

## The Definition of Basic Income and Uniformity<sup>1</sup>.

by  
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**ABSTRACT:** (204 words) A clear, precise and comprehensive definition is the keystone of the academic foundation on which to build both productive discourse and effective advocacy. But, basic income is deceptively simple and difficult to define. Advocates rightly look to the global network, BIEN, for guidance. However, BIEN's extended definition from 2016 permits casual discrimination against less-favoured groups. The addition of a sixth characteristic, 'uniform', would prevent this, but could lead to some unintended consequences. The paper proposes ways in which cases for differentiation could be met separately from the BI payment, and shows how a uniform BI could be part of a strategy to achieve the objective of an age-related, adequate standard of living. It rejects the claim that a uniform BI offends justice. It also distinguishes between a BI and the special case of an individual-based, potentially universal, uniform in principle, unconditional income-tested benefit, when gross income is zero. The last section briefly relates the abstract definition of the generic BI to its application in practice.

The wording of the proposed new characteristic would be:

'Uniform: the amount of a basic income is the same/equal for everyone within a given jurisdiction, at a given time, and does not vary according to pre-existing categories or circumstances.'

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BIEN's third international conference on Basic Income showed once again the confusion that arises when the same technical terms are used to mean different things. ... If BIEN wants to progress, one of its first priorities should be to agree a format for definitions (and translations) of at least the main concepts involved. (Parker, 1991: 6)

## I. Introduction

A clear, concise definition of Basic Income (BI) would provide the keystone of a firm academic foundation for both productive debate and effective advocacy. It should give debaters the confidence of knowing what they are talking about, thus avoiding the confusion that arises when people attribute different meanings to the same term and find that they are talking at cross purposes. When BIEN's definition is clear, easy to use and the reasons for it are well argued and persuasive, then it will be more likely to be adopted widely and therefore bring greater authority to the BI movement.

This process is not yet complete for BI, which is both deceptively simple and yet difficult to define.

The definition of a BI is 'a concept based on its smallest common denominator'<sup>2</sup> of characteristics.

The definition is independent of, and distinct from:

- policy objectives, including the amount of the BI;
- the practical and pragmatic considerations associated with implementation; and
- sources of financing the BI.

BIEN's generic BI, revised and improved in 2016<sup>3</sup>, comprises a definitive statement (which is included in BIEN's constitution of 2018)<sup>4</sup>, accompanied by a commentary on its five characteristics which expands the idea.

A **basic income** is a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered<sup>5</sup> to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement.

That is, basic income has the following **five characteristics**:

1. **Periodic**: it is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.
2. **Cash payment**: it is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.

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<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Walter Van Trier for this phrase, and the distinctions that follow.

<sup>3</sup> Search for 'General Assembly 2016' on BIEN's website, [www.basicincome.org](http://www.basicincome.org). Look for 'BIEN: The report from the General Assembly' by Toru Yamamori. The revision was reported as item 2).

<sup>4</sup> Use BIEN's name or charity number (1177066) to access its governing document, via <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/>.

<sup>5</sup> 'cash payment unconditionally delivered' makes it sound as though only the delivery is unconditional. The pre-2016 version, 'cash payment unconditionally granted', indicates that it is the cash payment that is unconditional.

3. **Individual:** it is paid on an individual basis – and not, for instance, to households<sup>6</sup>.

4. **Universal:** it is paid to all<sup>7</sup>, without means test.

5. **Unconditional:** it is paid without a requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness to work<sup>8</sup>.

([www.basicincome.org/about-basic-income/](http://www.basicincome.org/about-basic-income/))

‘Without means test’ has three aspects:

- it emphasizes that the BI is not allocated according to pre-existing financial circumstances;
- the BI is granted *prior to* taxes being levied on gross income;
- thus, the BI is exempt from taxes on income.

Other components of a recipient’s gross income could still be subject to taxes on income, whether or not they were considered to be the main source of finance for the BI.

However, this concept of BI is still incomplete, and requires the addition of a sixth characteristic, ‘uniform’, to avoid the categorical discrimination inherent in the current definition. Following the main justification for a BI, the case for uniformity is introduced in section II. Some potential adverse effects of this new characteristic are considered in section III. The case for differentiation is explored in section IV, and the role that a uniform BI might play in a strategy towards achieving the objective of an age-related, adequate standard of living is examined in section V. This is followed in section VI by an analysis and rejection of Maskivker’s (2018) claim that a uniform BI offends justice. Section VII distinguishes between a BI and the special case of an individual-based, unconditional, initially universal and uniform in principle, income-tested-benefit (ITB), when gross income is zero. Section VIII briefly relates the abstract definition of the generic BI to its application in practice. The conclusion in section IX summarises the situation.

