

BIEN Executive Committee Election

Post: Academic editor / Research

Toru Yamamori

Personal Statement

Background and Qualifications

I first encountered the idea of a basic income in the early 1990s through my involvement in solidarity activism with a casual worker's trade union. This experience led me to study economics in the hope that the discipline strives both to understand and solve social problems. While I soon discovered that this hope of mine had been naïve and false, my endeavours since then have been to effect change in the discipline and make it truly relevant to understanding and grappling with social issues. A part of what I have accomplished on this mission was recently recognised with the award of the 2017 K. W. Kapp Prize from the European Association for Evolutionary Political Economy (the second-largest association for economists in Europe).

My encounter with people who in 1970s Britain demanded UBI in their working class women's liberation and claimants' unions movement, led me, in 2002, to undertake oral historical research on the subject as well as to become immersed in UBI activism. The outcome of this former research won the 2014 Basic Income Studies Best Essay prize.

I am currently a professor at Doshisha University, Kyoto, and a life-member at Clare Hall, Cambridge.

BIEN and what I would like to do

I became a life-member of BIEN in 2004 and was elected a member of the Executive Committee in 2012 — possibly the first Asian to do so in both cases. At the 2016 Seoul Congress, I served as Chair of the Working Group on the definition of UBI in our Charter. While mediating diverse voices peaceably, constructively, and collectively has been a wonderful experience, I felt much could be improved if we were to connect the discussion to the exhaustive work already undertaken by BIEN members.

To this effect, when I was elected to the position of Research Manager two years ago, I promised to compile an index to help visitors to the BIEN website navigate the resources that we already have online and I set out to deliver on that promise in the first year. In the second year, I was invited by the 2019 GA (together with Annie Miller) to take the lead in the working group on the Clarification of the BI definition. We prepared for sessions of the open dialogue at the 2020 Congress in Brisbane. While the congress was cancelled due to the current pandemic, we ran monthly study meetings instead and we certainly hope to host an open dialogue at the 2021 congress in Glasgow.

In the course of the monthly meetings mentioned above, I have realised the need to channel the energy of BIEN members towards greater engagement in spite of the cancellations. Thus, if I were to be elected to the post of Academic editor / Research, I would do my best to open alternative ways for BIEN members to communicate their ideas. I would work to facilitate 'thematic research groups' where people working on the same topic can come together and/or we could aim to establish occasional research workshops online for members to present their research in discussion with the audience. Just two ideas to see us through in these difficult times and to let research flourish.