

THE EUROPEAN BASIC INCOME

FEPS POLICY STUDY
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DELIVERING ON SOCIAL EUROPE

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**BASIC
INCOME**



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All authors have contributed to this paper to an equal degree. Names are listed alphabetically.

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ABBREVIATIONS

EU	European Union
FEPS	Foundation for European Progressive Studies
GDP	Gross domestic product
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RI	Renner Institut
UBI	Universal Basic Income
UN	United Nations
US	United States (of America)
VAT	Value added tax
WHO	World Health Organization
YAN	Young Academics Network

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Across the political spectrum, there is widespread agreement that the European Union (EU) needs a palpable social dimension. In this paper, we provide a research-driven policy proposal on how this social dimension can be achieved in the light of the diversity of national welfare systems in the EU. We argue that a Universal Basic Income (UBI) could be a conceptually appealing policy to be implemented at EU level, complementing national welfare states. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the policy is receiving unprecedented and ever-increasing attention, and enjoys widespread public popularity, but is viewed with scepticism by major political parties. This paper is a unified source of information for progressive policymakers, advocates, consultants, and researchers who are interested in (a) how a European UBI could be concretely designed and (b) the reasoning and justifications behind its concrete design decisions. In order to formulate a policy proposal that could potentially foster cross-partisan compromises and move public policy preferences and political reality closer together, we conducted a comprehensive review of historical and contemporary UBI debates, gathered the key arguments presented in academic, popular, political, and organisational sources, and reflected on them from logical, normative, and empirical perspectives. Based on the most plausible arguments for and against a UBI, we designed a concrete policy proposal for a UBI at the EU level that responds to broadly progressive ideals from different partisan backgrounds. The result is an ambitious yet feasible proposal that bridges political divides and, if implemented, would be the most substantial leap for Social Europe yet.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Across the spectrum of party ideologies, there is widespread agreement that the European Union needs a palpable social dimension. At the same time, the idea of a Social Europe has remained largely an abstraction over past decades. However, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly brought about a previously unthinkable push for a solidaristic fiscal capacity at the EU level, without which the EU's various social challenges could not be properly addressed. While this considerable leap towards a social EU is certainly valuable in the short run, the social challenges with which nation-states are struggling to cope will not simply end once Covid-19 is overcome. Making the EU's fiscal capacity a permanent tool in its policy arsenal is therefore a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for giving Social Europe a tangible meaning. Even if such a permanent implementation were to be achieved, a major challenge still lies ahead: how could the EU make use of a permanent fiscal capacity in a socially beneficial manner, while still respecting the diversity of welfare states across its member states?

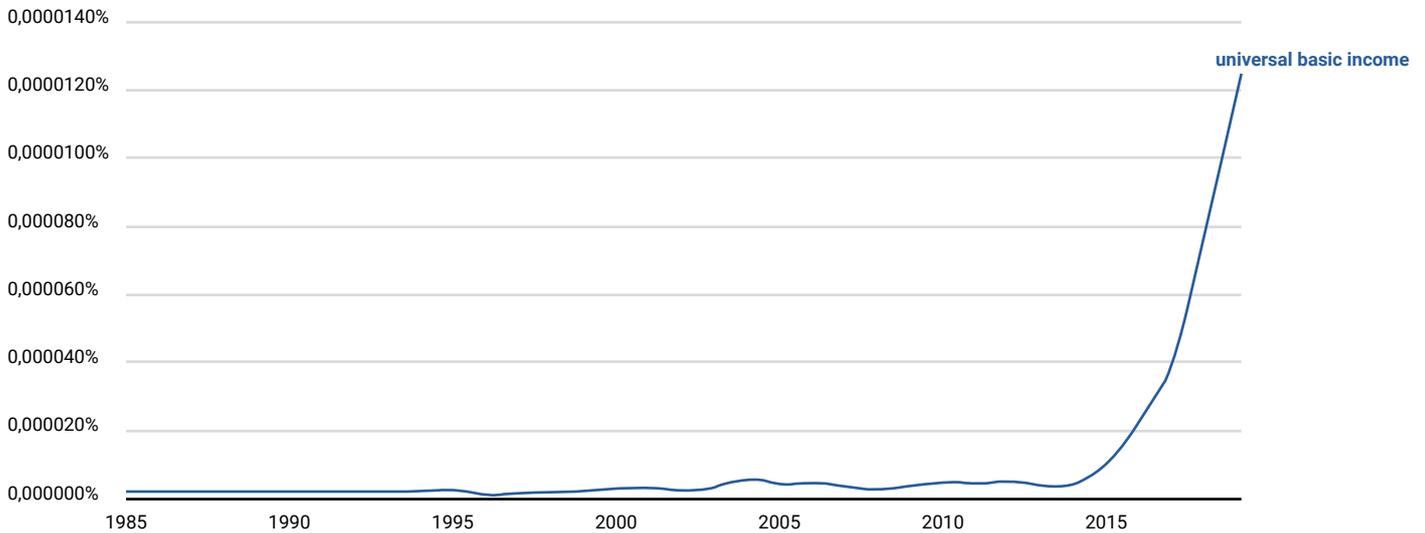
In this paper, we respond to this question by combining academic research approaches with policy advocacy. We suggest that an appealing answer can lie in an idea that has risen abruptly and appreciably in popularity over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic. In light of the increasingly visible strains on national welfare systems, the idea of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) has once again returned to capture the interest of a diverse cross-section of European society. More so than almost any other concept in social policy, UBI is being considered with increasing seriousness in debates ranging from academia (Van Parijs 2013) and international organisations (Gentilini et al. 2020) to activists and the media (Casdorff 2020). But this growing interest has not, at least so far, percolated through to the level of policymaking. To name one example: when one of Germany's most influential economic think tanks recently announced

the country's first long-term study on the effects of UBI (Cohnen-Beck 2020), public attention was so high that leading social- and Christian-democratic politicians and chancellor-hopefuls were quick to publicly take a position on the idea – in all cases, however, rejecting UBI tout court (Deutschlandfunk 2020a, 2020b). At the party-political level, support for UBI is at its strongest among greens and liberals, but as yet remains a decidedly minority policy position.

But such overlap, even undifferentiation, between the positions of political parties that directly compete for electoral support and institutional power is a major puzzle, since recent studies of public opinion on UBI describe its support as 'rather overwhelming' (Roosma and Van Oorschot 2020: 203). Europeans in favour of the general idea of a UBI far outnumber those who reject it, especially in wealthier countries with more highly developed welfare systems like Germany and Sweden (Bartha et al. 2020: 67–9). There is also extensive support in countries with less generous welfare provisions, as well as among individuals across Europe who suffer from socioeconomic deprivation, for a UBI implemented at the EU level – which raises the prospect of using such a policy as a potentially powerful tool to counteract the recent tide of Euroscepticism (Baute and Meuleman 2020). On top of this, proposals for an EU UBI have been consistently among the most-endorsed and closely followed economic and social policy demands of the Conference on the Future of Europe (2021). Thus, the policy can easily become a key factor in making or breaking the credibility of the EU's claim that it wants to include its citizens in shaping the EU's future. Furthermore, UBI has massively gained in popularity in academia and literature, as a brief analysis of the yearly n-grams in the English corpus of Google Books indicates (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Yearly n-grams for UBI in the English corpus of Google Books

(Google Ngram Viewer 2020)



Given the tremendous salience of UBI, its rich and varied history (Standing 2015), the considerable public support it enjoys, and the continuing incidence of severe social crises in Europe, it seems straightforward to claim that UBI is an ‘idea whose time has come’ (Reed and Lansley 2016). In particular, it appears that Europe has reached a threshold of urgent necessity where what counts is to finally overcome the gap in the political representation of these public preferences for UBI. However, what this perspective overlooks is that there are many fundamentally different interpretations of UBI that would result in entirely different policy designs and effects (De Wispelaere and Stirton 2004) – and that it is in part this intense lack of consensus on the proper construction of UBI that has stymied its wider uptake in party politics. Specifically, since it is hardly possible to argue that ‘the’ UBI is per se good or bad, its lack of implementation might be rooted precisely in different interpretations of the concept by different political ideologies that cannot agree on a compromise and fundamentally distrust each other’s aims and motivations on the issue. Throughout this paper, we build on the UBI definition developed by the 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’ (Basic Income Earth Network 2021). However, we explore how an understanding of a progressive European UBI could also be refined beyond these underlying points.

After all, in view of the clear trends in public opinion, it is not implausible to project that UBI could easily become a fertile source of electoral support for progressive parties in the near future, above all among parts of the electorate that so far do not perceive the EU as being especially beneficial to them. It could open up potential new routes to gaining political majorities, by acting as a material foundation for shared policy platforms that permit the creation of currently atypical or unstable governing coalitions. Moreover, UBI is a salient proposal that is unlikely to fade from public attention all that quickly. This raises the possibility that the policy may itself become the subject of intense contestation as parties from rival ideological traditions compete for ‘ownership’ over it. While in many of its current conceptions UBI lies close to progressive ideals, it is entirely conceivable that strongly conservative political actors may decide to seize the opportunity to ‘corner off’ the policy if progressives are too slow to do so – embracing it on

their own terms, and defining it in a way that could be harmful to the cohesion of European society.

The social effects of UBI in particular depend on what social principles the concrete policy design is based on (Mays 2019). The only way to deny backwards-looking actors the prerogative of interpreting this popular concept is for progressives to shape the overall debate by offering their own viable proposals, no matter whether they are personally in favour of UBI. After all, the question of UBI is not just one of 'if?' but also one of 'how?'. To contribute to this goal, this paper critically analyses the key arguments from UBI debates that speak for and against the scheme. As it aims to provide a constructive contribution to UBI debates that allows progressive actors to go beyond blanket rejections of a complex policy with many facets, the paper takes a decided stance in favour of UBI. We use academic analysis as the basis for an informed assessment of the conditions that a UBI

has to meet to fulfil its progressive potential while avoiding any socially destructive pitfalls. As a result, this paper is positioned between conventionally less normative, purely scientific research articles and typically less analytical policy advocacy work. Its hybrid form offers policymakers, advocates, consultants, and researchers a single source that compiles all the necessary information on UBI-related arguments and their political implications. Our analysis finally leads us to make a concrete proposal for a European UBI that would effectively create a multi-layered Social Europe (Denuit 2019: 10): an EU with a tangible social dimension that does not limit national welfare arrangements but rather complements and stabilises them. Thus, this paper is specifically of practical use for progressive actors involved in policymaking who are interested in (a) how a European UBI could be concretely designed and (b) the reasoning and justifications behind these concrete design decisions.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The debate on UBI has diverse facets that span multiple political ideologies and policy issues. To offer a progressive contribution to broader UBI discussions, this paper overviews the arguments that have been put forward for and against UBI in historical and contemporary debates. We then develop a policy proposal for a progressive UBI at the EU level that addresses the most valid concerns raised by UBI's opponents while delivering on UBI's key advantages. This is our own contribution to the debate, aimed at closing the gap between what voters want and what politicians support.