## II. Basic income and the case for uniformity.

In his pamphlet, *Agrarian Justice*, Thomas Paine wrote about the land and natural resources belonging to the people, and where it has been appropriated for private use, those owners owe a ground rent to the whole excluded population (Paine, 1796: 37-38).

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<sup>6</sup> The wording here is misleading: ‘– and not, for instance, to households’ could imply that no-one in a household would receive a basic income. Also, the couple basis is as common an alternative to the individual basis, as the household, which could include multiple generations. The following would be clearer: ‘– and not, for instance, on the basis of a couple or household.’

<sup>7</sup> A case can be made for inserting ‘including children,’.

<sup>8</sup> BIEN’s definition has so far concentrated on non-conditionality with respect to work – ‘without a requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness-to-work’, (which is very much a *male pre-occupation*), and has ignored *other potential types of conditions* that could still be imposed, with respect to uses of time or types of behaviour. This characteristic could easily be expanded to read ‘Unconditional: a basic income is not conditional on any behavioural requirements. It is paid without a requirement to work for pay or to demonstrate willingness to work for pay, to undertake volunteer work, or to behave according to traditional gender roles. In other words, it is obligation-free.’

Similarly, the wealth of a nation is built on the infrastructure and material heritage of previous generations, and who is to say whose forebears they are? Also, 'A 2005 World Bank study concluded that most of a nation's wealth derives from the intangible capital, that is, from human capital and the quality of its institutions, especially the rule of law. The wealthier the nation, the more this is so' (Bennett, 2009). Thus, a BI can be regarded as a dividend from the fruits of the economy, which is underpinned by these resources, heritage and institutions. An earlier name for this idea was social dividend (SD), which would grant the same amount unconditionally to each and every one within a jurisdiction. Thus, no-one (not even the 'free rider', whose life is devoted to pure leisure) owes a duty of work in return. BIEN's current definition of the generic BI on its website is consistent with this derivation of a SD.

Sometimes the characteristic 'universal' has been interpreted incorrectly as meaning 'the same amount for everyone'. But 'universal' refers only *to whom* the BI is granted and not *its amount*.

The current BIEN definition implies that a genuine BI could vary according to pre-existing categories or circumstances, for instance, based on gender, sexual orientation, race, creed, level of education achieved, or even height. It would appear that a BI could vary on anything, as long as it is not according to some variety of means test, which is specifically excluded according to characteristic no. 4. Unfortunately, the current BIEN definition does not prevent casual discrimination on the basis of prejudice against non-favoured groups. This is not in keeping with the inclusive and liberating nature of BI's current characteristics.

The common practice of granting a lower payment to a married, or otherwise cohabiting, couple denies them the opportunity to enjoy the household economies of scale already enjoyed by two non-cohabiting singletons sharing accommodation. This is not only discriminatory, but requires intrusive monitoring of relationships. If low income families become aware that they could receive more if they live apart, it could lead to the break-up of poorer families.

To discourage discrimination, a sixth characteristic, 'uniform', must be added to the definition.

The definition of BI in the World Bank Report (Gentelini *et al*, 2020) specifies only two characteristics – universal and unconditional. Their use of 'universal' implicitly includes 'on an individual basis'; and their 'unconditional' comprises two meanings – (i) not conditional on pre-existing categories and circumstances (i.e. unconditional in an *ex-ante* sense), and (ii) not conditional on behavioural obligations – or, at least, not on work requirements (i.e. unconditional in an *ex-post* sense).

The proposed new characteristic 'uniform' has much in common with both 'universal' and 'unconditional'.

Both 'universal' and 'uniform' imply that neither pre-existing categories nor circumstances are taken into account, either for allocating to whom a BI is granted, or for deciding 'how much?'

'Uniform' can also be identified with the *ex-ante* version of 'unconditional'. But, rather than giving two meanings to 'unconditional', it is less confusing to give the new characteristic a label of its own, that is, 'uniform'.

Because it has much in common with both 'universal' and 'unconditional', 'uniform' should be placed between them and become the new characteristic no. 5.

