
BIEN The Basic Income European Network

BIEN was founded in 1986 and aims to serve as a link between individuals and groups committed to or interested in basic income, and to foster informed discussion on this topic throughout Europe.

Link to BIEN Online at <http://www.basicincome.org>

E-mail: bien@etes.ucl.ac.be

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BIEN's *NewsFlash* contains up-to-date information on recent events and publications related to BIEN or basic income more generally. The *NewsFlash* is mailed electronically every two months to over 800 subscribers throughout Europe and beyond, and simultaneously made available for consultation or download at [BIEN Online](#). Requests for [free subscription](#) or [items for inclusion or review](#) in future *NewsFlashes* are to be sent to BIEN's secretariat: Philippe Van Parijs, 17 rue de Pavie, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, E-mail: bien@etes.ucl.ac.be.

This *NewsFlash* has been prepared with the help of François Blais, Pascal Couillard, Mathias Hungerbühler, Dirk Jacobi, Laurence Jacquet, Daniel Raventos, Yannick Vanderborght and Karl Widerquist.

CONTENTS

1. Editorial
 2. Glimpses of national debates
 - Canada
 - France
 3. Events
 - Barcelona, January 2001
 - Madrid, January 2001
 - Ghent, February 2001
 4. Publications
 - Catalan
 - French
 - German
 - Italian
 - Spanish
 5. National networks
 6. More about BIEN
-
-

1. EDITORIAL

Two new books on basic income in German. Two relevant conferences this month in Spain. And upsurges of relevant public debates in both Canada and France. In the meanwhile, the second issue of BIEN's new-style hard-copy newsletter is being sent from London by Duncan Burbidge to all members of BIEN. Guy Standing and Bridget Dommen have started preparatory work towards our 2002 Geneva Congress. And Jurgen De Wispelaere (back from Australia) and Stuart Duffin are about to undertake the renovation of our web site.

We have been pleased to welcome several new life members, but we still need more of you to join us. Not only to provide BIEN with a secure financial basis, but above all to strengthen the group of men and women throughout Europe and beyond who are willing to publicly express their commitment to BIEN's objectives. Life membership is 100 Euros and can be sent in cash without fuss to BIEN's secretariat. An acknowledgement and a copy of the basic-income issue of the *Boston Review* will be sent upon receipt.

The Executive Committee

2. GLIMPSES OF NATIONAL DEBATES

CANADA: GUARANTEED INCOME ON AND OFF THE FRONT PAGES

On December 9th 2000, just after the ruling Liberal Party won a decisive victory in the Canadian Parliamentary election, the idea of a guaranteed income suddenly and surprisingly appeared on the front pages of Canadian Newspapers. Under a banner headline, the National Post (one of the most conservative national dailies in Canada) reported that Prime Minister "Jean Chretien assembled a top-level committee in hopes of creating a cradle-to-grave guaranteed annual income program that he hopes will be his political legacy". Over the following four days, the National Post followed with more front-page articles including one with the headline, "Foes slam 'Socialistic Experiment.'" The harshest criticism came from Stockwell Day, the leader of Canada's Alliance Party, known for being more-conservative-than-the-Conservative Party. He accused the Liberals of misleading the Canadians during the election and said that Chretien should name a mountain after himself if he wants to leave a lasting legacy rather than spend billions to fund a cradle-to-grave welfare program. On December 13th, however, the Globe and Mail reported that Chretien denied any part in suggesting the idea. Chretien said, "I don't know where that idea comes from. I haven't said a word about it."

FRANCE: A DECISIVE STEP TOWARDS A NEGATIVE INCOME TAX ?

