

UBI

A PATH OF FREEDOM

Report about
a possible experiment on

Uncondicional Basic Income in **Portugal**

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Proposal for an Unconditional Basic Income Experiment in Portugal

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Introduction

The goal of this report is to investigate into the feasibility of an Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) experiment in Portugal. Many academics, policymakers, politicians, businesses, activists, and the general public have been interested for decades in the concept of UBI. Moreover, in the last decade, UBI experiments done in numerous countries throughout the world have helped to revitalise interest in the topic. The increasing interest in UBI experiments should be seen in accordance with the increasing importance of so-called “evidence-based policies”,¹ when focussing both at an individual behaviour level, as well as at societal, structural and governmental ones. This report on the project of implementing a UBI experiment in Portugal is divided in three chapters:

In chapter one, we provide a brief theoretical and normative explanation of UBI, exposing and evaluating the main arguments for and against UBI and UBI experiments. In this section, we defend the proposal of a full UBI that reinforces the Welfare State in Portugal, in accordance with the principles of the *Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union*, incorporating the urgent need for the transition to a decarbonised society, in accordance with the *European Green Deal*.

In chapter two we provide a comparative analysis of some of the most significant past and current UBI experiments which we consider particularly relevant for the Portuguese context. In section 2.1. we provide a description of four UBI experiments and three UBI policies. In section 2.2. we explore the lessons we can take from these experiments and policies.

In chapter three, we formulate in section 3.1. our concrete proposal for a UBI experiment in Portugal, and in section 3.2 we provide a set of indications on how best to design, implement and manage a UBI experiment, taking into account the Portuguese context.

1. Theoretical and normative justification of UBI

In this chapter, we briefly present the key theoretical and normative reasons for implementing a UBI. When employment is impossible, minimum social aid systems in welfare state regimes are reserved for individuals who lack the resources or the ability to obtain them. However, as UBI advocates argue, these social benefits don't guarantee all members of the political community an equal opportunity for a decent existence and the opportunity to participate in their community. According to *Basic Income Earth Network*, a basic income is a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement.²

The debate about the moral desirability and feasibility of UBI is highly stimulating, although at times it can be too theoretical. One of the benefits of UBI experiments is that they can help change what still seems to many a utopian possibility into a realistic public policy. Since there is still a lot of work to be done before we can draw solid conclusions on whether or not a UBI is a good or bad idea, the best approach to get this knowledge is to conduct local experiments.

To be clear, any reasonable proposal for the implementation of a UBI in Portugal would always have to go through the process of maintaining, extending and improving the existent welfare state. A UBI in this setting should be designed to address a basic challenge: poverty and social exclusion, should it ever be implemented nationally. In Portugal, a major cause for concern is the poverty experienced by a large number of persons even when they are eligible for government assistance programs such as the *Rendimento Social de Inserção* (Social Insertion Income).³ The conditionality linked to economic assistance policies is, however, an ineffective mechanism, as well as stigmatizing. Several studies demonstrate that the effectiveness of most conditional policies is compromised by what experts call "non-take-up", when people have the right to receive social benefits in the form of conditional incomes but they end up not receiving them. Several reasons explain this phenomenon: lack of knowledge about the existence of these benefits, bureaucratic difficulties, fear of feeling stigmatized, etc.⁴

It is important to note that UBI is not a social aid program directed primarily at the poor or those with little or no income, but rather a universal and unconditional policy. Moreover, by being obligation-free, UBI avoids the stigma associated with individuals who "live off subsidies". Contrary to what happens with conditional cash transfers, with a UBI it's possible to acquire additional income through employment, thus avoiding the "unemployment trap". UBI is a simple, practical, and non-degrading solution to poverty. When highly vulnerable, with a UBI no one has to ask for help from the social security system because a UBI is individual, universal and unconditional. Since no one has to give up this basic safety net, it thus allows for long-term planning, which is essential

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for individuals who want to live a decent life. And no one better understands how to plan and invest for the future of one's life than those who have experienced poverty themselves. Investing in a home may be more vital for some individuals and families, while training may be more crucial for others. The notion that social security has a better grasp on what the poor actually need is irrational, expensive, and inefficient. The reality is that a large number of the world's poor and unemployed are unable to make any use of social assistance programs because they either don't register with employment centres or are too ashamed to seek for aid or accept all of the constraints that exist in present systems.⁵ Unlike conditional transfers, UBI would be able to cover all of these people because it is individual, universal and unconditional.