5. **Uniform**, the amount of a basic income is the same/equal for everyone within a given jurisdiction, at a given time, and does not vary according to pre-existing categories or circumstances.

A further case for the addition of the characteristic 'uniform' could be that of emphasising in a clear and consistent way the distinction between a uniform BI programme and the special cases of individual-based, universal, *non-uniform* and unconditional income tax systems and BI-negative income tax systems. While 'uniform' adds this further distinction, it is, in fact, superfluous. The clue is in the cash-flow directions. As indicated in characteristic no. 4, BI is an income paid *to all*. The other systems include payments *from people* to jurisdiction, that is, in the opposite direction. So, there is already no room to claim that a special case of either an income tax or a BI-negative income tax system could be classified as a BI.

Universal benefit programmes can be either uniform or non-uniform. But a non-universal benefit programme is always non-uniform, since it divides the whole population.

### III. The effects of uniformity

It is worth identifying any potential adverse unintended consequences of a uniform BI for all, such as on population growth, or its work incentive effects for parents of large families.

In some developing countries, the surviving children of a large family provide the security for their parents in old age. Clearly, economic development has, *inter alia*, increased the chances of children surviving to adulthood, and, in some jurisdictions, may also have provided a state pension, both of which could help to provide the incentive to reduce average family size.

France's financial incentives to encourage families to have a third child were famously ineffective. It would appear that when women have a good education, autonomy over their own finances and control over their own reproduction, including information about, and access to, birth control facilities, most prefer smaller families. Sadly, a large proportion of women in the world are not in this happy situation due to cultural and political barriers, and a good education is inevitably a medium to long-term solution, but a BI could at least contribute to their financial autonomy.

Critics have commented on the fact that a uniform BI based on the individual will lead to household economies of scale for couples, but their arguments can be countered because the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Although the BIs would be

paid to children, to be administered on their behalf by the primary care-giving parent, (usually the mother), it is possible that one or other parent might regard the child BI as his/her own unearned income. Even for relatively small BIs, household economies of scale will increase with family size, which, for the most part, is under the direct control of one or both parents. So, might a uniform BI in the meantime encourage an increase in the growth of the world's population, which could worsen the already catastrophic climate emergency? Furthermore, might the additional unearned income, increasing with family size, have a negative effect on the parents' incentives to work for pay?

#### IV. The case for differentiation

The implicit assumption of the co-founders of BIEN was that the BI would be uniform, except for variations based on extra needs.

The most obvious case for differentiation is for tax-exempt **disability benefits** to cover the extra costs incurred by disabled people and those with chronic sickness, not just to live with dignity, but in order to achieve their full potentials. They would be cash benefits paid in a separate system to disabled people, those with chronic illnesses and their paid carers, in addition to the BIs.

Jurisdictions that cover a wide range of **climatic conditions** may need separate payments to protect those facing the harshest conditions.

If a BI were to contain a uniform element to cover **housing costs**, it would act as a powerful redistributive mechanism in favour of poorer areas within the jurisdiction. But it is likely to be the poorer communities in expensive areas who would have to uproot from their familiar neighbourhoods and social support networks, now coveted by richer people. In jurisdictions with great variation in house prices and rents, a separate system for meeting housing costs and related expenses may have to be retained or devised, in addition to implementing a different housing policy to reduce the variations in prices and rents. Differentiation based on regional house price variations often merely exacerbates the situation.

Cases for differentiation could be met either by a separate system of extra cash payments made in addition to the BIs or, in some cases, via public welfare services.

Cash-based social security payments and social services are complements for each other, rather than substitutes. Some needs are better satisfied via a cash payment, providing choice, for instance for food or clothing, while other needs can be satisfied more effectively and efficiently by the provision of collective services, such as health care, or education for all ages.

#### V. Basic Income and Age-Related Adequacy

BI is not a policy objective, but an instrument with identifiable outcomes. When implemented, it could be an important foundational instrument, which, together with other instruments, could form part of a strategy to achieve a set of carefully-specified

and prioritised objectives for welfare reform, tailored to meet the needs of the jurisdiction.

Many BI advocates aspire to a modest but dignified standard of living, sufficient for eliminating material poverty and enabling the social and cultural participation of every individual. What role might a uniform BI play as part of a strategy to achieve the policy objective of adequacy?