Our interdisciplinary analysis of the frictions around UBI is based on an exploratory examination of diverse types of contemporary and historical debate contributions. We took into account a total of 119 sources including popular discussions in news outlets, academic research papers and books, political statements, and reports from major organisations such as the UN, the OECD, and the WHO. All authors participated in the exploratory identification of sources independently to limit blind spots as far as possible. We started off with key publications from UBI research and then branched out from there by following cited sources and searching diverse databases for key terms from the UBI debate. These searches took place primarily between July 2020 and January 2021, with additions following throughout 2021. Furthermore, we used informal exchanges and participation in conferences, workshops, and similar events to gather further arguments which we then specifically looked for in the literature to close potential gaps.

As a result, our analysis covers the different discursive arenas which all, in their own ways, have contributed considerably to shaping the broader contemporary debate on UBI. We excluded informal, unscientific, and uncredentialed statements that are unlikely to have had impact in their respective arenas, such as entries on personal blogs or social media discussions. In addition, we combined contemporary sources with historical contributions by tracing back key elements of contemporary UBI proposals to the points in history at which they started to emerge in a clearly identifiable manner.¹ Based on these sources, we extrapolated the key arguments that emerged in different forms over time. While doing so, we grouped overly specific arguments into overarching, more general points. For instance: it would be possible to list the potential job losses arising from technological innovation as new, separate arguments every time a new technology emerges. In such a scenario, authors might claim that UBI could mitigate the consequences of unemployment due to innovations in industrial production, and that it could also reduce the impact of AI on poverty due to income losses. Rather than taking this approach, we instead reflected on how the fundamental underlying logic of a UBI would develop according to the sources in question and listed the essential components of this logic as unique arguments.

We then reflected on the resulting points and sorted them into guiding themes, thus developing an analytical framework that logically categorises otherwise disparate arguments. Based on our

1 While our list of sources covers the key arguments from UBI debates, it is subject to a few caveats. First, it is limited to sources that we were able to process in the light of limitations such as availability and language barriers. Thus, arguments that are heavily specific to national discourses outside our reach might be missing. Second, this context-specific nature of arguments also applies to the sources that we were able to analyse. For instance, arguments around protecting the welfare state primarily apply in national contexts with strong welfare policies. Third, our exploratory approach could be prone to blind spots, as UBI debates are extremely multi-faceted and expansive. Fourth, our main analysis ended in January 2021, so that arguments that emerged afterwards will not have been covered.

findings, we identified three main themes: social; economic; and political arguments. We define social arguments as those typically associated with social policy broadly construed, largely revolving around issues of minimum subsistence, equality, labour conditions, quality of life, social justice, and freedom. Separately from these concerns, the economic arguments in our framework focus on those rationales that are typically associated with the contemporary disciplines of economics, including – but not limited to – issues around employment, businesses, and other micro- and macroeconomic factors. Finally, political arguments are those primarily focused on the various facets of state activity and administration of the polity, covering areas like partisan and strategic considerations, system legitimacy, and indirect effects on other policy fields. While we acknowledge that there are strong intersections between categories regarding some arguments and that other categories might also be applied, we settled on this analytical taxonomy as the most practical and rigorous way to overview the key arguments of the debate.

We then took several steps to identify plausible reasons for why different predominantly progressive actors might embrace a UBI – or, indeed, why they might oppose it. First, we considered the logical plausibility of the arguments themselves: whether they are internally consistent, complete, and relevant, or whether they can already be refuted on reasoned grounds alone. Second, we applied more complex normative perspectives to issues that could not be addressed via simple logical inference. This primarily concerned arguments that tap into notions of justice and freedom and enabled us to engage with arguments that are not plausible or implausible per se, but which rely on certain normative assumptions. Finally, we cross-referenced the arguments from UBI debates with empirical case studies that have been conducted on UBI by other researchers. This served two purposes: on the one hand, it helped to verify the empirical plausibility of many of the arguments; on the other hand, it introduced another source of potential arguments to the aforementioned pool of sources, allowing us to add arguments that we had previously missed. For the examination of empirical studies, we took into account the ten experimental

income trials from the last six decades that have been subject to extensive scientific evaluation, six of which were carried out within the last 15 years. While other basic income trials were introduced in different locations all around the world (for example, Brazil, China, Germany, Japan, Kenya, the Netherlands [Samuel 2020]), there is limited empirical evidence available on the impacts of those projects. For these reasons, such cases were not included into our analysis. The selected pilots differ in their location (North America, Africa, Asia, Europe), scope (ranging from small settlements to nationwide projects), the size of the payments at stake (ranging from approximately \$2.80 to \$668 per recipient per month), and the specific design of the policy. The revised empirical cases include programmes implemented in both wealthy, economically developed countries (for example the USA, Canada, Finland) and poorer, developing countries (for example India, Namibia, Uganda). This is because the target subject of our UBI policy proposal is the European Union, which includes countries that occupy vastly different places in the global economic system, ranging from Luxembourg (real GDP per capita €83,640) to Bulgaria (€6,840) (Eurostat 2021).

Table 1: Empirical case studies (compiled by the authors)

Location	Duration	Scope	Pilot design	References
US, early pilots	1968-82	Selected participants in New Jersey and Pennsylvania (1); Iowa and North Carolina (2); Gary, Indiana (3); Seattle and Denver (4)	Four large-scale basic income experiments sponsored by the federal government that were conducted in the form of a negative income tax aimed at measuring individuals' responses to different levels of benefits and tax rates: (1) the experiment had a sample size of 1357 households, consisting of low-income couples from declining urban areas; (2) the experiment included 809 low-income rural families; (3) the experiment was composed of 1,780 black households, 59% of which were headed by single families; (4) the largest experiment containing 4,800 families offered recipients more generous plans than other experiments and extended the duration from three to five years for a quarter of the participants.	Munnell 1986

Table 1: Empirical case studies (compiled by the authors)

Location	Duration	Scope	Pilot design	References
Canada, rural Dauphin, Manitoba	1974-79	Every family in the small town of Dauphin and its rural municipality with a population of approximately 10,000 was eligible to participate.	<p>The large-scale negative income tax experiment of the Canadian Guaranteed Annual Income. The Dauphin cohort all received the same offer: a family with no income from other sources would receive 60% of Statistics Canada low-income cut-off (LICO), which varied by family size. The sample took into account family structure, as well as normal income received. It also excluded families earning above a predetermined amount (approximately \$13,000 in 1975 for a two-adult, two-child family). Three support levels were used: \$3,800, \$4,800, and \$5,800 (all in 1975) for a family of four. These support levels were adjusted for differing family size and structure and – given the inflationary environment of the day – were increased annually. Three tax-back rates were used: 35%, 50%, and 75%. Every dollar received from other sources would reduce benefits by 50 cents. All benefits were indexed to the cost of living.</p>	Hum and Simpson 2001, Forget 2011
US, Alaska	Since 1982	All citizens of the state	Alaska Permanent Fund, a state-owned investment fund financed by oil revenues, provides each citizen of the state with an income ranging from around \$2,000 per person per year when oil prices are high to \$1,000 in cheaper gas years. The payment only requires that the recipient reside in Alaska for at least a year.	Jones and Marinescu 2018

Table 1: Empirical case studies (compiled by the authors)

Location	Duration	Scope	Pilot design	References
US, North Carolina	Since 1997	All tribal members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians	Revenue from a casino on tribal land was unconditionally distributed to all tribal members on a semi-annual basis meaning between \$4,000 and \$6,000 extra a year per capita. Casino payments were increasing over time due to an increase in casino revenues.	Akee et al. 2018
Uganda	2006-07	Selected young adults in Uganda's conflict-affected north	The government programme randomly awarded unsupervised grants of \$382 to 535 young applicants aged 15 to 35. The programme was designed to help the poor and unemployed become self-employed artisans, increase incomes, and thus promote social stability.	Blattman, Fiala and Martinez 2014
Namibia, Otjivero	2008-09	Everyone under 60 living in Otjivero-Omitara settlement	The project provided a Basic Income Grant of \$6.75 per month to every person under the age of 60 without any conditions attached. Funding came from private donors in Namibia and around the world. The treatment group consisted of about 1,000 people.	Haarmann et al. 2019

Table 1: Empirical case studies (compiled by the authors)

Location	Duration	Scope	Pilot design	References
India	2010-12	Madhya Pradesh Unconditional Cash Transfer included eight villages with everybody receiving a monthly grant (1); Tribal Village Unconditional Cash Transfer included one tribal village with everybody receiving grants (2)	Over 6,000 individuals received small unconditional monthly payments for 18 months. Initially, in the larger pilot (1), each adult received 200 rupees (\$2.80) a month, each child 100 rupees (paid to the guardian). After a year, the amounts were raised to 300 and 150 rupees respectively. 20 similar villages received no basic income acting as a control group. In the tribal village (2), the amounts were 300 for adults and 150 rupees for children for the entire 12 months. Another village acted as a control group. An average family received the equivalent of \$24 a month. The original amount was calculated so as to be enough to make a difference for basic needs. This amount was calculated as about a quarter of the income of median-income families, at just above the current official poverty line.	Standing 2013
Finland	2017-18	Randomly selected participants, nationwide	2,000 participants, who were randomly selected among those receiving unemployment benefits and aged 25 to 58, were entitled to an unconditional income of \$635 per month, even if they found work during the two-year period. This corresponded to the monthly net amount of the basic unemployment allowance and the labour market subsidy provided by Kela (the Social Insurance Institution of Finland).	Kangas et al. 2019

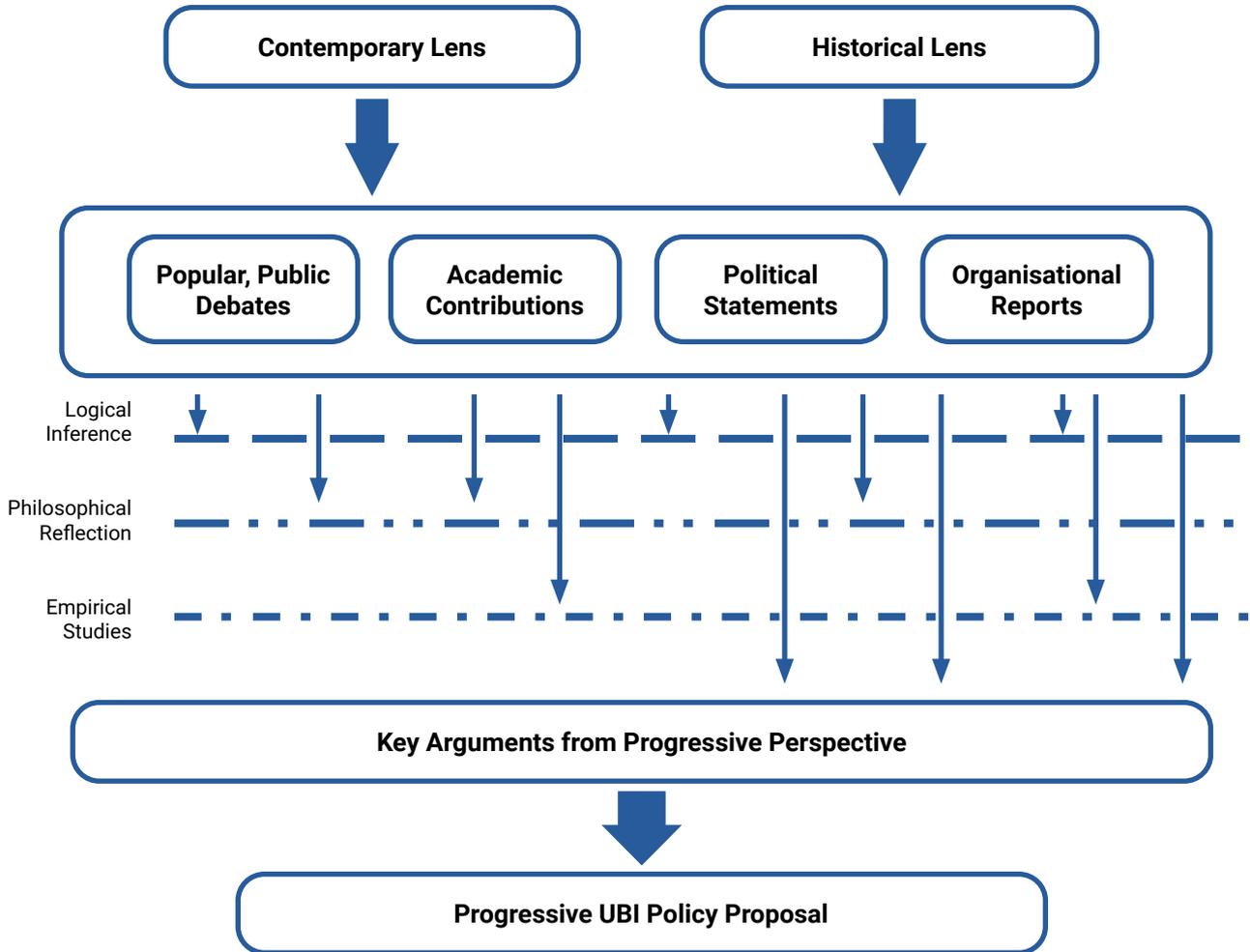
Table 1: Empirical case studies (compiled by the authors)