2. Comparative analysis of the various UBI experiments and policies

2.1 Description of four UBI experiments and three UBI policies

In this section we briefly outline seven examples of recent or ongoing UBI experiments and policies.⁶ A UBI experiment in Portugal should take into consideration some of their most important findings. In a country like Portugal, implementing a full UBI would need a major overhaul of the countries' social security system, and the experiences of other countries can help us understand and evaluate the merits of a UBI. UBI experiments raise legitimate concerns, but the truth is that they allow a deeper understanding of UBI's potential implications since they can spark an evidence-based discussion about its advantages and disadvantages.

Barcelona's B-MINCOME experiment

From October 2017 to the end of 2019, the "B-MINCOME" experiment took place in Barcelona, which combined a guaranteed minimum income with active social policies in the city's impoverished urban areas.

The project, led by the Barcelona City Council's Area of Social Rights' Department of Planning and Innovation and partially funded by the European Union's Urban Innovative Actions program, was aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion in Barcelona. The project's implementation phase lasted for 24 months, followed by an evaluation phase lasting another 12 months. Specifically, it was designed to test the combination of conditional monetary transfers (*Municipal Inclusion Support*) with four active policies of social inclusion in the areas of training and employment, entrepreneurship in the cooperative economy, housing policies, and a community participation program. While some treatment groups received a guaranteed income with no strings attached, the experiment did not only examine the impact of a UBI, but also various conditional cash transfers.

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During the experiment, material deprivation, financial situation, employment, health, and several subjective and objective measures of well-being, were all examined. There were no significant differences between the groups in terms of the positive effects. However, according to these findings, strong inclusive social policies must accompany a UBI in order for it to be most effective. Disincentives to work were more pronounced in the conditional cash transfer groups, and this could be explained by the hypothesis that having to comply with conditional measures might reduce the time available to search for a job.⁷

Finland's experiment

After a new government came to power in Finland in 2015, a process began that led to a UBI experiment which was launched in 2016, in a partnership between the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (*Kela*) and a number of academic institutions and think-tanks. About 2.000 people receiving *Kela*'s unemployment benefits were selected to participate in the experiment. Only people who were already receiving unemployment benefits were eligible for the UBI. Regarding the outcomes of the experiment, UBI recipients' incentives to work differed little from those in the control group, making it difficult to draw conclusions about the program's impact on the labour market. However, the beneficiaries showed significant positive results in terms of physical and mental well-being, levels of confidence (in other people, in institutions, and in relation to their personal future), and feelings of economic stability. Stress and depression levels were also reported to be lower among the recipients.⁸

The Netherlands' experiments

In the Netherlands, six separate experiments were conducted in six different cities. Utrecht hosted the most extensive of those experiments, which kicked off in early 2018 as an alternative to the "Participation Act" law, which makes the payment of certain subsidies conditional on the fulfilment of certain administrative obligations as well as the search for training or employment.⁹ The experiment in Utrecht involved the participation of approximately 750 social insertion income recipients who had agreed to participate. For nearly two years, city officials tested the effects of income disparity on three groups of the 750 recipients. In addition, two control groups were also weighed in on the decision. Results were primarily focused on labour market participation because of the experiment's scope. Regarding labour market participation, the results were more positive for the UBI recipients who were in the most vulnerable situations.¹⁰

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The experiments in the United States of America