Adequacy, or poverty benchmarks, can be estimated in different ways:

- 1) Focus groups, comprising representatives of typical household configurations, are asked to agree on how much cash they would need at a particular date to achieve a particular standard of living.
- 2) Statistical methods can estimate the different parameters representing 'adequacy' or 'survival level' in cash terms, from the data of samples of similar people, at a particular date.
- 3) Alternatively, a respected and authoritative institution can suggest a fair sharing of resources. The OECD's official adequacy benchmark is '60 per cent of median equivalised household disposable income for a couple' in each jurisdiction. 'Equivalisation' is the process of giving different weights to members of households to enable the incomes of different households to be compared.

These last two methods are based on the distribution of consumption or of incomes across a population. All three methods acknowledge that adequacy is likely to fall into groups according to age – for children, working age adults and those of pension-entitlement age, for instance.

Since adequacy would appear to be age-related, a uniform BI could not fulfil this objective on its own. However, a BI that would be adequate for the age group with the lowest level of perceived need, could then also meet that same **baseline** level for the rest of the population. Adequacy then provides the case for differentiation to meet the *further needs* of the rest of the population. This could be met by 'topping-up' with a separate system of individual-based, age-related, unconditional cash payments, paid in addition to the BIs.

## VI. Does a uniform basic income offend justice?

BIs, (together with a separate system of differentiated benefits varying according to pre-existing categories or circumstances, where a case has been made for them), would cater for the general needs of the population, representing equalisation from the provider's point of view, based on the sharing of resources.

'Welfarism' is an approach based on designing cash payments *tailored to individual needs or wellbeing*, representing equalisation from the recipient's viewpoint. This latter would be a far more complex and subjective exercise, possibly requiring micro-management. Who is included? What is being equalised – utility (if interpersonal comparisons were possible), or a common basket of satisfiers? Should regional price

variations within the jurisdiction be taken into account, even if this latter type of differentiation were merely to exacerbate the situation? To what extent should individuals be compensated for social disadvantage, (such as an impoverished childhood, inadequate or abusive parents, a poor education, or even a low IQ), to level the playing field, and how would this be achieved?

A welfarist benefit system is so different from a BI both philosophically and administratively, that it should have its own name and its own definition, distinct from a BI. A BI would be easier to implement, and could be a stepping stone to a welfarist system, if the latter were thought to be both desirable and feasible.

In her paper, 'Why a uniform basic income offends justice', Maskivker (2018) presents a welfarist version of equality and freedom, claiming that justice must take account of disparity and morally relevant differences. Justice would not only compensate for social disadvantage based on 'situational differences... that stem from the individual's life-context, such as income, educational level, family environment, work opportunities offered by the community, and so forth' (p.195; see also p.198). The fact that 'the uniform basic income ignores important moral differences in effective opportunity that would-be-recipients *already* enjoy' (p.198), implies that justice should also penalise, or at least not favour, social advantage. 'It is unjust that scarce resources be devoted to finance the (relative) freedom from work of unequally disadvantaged individuals in society' (p.194).

The first question is 'Why should a welfarist version be preferred over a non-welfarist approach to justice?'. The difference between them is based on the fact that the latter does not take account of 'preference satisfaction because [it] holds individuals responsible for their preferences' (p.200).

The second question would be how to estimate individual subjective experiences of social advantage and disadvantage? Maskivker states 'As it is common in public policy implementation in general, the establishment of categories in which similar cases are grouped should be the norm' (p.208). She then observes that '[t]wo natural indicators of moral agency... seem to be income and wealth' (p.209) and 'the idea that individuals who can afford to opt out of work independently, without incurring unacceptable costs, should not receive help from society seems reasonable' (p.209).

Maskivker wants to redefine a BI, 'based on the principle of universal citizenship, but activation of the right is not automatic...' (p.212), proposing a differentiated payment dependent on categories or circumstances (p.211). Her solution is a graduated basic income grant – differentiated against both income and wealth, as proof of social disadvantage – with those of sufficient income and wealth receiving nothing, in contrast to new characteristic no. 5. In addition, 'the graduated basic income will be means-tested indirectly insofar as it will apply differently to people in accordance with their levels of socio-economic advantage,' (p.215). This is in direct contrast to characteristic no. 4 in the BIEN definition.