Location	Duration	Scope	Pilot design	References
Canada, Ontario	2017-18	Randomly selected participants in three cities: Hamilton, Thunder Bay and Lindsay.	Participants of the project were randomly selected among residents of the regions aged 18 to 64. The financial threshold for inclusion was \$34,000 per year for single adults or \$48,000 per year for couples. If participants also received a paid salary, the amount of basic income would be reduced by 50 cents for every dollar of earned income. Those participants receiving either Employment Insurance or Canada Pension Plan would have their basic income reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis. Those with disabilities would also receive up to \$500 per month on top, but they would withdraw from their participation in the Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program.	Hamilton and Mulvave 2019
Spain, Barcelona	2017-18	Randomly selected households from some of Barcelona's poorest districts	'B-MINCOME' experiment in which under the two-year randomised control trial 1,000 households could receive up to \$1,968 per month. The control group consisted of 383 households. The pilot project combined minimum guaranteed income with active social policies. There were four forms of participation in the experiment: (1) conditional (the cash is paid under condition of participation in one of the active policies); (2) non-conditional (the cash is paid with no conditions attached); (3) limited (any extra income the household receives reduces the amount of cash); (4) unlimited (extra income does not reduce the amount of cash).	Laín 2019

Such pilot projects are subject to important caveats regarding the generalisability of their results, not least as far as their long-term political outcomes are concerned. In addition, there are certain limitations in the specific design of pilot projects when it comes to the main theoretical principles of UBI we emphasise in this paper: universality; coverage of the basic necessities; and the format of unconditional income transfers. For instance, early pilots in the US and Canada are designed as negative income tax experiments rather than UBI, while many other experiments including the Youth Opportunities Programme in Uganda, the pilot project in Finland, and the Ontario pilot project in Canada target specific groups such as youth or the unemployed. Nevertheless, despite the inevitable restrictions that accompany experimental approaches and their designs, they (1) shape political reality, since policymakers might base their fundamental decisions on them, and (2) offer the best available empirical evidence about the prospects of UBI. While the pilots cannot prove that certain outcomes necessarily occur in other cases as well, they can serve as strong support for arguments if these are already plausible by themselves. Given the limited scope of this paper, we cannot evaluate the different studies at this point, especially as such evaluations even for just a single experiment can cover hundreds of pages (Kangas et al. 2021). However, we explicitly stress that there is a need for more systematic research on the way that empirical trials are used in UBI debates and on how this matches the contents and methodological capacities of such studies.

Our different analytical steps come together in a coherent methodological framework through which we qualitatively examine historical and contemporary UBI debates and develop a concrete policy proposal based on the arguments identified in these steps. For ease of comprehension, we represent this framework visually in the overview below (Fig. 2). While this depiction necessarily simplifies the complex processes of analytical evaluation, especially the ways in which different stages of argument evaluation blend into each other, it captures the main elements of our approach in a concise way.

Fig. 2: Methodological approach



As the structured overview of key arguments is an important contribution of this paper, we provide tables of all the arguments we analysed (Tables 2, 3, and 4), numbered for cross-referencing purposes in the policy proposal. This critical engagement from logical, normative, and empirical perspectives helped us to identify the points that are most robust regarding their argumentative resilience and their corroboration by empirical evidence. While the results from this stage of our analysis illuminate why

progressive actors in particular hesitate to embrace UBI, it still remains open how precisely a concrete progressive vision of a UBI is to be formulated. Thus, based on the examination of UBI debates, we propose a policy design of a UBI that addresses the most important arguments from a progressive perspective – that is, from the perspective of fostering social, economic, and political developments that improve the position of the worst-off in society.² Our policy proposal at the end of this paper revolves around a

² Applying such a broad understanding of progressive ideals to a proposal for a UBI can run the risk of making the proposal somewhat generic and more centrist than strictly progressive. For instance, far-left progressives might consider a proposal that is broadly acceptable to liberals to be economically too closely oriented towards the political right. This is a dilemma inherent to any proposal that aims to bridge ideological divides. However, we argue that there is a strong foundation for a united vision of a UBI that is decidedly progressive while offering a variety of dials that can be adjusted according to more specific political preferences.

UBI at the EU level, adjusted to national at-risk-of-poverty thresholds and addressing the long-lasting public perception that the EU lacks a meaningful social acquis (Graziano and Hartlapp 2018; Sabato and Vanhercke 2017: 73). However, since we also acknowledge that there are legal restrictions that limit the formulation of social policy at the EU level, the key elements of our policy proposal are theoretically applicable to the national level as well.

The product of our research is novel as it explicitly aims to incorporate arguments from different political ideologies, particularly from social democrats, the far left, greens, and liberals. So far, many UBI proposals have remained one-sided, and have tried to address the concerns and priorities of one political ideology on as many points as possible. Our goal is to explore the potential for political compromise and inform possible future scenarios for a politically realistic implementation of a UBI. This paper takes a pragmatic stance by arguing in favour of a UBI while also taking critical arguments seriously in the spirit of such a political compromise. Its main aim is to link together different strands of research and policy practice that, as yet, all too often fail to sufficiently address each other's insights.

DISCUSSION OF ARGUMENTS

DISCUSSION OF ARGUMENTS

As the arguments that we have gathered vary greatly in their plausibility and relevance, we use this section to summarise the arguments for and against a UBI and reflect on the empirical evidence. We argue that the combination of the state of the debate with the state of empirical research supports the conclusion that, if it is designed properly, a UBI is a highly promising policy that the contemporary EU urgently needs to adopt, albeit with due care and consideration.

To give a compact overview of the key aspects of the UBI debates that we have collected in this paper, the following tables summarise the arguments in brief along with indications as to whether empirical insights so far support them (in green) or not (in red) in the relevant column. The 'plus' and 'minus' symbols in the respective first column indicate

whether an argument is used for (+) or against (-) UBI. As empirical findings are still limited, many arguments cannot be supported or refuted on empirical grounds. Thus, we only provide remarks on empirical robustness where such findings are available. It should be noted that such empirical remarks are not claims of definitive proof. Rather, they indicate the empirical plausibility given the state of research at the time of writing. Further, for arguments that can be traced back beyond 21st-century debates, the tables give an indication of the historical period in which they emerged (Renaissance, Enlightenment, 19th century, and 20th century). Finally, each argument is associated with a specific identifier (ID) that is used to cross-reference arguments between the text and the tables. Thus, elements of the later policy proposal can quickly be traced back to their underlying arguments.

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Alleviation of monetary poverty	Empirically and logically plausible if paired with complementary schemes such as universal public services that ensure that different forms of deprivation do not need to be covered by the UBI itself. (+Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project; Ontario project, +Alaska project; Barcelona project)	Renaissance (More, Vives)	Hamilton and Martin-West 2019; Jones & Marinescu 2018; Laín 2019; Drucker 1949; King 1968	1
+	Nobody falls through security net	Empirically and logically plausible if paired with complementary schemes such as universal public services that ensure that different forms of deprivation do not need to be covered by the UBI itself. This argument applies both in terms of mistakes made in needs-testing processes, as well as problematically low take-up rates of needs-tested benefits	Renaissance (More); Enlightenment (Montesquieu); 19th century (Bellamy, Fourier)	Bellamy 1888; Hamilton and Martin-West 2019: 323; Galbraith 1984; Montesquieu 1748; De Wispelaere and Stirton 2012: 106	1.1

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Essential component of citizenship	Plausible if realised through systems of positive social rights, with well-defined arrangements for who is eligible to be a recipient (inhabitants, households, all humans).	Renaissance (More); Enlightenment (Spence); 19th century (Charlier, Fourier, George, Mill); 20th century (Cole)	Cole 1935, 1944; Jordan 2012; Parker 1988; Meyer, Petersen, and Sørensen 1981; Mitschke 2001	1.2
-	Public spending should be targeted at poorer members	Empirically and logically plausible depending on the definition of the relevant population group (unemployed, widows, orphans/children).	Renaissance (Vives); Enlightenment (Condorcet, Paine, Spence)	Condorcet 1988; Paine 1795; Lombardozi and Pitts 2020; Pitts, Lombardozi, and Warner 2017; Spence 1793	1.3
+	Targeted benefits raise exclusions and deprivation over time	Plausible due to practically unfeasible need for perfectly objective criteria of needs-testing. Again, low take-up rates of non-universal benefits amongst the poor are key in this regard as well. (+Ontario project)	Modern	Hamilton and Mulvale 2019; De Wispelaere and Stirton 2012: 106	1.4
-	Poverty is not just a monetary issue	Plausible with regards to social exclusion, implies need for complementary schemes.	Modern	Coote and Yazici 2019	1.5
+	Reduces costs of being poor, eg buying products that break easily	Plausible, as it provides lower-income individuals with the opportunity to buy longer-lasting, high-quality, sustainable goods due to more financial freedom.	Modern	MacNeill and Vibert 2019: 6	2
-	Gives money to the rich	Question of justice and priority: does giving money to a few rich outweigh advantages of giving money to many others? Under these specific assumptions a legitimate concern that makes careful policy design crucial, which can be addressed by funding UBI via taxes on extremely high income and wealth.	Modern	Coote and Yazici 2019	3