Along with a number of other countries across Europe, France is considering a reduction of its income taxes. However, only about one half of French households currently pay income tax, which implies that only the comparatively rich half of the population would benefit from the tax cut. For any European government, and especially a red-green government, this makes such a measure hard to sell. To make it acceptable, the government tried to couple it with a reduction of the "generalised" social security contributions (CSG) on the lower layers of income, which would benefit the low-paid workers. But France's supreme court (Conseil constitutionnel) turned down this option on the 19th of December 2000, mainly on the ground that it involved a discrimination among similarly situated households and therefore violated the principle of equality before the tax system. Some, including the social affairs minister Elizabeth Guigou, then proposed to increase the minimum wage, while offsetting the cost for the employers of low-paid workers through selective cuts in their social security contributions. But a majority emerged in favour of using a more straightforward method to boost the disposable incomes of low-income households: to design the tax cut in the form of a refundable tax credit. As the idea smells, in the French context, of market-liberal ideology, a consensus was not easy to reach. But by early January the Prime Minister and Finance Minister became convinced that this was the way to go, and on the 11th of January 2001, *Le Monde's* main headline was: "Lionel Jospin endorses the tax credit".

The following day's issue of the same newspaper carried, under the title "Tax credit: don't be shy, comrades!", a characteristically crisp article by former Prime Minister Michel Rocard (also chairman of the social affairs commission of the European Parliament and one of the keynote speakers at BIEN's Berlin congress). He rejoiced at the fact that the proportionality and hence the yield of the CSG (introduced by the government he headed) was not affected, and urged that the existing guaranteed minimum income scheme (RMI), which his government also introduced, should evolve into a refundable tax credit of the negative-income-tax type, such as the "allocation compensatrice de revenu" recently proposed by the "Rocardian" Roger Godino. "The replacement of all that [the RMI and other assistance schemes with a flavour of charity] by a single principle, applicable to rich and poor alike, designed so as to provide people with work incentives and to prevent them from being trapped in non-work situations, is something that looks far more impressive and that corresponds far more a leftish conception of the relationship between income, taxation and work." But what about the idea's suspicious pedigree, in particular its association with Milton Friedman, the founder of monetarism, "which causes inequalities to expand exponentially and many countries to be locked in underdevelopment"? This system, Rocard replies, we've got it, whether we wish it or not. "Why then refuse the instrument for dampening human suffering which Friedman himself had seen fit to append to the system, as he understood the social cruelty of what he was proposing? It would beat it all to take the worst and leave behind the best." (*Le Monde*, 12.01.01)

From the information made available by the Finance Ministry, however, it seems clear that the French version of the refundable tax credit will not be integrated with either the RMI nor the tax reductions for higher earners and will be similar to the American EITC or the British WFTC, rather to a straight negative income tax, though more general from the start as it would not be restricted to families with children. In the case of a single person, for example, once the new scheme is fully in place (2003), the credit would start at a level of about 200 Euros annually for earnings at 30% of the minimum wage, reach a maximum of nearly 700 Euros at the level of the minimum wage (about 850 Euros per month) and be phased out gradually until it vanishes at 140% of the minimum wage. Because of the refundable nature of the tax credit, this is no doubt an important and unprecedented step in the direction of a negative income tax and, beyond, of a universal basic income, though more modest, for example, that the Netherlands' 2000 tax reform.

3. EVENTS

BARCELONA (ES), 24-25 January 2001, Second Symposium on Social Inequalities in Catalonia

