



Join the Conversation

This is one part of a series. Look for all our basic income modules and other resources at basicincomecanada.org

INTERNATIONAL PRIMER

People all over the world are advocating for a basic income to ensure everyone has the money they need to live a dignified life. There is an international not-for-profit group called the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) that since 1986 has served as a link between individuals and groups committed to, or interested in, basic income and to foster informed discussion on the topic. There are 35 recognized affiliates of the Basic Income Earth Network, working in countries including Argentina, Brazil, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, India, Japan, China and South Africa.

Different countries use different terms to refer to basic income and also have different definitions for what they mean by a basic income. For example, other terms used to advocate for similar concepts include “citizen’s basic income”, “guaranteed annual income,” “guaranteed livable income,” “universal basic income (UBI),” “basic income guarantee (BIG),” and “basic income.” These terms have all been used to advocate for periodic cash payments unconditionally delivered to people, without any work requirements.

Pilots

There are several pilot projects happening in 2017 testing different aspects of basic in-

come in different countries. These include projects in Finland, Kenya, the Netherlands, Ontario, Scotland, Uganda, and the United States. Although each of these has been described as a “basic income pilot” or “basic income experiment” in media reports, few manifest every characteristic of a basic income, and each one is designed to measure something different. In Finland, for example, the focus is on people who are unemployed, while in Kenya, the same amount of money is being given to everyone in a rural village through the charity, Give Directly. They all share the commonality of testing the effect of cash transfers on individuals as well as groups of people.

Advocacy

Groups around the world advocating for basic income have taken different approaches to fit the contexts they are working in.

In the Southern African region, the SADC BIG Campaign is advocating for the roll-out of a universal basic income grant to all SADC residents including refugees, and asylum seekers by 2020 funded by a tax on extractives. To this end, they orchestrated a declaration at the 8th Alternative Mining Indaba made by civil society and over 450 representatives for “a call on African gov-

ernments to set aside part of revenues from extractive industries to fund basic income/ grant to vulnerable groups in society.” In India this year, the Chief Economic Advisor to the Government of India began to speak in favour of the idea of UBI, and announced that the Government will present a paper in the Parliament introducing the idea. In November 2016, INBI undertook a follow-up study of the original Basic Income Pilot conducted in India called the Legacy Study to understand what the effects of basic income were at the tribal village level. The study is now complete and the report will be released in the fall of 2017.

Germany has seen quite a bit of activity in 2017 in their election season on basic income, with a single-issue political party being set up just to promote basic income

DID YOU KNOW?

There is an International Basic Income Week that happens every year to spread information about basic income.

Canada participated in International Basic Income Week by collecting over 600 responses from people living all across Canada to the question, “How might a Basic Income Guarantee affect your life and your loved ones?” and sending them to the Prime Minister and leaders of the other major political parties.

Hundreds of people interested in basic income gather every year at an international conference hosted by BIEN to discuss emerging ideas, review recent research, and present advocacy strategies.

and a website created for candidates that want to make their position on basic income known at, grundeinkommen-ist-waehlbar.de. In Germany there is also a group called “*Mein Grundeinkommen*”¹ – a non-profit organization - that crowdfunds and raffles off unconditional basic incomes of 1.000 € a month.

In the U.S., where a lot of the recent interest in basic income has been centred on discussions of job loss and automation, there is a basic income pilot project taking place in Oakland, California, funded by Y Combinator, in Silicon Valley. There are several basic income research and advocacy groups in the US. One of these, USBIG, hosts conferences on basic income regularly and works with partner organizations to support local groups. Also in the US is the filming of a documentary called “*Bootstraps*,” where they aim to give twenty Americans from all walks of life a guaranteed cheque every week big enough to cover basic expenses and film the participants to follow the changes that happen to them when they receive the money.

In the Netherlands, the return of the basic income idea in the Dutch debate has been boosted by a book from the young historian Rutger Bregman, “*Gratis Geld Voor Iedereen*,” (published in English in 2017: *Utopia for Realists*), and a couple of national television documentaries.

The topic of a basic income is regularly covered on television, radio, the internet and in newspapers.

¹ <https://www.mein-grundeinkommen.de/>