much the same way as in the UK the Citizen's Basic Income Trust and Basic Income UK work happily together. However, this may not be the only avenue. We hope to have an open discussion about the possibilities that fall within the legal charter of BIEN.

BIEN as a professional organisation

With BIEN established as an educational charity there is scope to enhance its collaboration in research and education with international organisations, universities, charities and other civic and public organisations. There are issues to be discussed about the funding streams BIEN should seek, and also about the desirability of remaining a network of individuals who do their own educational work, or push for an organisational approach. The latter will require much more time and input, which raises genuine questions about capacity within a volunteer network. Whatever approach and direction is taken, it is important that BIEN does not grow faster than it is able to properly administer its work and processes. BIEN should therefore spend some time considering carefully what would be viable and sustainable long-term activities that protect and build on BIEN's well-established reputation.