Mayor Michael Tubbs launched the first-ever mayor-led guaranteed income in the town of Stockton, in February 2019, where 125 randomly selected residents were given 500 US dollars per month for 24 months with no strings attached, including no work requirements. Early findings point to improved mental health and increased happiness, as well as more entrepreneurial activity, increased self-determination and financial security. More people were able to find full-time work as a result of it as well.¹¹ Mayors for a Guaranteed Income (MGI), a movement started by the Stockton experiment, has spawned a number of experiments in the US, all of which are fuelled by mayors in different cities.¹² Several of the new experiments at MGI are being publicly funded, in contrast to the Stockton experiment, which was entirely financed through private donations. To ensure that future advocacy is based on statistical evidence, the Center for Guaranteed Income Research at the University of Pennsylvania was created, which will provide aggregated quantitative and qualitative data on the experiments currently taking place in the United States.¹³

Maricá's UBI policy

During the 2013 municipal elections in the city of Maricá, in Brazil, Mayor Washington Quaqué decided to implement a guaranteed income for the city's residents. In addition to the community bank, *Banco Mumbuca*, the policy is funded by oil revenues as part of an overall program to promote civic engagement and a social economy. There have been many changes and expansions to the policy since its inception in December 2019. Maricá's program includes 42.000 people (out of the city's population of 165.000), which makes it one of the world's largest UBI experiments. Eventually, the policy could be extended to include all of Maricá's residents. One of its most distinctive features is that the basic income is given in a local digital currency (*mumbuca*) administered by the community bank. It is however a means-tested targeted program, but the amount is unconditional. Initially, each individual received a monthly payment equivalent to 20 euros paid in mumbucas. The value of the benefit currently amounts to 170 mumbucas (26 euros) per month. The program's impact on Maricá's citizens as well as its economy, is still being studied using both quantitative and qualitative methods. A first report with preliminary results should be published during 2022.¹⁴

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South Korea's UBI policy

Since 2019, the Gyeonggi Provincial government funds a basic income policy for approximately 175.000 residents of an amount of approximately 182 euros every quarter, that is 727 euros per year. As a result of a number of surveys, it has been determined that the policy has had a positive effect on people's well-being, such as their satisfaction with life, their perceptions of work values, and their overall happiness have all improved, with positive effects on the motivation of recipients to work the public's perception of basic income has also improved.¹⁵

Macao's UBI policy

The UBI policy in Macao, named "Wealth Partaking Scheme", is one of the most prominent in the world, and is distributed on an annual basis by the People's Republic of China, which has ruled Macao since December 1999. The casino industry in the region provides the funding for this income. The Wealth Partaking Scheme was launched by the Macao Special Administrative Region in 2008, which pays a UBI to both permanent and non-permanent residents. The amounts paid each year have fluctuated since its inception, starting at 5.000 patacas (533 euros) for permanent residents in 2008, rising to 10.000 (1.067 euros) in 2019 for permanent residents and 6.000 patacas (640 euros) for non-permanent residents. Even though the policy has been in place for more than a decade, very little information has been gathered about its effects on individuals or groups.¹⁶

2.2 What we can learn from UBI experiments

Each of the described UBI experiments and policies is the result of its own cultural, social, economic and political context, which makes it difficult to draw general conclusions from their results. The social assistance mechanisms in different countries, regions, or cities are each specific to their particular context, as are the needs of the target groups in each UBI experiment or policy. As a result, the types of effects that can be derived from each UBI experiment are influenced by these often-striking differences. Moreover, UBI experiments bear little resemblance to the formal definition of a basic income. For example, it's not uncommon for cash transfers in UBI experiments to fall below the national poverty thresholds. With a more generous UBI, the effects on the labour market, educational options, and consumption patterns are likely to be quite different from the available results we already have from past experiments. It's also not uncommon for experiments to be aimed at marginalized or impoverished groups. It's likely that these beneficiaries will make very different choices when given a basic income (where to spend the money, finding or quitting a job) than other members of society (more affluent members could afford to save the money, or spend it on positional goods, or make long-term decisions).