The individual as the benefit unit removes the need for intrusive monitoring of personal relationships, but Maskivker acknowledges that her proposal will still be 'more bureaucracy-prone than a uniform basic income' (p.215). She claims that her graduated basic income grant will have greater redistributive effects than a uniform



grant. However, much of the redistribution potential for each type of cash-based social protection programme is due to its source of funding. Much also depends on the vision of society that people wish to create for themselves. A uniform BI scheme, especially one financed by a redistributive source of finance, could lead to a far more just, *inclusive* and united society than would a 'gradated BI grant'.

Maskivker's initial challenge presented the welfarist approach to equality and freedom, based on subjective, individual experience, with all its problems of definition and calculation. How well would income and wealth substitute for those subjective experiences? But her 'gradated basic income grant', (a contradiction in terms), is no BI, but merely a type of means-tested benefit, trying to masquerade as a BI. For those who favour means-tested benefits, perhaps Maskivker's version could be a preferred option. But, no details about the implementation are revealed, nor of the financing arrangement for a benefit system essentially based on income tax. It is difficult to judge how her proposal would work in practice, or how it would compare with other typical income-tested benefits in existing welfare states.

The initial question remains 'does a uniform BI offend justice?' According to the justification for a BI in section II above, the answer must be a clear 'No'.

## **VII. What is the difference between a BI and the special case of an income-tested benefit (ITB), when gross income is zero?**

A BI is 'without means test' – it is not allocated according to pre-existing categories or financial circumstances. It is completely independent of any tax system, including any income tax that might be levied subsequently, (whether or not it is regarded as the main source of finance). It is paid prior to any taxation and thus is exempt from taxes. It is represented by an intercept on a disposable (or net) income axis.

In contrast, an ITB is completely integrated in the system of taxes on gross income, and normally has four aspects:

- it can be allocated according to pre-existing categories or circumstances of income or wealth;
- the income-tested benefit is granted *after* taxes have been levied on the gross incomes of the recipients comprising the benefit unit;
- but, the ITB itself is exempt from taxes on income, and can also be represented as an intercept on the disposable (or net) income axis;
- then the total disposable incomes of the recipients comprising the benefit unit are further subjected to a withdrawal rate or taper.

In its extreme form, the withdrawal rate can be 100 percent, (creating an *income ceiling* for low-income beneficiaries). The net payment to the benefit unit is non-uniform.

Let us consider the special case of an income-tested benefit, which is a periodic, individual based, potentially universal, uniform in principle, unconditional cash payment, when gross income is zero.

Could this special case of an ITB be classified as a BI? There would appear to be very little difference between them, except that, because the ITB is integrated in the income tax system, it is means-tested, while the BI is not.

Consider a diagram with disposal income on the vertical, and gross income on the horizontal, axis:

- with the BI system, any income tax schedule starts *above* the BI intercept on the vertical axis;
- with an ITB system, the main tax schedule starts *below* the ITB intercept on the vertical axis, that is, at disposable income equals zero, and, in addition, *the taper starts above* the ITB intercept. The ITB system is means-tested, that is, it violates characteristic no. 4

Although this special case of an ITB would be preferable to the more usual conditional, couple- or household-based version, with its intrusive administration into personal circumstances, it retains ITB's three main adverse outcomes for recipients with low, non-zero, gross incomes:

- The ITB does not provide the financial security that is offered by the BI. The ITB requires a continual flow of accurate, real-time information about the recipient's incomes from all sources, from a series of different agencies, which is difficult to maintain. The BI is not dependent on this.
- The ITB is double taxed, and the resultant marginal tax rate (mdr) can be calculated as the sum of the two tax rates minus their product. This often leads to a higher mdr on the gross incomes of low-income people compared with the mdr on gross incomes of more affluent taxpayers. Thus, the outcome is a regressive taxation system that is divisive between net recipients and net taxpayers.
- The high mdr of the ITBs reduces net wage rates, introducing an inherent, potential work disincentive effect for low-income people.

The ITBs and BIs are not only administratively different, but represent very different philosophies. The ITB is part of social assistance, which has emerged from the old Poor Laws and represents the rich man's grudging concession to the poor man, while the BI is a celebration of the sharing in the fruits of the economy underwritten by the land and natural resources, material heritage and institutions of society.

### **VIII. Application of the definition of the generic BI**

The abstract definition of the generic BI is a distinct concept and should remain separate, even while providing a template for proposals of practical and pragmatic BI programmes. The six characteristics of the generic BI define the structure for a class of genuine BI models within a wide variety of cash-based social protection programmes in response to the diverse contexts into which they would be introduced.