Organised in the famous Gaudi building "La Pedrera" by the Fundació Bofill, a Catalan Foundation particularly concerned with inequalities from a left-nationalist perspective, this conference devoted the whole of its first plenary session (in Spanish) to basic income (before turning - in Catalan - to a presentation and discussion of empirical studies on various dimensions of inequality in Catalonia). After an opening lecture by Philippe Van Parijs (Louvain), the Barcelona economist Jose Iglesias Fernandez presented a scenario for the gradual introduction of a basic income at subsistence level in Catalonia from 2002 to 2021, starting with the deciles of the population with the lowest income. (The level of autonomous regions, such as Catalonia, is a natural level to use for basic income proposals in Spain, as the existing guaranteed minimum income schemes are organised by them. One problem, however, is that their fiscal powers are very limited.) This was followed by a round table with the participation of Gösta Esping-Andersen (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona), Daniel Raventos (Universitat de Barcelona), Antoni Castells (Universitat de Barcelona), and José Antonio Noguera (Universitat autonoma de Barcelona). On the previous day, informal meetings on basic income were organised, with the participation of some regional and national members of parliament and some Trade Union officials, at the initiative of both the Fundació Campalans (linked to the Catalan socialist party) and the Fundació Bofill. The proceedings (in Catalan) of the Symposium will be published by the organisers. For further information, contact Jordi Sánchez, Fundació Jaume Bofill, Provença 324, 08037 Barcelona, fbofill@fbofill.org

MADRID (ES), 24-26 January 2001, Public Policies and Income Distribution

The last in a long series of conferences on inequalities organised by the Fundación Argentaria (now merged into the Fundación BBVA, the foundation linked by one of Spain's top two banks). Several contributions (especially by Luis Ayala Cañon & Rosa Martínez López and by Magda Mercader & Horacio Levy) concerned the impact of Spain's current regional minimum income schemes on poverty and inequality, and the final conference ("¿Que distribución de la renta para el siglo XXI?") by Philippe Van Parijs dealt explicitly with recent European developments in the direction of a universal basic income and prompted a lively discussion on the relevance of basic income for a country such as Spain. As was the case with previous conferences, the proceedings will be published (in Spanish) jointly by the Foundation and Visor Distribuciones. For further information, contact Paloma Galan San José, Fundación BBVA, pgalan@grupobbva.com

GHENT (BE), 16 February 2001, Are jobs "goods" or "bads"? Ethical problems and employment

A one-day conference on moral conceptions of employment, ethical problems with the distribution of jobs, and the consequences for employment regulation and social policy, organised at the Law Faculty of the University of Ghent by Professor Koen Raes and Jurgen De Wispelaere, with the participation of several major contributors to the European debate on basic income, including Gijs van Donselaar (Amsterdam), Ingrid Robeyns (Cambridge), Bea Cantillon (Antwerp), Stuart White (Oxford), Jurgen De Wispelaere (LSE), Simon Wigley

(Ankara), Robert van der Veen (Warwick), Loek Groot (Amsterdam) and Belgium's Minister of Social Affairs Frank Vandenbroucke. For further information, contact Prof. Koen Raes, Universiteit Gent, Faculteit van de Rechten, Vakgroep grondslagen en geschiedenis van het recht, Blandijnberg 2, B-9000 Gent, koen.raes@rug.ac.be

4. PUBLICATIONS

CATALAN

RAVENTOS, Daniel. "Renda bàsica, treball i algunes grans i esteses mentides", in *El Vaitot. La quarta persona del singular* (Valencia) 5, Winter 2000, pp. 6-18. ravento@eco.ub.es

A general presentation of the case for basic income, with special attention for misunderstandings about its connection with work, by Barcelona professor Daniel Raventos, author of "El derecho a la existencia" (Ariel, 1999).

RAVENTOS, Daniel. *Síntesi n°1: La renda bàsica*, Diputació de Barcelona, Centre per a la Innovació Local, Patronat Flor de Maig, January 2001, 38p. ravento@eco.ub.es

A didactic introduction to the various dimension of the debate on basic income, with an appendix containing a funding proposal for two variants of a basic income for Spain, of respectively about 400 and 600 Euros per adult and per month.

FRENCH

BLAIS, François. "Sur quatre paradoxes de l'allocation universelle (et sur la manière de les résoudre)", in *Éthique publique* (Montreal) 2 (2), 2000, 55-63. Francois.Blais@pol.ulaval.ca

Basic income is an ambitious and controversial proposal for reforming the modern welfare state. Part of the opposition against it stems from a number of paradoxes which undermine its credibility and prevent it from receiving all the attention it deserves. In this article, Laval University political science professor François Blais attempts to shed new light on four of these paradoxes: (1) It is better for the poor that one should give to the rich. (2) It is good to make the poor pay to at least the same extent as the rich. (3) Giving to individuals rather than to households is better for (multi-person) households and worse for (single) individuals. (4) The right to work requires an unconditional right to an income.

