

Wise Cities and Universal Basic Income Facing the Challenges of Inequality, Technology and Social Cohesion

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Sala Jordi Maragall, CIDOB. Elisabets 12, 08001 Barcelona

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The 20th century income distribution system has broken down irretrievably. The world is witnessing an unprecedented wave of scientific and technological progress in digitalization, robotics, artificial intelligence and genomics, to name the most relevant. This new era is termed as the 4th industrial revolution and it is challenging the sustainability of employment and the social organization of work as we currently know them. Some rigorous studies point out that around 47% of actual jobs will disappear by 2025 (OCDE, Frey and Osborne). This future scenario is raising increasing attention from policymakers, business, academia and civil society all over the world, as the current welfare state and social organization are under threat.

Increasing levels of inequality and unemployment are already a reality in most places, seriously affecting the social cohesion in cities, regions and countries. The income of the scarcity is falling and becoming more volatile. And chronic insecurity will not be overcome by minimum wage laws, tax credits, means-tested benefits or workfare. Numerous striking questions arise. Will new technologies not only destroy but help create jobs in the long-run? What will local, regional and national governments do in order to guarantee access to basic services? Will we get our retirement subsidy? What is the role of the private sector and civil society? Can we find new governance mechanisms to address these challenges?

Cities have become not just the place where the world's majority of population live, but also the nest for scalable innovations and experimental policies. Some cities are deploying pilots for testing the feasibility of a Universal Basic Income (UBI), a fixed monthly income that all citizens would receive, unconditionally, regardless their social status and economic income level. They argue that this scheme would guarantee social cohesion by safeguarding access to basic services, eliminate transaction costs around bureaucracies, foster entrepreneurship, innovation and consumption. Is this an old idea whose time has finally come? Is UBI a political imperative?

Against this backdrop, CIDOB and the "[Wise Cities: a glocal Think Tank network](#)" organise a conference to discuss this issue from first-hand policymakers that are currently undergoing a UBI pilot, along with scholars that are researching this highly compelling social innovation scheme.

PROGRAMME

09.15 **Welcome**
Antoni Segura, President, CIDOB

09.30 **Universal Basic Income: Trials**

Introduction

Josep M. Coll, “Wise Cities: a glocal think tank network” Scientific Coordinator; Associate Senior Researcher, CIDOB

Helsinki

Pertti Honkanen, Senior Researcher, Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela)

Utrecht

Timo Verlaat, PhD Candidate, University of Utrecht

Barcelona

Lluís Torrens, Director de Planification and Innovation, Social Rights Area, Barcelona City Council

11.00 Coffee break

11.30 **Discussion: UBI, a utopia or a reality?**

Moderates: **Josep M. Coll**, “Wise Cities: a glocal think tank network” Scientific Coordinator; Associate Senior Researcher, CIDOB

Boyd Cohen, Director of Research, EADA Business School

Lluís Torrens, Director of Planning and Innovation, Social Rights Area, Barcelona City Council

Timo Verlaat, PhD Candidate, University of Utrecht

María Sisternas, Founder and CEO, Mediaurban

Pertti Honkanen, Senior Researcher, Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA)

Xavier Ferràs, Dean, Faculty of Business and Communication, University of Vic

12.45 **Debate with the audience**

13.30 **Concluding remarks**

Language: English