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Enhances long-run inequalities: the rich save it, the poor spend it	Plausible if not considered during policy design. Can be addressed by funding UBI via taxes on extremely high income and wealth.	Modern	Coote and Yazici 2019: 25	3.1
+	Indirect redistribution	Different revenue sources can result in this, eg taxes on extremely high income and wealth. Furthermore, individuals in larger households would share basic fixed costs, effectively increasing their available UBI per capita if it is paid to individuals directly.	20th century (Van Parijs)	Van Parijs 2004: 13	3.2
+	Limit to extreme inequality at the lower end of income	Primarily applies to negative effects of lacking participation opportunities of low-income groups.	20th century (Van Parijs)	Van Parijs 1992: 7	4
+	Emancipation of vulnerable groups and dependent individuals	Plausible if paired with complementary schemes such as needs-tested tailored public services. Could, for instance, promote gender equality through enhanced independence.	Modern	Pega et al. 2017	4.1
+	Social mobility and opportunities	Plausible if paired with complementary schemes such as public services and equality legislation.	Modern	OECD 2018	4.2
+	Social stabilisation in risky and uncertain phases of life	Plausible if paired with complementary schemes such as universal public services that ensure that different forms of deprivation do not need to be covered by the UBI itself.	20th century (Drucker; McLuhan)	McLuhan 1966; Hamilton and Martin-West 2019: 321; Stern 2016; Barr 2001	5

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Lower wages, as commodity of work can be sustained more easily	Legitimate concern if UBI is not complemented with frameworks and institutions that further empower workers, eg unions. However, if such systems are in place, lower wages become less likely due to the enhanced bargaining power workers have from UBI being available. If lower wages do occur, the UBI itself would cushion the effect.	Modern	Coote and Yazici 2019: 24	6
-	Increases the share of part-time jobs	Plausibility unclear. If applicable, the UBI itself would cushion the effect.	Modern	Gaskell 2018	6.1
+	Enhances workers' bargaining power	Plausible under certain conditions, as the individual negative impact of losing a job would be reduced. Presupposes that other structures such as unions persist to organise and channel workers' interests.	Modern	Vanderborght 2006: 5-6	7
+	Better working conditions and reimbursement for hard jobs due to better bargaining power	Likely as long as not met with large-scale automation and assuming that other structures such as unions persist to organise and channel workers' interests.	20th century (Milner and Milner)	Milner and Milner 1918; Zimmermann 2016	7.1
-	Hard but essential jobs will not be done anymore	In parts plausible, but only ceteris paribus. If jobs are actually essential, reimbursements will have to rise until incentives are strong enough for people to do these jobs. Thus, the argument might apply to some semi-important tasks, but not to all.	Modern	Heaven 2019	8

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Reconceptualisation of the meaning of work away from pure work for income	Theoretically plausible, as currently unpaid contributions to society would be more financially sustainable for the individual due to the guarantee that a certain income is always secured. Entails specific facets of gender equality in terms of reimbursement for otherwise non-paid work.	Modern	Zelleke 2008: 5; Vanderborght 2006: 6-7	9
+	More fulfilling work due to enhanced bargaining power and flexibility	Theoretically plausible if complementary services ensure that workers do not have to spend the UBI on issues such as health care.	Modern	Sheahen 2012	9.1
-	Labour is a source of dignity and appreciation that UBI cannot replace	In principle plausible, if UBI is expected to be a silver bullet. This implies that UBI should not aim to replace work. If UBI does not overpromise and is appropriately paired with other social policies, it is likely to enable better conditions in as yet non-dignifying work.	Modern	Coote and Yazicki 2019: 24	10
+	Better work-life balance	Empirically plausible if workers use the UBI to work less or in areas that they consider more fulfilling, but depends on individual life choices. Could apply to gender equality by enabling more equal burden-sharing. (+Native American Casinos; Ontario project; +Barcelona project)	Modern	Hamilton and Martin-West 2019: 323-4; Laín 2019	11
+	Higher life satisfaction	Empirically plausible if workers use the UBI to work less or in areas that they consider more fulfilling, but depends on individual life choices. (+Experiment in Finland; Barcelona project)	20th century (Fromm; Mead)	Mead 1970; Fromm 1966; Hamilton and Martin-West 2019: 323-4; Laín 2019	12

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Improved (mental) health	Empirically plausible if health care systems are sustained. (+Mincome experiment; Native American casinos; Ontario project; Experiment in Finland; Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project; Barcelona project)	20th century (King)	Haagh and Rohregger 2019; Lain 2019	12.1
+	Fair share of economic growth	Depends on ideas of fairness: as most of society's wealth has been built or prepared by prior generations, people have contributed equally little to it and thus, one might argue, deserve an equal basic share of growth.	Enlightenment (Paine; Spence); 20th century (Cole, Douglas)	Cole 1935, 1944; Douglas 1935; Fromm 1966; Spence 1797; Paine 1797; Wignaraja 2020; Bidadnure 2019: 482	13
-	Isolates some groups from society, eg if they no longer receive specialised attention, or if UBI serves as an excuse for discrimination	Unclear, depends on whether complementary action and schemes of services tailored to such individuals' needs are in place or not. Otherwise, this could, for instance, become a problem in patriarchal societies that might 'push women back' into households.	Modern	Luterman 2019	14
+	Enhanced social inclusion of low-income groups	Empirically plausible, but social inclusion entails more facets than the purely monetary dimension of participation (e.g simple resentments). (+Madhya Pradesh project)	Modern	Ciaian, Ivanov, and Kancs 2019	14.1
+	Higher education participation due to enhanced financial freedom	Empirically plausible. (+Early pilots in US; Mincome experiment; Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project)	Modern	Standing 2013; Haarmann et al. 2019	15

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Lower incentives for education participation	Theoretically appealing if one assumes that the 'share' of education participation that is solely the result of the threat of poverty has sufficient intrinsic value to sustain said threat of poverty. However, empirically implausible. (-Early pilots in US; Mincome experiment; Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project)	Modern	Mookherjee and Napel 2019	15.1
-	People will forget how to live independently from UBI	Empirically implausible, logically flawed. The same logic would apply to universal services. As long as UBI prevents arbitrary state intervention, this point is less relevant. Could further be mitigated through complementary social investment schemes. (-Pilot in Uganda, Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project; Experiment in Finland)	Modern	Banerjee, Niehaus, and Suri 2019: 960; Levy 2006: 13	16
+	Separates spheres of justice by introducing a basic guaranteed degree of decommodification	Plausible, but only relevant under specific philosophical assumptions. A UBI would change the role of the markets from an omnipresent sphere in which everyone is forced to participate to one of a tool that everyone can use to their own preferences. Thus, it would 'civilise' capitalism. The implications of this fundamental individual right to decommodification depend on the underlying understanding of justice.	20th century	Walzer 1983; Precht 2018	17
+	Prevents discrimination via definitions of deservingness	Plausible, as needs-tested schemes are based on ideas of eligibility that are defined by individuals or groups who can falsely consider their own conceptions to be universally applicable, thus discriminating against outgroups.	Modern	Heller 2018	18
-	Does not address needs -> unjust	Plausible, as everyone gets it. Implications for justice depend on underlying philosophical assumptions that vary.	Modern	Butterwegge 2015; Henderson 2017	19

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Ignores individual contributions -> unjust	Plausible, as everyone gets it. Implications for justice depend on underlying philosophical assumptions that vary.	20th century (Van Parijs)	Van Parijs 1992: 8	20
-	Does not change unequal capital distribution -> unjust	Depends on revenue source. If it is financed via taxes on extremely high incomes and wealth, this does not apply. Implications for justice depend on underlying philosophical assumptions and definitions of justice that vary. For instance, ideas of justice based on an equal basic treatment of all individuals would rather support UBI.	Modern	Butterwegge 2015. Henderson 2017	21
+	Justice is a fuzzy term with many meanings -> just in a world of individualised life decisions	Plausible, considering complex philosophical debates on justice that have been going on for millennia and continue to go on today. As this indicates how problematic generalisations of ideals of justice can be, a UBI would add a layer to otherwise often needs-tested welfare systems that lives up to individualised life choices. Furthermore, different societies apply different ideas of justice, rendering an individualised approach an appropriate addition to welfare systems, especially in complex polities such as the EU.	Modern	Bidadanure 2019. Sen 2010; Widerquist 2013	22
+	Provision of different kinds of freedom, particularly based on the Capability Approach	Plausible: By providing everyone with a consistent financial basis, UBI would enhance the capabilities of individuals to go about their lives how they themselves see fit, as they do not depend anymore on the scrutiny of others to sustain their most fundamental needs. This responds to the modern diversity of cultures, identities, and individual responsibilities.	Modern	Dent 2019; Milevska 2014; Sen 2010; Widerquist 2013	23

Table 2: Social arguments

+/-	Social Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Limits stigmatisation of the needy	Plausible: Needs-tested schemes go along with considerable degrees of stigma for recipients that ultimately lead to social exclusion. As everyone would receive a UBI, it would considerably reduce this issue.	20th century (Theobald)	McDonough and Bustillos Morales 2019. Calnitsky 2016; Theobald 1963	24
-	UBI reinforces individualism in society, thus further weakening collective cohesion	Plausible in theoretical systemic critiques, but less applicable in policy practice. Ignores that UBI is in and of itself a system of institutionalised collective solidarity. Assumes that individualism is always negative. Ignores the less abstract, real everyday struggles of those who already live in an individualised system but lack the practical means necessary for making emancipated decisions within this context.	Modern	Bayon 2021; Lombardozzi and Pitts 2020; Pitts, Lombardozzi, and Warner 2017	25

Taking all of these considerations into account, the social arguments in favour of UBI might appear to outweigh³ those that speak against it – but only under certain conditions. Most empirical studies hint that a UBI would primarily have socially beneficial effects. However, many of them presuppose arrangements of mutual support between a UBI and complementary welfare schemes. As things stand, some fears about the fundamentally negative social effects of a UBI are speculative and assume that the aforementioned complementary schemes are not in place, or that they are entirely replaced by a UBI. While such points are plausible if it is assumed that a UBI should serve as a one-size-fits-all silver bullet for all social problems, they become less persuasive if a UBI is conceptualised as one part of a broader welfare-state framework, encompassing a portfolio

of multiple parallel social policies. Importantly, this does not mean that some key arguments against UBI are not plausible. It simply implies that many social arguments on UBI are overly focused on supporting or rejecting the basic idea itself rather than engaging with its underlying assumptions, and incorporating crucial tweaks and details into UBI policy design.

But even if such nuances are properly addressed by a concrete UBI design, opponents of the scheme might argue that, while the policy could be beneficial from a social perspective, it could have detrimental effects on labour markets, businesses, state finances, and other aspects of the national economy. On that basis, the next table summarises the arguments that are often employed for and against UBI through an economic lens.

³ Throughout this paper, we make strongly simplified claims about arguments ‘outweighing’ each other. These are based on individual qualitative judgments that follow from the information provided in the tables, including empirical and logical engagement. We explicitly stress that, depending on individual preferences, one argument against UBI might outweigh many others for the policy, or indeed vice versa. Thus, these claims are intended only as subjective interpretations and cannot be generalised; rather, the aim here is simply to provide a categorised overview of the arguments about UBI.

