

## Open Letter in Support of the Catalan Basic Income Pilot

We are an international group of policy researchers who serve on the [Scientific Committee](#) of the [Catalan Basic Income Pilot](#). We are all experts in social security policy design, implementation and evaluation, and many of us have direct expertise with ongoing or past basic income pilots in different countries. Not all of us are basic income advocates but we are all committed to ensuring the policy-making process reflects the best available empirical evidence.

The Catalan Basic Income Pilot presents a unique opportunity to evaluate innovative new policies in accordance with the latest scientific guidelines. It is with surprise and consternation that we are learning that the upcoming annual budget vote in the Catalan Parliament might drastically cut its budget, abandoning the pilot before it has properly begun.

The Catalan Government had committed to using innovative research strategies to evaluate the best direction to take future Catalan social policy. A [government office with a dedicated team](#), coupled with both local and international consultants under the guidance of a leading Catalan institute such as [Ivàlua](#), are strong indicators of a government taking evidence-based policy-making very seriously.

The Catalan pilot project is already being closely watched by the international research and policy community. There are currently a large number of pilot and policy evaluation projects ongoing in Europe and the rest of the world, but the Catalan pilot project stands out by its planned size, the scientific quality of the project itself, and its unique design which allows us to test some aspects of basic income that are missing from other projects. In other words, the Catalan project has a very specific place both in the rapidly growing list of international basic income pilots and the equally rapidly growing research that is scientifically evaluating the variety of basic income projects around the world.

Significantly, scientific insights from basic income pilots also yield evidence about what works in social protection. These insights can then help us improve existing policies such as the *Ingreso Mínimo Vital* or the *Renda Garantida de Ciutadania*. It is a mistake to think that evidence from the Catalan Basic Income Pilot is only relevant to the basic income proposal.

Changing direction at this point not only means a waste of public money and hours spent by numerous experts preparing the pilot design, but also undermines the trust that the scientific community can bring to government promises to engage in serious policy research.

We have seen this before in Canada in 2019 when the newly elected Government of Premier Doug Ford cancelled the Ontario Basic Income Pilot, alienating the scientific community and destroying the possibility of drawing upon that expertise in aid of its own proposed projects.

It is worth contrasting Ontario with Finland, where the Finnish government decided to complete the Finnish experiment in 2017-2018, despite considerable scepticism about basic income amongst many of its ministers. But the Finnish government took its political commitment to evidence-informed policy-making seriously and made sure the experiment

ran as planned. The results of the Finnish experiment are controversial and subject to interpretation, but that is entirely to be expected and an essential part of rational policy-making. The Catalan Parliament needs to decide whether to take the Finnish option of rational policy development or the Ontario option of short-sighted political prejudice and speculation.

Basic income pilots are not just instruments to promote basic income. They can play a much larger role in better understanding how the Catalan social protection system works and how it can be made better in the near future. To have that guidance, based on the best scientific evidence we can gather, is well worth the relatively small investment of 40 million Euros. To throw away the chance of obtaining such evidence-informed guidance is simply short-sighted and truly a wasted opportunity.

Signed:

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