GERMAN

KREBS, Hans-Peter & REIN, Harald eds. *Existenzgeld. Kontroversen und Positionen*. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2000, 256p. (Second editor's address: Frankfurter Arbeitslosenzentrum, Solmsstr. 1a, D-60486 Frankfurt am Main, falz-@t-online.de, <http://www.netpool.org/falz/>)

This book grew out of a conference held in Berlin in March 1999 under the title "For an existence income and a radical reduction of working hours. On the critique of the waged-labour-based society". Most of the contributions are by activists and political groups from the radical left. The unifying theme is the discussion of a basic income proposal made under the label "Existenzgeld" by an organisation of social assistance initiatives (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Sozialhilfeinitiativen (BAG-SHI), Moselstr. 25, D-60329 Frankfurt am Main, <BAGSozialhilfe@aol.com>, <http://www.bag-shi.de/>). It involves an unconditional payment of 750 Euros) per month. In addition to this there is a housing subsidy that covers at least part of the cost. The funding is secured by a "take half" tax of 50% on all forms of income. Most of the contributions deal with the question whether the introduction of an unconditional basic income would be a threat to the capitalist system and a first step to overcoming it or whether it leads to the stabilization of exploitation through waged labour. Partly because some of the authors refer under the same label of "Existenzgeld" to different minimum income schemes (including means-tested ones), not all reach the same conclusion on this issue. In addition to contributions to the 1999 conference, the book gathers reactions by organisations of the unemployed and social assistance claimants, excerpts from André Gorz's most recent book, and some contributions by left-wing groups in France (ACI and Associations et collectifs des chômeurs et des précaires), Italy (3RME and Andrea Fumagalli) and Spain (José Iglesias Fernandez).

MITSCHE, Joachim. *Grundsicherungsmodelle - Ziele, Gestaltung, Wirkungen und Finanzbedarf. Eine Fundamentalanalyse mit besonderem Bezug auf die Steuer- und Sozialordnung sowie den*

Arbeitsmarkt der Republik Österreich, Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000, 188p., ISBN 3-7890-6924-8. (Author's address: Bergstrasse 32, D-66130 Saarbrücken-Güdingen.)

Joachim Mitschke, professor of public finance at the University of Frankfurt, has been, over the last twenty years, one of Germany's most vocal and persistent advocates of a citizen's income (Bürgergeld) in the form of a negative income tax. This book presents the most systematic presentation of his argument and proposal since his first book on the topic, *Steuer- und Transferordnung aus einem Guß* (published also by Nomos in 1985). The basic idea is still the same - a lump-sum, household-based refundable tax credit at subsistence level that would integrate and replace the non-contributory components of the welfare state - but the discussion attempts takes the more recent literature and debate into account. The publication of the book is sponsored by the Friedrich-Ebert foundation, linked to Germany's social-democratic party. But it stems from a report commissioned by an Austrian institution that wishes to remain unnamed, before the general election of October 1999 that led to the coalition of Christian-democrats and (right-wing) liberals. The specific features of the proposal (9000 Schillings or nearly 700 Euros for each adult, one third of this amount between the ages of 15 and 19, and one sixth below 15) and its costing therefore relate to the Federal Republic of Austria, but the approach is meant to be of far wider relevance in the European context, with the explicit central aim of making more low-wage employment possible.