Table 3: Economic arguments

+/-	Economic Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Fixed regular cash income	Logically plausible, depends empirically on the expected socially average costs of the living expenses the scheme is designed to cover, and on the number/identity of intended recipients (adult citizens, families, OAPs).	Enlightenment (Paine, Spence); 19th century (Charlier); 20th century (Townsend)	Charlier 1848, 1894; Paine 1795; Spence 1793; Roosevelt and Townsend 1936	26
-	Fixed levels cause economic distortions	Logically plausible that fixed levels could be difficult to sustain in recessions, may preserve obsolescent industries, and obstruct technological advances, but no empirical evidence.	20th century (Drucker)	Drucker 1949	26.1
+	Proportional quotient for resource distribution	Logically plausible, depends empirically on the chosen measurement of total resources (eg GDP) and proportional formula (eg X% of GDP per capita).	20th century (Milner and Milner, Russell)	Milner and Milner 1918; Russell 1918	26.2
-	Negative work incentive	Mixed empirical findings, but mostly empirically implausible. Logically plausible, but less of an issue than with needs-tested schemes, as the latter limit marginal income gains at lower income levels due to the reduction of social support that happens simultaneously to wage increases. The rest depends on philosophical assumptions. Many argue that people are likely to keep working as the desire to be productive is in human nature and rich people also usually keep working despite not technically having to. (+Early US pilots (but only when benefits were higher); -Mincome experiment; Experiment in Finland; Ontario project, Pilot in Uganda; Madhya Pradesh project; Alaska project; Barcelona project)	Renaissance (Vives); 19th century (Fourier; Mill); 20th century (Caillé; Galbraith; McLuhan; Rhys-Williams)	Mill 1849; Caillé 1994; Fourier 1836; Gorz 1985, 1997; McLuhan 1966; Rhys-Williams 1943; Hamilton and Martin-West 2019: 322; Zelleke 2008: 5; Midões 2019; Bick, Fuchs-Schündeln, and Lagakos 2018; Jones and Marinescu 2018; Laín 2019	27

Table 3: Economic arguments

+/-	Economic Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Room for skill development due to financial independence	Logically plausible, as financial independence would reduce the immediate pressure to earn money and would enable participation in education schemes that are not free of charge. Unclear whether this will be used.	Modern	Dent 2019	28
+	More cautious and ethical career decisions	Logically plausible, as fewer individuals would have to base career decisions on immediate financial hardship, thus becoming able to consider other factors in their decision-making process.	Modern	Santens 2017	28.1
+	Efficient human capital allocation due to cautious career decisions	Logically plausible, as the freedom to make more cautious career decisions could lead people to choose paths that fit better to their skills and preferences, resulting in better performance.	Modern	Santens 2017; Van Parijs 1992: 8	28.2
-	Will not resolve unemployment	Empirically plausible. For UBI, this means that it must not make overly optimistic claims about its capacity to resolve unemployment (again, it is by no means a silver bullet), and that it needs to be accompanied by complementary employment measures (+Experiment in Finland; +Alaska project)	Modern	Krämer 2019; Jones and Marinescu 2018	28.3
+	More options of financial planning and saving	Empirically and logically plausible, as people gain financial flexibility to a certain degree. (+Ontario project; Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project)	Modern	Standing 2013, Hamilton and Mulvave 2019	29
+	Abolishes 'bullshit jobs'	Logically plausible, as workers would not be financially forced to remain in pointless employment while employers would feel less pressure to offer such positions. Depends on the combination of UBI with other schemes (eg capital and labour partnerships, unemployment alleviation, profit sharing).	19th century (Charlier; Morris); 20th century (Kuiper, Meade, Milner and Milner, Schmid)	Kuiper 1976; Morris 1890; Charlier 1848, 1894; Meader 1935, 1937, 1938; Milner and Milner 1918; Schmid 1984; Abrahamian 2018; Graeber 2018	30

Table 3: Economic arguments

+/-	Economic Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Rising wage costs due to stronger bargaining position of workers	Logically plausible in fields with low levels of competition for jobs. Flipside of enhanced social conditions of workers in such fields, thus not necessarily a problem in and of itself.	Modern	Tcherneva 2005: 9	31
+	Reduces economically harmful risk aversion	Logically plausible, as everybody has a constant income stream that they can rely on in case taking a risk does not pay off.	Modern	Santens 2016	32
+	More flexibility for businesses due to lower social repercussions of layoffs	Logically plausible, as layoffs would no longer endanger the most fundamental livelihoods of workers. Assumes that funding does not disproportionately hurt vulnerable businesses. While empirically unclear, this stands in tension with increased bargaining power of workers.	Modern	Santens 2016	33
+	Stimulates business development	Empirically and logically plausible due to financial independence for founders, even in earlier stages and economically challenging times. (+Pilot in Uganda, Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project; +Alaska project)	Modern	Vanderborght 2006: 6; Jones and Marinescu 2018	34
+	Can be funded by hypothecated portion of existing public income	Logically plausible, depends empirically on intended revenue base (public asset rent, government income).	19th century (Mill); 20th century (Cole, Meade)	Cole 1935, 1944; Meade 1935, 1937, 1938; Mill 1849	35
+	Can be funded by dedicated tax levies	Logically plausible, depends empirically on the intended tax base (eg land and property value, wealth and inheritance, windfall/gifts, sales/transactions, income) and level.	Enlightenment (Paine, Spence); 19th century (George, Huet); 20th century (Friedman, Hayek, Rhys-Williams, Tobin, Townsend)	Friedman 1962, 1980; George 1879; Hayek 1944; Huet 1853; Paine 1795; Rhys-Williams 1943; Spence 1793; Tobin, Pechman, and Mieszkowski 1967; Roosevelt and Townsend 1936.	35.1

Table 3: Economic arguments

+/-	Economic Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Taxes would drive businesses and the rich away	Empirically unclear and logically possible, as businesses might want to lower costs by relocating to places with lower taxes. Could be mitigated via transnational taxation agreements, starting at the EU level.	Modern	Bakija and Slemrod 2004	35.2
-	Extremely expensive	Logically plausible if UBI should cover an actually meaningful amount. UBI runs the risk of either being insufficient or unattainable. This can be addressed in policy design through heavily diversified revenue sources, but is nonetheless a serious challenge. It implies a stepwise introduction of UBI that is strictly linked to the resources available, increasing from a starting point at a very low level. It further underlines the need for complementary schemes: as initially attainable UBI levels are low, UBI must strictly be an addition to rather than a replacement for existing welfare schemes.	Modern	Coote and Yazici 2019: 24; Kearney and Mogstad 2019	36
+	Savings for other welfare schemes	Plausible in principle, but often overstated. Depends on the implementation: certain welfare schemes like some social assistance might become obsolete while positive spillover effects in areas like health care might lower costs for some public services. However, as many other arguments imply, most welfare schemes must remain in place for UBI to be socially advantageous.	Modern	Milevska 2014	37

Table 3: Economic arguments

+/-	Economic Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Growth through consumption stimulus	Empirically and logically plausible, as low-income individuals in particular will see a considerable increase in income relative to before. Clashes with ecological concerns around overconsumption. This implies for policy design that revenue sources should create sustainable consumption incentives and be sufficiently redistributive to limit consumption increases amongst high-income groups. (+Namibian project; Uganda project)	Modern	Milevska 2014	38
-	Increases consumption of undesirable and unnecessary goods	Depends on the definition of undesirable goods. In terms of socially defined desirability (eg drugs, gambling) the argument is empirically implausible. It also presupposes a specific philosophical idea of human nature that aligns with a conceptualisation of public policy that reaches deeply into individual choices. In terms of ecologically defined boundaries to consumption (ie general overconsumption), the argument has to be taken seriously and implies for policy design that revenue sources should create sustainable consumption incentives and be sufficiently redistributive to limit consumption increases amongst high-income groups. Furthermore, environmental policy has to address the issue of planetary boundaries and consumption more generally, with or without UBI in place. (-Early US pilots; Madhya Pradesh project; Namibian project)	Modern	Banerjee, Niehaus, and Suri 2019: 960	38.1

Table 3: Economic arguments

+/-	Economic Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Money could better be spent elsewhere more efficiently	Theoretically plausible, as the same amount of money that is needed for a UBI would mean massive gains for schemes such as public services or needs-tested systems. Depends on the empirically problematic assumption that political majorities for massive increases in non-universal schemes are given and are larger than for UBI. Further, it ignores the more far-reaching benefits of UBI such as universal decommodification as a basic right for all. Finally, it assumes that the aforementioned problems with needs-tested systems are non-issues.	Modern	Coote 2019	39
-	Prices for goods would increase	Limited plausibility as a UBI would not imply printing more money and competition between producers of goods would persist. Only applicable in sectors with rising wage costs, naturally limited supply, or other sources of underdeveloped competition, mitigated through increased income levels.	Modern	Santens 2016	40

In the realm of economic arguments, the picture seems less clear than in the context of social issues. There are plausible economic arguments for and against a UBI; again, many of them depend heavily on concrete policy design. Some popular arguments against a UBI – such as the fear that rising prices will entirely offset income benefits – are logically inconsistent. Others, such as the ecological risk of overconsumption and the high costs associated with the scheme, create limits as to what the policy can and should achieve. These do not entirely render UBI undesirable, as they do not invalidate the scheme’s persistent potential advantages. However, they set clear requirements regarding policy design, and underline the crucial need for discussing UBI less as a dichotomy between support or rejection and more

as a question of how it can be implemented so it can best realise its potential.

So far, it appears that UBI’s comparatively clear social and likely economic benefits are met with scepticism that is partly justified and partly based on empirically or logically questionable assumptions. Nevertheless, it could be argued that there are risks associated with a UBI that affect other areas of state policy and administration, public legitimacy, and party strategy that outweigh all its social and economic advantages. Consequently, the political arguments in UBI debates have to be taken into account as well.

Table 4: Political arguments

+/-	Political Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	State has a duty of public assistance	Already the underlying premise for welfare-state systems, logically plausible to use this to justify updating welfare-state provisions to incorporate UBI. Empirically unclear whether this is best administered centrally or with a role for more local bodies too.	Renaissance (More, Vives); Enlightenment (Spence)	More 1516; Spence 1793; Vives 1526	41
+	Voter mobilisation	Predominantly relevant from a political strategy perspective. Plausible based on opinion polls, unclear link between preferences and voting behaviour. Outcomes likely depend on the respective election and its broader context. (+Public Opinion Data)	Modern	Bartha et al. 2020: 67-69; Roosma and Van Oorschot 2020: 203; Baute and Meuleman 2020; Meuleman et al. 2018	42
-	Potentially harmful for vote share	Unlikely based on opinion polls, unclear link between preferences and voting behaviour. Outcomes likely depend on the respective election and its broader context. (-Public Opinion Data)	Modern	Arthur 2016: 3	42.1
-	It will not be enough to save political party X	Plausible due to the complexities of politics and voters' preferences. Important in very specific contexts for party strategy, but not the purpose of UBI from a non-partisan view on policy making.	Modern	Pitts, Lombardozzi, and Warner 2017	43
+	Justifies other policies, eg. CO2 tax or EU Treaty changes	Logically plausible, as potential backlash from policies such as CO2 taxes might be remedied if they are paid back to consumers at a flat rate. However, not at the core of the UBI itself.	Modern	Valk 2018	44
+	New coalitions, as UBI has supporters across many different ideologies	Logically plausible, as UBI appeals to a wide range of political ideologies. Presupposes willingness to compromise in general and on the precise design of the policy.	Modern	De Wispelaere and Yemtsov 2019: 195	45