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Given that limited comparability is an important concern, we can ask whether evidence from existing cases is relevant to our perceptions and theoretical discussions of the possible effects of a potential UBI experiment in Portugal.¹⁷

It is also important to acknowledge the influence of political actors, as well as the political process itself, when conducting UBI experiments. Because even when an experiment is considered as scientifically driven, it's still an outcome of an existing political process. Therefore, one should not necessarily condemn the shortcomings of UBI experiments because of the influence of the political process on which they are necessarily embedded, but rather acknowledge them and work with those limitations and challenges in mind from the start, emphasizing the need to be cautious and develop additional strategies to account for these limitations in any future basic income experiment in Portugal. Indeed, it may be crucial to understand the results of an experiment if we understand how the experiment may have distinct scientific goals and political motivations. Researchers and legislators don't always speak the same language or use the same methods when implementing a UBI experiment. Mismatched expectations and differences in goals and methods can lead to conflicts amongst all parties, which is an extra problem to deal with. As a result, experiments are also vulnerable to political interference, particularly in the form of manipulated outcomes and can be employed as a populist ideology.

In spite of the limitations outlined (limited comparability and political interference), the reality is that any UBI experiment can still give us additional empirical data to fill gaps in our understanding of basic income.¹⁸ For example, we need to acknowledge that there are still important knowledge gaps in the areas of labour market participation and education investment regarding the potential impacts of a basic income. Other impacts should also be worth considering, such as the impact of cash transfers on consumer patterns and the effect on environmental sustainability, or how it might reinforce competition based on positional goods.

However, empirical data, no matter how positive it can be regarding the potentials impacts of a UBI, will not be enough to end the argument on the potential merits of a basic income. Ethical and advocacy debates can nevertheless benefit from empirical evidence gleaned through experiments, which can be used to support the case for basic income.¹⁹ This means that rather than relying on generalizations, we must acknowledge the specific facts we have from diverse UBI studies, and understand how they connect to their context and to the general idea of basic income.

3. Specification of the UBI experiment in Portugal

This section has the practical aim of clarifying what can be done to implement a UBI experiment in the Portuguese context. We will partly follow here a recent proposal going in this direction, which was submitted to the Portuguese Parliament by the MP Cristina Rodrigues.²⁰ We will also use the information available in the recent poll on UBI in Portugal to partly orient our proposal.²¹

3.1. Proposal for choosing the location of the experiment

Before, during, and after the experiment, the political window for basic income should be examined. For a political movement in support of basic income, it's critical to know whether the current political climate is conducive to its implementation, in which case an experiment may slow or halt that momentum, or whether acquiring relevant facts through an experiment could be the key factor. If an adverse policy window prevents an experiment from leading to political implementation, then its justification must come from somewhere else.

Having said this, one potential city in Portugal for a full implementation of a UBI experiment could be Alcácer do Sal, in Alentejo. In 2021, a UBI experiment project, conceptualised by researchers Rui Pereira and Surabhi Srivastava, has started in the town of Alcácer do Sal.²² The experiment has four phases: formative research, implementation, impact and advocacy.²³ Alcácer do Sal has a significant geographical dispersion, hence many of its parishes are quite rural. Currently, 13.350 people live in the city, of which 3,6% are foreigners. It has a high percentage of elderly people (above 65 years old). Alcácer do Sal faces many challenges, such as poverty and migration of young people to other cities in Portugal or countries in the EU. It has also some of the worst indicators in terms of wages, education, per capita spending power, and birth rates in Setúbal's District. The first phase of the project already took place in May and June 2021, with the organization of 8 focus group discussions, with 63 people in total. The focus groups were categorised based on gender, age, income-level and nationality-status. The themes covered were about community, deservingness, productivity and UBI. The project is now in a phase of producing a report with the first results of the focus groups as well as applying for funding of the experiment. But the project is only in its formative stage, and if the funding cannot be secured it will not be implemented.

