

Chairs' report – BIEN Executive Committee Year 2018-2019

Overview

A decision was made to set down working groups to refine new lines of activity during the Autumn. These working groups focussed on advancing new strategic projects, improving research visibility on the web, develop a long-term focussed plan in fund-raising and wider public engagement, improving our structures for enrolling and monitoring progress of volunteers, thinking of new ways to engage with members and gain knowledge about affiliates and their interests and concerns, and prepare for the India Congress

Activities and goals highlights

The Executive Committee decided to focus energies on limited and achievable long-term programme goals and outputs within BIEN as a new institutional actor, to increase its visibility, distinctiveness of engagement with wider audiences, and profile that engagement within our media, keeping to our tradition as a plural network.

BIEN Civic Forums

In this spirit of focussing our energies on goals around which we could collaborate and eventually involve affiliates and non-affiliate partners a previous proposal to kick-start a series of BIEN Civic Forums (initiated by the Chair in January 2018) was set forth as a pilot programme over the coming two years. The remit, objectives and ideas about dissemination from the Civic Forums were discussed. Two first BIEN Civic Forums were planned for the India BIEN Congress (India Day) and for an event in Scotland sponsored and hosted by RSA Scotland under Jamie Cooke and co-organised with BIEN, to take place in August and October 2019. A logo was created for the Civic Forum series. The purpose of the Civic Forum is to enhance BIEN as a platform for critical engagement about basic income in local settings with a range of civil society stakeholders. For purposes of education for the benefit of the wider public the series' contents and outcomes will be featured on BIEN's web-pages.

Engagement and reform initiatives within BIEN

A *survey of affiliates* was conducted in Summer 2019 and the information and feed-back will be used to feature information about affiliates, as well as consider plans and actions. A follow up is currently undergoing. *Membership surgeries* were organised in Summer 2019 after all members were contacted to provide opportunities to skype with EC members about any question, proposals or concerns. Take-up was limited, but responses positive, and the process will continue in the expectation it will take some time to embed this new practice. An *Academic Advisory Board* is being piloted, with an initial steering group, the purpose being to have an extra arm to incorporate the expertise within BIEN into advisory functions as per request of the BIEN EC, LOCs, members, or affiliates.

Communication and fundraising

BIEN News has continued as a successful enterprise, continuing to recruit new volunteers under an improved structure led by Leah and Andre. The spread of news coverage into policy debates connected with basic income and featuring new research has been given priority. A committee led by Aoife and Kate discussed long-term strategies and plans to feature key BIEN events as the focus for fundraising. Toru has been working on a search engine for the website which is nearly finished. Plans for improving the visibility of research are ongoing, and will be a focus for the coming year

Working practices and institutional changes

The Executive Committee met every 6 weeks, with working groups meeting in between during the Autumn. In Spring and Summer the whole Executive Committee met monthly. Attendance has been good overall. The AISBL created in Belgium in 2016 was officially wound down and ceases to exist. The EC discussed how the work in future can be better focussed and managed, especially considering the thinning out of energies and drain of resources relating to yearly global congresses. Issues highlighted include the importance of continuing the LOC rep as a separate post, thinking about opportunity costs in different activities, and how to support different activities within BIEN. Considering the success of regional congresses in recent years, the scope for policy-focussed events, and the costs of global travel on a yearly basis for BIEN members, combined with the importance of outreach within regions, the EC invites a consultation about profiling every other congress as regional going forward. The daily management of BIEN has been greatly improved with the expertise and dedication of Malcolm Torry as General Manager. The EC decided that the expansion of posts last year probably went a bit too far, making the working group too large, and thus duplicate posts have been wound down, leaving the EC two posts smaller and whilst still larger than traditionally, being now a more manageable size.

India Congress

The 19th BIEN Congress is being hosted this year by India Network for Basic Income in Hyderabad, India from 22nd to 25th. On 22nd will be the India Day focussing on the basic income debate and the initiatives in India. This is being done under the umbrella of the BIEN Civic Forum which is a new initiative being piloted in India and Scotland. The main Congress will be inaugurated on the 23rd morning and will conclude at 2.45pm on 25th August 2019. The General Assembly of BIEN is scheduled at 3pm on 25th and will conclude at 6pm. The theme of the Congress is: 'Basic Income as Freedom and Development'. The Congress will have about 10 plenary sessions with about 50 featured / invited speakers. About 80 papers have been accepted under nearly 20 thematic areas and will be presented in the concurrent sessions. The Congress hopes to attract more than 300 delegates. In addition to sessions, the Congress also features Basic Income Ideas Bazaar which provides stall space for individuals and organisations across the world to showcase their ideas related to basic income.

Louise and Sarath (Chair and Vice Chair)