

Interview with Julen Bollaín, representative of the Spanish Basic Income Network.

1. You have participated in the Gaztebi project - <https://www.ehu.es/es/web/lan-harreman-gizarte-langintza-fakultatea/gaztebi> What are the main conclusions?

Gaztebi (Gazte Basic Income) was set up with the aim of analysing and debating the possibilities offered by unconditional basic income (UBI) as an economic and social policy. That is to say, to analyse whether basic income serves to provide financial security for young people, to guarantee the fulfilment of basic material needs, as well as to guarantee progress in freer personal and collective development.

To this end, we have tried to respond to the following objectives through different actions:

1. To analyse the vision of the UBI by the entities and social agents working in the field of youth, as well as its possible consequences for the attention to youth in these spaces.
2. To analyse the social attitudes of university students towards employment and their future prospects, as well as their perceptions of the possibilities that the implementation of a UBI can offer them to guarantee their financial security and to advance in their life projects.
3. To open a space for the dissemination and debate of the UBI proposal in order to broaden social knowledge about the characteristics and implications of this measure.

All of this has been carried out through three actions. Firstly, and with the aim of bringing knowledge and debate on the characteristics and implications of the UBI closer to university youth, but also to society, several audiovisual tablets were produced. These tablets were to be used in the workshops for reflection on UBI. Secondly, group interviews were carried out with different social, trade union and institutional organisations with a double objective: on the one hand, to unify and validate the questionnaire to be used in the third and last action, and on the other hand, to find out the beliefs of the agents with regard to UBI and the situation of young people. Finally, a questionnaire created after a shared construction was distributed to 709 students of the University of the Basque Country/Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (UPV/EHU). The answers obtained through this questionnaire have been used to analyse the social attitudes of university students towards employment and their future prospects, as well as their perceptions of the possibilities that the implementation of an UBI can offer them to guarantee their financial security and advance in their life projects.

The consequences we have obtained from these actions are manifold. The main objective would be that 67% of young people are in favour of the introduction of a basic income in the Basque Country, 13.2% are opposed and 19.8% do not take a position. Specifically, 78.4% of students agree with the individual nature of the basic income, 73.8% are in favour of financing it through a progressive and redistributive tax reform and 69% agree with the universal nature of this income.

Young people are also clear on how they would spend the money. 51% of university students would use the basic income to cover basic needs such as rent, electricity or food expenses, 36% would save for the future, 29% would invest in the training process and 29% point to the possibility it would give them to emancipate themselves.

On the other hand, 81% of the young people interviewed believe that basic income would improve their living conditions. Furthermore, 70% said that basic income would allow them to do other jobs outside the labour market (e.g. care work or voluntary work), 59% said that the distribution of wealth would be more equitable and 54% said that it would help to eliminate precarious employment and labour abuses.

Therefore, in addition to indicating that young people value basic income very highly as a measure to improve their living conditions and make life more free and dignified, the results indicate the need to open up spaces for debate and dissemination of this proposal in the public sphere, with the aim of being able to discuss in depth the possibilities and challenges it would entail.

2.- How do you assess the Popular Legislative Initiative for the Unconditional Basic Income in the Basque Country - <https://rentabasica.eus/eus/>-?

It is undoubtedly a historic step forward for basic income in the Basque Country and for those of us who defend basic income. It has been long months of work and effort on the part of many people, and this is always to be welcomed and applauded.

The truth is that from the beginning I have been a little sceptical about this action, because I saw a uniformity that did not effectively represent the diversity of the Basque Country. Furthermore, I believe that the available loudspeakers have not been used effectively and I think that there has been a lack of a communication strategy with the aim of making basic income known to a significant part of the Basque population. However, I believe that this popular initiative has achieved some of its objectives with great success and, in particular, I would stress that it has been able to obtain, fighting against many adversities, more than double the 10,000 signatures necessary for its debate in the Basque Parliament. In the second half of the signature collection process, the promoter's work on the streets has been excellent, and this has paid off. And I would not want to let this opportunity pass without thanking you, in one way or another, for the contribution you have made to carry this initiative forward: congratulations for your work and thank you for your time!

At the end of the day, as always at the end of a long and demanding process full of mistakes, successes and lessons learned, the objective now must be to look to the future. It is time to define clear objectives, to try to weave new networks and to broaden the base to make the basic income movement ever wider.

3.- How do you assess the parliamentary rejection of the Popular Legislative Initiative for the Unconditional Basic Income of the Basque Country?
https://www.legebiltzarra.eus/ords/f?p=120:10:11384989257205::NO:RP,RIR:P10_ID,P10_T EXT_SHOW,P10_EXPAND:192660,N,N ?

Logically, although this decision is what we could have expected, it disappoints all of us who defend basic income. Because the political class has voted 'no' to the instrument that would allow real freedom for the people of our autonomous community and that would make poverty disappear. Let us remember that a poor person cannot be free.

However, I believe that this citizens' initiative directly challenges the political class beyond the vote. I fully understand that some parties, quite legitimately, vote against a bill on the establishment of a basic income. But that does not mean that they should ignore the appeal made to them by a large part of the population. The high number of signatures obtained knocks directly on the door of the political class, which claims to be responsible for establishing the necessary channels for a real and in-depth debate among Basques on a basic income. Because the political class wants it? No, because the citizens have requested it with more than 22,000 signatures.

4. Being in favour of an unconditional basic income, what do you think should be done in the coming months?

It is very difficult to answer this question. Surely we need to sit down, take time, assess what has been done and what remains to be done, define feasible objectives and actions. I think we need a moment of calm to be able to think with a cool head and away from enthusiasm.

Surely, as I said before, a large part of the road ahead of us is to broaden and unify the social base that actively defends basic income. And why do I say this? Because, in line with what Guy Standing says in the epilogue to my book, the biggest challenge is political. In his words, the political class has the soul of spaghetti: in general, little intellectual courage, but it understands the pressure. So the question is whether ordinary people, you and I, want change. And if we want change, we have to push for it. According to the latest polls, between 65-70% of citizens in European countries would be in favour of the introduction of a basic income. What is wrong, then, that we can't get all those people to fight for a basic income? That is why I say it; we have to broaden our vision; we have to bring the diversity of sectors of our society into the struggle. I am convinced that this path will give us the most promising future.