Another location of a possible UBI experiment could be the town of Vila Nova de Gaia, where the Mayor of Vila Nova de Gaia, Eduardo Vítor Rodrigues, expressed recently an interest in this possibility, during the opening of the projection of the documentary "RBI-A path to freedom".²⁴ Another important institution which has expressed interest in debating this possibility is the Portuguese Conselho Económico e Social (Economic and Social Council), presided by Francisco Assis.²⁵

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A favourable report from this important institution regarding UBI experiments would certainly constitute a major step towards implementation. Furthermore, several European institutions also expressed their willingness to help in the implementation of UBI experiments in Member States, such as the European Committee of Regions.²⁶

3.2. Guidelines for the design of the UBI experiment

General design guidelines

Experiment designs should be based on the following general guidelines that help us get a clear picture of what we're trying to achieve, the goal being to assess the impacts a UBI can have in a specific Portuguese municipality or region:²⁷

- Any implementation of a UBI experiment should be in accordance with the principles of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, incorporating the urgent need for the transition to a decarbonized society, under the guidelines of the *European Green Deal*.²⁸
- To ensure the experiment's long-term viability, the design must take sustainability into account and specify an appropriate amount for the UBI. A well-defined work schedule and a sufficient budget are required. The design must be maintained until the end of the experiment, unless a critical imponderable must be addressed to ensure its success.
- The sample size should be at least of 1.000 people, preferably more. Even if managing a big number of people is challenging, not having enough people in the sample will make it more difficult to evaluate the behavioral trends that differ among groups. The sample must be as stable as possible.
- In order to track how the results change over time, the experiment's duration must have at least a two-year time frame. This would allow to differentiate the immediate impact of receiving a UBI from its longer-term assimilation effect while also taking into account behavioral effects. For example, by seeing what certain people do with the UBI, some individuals may change their own attitude over time. The experiment shouldn't be too long, to avoid the tiredness impact of monitoring findings.
- The design must be scalable in various contexts, so that it can be used at a regional or national level (or supranational, for example in the European context, if this is thought suitable).

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- Randomized control groups should be used. For the sake of research, this allows us to compare the outcomes of UBI recipients and non-recipients alike. Additionally, this allows for the isolation of behavioral changes resulting from the UBI, which are not influenced by changes in exogenous causes.
- The data should be collected in a method that is both transparent and scientifically sound, so as to be able to attribute certain results to the policy implemented. All the necessary data for the examination of the variables in question should be gathered using baseline surveys that allow for a complete census of a given sample. The information must be gathered via distributing assessment questionnaires on a regular basis, perhaps every six months or so, and culminating in a final questionnaire, to be used during the last month of the UBI distribution. Data protection should be a priority.
- There must be an ability to examine the impact of the UBI on individuals and households, and on the community as a whole, taking into account economic multipliers and the way in which the UBI impacts the economic activities of the community.
- Assessments should take into account effects on both attitudes and behavior of beneficiaries. One hypothesis to facilitate the collection of these data is the adoption of Likert scales in questionnaire surveys.²⁹
- The hypotheses under investigation must be fully explicit before launching the experiment and before applying the baseline survey. These might include, for example, the effects of the UBI on the ability of families or individuals to access better nutrition, better health care or be able to pay their debts as well as their level of savings. In general, the results of the UBI regarding the empowerment of the beneficiaries should be considered.
- The cost and budget of the experiment must be realistic and various forms of financing can and must be considered (municipal, national and European, including local currencies). The financing must be transparent and defined in advance.
- Transfers must be monitored, passing through the banking system, respecting data protection.

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These indications provide us with a good mapping of what might be desirable for the purposes of clarity and reliability of the results. With this possibility in mind, the next step would be to constitute an independent scientific board with institutional entities, whether municipal, national or European, involving academic experts (economists, sociologists and other social scientists), possibly social workers and representatives of the competent authorities (from the Ministry of Labor and Social Security or Social Security as such, but also, possibly, members of parliamentary groups or local government structures that could host the experiment) to design such a project and test some of the effects of implementing the UBI in one or several Portuguese localities. This would allow, on the one hand, to draw up an adequate design with various areas of expertise involved and, on the other, to have a better idea of its effects in Portugal.

The importance of having an evidence-based public conversation about UBI

When in the process of implementing a UBI experiment, we should work back and forth from the public conversation to the experiment. Anyone who conducts a UBI experiment should respect the regional or national discussion of UBI, taking into consideration as much as possible about what people are interested in. The public's support for the idea of a UBI should be taken into consideration while outlining the rationale for a UBI. Public support for UBI is quite strong in Portugal, as the recent poll on the topic has revealed.³⁰ The result of this poll should partially orient the guidelines for the design of the experiment.