ITALIAN

Aldobrandini, Giovanni & Salvatore, Ingrid eds, *Forum: Workfare e Welfare*, special issue of *Filosofia e Questione Pubbliche* (c/o Centro di Ricerca e di studio sui diritti del uomo Luiss Guido Carli, viale di Villa Massimo 57, 00161 Roma, fqp@luiss.it) 5 (2), 2000, pp. 13-161. (Editors' address: Ingrid Salvatore cefisi@tin.it)

A set of articles on the reform of the welfare state and its moral foundations. It is opened by a defence (by Philippe Van Parijs, Louvain) and a critique (by Amy Guttmann, Princeton, and Dennis Thompson, Harvard) of an unconditional basic income and closes with a philosophical argument against workfare by the editor Ingrid Salvatore (John Rawls Fellow at Luiss University, Rome), with in between various contributions from the perspective of political theory (by Stuart White, Oxford, and by sociologist Ota de Leonardis, Milan University, author of "In un diverso welfare", Feltrinelli 1998), of economics (Elena Granglia) and of social policy (Maria Luisa Mirabile, CGIL, Roma, and Renato Brunetta, member of the European Parliament for Forza Italia)

Del Bo', Corrado. "Giustificazioni morali al reddito di cittadinanza", in *Millepiani* 16, 2000, pp. 139-150. (Author's address: Università degli studi di Pavia, Dipartimento di studi politici e sociali, Via Luino 12, I-27100 Pavia, delbo@unipv.it)

A useful overview of the normative discussion on the legitimacy of an unconditional basic income.

SPANISH

CUADERNOS RENTA BASICA n°3, January 2001, 32p. (Eco-Concern, Mare de Deu del Pilar 15, Barcelona 08003, ecoconcern@pangea.org, www.rentabasica.net)

This third issue of the (very smart) newsletter of a Barcelona-based but Spanish-language basic income network contains an account of BIEN's Berlin congress, a long interview in this connection with Philippe Van Parijs (secretary of BIEN) and a set of articles by fervent basic income supporters: Francisco José Martínez (professor of philosophy at UNED, Madrid) on waged labour and unpaid activities, José Iglesias Fernández (the network's driving force) on "general labour as the justification of basic income" and Javier Aguado Abad (a young activist of the Kolectivo de Jóvenes de la Coma) on how to overcome "moral and ideological resistance to basic income".

RAVENTOS, Daniel. "Por un futuro diferente", in *El Viejo Topo* (Barcelona) 148, January 2001, pp. 16-24. ravento@eco.ub.es

A lengthy interview on basic income with the Barcelona economist Daniel Raventos, one of Spain's most vocal advocates of basic income ("El derecho a la existencia", Barcelona: Ariel, 1999), tackling questions that reflect the Spanish Left's deep ambivalence about an unconditional basic income.

VAN PARIJS, Philippe. "Ingreso básico, justicia y eficacia", in *Ética y Empresa: una vision multidisciplinar* (Adela Cortina ed.), Madrid: Fundación Argentaria & Visor Distribuciones, 1997, pp. 239-250. vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be

A short presentation (which has just come to our attention) of the ethical and economic cases for basic income based on a lecture made in Madrid in October 1995.

5. NATIONAL NETWORKS

OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED BY BIEN

- *Citizen's Income Study Centre*
Director: Stuart Duffin
St Philips Building, Sheffield Street, London WC2A 2EX, United Kingdom
Tel.: 44-171-9557453
Fax: 44-171-9557534
E-mail: citizens-income@lse.ac.uk
Website: www.citizensincome.org
- *Vereniging Basinkomen*
Coordinator: Emiel Schäfer
Elisabeth Wolffstraat 96-B 1053 TX Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Telephone : 020-6799940 or 6167029
Fax: 020-6799940
E-mail: basic.income@wxs.nl
Website : www.basisinkomen.nl
- *BIEN Ireland*
Coordinator: John Baker
Equality Studies Centre, University College, Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland
Tel +353-1-706 8365
Fax +353-1-706 1171
E-mail: John.Baker@ucd.ie