Table 4: Political arguments

+/-	Political Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
+	Breaking the triangle of dependence in social policy by enhancing independence from markets and societal institutions while minimising state scrutiny	Logically plausible if state scrutiny is prevented through universality: UBI would make individuals less dependent on the markets and on societal institutions such as families. This is achieved by state action, but as the state has no right to interfere with the payments of UBI (different from needs-tested systems), the dependence on the state is de facto heavily limited as well, resulting in the highest possible degree of individual independence.	20th century (Christensen)	Christensen 2003: 19-20; Berggren and Trägårdh 2016: 86-94; Daly 2010: 139	46
+	Gives EU a social dimension	Logically plausible if implemented at EU level, especially as people might directly receive the money from the EU itself. This would result in a far more direct, palpable feeling of an EU that cares for social issues.	Modern	Ghebrea 2018; Milevska 2014; Baute and Meuleman 2020	47
+	Enhanced acceptance of social policy, as everyone receives UBI	Presupposes that UBI does not go along with palpable net losses in social security and is funded in a socially accepted way.	20th century (Rothstein)	Rothstein 2001: 219-23	48
+	Satisfies right to subsistence	Plausible, but depends on definition of subsistence requirements (agriculture, shelter and residence, security and belonging), its justification (eg solidarity, civic integration), and its proposed institutionalisation (eg constitutional amendment).	19th century (Fourier); 20th century (Cole, Rhys-Williams, Theobald)	Cole 1935, 1944; Fourier 1836; Rhys-Williams 1943; Theobald 1963.	49
+	Strengthens EU citizenship by giving it a palpable, direct benefit	Logically plausible if implemented at EU level, especially as people might directly receive the money from the EU itself. This would result in a far more direct, palpable feeling of an EU that cares for social issues.	20th century (Ferry)	Ferry 1995, 2000; Viehoff 2017	50

Table 4: Political arguments

+/-	Political Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Social policy is in the member states' hands -> Conflict with Treaties and opposition from some member states	Applicable if implemented at EU level, but not a plausible argument against UBI itself. Rather a hurdle in implementation, as changes of the legal framework are possible via political action. Depends on an assumption of lacking solidarity between member states. Legal hurdles are a serious challenge for UBI at EU level, but the use of the argument hints that the underlying challenge lies in political will.	Modern	Milevska 2014	50.1
+	Does not restrict national welfare regimes	Logically plausible if implemented at EU level as an added benefit that does not replace national welfare states at all but rather contributes a novel element.	20th century (Tobin, Pechman, and Mieszkowski)	Tobin, Pechman, and Mieszkowski 1967	50.2
+	Stabilises right to freedom of movement inside the EU	Logically plausible if implemented at EU level, as intra-EU migrants would no longer entirely depend on varying national welfare schemes but could be sure that their livelihood is sustained. As this is one condition for the full right to free movement, UBI would effectively result in more equal rights for EU citizens.	Modern	Bruzelius, Reinprecht, and Seeleib-Kaiser 2017	50.3
-	Fear of welfare magnetism	Potentially plausible, but only if implemented at national level and if UBI unleashes dynamics that contradict research on welfare magnetism in the context of existing social policy. Largely implausible if implemented at EU level, as the effective real income would be similarly available across the EU. Large-scale welfare magnetism is, more generally, empirically implausible.	Modern	Milevska 2014; Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 218-19	50.4

Table 4: Political arguments

+/-	Political Arguments	Argumentative Resilience	Historical Examples	Reference	ID
-	Distracts from/ reproduces systemic problems of capitalism	Theoretically appealing under assumptions that demand fundamental systemic change away from capitalism. Logically flawed in policy practice as (a) these problems have not been solved without UBI either, as (b) the same criticism can be applied to non-universal social policies as well, and (c) a UBI would be a radical, palpable social policy change in and of itself.	Modern	Bayon 2021; Mathers 2020: 333; Lombardozzi and Pitts 2020	51
- / +	Actively replaces the welfare state	Desirability depends on ideological considerations. These considerations then have strong implications for policy design. UBI is not a silver bullet and does not have to be treated as one. As extensively argued so far, the welfare state should be left in place.	20th century (Friedman; Rhys-Williams)	Rhys-Williams 1943; Friedman 1962, 1980; Coote and Yazici 2019: 12	52
-	Incentive for welfare states to avoid improvements	Theoretically plausible, as UBI would remedy some negative effects of weak welfare states, thus lowering political pressure. However, this is a tension that generally applies to any newly introduced social policy that might positively affect the social situation of vulnerable and/or politically active/influential groups. Could be mitigated via complementary measures such as binding standards for upwards convergence.	Modern	Coote and Yazici 2019: 12	52.1
+	No (added) bureaucracy	Empirically and theoretically plausible, as the scheme itself does not need infrastructure for issues like needs-tests. Depends on implementation, policy design, and context conditions that might increase the need for administrative complexity. (+Ontario project; Experiment in Finland)	Modern	United Nations Human Rights Council 2017: 1; De Wispelaere and Stirton 2012	53
+	Spillover benefits in other policy fields, eg lower crime rates	Empirically and theoretically plausible, as the reduction of poverty and the consistent availability of financial means eradicate some sources of problems in other policy fields. (+Namibian project)	Renaissance (More, Vives)	More 1516; Vives 1526	54

With regards to political arguments, similar dynamics unfold to those observed in the other categories. The advantages of a UBI are intuitively plausible, but often strongly dependent on policy design. Again, some arguments against the scheme are either misleading due to faulty assumptions or can be addressed through different choices in how a UBI is actually implemented, but political arguments against UBI tend to be less pressing in terms of policy choices than those from social and economic perspectives. For many arguments, empirical evidence is scarce. This is especially prevalent in this category, as political arguments are difficult to test through experimental case studies, since they largely presuppose political action. Shying away from such action simply out of a lack of prior evidence leads to an avoidable stagnation in policy progress, which can only be seen critically in light of the many arguments presented here.

One of the most striking aspects of the debates on UBI is that they run across – rather than along – ideological lines. Arguments for and against UBI occur within different political groups. For instance, Social Democrats who are in favour of UBI tend to emphasise individual independence and universal welfare coverage, and prioritise guaranteed protection for everyone while tolerating the side-effect of giving money to ostensibly less ‘deserving’ or ‘needy’ individuals such as the rich (ie those who benefit from the unequal outcomes of historical and contemporary processes of property-acquisition) and those who do not work (which they often see as a central component of individuals’ ‘authentic’ identity and role in society). In contrast, those Social Democrats who oppose UBI focus on the efficient use of scarce resources and on targeted benefits, and prioritise the exclusion of the rich and ‘undeserving’ while accepting that this approach may potentially miss out some individuals who are in material need.

Comparable positions can also be found among the far left, with the addition that many far-left actors consider UBI by construction not radical enough to overcome the deficiencies of capitalism. Similarly, some liberals value the gains of individual freedom, the lack of bureaucracy, and the potential

benefits for business development, investment, and consumption higher than the costs of welfare and taxes, while others consider UBI a threat to the idea of ‘pulling oneself up by the bootstraps’, seeing it as an extreme form of state-dependence. From the perspective of many Greens, meanwhile, the emancipatory effects of UBI regarding more ethical and sustainable decisions are so valuable that they outweigh the risk of environmentally harmful increases in consumption – whereas others place these priorities the other way around.

All in all, it has become clear that, despite often broad-brush political hesitations about implementing a UBI, the debates around the scheme are far more complex and nuanced. From an empirical perspective, a UBI is likely to have many positive effects, even if it cannot single-handedly solve all the problems of contemporary social policy. Given the limitations of experimental UBI trials, their results are not definitive proof, but nevertheless provide the most accurate and valuable possible insights into the empirical plausibility of UBI schemes.

IMPLICATIONS

IMPLICATIONS

Based on the results of our overview of these empirical studies, we argue that a UBI is likely to reduce monetary poverty without resulting in exclusion and deprivation, as often happens with targeted benefits. Furthermore, the studies suggest that a UBI is likely to lead to significant improvements in work-life balance and mental health, as well as to increases in life satisfaction, social inclusion, and education participation. Among political outcomes, one could expect a decrease in bureaucracy and spillover benefits in other policy fields, such as reduced crime rates. From an economic perspective, a UBI is likely to provide more options for financial planning and savings, stimulate business development, and generally enhance growth through consumption stimuli. However, there is insufficient empirical evidence to make a definite prediction on how a UBI would affect long-run inequalities, and whether or not it would lead to more fulfilling work. We also cannot be sure whether or not a UBI would increase voter mobilisation, stimulate the formation of new coalitions, and enhance popular acceptance of the welfare state in general. However, public opinion data strongly suggests that a UBI scheme would benefit from appreciable public popularity.

Besides empirical findings, the theoretical debate on UBI has developed far over the last five centuries. The thorough examination of historical and contemporary arguments from social, economic, and political perspectives leads us to support the implementation of UBI in a way that properly addresses the valid arguments against it.

We argue that a UBI would provide an effective and gapless reduction of poverty and an enhancement of non-paternalistic social inclusion. It would massively expand the bargaining power of workers and emancipate the individual by adding a layer of social protection that is a right for all rather than a privilege for select groups. Achieving these benefits by simply improving and expanding existing needs-tested systems would be a fallacy: modern societies

encourage and depend on individualised life choices whose contribution to society cannot entirely be judged and fairly rewarded through needs-tested systems alone. In practice, such systems make unacceptable mistakes that leave behind many of the most vulnerable.

Furthermore, the steady decline of political support for parties embracing such systems along with clear trends in public opinion show that progressives do not face a choice between raising more funds for either needs-tested systems or for a UBI. Rather, progressives have a choice between not raising additional funds and watching support for welfare-oriented parties decline, or raising increased funds for systems that complement existing welfare schemes by addressing every individual equally. Just as taxes are a membership fee for society, a UBI would be a remuneration for contributing to society in a world in which simple dichotomies between useful labour in employment and everything else do not tell the whole story. Individuals outside of traditional blue-collar jobs also increasingly face insecurities and dependencies.

The emancipatory power of UBI to make individuals more independent and enhance freedom through fostering people's capabilities is unmatched by other policy approaches. This matters fundamentally for all facets of society. Not only would it enhance people's quality of life, but it would also democratise many spheres of public life by guaranteeing that everyone has basic opportunities independent of their market income in a system that presupposes monetary means for proper participation. Thus, a UBI would be an effective way of civilising market economies in the areas where it matters most, while remaining acceptable for diverse political ideologies that are otherwise increasingly stuck in deadlocks that prevent any palpable but desperately needed social progress. Importantly, this does not mean that all progressive actors have to embrace exactly the same vision of a UBI. Depending on the

specific priorities at stake, there are many concrete forms that a progressive UBI could take that would emphasise specific facets of policy design differently. Furthermore, strongly simplified proposals could make political messaging easier. Viewed from the perspective of democratic political competition, it could be strategically reasonable and normatively desirable for different progressive movements to embrace different variants of UBI. However, as we detail further below, there is considerable common ground based on which progressives could join forces and negotiate further details and degrees of specificity during the policymaking process.