An experiment in accordance with the welfare state

UBI is frequently criticized for threatening to dismantle the welfare state as we know it if it is implemented, and seen as a pretext by which the state could withdraw from critical areas like public health and public education, even if from a neoliberal point of view, this possibility would be welcomed.³¹ Indeed, a cash-based, individual, universal, and unconditional income that is handed out on a regular basis might be highly valuable in a capitalist view not only to boost growth but also to minimize governmental funding.

However, a UBI experiment in Portugal would have to be in compliance with the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic. As stated by Sandra Lima and Gonçalo Marcelo, a UBI cannot be considered as a replacement for the welfare state, but rather as its consolidation, since the State cannot renounce to its fundamental tasks expressed in paragraph (d) of article 9 of the Portuguese Constitution, namely to promote the well-being and quality of life for the people and real equality between people.³²

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In the event that Portugal were to implement a UBI, it seems highly unlikely that any political choice would lead to a severe restriction of the National Health Service or of Public Education, since it would be illegal to make these kinds of decisions. So, the public debate over a Portuguese UBI experiment should be framed around the country's egalitarian values, which are enshrined in its constitution.

The ecological impact of a UBI

One aspect of the implications of UBI experiments that has been overlooked is the ecological impact of a UBI. Since three of Portugal's political parties include a UBI implementation as part of their program, and these being denominated "Green" parties, this consideration is especially pertinent in the Portuguese context.³³ Moreover, since the "Green New Deal" is now a top priority in European politics, this makes it more important to examine the topic in the context of the European Union (EU).

Ecologism, as an alternative to the current socio-economic paradigm, seeks to foster a change to post-productivism in society at large.³⁴ However, it may be impossible to analyse the environmental impacts of basic income because it is difficult to develop objective standards for assessing environmental sustainability.³⁵ A UBI experiment that takes into account the importance of environmental sustainability might yield significant results that would demonstrate the UBI's compatibility with environmental sustainability, making it more difficult to argue against UBI in the future. A UBI experiment may be able to shed some light on the question of whether or not UBI directly promotes or decreases consumerism and, as a result, whether or not our system's ecological sustainability grows thanks to a UBI.

Since UBI removes people from the cycle of production and consumption, it has the potential to reduce environmental stress. Although UBI allows people to maintain their consumption even when their private income is low, it may also put more strain on the environment because of this. These questions can only be answered by a UBI experiment that closely examines how individuals spend their time and what they purchase as they go about their daily lives. If UBI encourages people to work less hours and live more sustainably, it could help the environment.

The cost of a UBI

When implementing a UBI experiment it is also important to focus on the bottom-line questions, that is an overall review of UBI as a long-term, national policy. When it comes to the public discussion UBI, the ethical and existential implications are the most important ones, but it's true that at least in Portugal, those who are opposed to the policy tend to focus on its financial

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implications as the most important ones. Fortunately, Pedro Teixeira published a study in 2019 on the cost of UBI in Portugal.³⁶ In order to change public perceptions about the cost of a UBI, advocates should focus on proposing a financial model that takes into account the difference between the net cost and the gross cost, in the most relevant definition of this difference, such as the estimated cost of a UBI for the United Kingdom (UK) recently simulated by Karl Widerquist and Georg Arndt.³⁷ A UBI would cost just 3,4 percent of GDP to implement in the UK, according to the authors. The present economic and social crisis caused by the Covid-19 outbreak has also prompted some UBI proponents to call for a “emergency UBI” that could be partially funded by Portugal and partially funded by EU funds as a response.³⁸

Having a cost estimate for UBI in Portugal that, in theory, could be around 4 percent of GDP would allow us to focus on the bottom-line questions, that is, on one hand, an overall evaluation of UBI as a long-term, national policy, and on the other, a powerful financial argument for convincing local authorities to implement a UBI experiment.³⁹