OTHER EUROPEAN GROUPS

- *Asociación Renda Basica (AREBA)*
Coordinator: José Iglesias Fernández
Salvador Espriu 89, 2º, 2a, E - 08005 Barcelona, Spain
Fax: 34-3-225.48.20
- *Association pour l'instauration d'un revenu d'existence (AIRE)*
Chairman: Yoland Bresson
33 Avenue des Fauvettes, F-91440 Bures sur Yvette, France
E-mail: Yoland.Bresson@wanadoo.fr
- *Folkroelsen for medborgarlon*
Coordinator: Kicki Bobacka
Väpplingvägen 10, 227 38 LUND, Sweden
Tel.: 046-140667 or 046-144545
E-mail: kicki.bobacka@mp.se
- *Grundeinkommen Österreich*
Coordinator: Michael Striebel
Akademie für Sozialarbeit Vorarlberg – ASAV, Kapuzinergasse 1, A-6900 Bregenz/Austria
Tel: 43 /55 74 / 43 04 6-72
Fax: 43 / 55 74 / 43 04 66
E-mail: dir.asav@schulen.vol.at
Website: <http://www.vobs.at/asav/pax1.htm>
- *Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Sozialhilfeinitiativen (BAG-SHI)*

Contact: Wolfram Otto Kiel
E-mail: aloini@gaarden.net
Website: www.existenzgeld.de

OUTSIDE EUROPE

- *Universal Basic Income New Zealand (UBINZ)*
Coordinator: Ian Ritchie
Private Bag 11.042 Palmerston North, New Zealand
Tel. 06-350 6301
Fax 06 350 6319
E-mail: ian.ritchie@psa.org.nz
Website: <http://www.geocities.com/~ubin/>
- *Organisation advocating support income in Australia (OASIS)*
Convenor : Allan McDonald
PO Box 280 Urangan Qld. 4655, Australia
Fax 07 4128 9971
E-mail: allanmcd@cyberalink.com.au
Website: <http://www.satcom.net.au/supportincome>
- *BIEN Brazil (Basic Income Earth Network)*
Coordinator: Eduardo Suplicy
Senado Federal - Edifício Principal
Térreo, Praça dos Três Poderes,
Brasília - DF, Brazil
Tel. 311-3213/15/17.
E-mail: esuplicy@senador.senado.gov.br
- *American Basic Income Network*
Coordinator: Karl Widerquist
The Jerome Levy Economics Institute of Bard College
Annandale-on-Hudson, NY 12504-5000, USA
Tel. +1-914-758-7735
Fax 914-758-1149
E-mail: Widerquist@levy.org
Website: <http://www.usbig.net>
- *Basic Income/Canada (BI/Canada)*
Coordinator: Sally Lerner
Department of Environment and Resource Studies
University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1
E-mail: lerner@watserv1.uwaterloo.ca
Provisional website: <http://www.fes.uwaterloo.ca/Research/FW>

OTHER RELEVANT WEBSITES

- <http://www.apfc.org>: The official site of the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation. Among much other information, it features the annual amounts of the universal and unconditional dividend paid to each Alaskan resident since 1982: nearly 2000 US dollars in 2000, compared to less than 400 at the start.
- <http://www.humano.ya.com/ademetrio>: Run by Daniel Raventos, professor of economics at the University of Barcelona, this site gives wide information on publications and events relevant to basic income, especially in Spanish and in Catalan. It has an associated electronic list: <http://www.rediris.es/list/info/rentabasica.html>. Contact address: ravento@eco.ub.es
- <http://www3.sympatico.ca/tim.rourke/bi.html>: Run by Tim Rourke, a quick seminar on what Basic Income is all about so that people can then get up from the computer screen and go and do something about it." Contact address: tim.rourke@sympatico.ca

6. MORE ABOUT BIEN

BIEN's EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Prof. Ilona Ostner (iostner@gwdg.de), co-chair;
- Dr Guy Standing (GuyStanding@compuserve.com), co-chair;
- Alexander de Roo MEP (aderoo@europarl.eu.int), treasurer;
- Prof. Claus Offe (coffe@sowi.hu-berlin.de), research coordinator;
- Prof. Philippe Van Parijs (vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be), secretary, with support from Yannick Vanderborght (vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be)
- Dr Stuart Duffin (Stuart.Duffin@SINE.org.uk), communication co-ordinator, with support from Jurgen De Wispelaere (J.De-Wispelaere@lse.ac.uk).

HONORARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Prof. Edwin Morley-Fletcher (m-fletcher@cnel.it)
- Prof. Robert J. van der Veen (vanderveen@warwick.ac.uk)
- Dr Walter Van Trier (Walter.VanTrier@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be)
- Dr Steven Quilley (steve.quilley@ucd.ie).

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER OF BIEN

Membership of BIEN is open to anyone who shares its objectives. The individual membership fee is 25 Euros for 1999-2000 or 100 Euros for life membership. BIEN Members receive hard copies of the Newsletter, are kept informed of relevant meetings, seminars and research projects and have voting rights at BIEN's General Assembly held every second year in conjunction with the Congress. A broad membership strengthens BIEN in its efforts to put basic income on academic and political agendas. It also provides much appreciated support to the unpaid activity of the Executive Committee and gives BIEN a firm basis for the funding of its modest running costs. A full statement of accounts is submitted to the General Assembly. To become a BIEN member, please fill out the *Membership Subscription Form* or download the *Individual Membership Form* which are both on the BIEN web site (<http://www.etes.ucl.ac.be/BIEN/JoinBien.htm>). An acknowledgment will be sent upon receipt. For further questions, e-mail BIEN at bien@etes.ucl.ac.be.

BIEN'S LIFE MEMBERS

James Meade (+), Gunnar Adler-Karlsson (SE), Maria Ozanira da Silva (BR), Ronald Dore (UK), Alexander de Roo (NL), Edouard Dommen (CH), Philippe Van Parijs (BE), P.J. Verberne (NL), Tony Walter (UK), Philippe Grosjean (BE), Malcolm Torry (UK), NN (Geneva, CH), Andrew Williams (UK), Roland Duchatelet (BE), Manfred Füllsack (AT), Anne-Marie Prieels (BE), Philippe Desguin (BE), Joel Handler (US), Sally Lerner (CA), David Macarov (IL), Paul Metz (NL), Claus Offe (DE), Guy Standing (CH), Hillel Steiner (UK), Werner Govaerts (BE), Robley George (US), Yoland Bresson (FR), Richard Hauser (DE), Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy (BR), Jan-Otto Andersson (FI), Ingrid Robeyns (UK), John Baker (IE), Rolf Kuettel (CH), Michael Murray (US), Carlos Farinha Rodrigues (PT), Yann Moulrier Boutang (FR), Joachim Mitschke (DE), Rik van Berkel (NL), François Blais (CA), Katrin Töns (DE), NN (New York, US), Gérard Degrez (BE), Michael Opielka (DE), Lena Lavinias (BR), Julien Dubouchet (CH), Jeanne Hrdina (CH), Joseph Huber (DE), Markku Ikkala (FI), Luis Moreno (ES), Rafael Pinilla (ES), Graham Taylor (UK), W. Robert Needham (CA), Tom Borsen Hansen (DK), Ian Murray (US), Peter Molgaard Nielsen (DK), Fernanda Rodrigues (PT), Helmut Pelzer (DE), Rod Dobell (CA), Walter Van Trier (BE), Loek Groot (NL), Andrea Fumagalli (IT), Bernard Berteloot (FR), Jean-Pierre Mon (FR), Angelika Krebs (DE), Ahmet Insel (FR), Alberto Barbeito (AR), Ruben Lo Vuolo (AR), Manos Matsaganis (GR)

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