Against the major benefits of a UBI outlined above stand a range of concerns, some of which are either empirically implausible or logically inconsistent. Examples for this are the assumption that people would stop working and the notion that there is no public support for the scheme. Similar fallacies revolve around rejecting a UBI based on the grounds of procedural hurdles. For instance, a UBI at the EU level might clash with the EU's lack of social competencies in the Treaties. However, this does not speak against embracing the scheme itself in any way, but only implies that its implementation would be challenging. Besides such points, there are some more convincing and important arguments against UBI. Some of them are hard to resolve and result from fundamental tensions, but would have to be accepted in order to make use of the massive potentials of UBI. Many others can be addressed via policy design: a UBI does not have to – and often could not even – replace the welfare state. Contrary to what has sometimes been misleadingly claimed, the complexity of welfare states cannot be properly matched by a single policy, and any attempt to do so would, in turn, also overburden and thus undermine a UBI's efficacy. Instead, a UBI should explicitly be used to further solidify the welfare state and make it more effective by closing its gaps and complementing it. The scheme's redistributive effects are entirely dependent on its revenue sources. Whether it can be financed or not also depends on the structure of its funding. Importantly, we do not claim that one cannot plausibly argue against UBI in the light of these considerations. However, to remain consistent, such positions depend on very specific assumptions, on

unfavourable circumstantial conditions regarding issues such as available resources, and on mistakes in concrete policy design – such as, for instance, cutting crucial services.

Concerning the specific assumptions on which opponents of UBI rely, a key residual question is whether a UBI is socially just or not. It might appear as if a UBI does not sufficiently address needs, contributions, or inequalities, but these arguments quickly fall apart after closer examination. Its effects on inequalities are entirely dependent on its funding, and this argument is easily resolved via policy design. The argument about needs and contributions rests on a one-dimensional assumption regarding what defines these terms. Non-universal schemes presuppose that those examining the needs and contributions of individuals are infallible in their judgments and that their underlying ideas of justice are universally applicable. While the former assumption stands in stark contrast to empirical experiences with needs-tested systems, the latter assumption disregards the variety of valid concepts of justice that exist in pluralistic, individualised, and democratic societies. Just because a UBI by itself cannot address all considerations regarding justice, it is not necessarily unjust. Quite the contrary: given that a UBI does not have to replace existing systems but can rather complement them, it would address injustices inherent in existing systems and therefore has a vital contribution to make in helping stabilise them. Thus, philosophical approaches such as liberal egalitarianism (Rawls 1996, 1999) and the capability approach (Sen 2010) offer examples for frameworks within which UBI can be considered fundamentally just. These are not the only approaches for which this applies, but they illustrate that arguing against UBI in spite of the empirical and logical considerations outlined above is heavily dependent on specific assumptions about what justice means and what it entails, and on claiming that these assumptions are universally applicable.

Although not an argument against UBI in itself, a strategy that is easily employed against a UBI's implementation is to make an argumentative claim against a UBI – for instance on negative work incentives – and to say that a UBI must not be

implemented before sufficient empirical evidence is available to refute the claim. Once empirical studies hint that the claim seems implausible or unlikely, it can then easily be argued that available experimental evidence is just not sufficient and that negative effects would occur if it were actually implemented. At the same time, outcomes that a UBI is hardly intended to achieve – for instance, the abolition of unemployment – are cherry-picked as empirical examples of why a UBI is ineffective. This strategy leads to fallacies as it rejects any findings that speak for a UBI by design.

We argue that it is time to break with this fallacious approach, and to implement a UBI across the EU. The scheme's expected benefits, both from an argumentative and empirical angle, are considerable; many concerns against it are often empirically or logically flawed, or depend on the design of the policy. We acknowledge that there are considerable unpredictabilities associated with UBI, but not implementing it is just as much an active policy choice as embracing it, and comes with its own attendant uncertainties. In light of the various imperfections of the established needs-tested social welfare systems, the choice to disregard a UBI would further amplify the mismatch between the 21st-century challenges associated with rapid globalisation and individualisation on the one hand, and responses by incomplete 20th-century welfare states on the other.

A UBI could be one step to prevent the incremental erosion of existing social policy. But if designed poorly, it could also pose a danger to societal cohesion and let many of the justified concerns about the policy become reality. This is why we call on progressives across different parties to act swiftly and to embrace a vision of UBI that responds to legitimate concerns before others use the unrivalled and ever-increasing popularity of the idea of a UBI to undermine and abolish existing welfare states and public service provisions. Based on our examination of debates around a UBI, we therefore use the final section of this paper to propose a policy design that we believe offers an appropriate approach for the contemporary EU.

POLICY DESIGN

POLICY DESIGN

As we argued before, some arguments against a UBI are more robust than others. Just as any rejection of UBI has to consider the points that speak in favour of the policy, a proposal for UBI must take seriously the convincing arguments levelled against it – either because they are empirically plausible or because they are logically compelling. Thus, the following policy design is derived from an exhaustive examination of the UBI debates presented so far. Of course, it is not possible to resolve every last concern, as some issues (for example high costs and sufficiently high payments) stand in conflict to a certain degree. The following policy is therefore a compromise between various considerations that should illustrate how progressives can approach concrete UBI proposals. It is not meant to be a definitive design; rather, its elements are explicitly open to alteration, as long as such changes take into account the various arguments and considerations around UBI from a progressive perspective.

The proposal also draws inspiration from similar approaches such as the idea of a Eurodividend (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 235-44). It addresses the main questions that a UBI has to deal with and embeds them in a framework adapted from De Wispelaere and Stirton (2004). They argue that various UBI concepts are rooted in different interpretations of the universality, individuality, conditionality, uniformity, frequency, duration, modality, adequacy, and fuzziness of the policy design. Applying this framework, we are confident that the following proposal adequately factors into consideration the most pressing concerns about UBI, where these cannot simply be refuted on the grounds of empirical insights and logical inference. Specifically, these concern the risk associated with replacing welfare policies that a UBI could not itself fully deliver on, the issue of adequate and sustainable funding, and several aforementioned considerations around the notions of justice by which it is to be judged. We provide cross-references to the arguments' IDs from the tables above in

superscripts, to make it transparently clear when parts of our policy proposal directly respond to specific issues. The policy proposal is not intended as a theoretically impeccable vision of a UBI, but as an ambitious yet in principle feasible compromise between ideals and limitations that responds to the diverse facets of the UBI debates.

Who should get UBI?

A major valid concern about UBI is that it might also be paid to the rich or to people whom society deems 'undeserving' ⁽³⁾. At the same time, however, issues such as discrimination ⁽¹⁸⁾ and gaps of coverage amongst the needy ^(1.1) have been identified as some of the key reasons for why a UBI might be considered necessary. As introducing restrictions at any point can become a slippery slope ^(1.4), every member of European society (that is, EU citizens and residents) should have the right to UBI, irrespective of their income or any other criterion of 'desert'. In our model, this concerns the EU as a whole, since we propose to introduce the UBI at the EU level ^(47, 50, 50.1, 50.2, 50.3, 50.4). The considerable challenges and benefits of this approach are addressed further, below.

We also propose making the automatic reception of UBI conditional on income to partly address the issue of needs ⁽¹⁹⁾ in a system that provides a universal right to accessing income, rather than a UBI that is paid out by default to everyone irrespective of needs. This means that, starting at a specific threshold, the amount of money paid by default will decrease with increasing income. The precise level at which UBI entitlements should start to taper off could be tied to median income levels: once an individual reaches the respective national median income without UBI, the share of UBI that is paid out by default is reduced with every additional marginal increase in regular income. The marginal decreases in UBI that is paid out by default should be below the marginal increases in regular income. The precise rates

at which the UBI that is paid out by default would decrease are up to policymakers' preferences. They might be purely linear, work with brackets (implying sudden cut-off points), or increase progressively. Low-income individuals would not be affected by this system and receive their full UBI by default to prevent low take-up rates amongst the needy.

Crucially, people still retain their right to the full amount of UBI, but they will have to actively claim the respective unpaid amount. In this system, anyone with an income at the level of the national median income or below would not have to do anything to receive the full UBI by default. By contrast, a person with a monthly income of, for instance, €4,000 might not receive any UBI by default, depending on the country and reduction rate in question, but would still be able to claim the full UBI if they wish to do so. This nudge is intended to make people who do not rely for their income on UBI at least reconsider whether they actually want to receive it. This also sets such a scheme apart from proposals of a negative income tax. While the latter implies that high-income individuals lose their right to their basic income, our proposal sustains the right for everyone, but makes payouts conditional on active requests. The hypothecated UBI funds left unclaimed at the end of each tax year will be paid into the sovereign wealth fund in the name of those who refrained from claiming it to increase the financial base of the overall scheme in the long run. Along with a publicly accessible register of such UBI 'donors', this could incentivise at least a few of the better-off members of European society to contribute to lowering the costs of this UBI ⁽³⁶⁾, while introducing a modest increase of resources in the sovereign wealth fund.

Some further specifications of the universal right of accessing income respond to the questions about age, and about the entity to whom UBI is paid. In the spirit of maximising independence ⁽⁴⁶⁾, UBI should

be paid to adult individuals directly, rather than to households or other collective entities. At ages under 18, a slightly lower amount should be paid, partly to the caregivers of the individual and partly into a publicly administered, sustainable sovereign wealth fund. Once turning 18, the inflation-adjusted money paid into the fund in the individual's name would become available to them – potentially enabling a smooth entry into higher education ⁽¹⁵⁾ and the labour market ^(28.1, 28.3) – while the interest accrued over the years will be retained in the fund as a long-term financial security scheme for different public purposes ^(54, 36, 37). This would effectively combine ideas of basic income with ideas of basic capital (Prabhakar 2018). Workers who meet the conditions of the Posted Workers Directive should receive UBI levels that correspond to the shares of a month they spent in different countries for their work.

How much should UBI provide?

To achieve the benefit of poverty relief ⁽¹⁾ at current EU standards while limiting the criticism of insufficiency, we propose an ideal-type UBI set at the level of 60 percent of a country's median income or 50 percent of the average income, whichever is higher (Müller and Schulten 2020). As we propose an EU-wide UBI ^(47, 50, 50.2, 50.3, 50.4), the absolute amount of money paid would thus vary between member-states depending on their costs of living and their income levels to avoid disturbing labour markets ^(27, 31) and to achieve sufficiency ⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, we propose that the UBI should not exceed 60 percent of the EU-wide median income and should not fall below 20 percent of this median income. We detail these limits and their implications further below including concrete numbers for different EU member states. Differences that are based on local-level adjustments below the national level⁴ are not planned for within the UBI itself, in order to keep the

4 From a purely theoretical perspective, sub-national adjustments of UBI levels would be optimal. However, such approaches would severely interfere with member states' autonomy and could politically be addressed more effectively through national schemes. Furthermore, issues with data availability might make a proper implementation of an EU UBI with sub-national variation overly complicated. Thus, we acknowledge the theoretical appeal of sub-national adjustments but advise addressing sub-national differences through policies within national welfare state arrangements rather than through the EU UBI.

scheme simple and streamlined⁽⁵³⁾. However, such differences certainly still need to be accounted for by the remaining portfolio of complementary policy schemes, including those that already exist^(50.2). It is absolutely crucial that the UBI must not replace public services and social transfers^(52, 52.1) that compensate for local-level costs of living, such as housing benefits. In regions with low costs of living, the UBI by itself would be particularly valuable, perhaps incentivising people to move to such regions more^(50.3), while regions with higher costs of living would be compensated for by other local-level policies.

In the light of these considerations, we stress that a UBI that corresponds with national at-risk-of-poverty thresholds is an ultimate goal rather than an immediate policy. As existing social policies remain in place, a UBI could practically be introduced very slowly and carefully to ensure financial feasibility and to be able to respond to unexpected developments. As we detail in the later sections, the practical introduction of UBI should be closely tied to revenue sources. A UBI that sufficiently eradicates monetary poverty is highly ambitious, but if other welfare systems remain in place, any low-level UBI can be a social improvement if funded properly. Thus, we propose to (a) treat the ideal level of UBI as a long-term goal, (b) introduce UBI at low levels and slowly as well as gradually, under the condition that (c) existing social policies may only optionally be replaced if they are entirely equivalent to the already existing UBI, that is, cash transfers at the UBI level that is de facto available to individuals.