One final point regarding the cost of a UBI has to do with the distinction between a UBI and a Negative Income Tax (NIT). Both are unconditional in the sense that they are obligation-free, that is, they do not require any effort from the holder of the position. When it comes to conditional cash transfers, UBI and NIT are both obligation-free, which sets them apart from the rest of the options. Unlike conditional cash transfers, both policies aim to alleviate people from the “poverty trap” in a more effective manner because they both allow for the building of unconditional income alongside employment income. NIT is however still a policy that solely benefits the poor, which carries with it the usual stigma and the bureaucratic obstacles associated with means-tested cash transfers. A UBI is like a floor on which everyone can stand, and not merely another more sophisticated policy targeted at the poor⁴⁰ Most of the UBI experiments which are taking place around the world can be seen as NIT experiments, because the cash transfers are means-tested, even if they are individual and unconditional. NIT means-test experiments are much cheaper to put in place, and this is the main reason why there are so few real UBI experiments. But it would be quite an improvement if a UBI experiment in Portugal could study the impacts of a UBI on full-time workers and part-time workers.⁴¹

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The ethical debate about UBI

Researchers can't and shouldn't try to settle the debate over the ethical evaluation of UBI.⁴² By disregarding it, they are doing a disservice to the general public. Recognizing and addressing the disagreement will help them avoid scepticism from those with differing ethical views. Fundamental ethical debates should be taken into consideration in experiments whenever possible. The debate over a UBI is as much about moral values as it is about facts. Because of this, it is necessary to discuss the relevant data in light of both local issues and locally held normative debates: how much do we care if UBI has any effect on the flow of emigrants? Is it better to work? Is it worthwhile to strive for greater levels of trust inside organizations or between individuals?

There are numerous normative and empirical consequences of UBI experiments, and these are frequently intertwined, and it is easy for researchers and advocates involved in UBI experiments to lose track of the main ethical controversies.

An inclusive experiment

The empirical data gathered should be relevant for the local stakeholders involved in the experiment, which means that it should be comparable to the difficulties that already exist in the environment where it is implemented which prompted the need for an experiment.

In order to gather useful and relevant data, researchers working in the experiment must be able to communicate the goals, design, and findings of their work to other stakeholders (recipients, politicians, media and communities). It's important to make sure that the main stakeholders are given accurate and non-biased information at all times. The experiment should involve a wide range of stakeholders at every level, from conception and implementation to evaluation and follow-up. Stakeholders should not only be informed, but also asked for their input and concerns, depending on their level of influence, power, and how they might be affected, when conceptualizing and designing the program.⁴³

There should be a focus on “key informants”. Even while the primary information gathering process must be carried out using information from UBI recipients, this must be supplemented with information from outside the process, such as public officials who work in the municipal government, the health care system, or the educational institutions.

Conclusion

There are many factors that influence the goals, implementations, and outcomes of UBI experiments, including the political and institutional framework, cultural norms, and even their scientific designs. These experiments are influenced by political processes and national and international discussions on basic income. Many UBI attempts have very little in common. To the extent that they represent UBI in general, these experiments demonstrate how difficult it is to compare and generalize the results of these studies so that they can be used in discussions about UBI. When it comes to experimentation with basic income, this isn't anything new, but rather an acknowledgment of how far the experimental situations have diverged into different design processes and purposes.

Despite these limitations, it's important to acknowledge another important piece of evidence from the ongoing literature on cash transfers: the fact that we have significant evidence on the impact of giving money to people.⁴⁴

In terms of well-being, happiness, health, and other qualitative characteristics such as increasing trust, autonomy and social involvement, unconditional cash transfers have a considerable positive impact in people's lives. However, many critical gaps remain in our understanding of basic income, particularly when it comes to employment participation and other effects such as migration or consumer behavior in terms of ecological sustainability. UBI experiments can play a variety of functions, including obtaining further evidence, supporting advocacy, widening the debate, advancing political implementation of basic income, or adding to the normative debate on basic income.