Context is important. Each jurisdiction faces different opportunities, problems and constraints – presented by, among other things, its climate, natural resources, history, infrastructure, technology, institutions and culture.

Even a clear, precise definition will need some accommodation or adaptation of its characteristics to the existing situation, when a BI model or programme is put into practice. For instance, 'universality' implicitly refers to the extent of the BI-awarding jurisdiction, which is defined here as any authority with the legal powers both to grant a BI programme and to finance it. Similarly, further adaptation is required when each jurisdiction decides whether to base its eligibility criteria for universality on 'citizenship', (which could be challenging to apply), or on residency qualifications.

The cash transfer system comprises a cash-based social protection programme representing a cash flow from jurisdiction to population, together with its source(s) of funding, (which needs equally careful planning in order to meet the objectives of the jurisdiction), representing a cash flow from population to jurisdiction.

The social protection programme could cover a range of instruments, including a selection from:

- A foundational, uniform BI
- Benefits to meet the cases for differentiation
- Age-related, 'adequacy top-up' payments
- Targeted and non-uniform income-tested benefits<sup>9</sup>
- Retained social insurance benefits, with an 'earnings replacement' role during times of sickness, unemployment and retirement
- Other types of benefits for which a BI is not a good substitute, such as a welfare fund for emergency payments in the event of fire or flood.

While the BI is uniform, net payments resulting from the complete social protection programme and its source of funding are not necessarily uniform. The characteristics which define the generic BI can help to contribute towards the simultaneous financial outcomes, which include financial autonomy (via choices about the use of one's own time and the use of one's own disposable income), financial security (via the reduction of material deprivation, stigma, humiliation and exclusion), and the reduction of income inequality. These can then lead to emancipation, wellbeing and a just, inclusive and united society, via attitudinal and behavioural changes. Of course, the final outcomes depend not just on the BIs or even the cash transfer programme, but also on social service provision and other government policies, among other things.

## **IX. Conclusion**

'Uniform' is probably the most difficult characteristic to specify, which is why it has not yet been adopted into BIEN's definition.

'Uniform' should be included as the new characteristic no.5 defining the generic BI. This avoids casual discrimination between people on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race or creed. But household economies of scale increase with family size, which could encourage parents to have larger families, especially in cultures where most women do not have control over their own fertility. Not only might the resultant household economies of scale encourage population growth, but

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<sup>9</sup> See section VII.

uniformity could have a large unearned income effect on work disincentives for parents of large families. Education can be part of a medium- to long-term solution, but a BI could bring women greater financial autonomy in the meantime.

Since the BI is uniform, a separate system of cash payments could be made in addition to the BI, where necessary to meet cases for differentiation, or to achieve the objective of an age-related, adequate standard of living.

Given the justification for a BI given by Paine and others, a BI does not offend justice. The special case of an individual-based, potentially universal, uniform in principle, unconditional income-tested benefit, when gross income equals zero, cannot be classified as a BI, because it is means-tested and contravenes characteristic 4.

The following revised definition of BI, could provide the basis for further discussion:

A **basic income** is a periodic, *uniform*, cash payment unconditionally *granted* to all on an individual basis, without means test or *behavioural* requirement.

That is, basic income has the following **six characteristics**:

1. **Periodic**: it is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.
2. **Cash payment**: it is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.
3. **Individual**: it is paid on an individual basis – and not, for instance, *on the basis of a couple or household*.
4. **Universal**: it is paid to all, *including children*, without means test.
5. **Uniform**, *the amount of a basic income is the same/equal for everyone within a given jurisdiction, at a given time, and does not vary according to pre-existing categories or circumstances*.
6. **Unconditional**: *a basic income is not conditional on any behavioural requirements*. It is paid without a requirement to work *for pay* or to demonstrate willingness to work *for pay*, *to undertake volunteer work*, or to behave according to traditional gender roles. *In other words, it is obligation-free*.

*A BI is a foundational income, or income floor, on which each can build with income from other sources.*

(Italics indicate proposed changes to the current BIEN definition.)

Rather than referring to BI as a UBI, (Universal or Unconditional BI), purists should refer to it as PCIUUUBI (periodic, cash, individual, universal, uniform, unconditional basic income).

But BI is simpler.

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