In certain circumstances, a UBI may be enough to increase real freedom for all⁴⁵, but in most cases, other policies like an optional "Participation Income"⁴⁶ or the state's role as an "Employer of Last Resort",⁴⁷ may be necessary as additions to a UBI.

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Foot notes/Quotations/References

- 1 Cartwright, N. & Hardie, J. (2012). *Evidence-Based Policy. A Practical Guide to Doing it Better*. New York: Oxford University Press.
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- 10 Verlaat, T., de Kruijk, M., & Rosenkranz, S. (2020). *Study What Works (Weten Wat Werkt): Summary of the Final Report in English*. Utrecht: Utrecht University. The summary of the final report of the experiments is available here: <https://www.uu.nl/sites/default/files/uu-use-eindrapport-wetenwatwerkt-summary-en.pdf>
- 11 The key findings of the Stockton experiment are available at: <https://www.stocktondemonstration.org/#summary-of-key-findings>
- 12 *Mayors for a Guaranteed Income's* website: <https://www.mayorsforagi.org/>
- 13 Center for Guaranteed Income Research's website: <https://www.penncgir.org/>
- 14 The website on Maricá's experiment: <https://www.maricabasicincome.com/>

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<https://basicincomefair.gg.go.kr/download.php?downloadfilename=605da8a38316e.pdf>

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21 The poll on UBI was carried out by Marktest at the request of MEP Francisco Guerreiro, member of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament. About 1.500 people were interviewed, with the aim of asking the opinion of the Portuguese population regarding a possible implementation of a UBI in Portugal. The poll reveals that 76% of the inquired are in favour of implementing a UBI in Portugal. A strong majority of the enquired is also in favour of a UBI experiment that would allow a broad national public debate on the potential benefits and pitfalls of a UBI. The Markest poll is available at: https://rbidoc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Marktest_SondagemRBI_Out21-1.pdf

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23 As explained by Catarina Neves, Surabhi Srivastava & Rui Pereira, “Reciprocity, desert and work ethos: a case study on a community-based initiative on Basic Income in Portugal”. Conference given at the 2021 BIEN world congress, in August 19, 2021. See website: <https://cbin.scot/bien2021/>

24 The documentary’s webpage: <https://rbidoc.com/apresentacao-em-vila-nova-de-gaia/>

25 See here the letter written by MEP Francisco Guerreiro to Francisco Assis, the President of the Conselho Económico e Social, and the encouraging reply he received:

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- 27** This section draws on Merrill, R., & Marcelo, G. (2018). Como Implementar e Financiar um Rendimento Básico Incondicional? Reflexões para o Caso Português e Proposta de Um Projeto-piloto. *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 74(2/3), 585-626, as well as Standing, G. (2017). *Basic Income: And How We Can Make It Happen*. Pelican Books.
- 28** Webpage of the *European Green Deal*: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en
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- 38** Neves, C. & Merrill, R. (2020). Encouraging European solidarity: an unconditional basic income, *Social Europe*. Available at: <https://www.socialeurope.eu/encouraging-european-solidarity-an-unconditional-basic-income>
- 39** To fill this gap, an essay prize on this topic has been launched recently: <https://ubiexperiments.weebly.com/ubiexp-essay-prize-2022.html>
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- 41** There has been some research done on the impact in the labour market of the UBI policy in Alaska, with positive results. See Jones, D., & Marinescu, I. (2018). The labor market impacts of universal and permanent cash transfers: Evidence from the Alaska Permanent Fund (No. w24312). *National Bureau of Economic Research*. Available at: <https://www.nber.org/papers/w24312>. Similar results have been found regarding the UBI policy in the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, in North Carolina. See Akee, R. K., Copeland, W. E., Keeler, G., Angold, A., & Costello, E. J. (2010). Parents' incomes and children's outcomes: a quasi-experiment using transfer payments from casino profits. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 2(1), 86-115. Available at:

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42 For a rich and rigorous analysis on a set of related considerations necessary to take into account when designing and implementing UBI experiments see: Widerquist, Karl. *A Critical Analysis of Basic Income Experiments for Researchers, Policymakers and Citizens*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

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