How should UBI be distributed?

We recommend that the UBI be paid throughout the entire life of an individual, given the above specifications for minors. To sustain individual independence⁽⁴⁶⁾ as one of UBI's greatest benefits and to prevent paternalistic state control over individual behaviour^(4.1, 23), the UBI should be paid directly in monetary terms rather than in the form of vouchers or goods. It should also not be implemented as loans but as payments with no strings attached, enabling recipients to do with it

whatever they please. That said, we generally favour the introduction of complementary information provision on sustainable investment⁽¹⁶⁾. We propose payments on a monthly basis to allow recipients to take risks⁽³²⁾ without losing the benefit of security^(1.1, 5) by spending their entire income at once. Payments should generally be directed into individuals' bank accounts. Should no information on this be available in some cases, the amount of UBI that would automatically be paid would go into the sustainable sovereign wealth fund and could be accessed by the respective individual later once a secure account for payments is accessible.

Crucially, existing welfare schemes must mostly not be replaced, as the benefits of a UBI can only properly be felt if it does not have to fulfil social policy tasks that it is not designed to address and that other policies can address more effectively while also being politically feasible^(1, 1.1, 1.5, 4.1, 4.2, 5, 14, 16, 28, 46, 54). The only schemes that would become obsolete through the introduction of the UBI are those that fulfil a purpose that the UBI would entirely cover^(37, 53), such as basic non-contributory unemployment benefits and minimum pensions. As the former in particular are associated with high levels of bureaucracy, a properly implemented UBI could abolish large parts of the current welfare bureaucracy⁽⁵³⁾, while leaving most public services untouched. Different from notions of either replacing the welfare state altogether or leaving it entirely untouched, we therefore advocate a UBI that complements the welfare state. As a UBI at the proposed level would hardly be sufficient for covering costs of health care, education, and other services^(1.4), they have to be sustained for UBI to be a step of social progress rather than regression. As our proposal is a UBI at the EU level, these decisions on welfare systems beyond UBI would ultimately be up to the member states^(50.1). Therefore, we advocate for the complementary introduction of stricter requirements for upwards convergence in national social policy (for example via an EU-wide standard for national minimum wages) to avoid freeriding and social dumping by member states^(52.1). This conceptualisation of a UBI would be one of three major pillars of a 21st-century social Europe that provides citizens with jobs, universal public services, and a UBI. Rather than treating either of

these as a silver bullet of social policy, we argue that all are necessary to sustain a dignified life: without services, jobs and UBI are insufficient; without jobs, UBI and services are unsustainable; and without UBI, jobs and services leave unavoidable gaps and lack emancipatory potential in a system of individualised market economies ^(1.1, 4.1, 25).

How is it funded?

Funding for such an ambitious scheme is not trivial ⁽³⁶⁾. However, research suggests that financing a UBI is possible, even at high levels and without replacing the welfare state (Pereira 2017). Often, 'cost objection to BI is based upon inadequate and/or misleading information' (Pereira 2017: 105). Even funding from single revenue sources could suffice for high levels of UBI, but this would come with its own drawbacks. Examples of such approaches are funding UBI solely by raising income taxes (Ghatak and Jaravel 2020), or from a fund financed through wealth taxes or from royalties on individuals' digital data (Andrade, Crocker, and Lansley 2019). Taking seriously the drawbacks of these approaches, we refrain from proposing a one-size-fits-all solution in which a single source of income should be the remedy for all expenses. Single taxes are subject to too much volatility for a scheme of the size and impact of an EU-level UBI (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 237), and they would likely overburden the entity or resource that is taxed, thus possibly driving away businesses and individuals ^(35.2).

Therefore, we propose the introduction of various revenue sources that spread the fiscal burden, along with a multi-step introduction of the scheme. In this approach, UBI levels would be raised along with increases in available resources from the gradually introduced and gradually increasing revenue sources listed below. As the level that covers at-risk-of-poverty thresholds is an ideal-typical goal, and as the introduction of the revenue sources presented here would already be a major leap forwards for EU integration in and of itself, we strongly emphasise that the proposed EU UBI should be introduced at low levels first. The following combination of

revenue sources is inspired by the existing research on financing UBI and the proposed phases should not be seen as fixed. Rather, revenue sources can be flexibly introduced in line with contextual political conditions, as the proposed UBI itself can be introduced equally flexibly. As some of the proposed revenue sources might also be intended for other projects, we propose earmarking specific shares of the resources generated by each revenue source for UBI upon the respective source's introduction. Guaranteeing that the introduction of each resource at the EU level is accompanied by a share of it being used to increase UBI levels could considerably contribute to public support for permanent exclusive EU resources that are gradually added to. Thus, dedicating parts of these resources to an EU UBI might enable progressives to also raise funds for other projects which might otherwise be seen as in competition for said resources. In practice, the likely outcomes of an EU UBI and potentially competing projects should be carefully compared, and resources allocated in a way that appropriately delivers on a balanced mix of priorities. As we propose a slow and gradual introduction of the scheme at initially low levels, such a sharing of resources would be less problematic than in the case of a sudden high-level introduction.

In the first phase, several new EU-level taxes under the administration of the European Commission should be introduced along with a redirection of funds from the European Emission Trading System. First, we propose a financial transaction tax that would also stabilise financial markets by disincentivising high-risk, high-frequency speculation, while moving a share of the revenue generated in the financial markets back into the circulation of the real economy. Second, two revenue sources could contribute to the UBI as much as to environmental sustainability: a green border tax and a CO2 tax – optionally just on production factors and the consumption of some non-essential goods – to be determined by a dedicated expert committee with social implications in mind. The CO2 tax would be collected and paid back to all individuals at an average value. As recent research demonstrates, such a tax could be a net benefit to lower-income groups if it is paid back entirely as a low-level UBI

(Gechert and Dullien 2021; Kalkuhl, Knopf, and Edenhofer 2021). A focus on production factors and non-essential goods could be applied if the tax ends up running the risk of becoming regressive, contrary to what the study evidence would lead us to expect. If designed properly, it could (a) disincentivise high-carbon consumption, (b) potentially redistribute money from the richest to the rest of society ^(3, 3.2, 21) or remain distributively neutral (Dissou and Siddiqui 2014), and (c) set an automatic minimum UBI. Third, the EU-wide sustainable sovereign wealth fund should be set up early on and be immediately funded with revenues from natural resources and with savings from the abolition of environmentally harmful subsidies.⁵ As this will take time to pay off, an early introduction is crucial. Fourth, a reform of the European Emission Trading System that centralises auctions in the EU institutions, increases prices of certificates, and broadens the base of emitters could also introduce further funds for an EU UBI (Schachtschneider: Forthcoming).

Phase two would take the EU and the national level into account. At the EU level, a digital services tax would be introduced along with a layered value added tax (VAT) that is heavier on goods that are less essential. Following the logic that applies when pairing a CO₂ tax with UBI, current research suggests that an otherwise regressive VAT would effectively become a progressive tax if combined with UBI (Gale 2020). National contributions to the UBI would also be collected based on national corporate tax income. To avoid a race to the bottom, an EU-wide minimum corporate tax basis would be introduced as a binding standard. Through this combination, member states that benefit from disproportionately high levels of corporate activity would pay a higher share to the UBI in this regard than those that are worse off. Consequently, economic prosperity

would increasingly be to the benefit of all European citizens, and the potential for intra-EU conflicts in this field would be reduced.

The third phase would then introduce direct interpersonal redistribution via EU-level taxes on luxury goods and on extremely high incomes ^(3, 3.2, 21), inheritances, and wealth ^(3.1). It is important to note that such taxes must not interfere with medium-level incomes but would primarily concern the most extreme cases as much as necessary to finance the remaining, uncovered costs. Furthermore, a land value levy and a 'robot tax' could contribute to the feasibility of the scheme.

Taken together, these revenue sources would complement each other, yield considerable financial means, and serve as a buffer if one source unexpectedly breaks down. Furthermore, they offer direct control over the redistributive effects of the scheme ^(3, 3.2, 21), responding to one of the main challenges associated with UBI. Should the different funding mechanisms still be insufficient, more product-specific taxes could be adjusted. For instance, Canadian UBI Works (2020) proposes a levy on sugary drinks. However, we suggest refraining from overly specific, product-targeted taxes if possible to limit dependencies on short-term fluctuations in specific markets. As a detailed calculation of expected revenue from these sources requires economic modelling that responds to unintended effects of new revenue sources as well, it would surpass the scope of this paper. However, it bears great potential for future research on this proposal.

To give a rough indication of what can be expected from some of these revenue sources, the following table summarises existing research on this issue.

5 We acknowledge the inherent trade-offs between different progressive ideals in some of these measures. We therefore stress the need for a robust diversity of revenue sources for the overall UBI 'fund'; depending on political priorities, the precise balance of proposed sources can be tweaked. For instance, some might argue that environmentally-harmful subsidies keep prices for essential goods low. Similarly, green border taxes could be limited in favour of avoiding trade barriers for some developing countries. However, in light of the urgent need for action against climate change, we argue that the proposed UBI would, through the other suggested revenue sources and the policy design overall, appropriately balance out these trade-offs while sustaining the net benefits discussed throughout this paper.

Importantly, most of the cited studies were not conducted in the context of an EU UBI. This implies that the numbers presented might diverge significantly from the scenario we propose. Some numbers are based on our own calculations, applying the contents of the underlying studies to the case of a monthly EU UBI per capita. As this can distort some of the assumptions behind the original studies, and since it is questionable how well a layering of such diverse revenue sources would work in practice, these numbers should be treated with great caution and do not obviate the need for further

in-depth research. Thus, the data is not an attempt to calculate an actual basis for an EU UBI, but rather serves as a very rough illustration of what existing research in different contexts suggests. In line with this, the data we have cited should be understood only as examples for the proposed revenue sources, not as ultimate recommendations. Some of the proposed revenue sources are highly complex, so each revenue source can be tweaked according to political preferences and different contexts.

Table 5: Potential revenue sources

Revenue Source	Expected Revenue per Capita and Month	Source
Financial transaction tax	€11 at 0.01% on derivatives and 0.1% on securities (based on 2011-EU27 data)	Funke, Meyer, and Trebesch 2020: 30; European Parliament 2021: 18
CO2 tax	€33 to €66 at a CO2 price of €140/t to €280/t (linearly upscaled from €35/t in Germany; price estimated to be necessary for sufficient climate protection)	Gechert and Dullien 2021; Kalkuhl, Knopf, and Edenhofer 2021
Green border tax	€1 to €3 'depending on the scope and design'	Jadot 2021: 12
Expanded emission trading	€43 at an extension derived from ecological goals	Schachtschneider (Forthcoming): 200
Sovereign wealth fund	Entirely dependent on size and economic developments. Examples for existing models outside the EU-wide context suggest potential UBI levels at €41, or €82 (2019 average exchange rates applied). Again, these levels fundamentally depend on the design of the fund and cannot be generalised.	Andrade, Crocker, and Lansley 2019
Digital services tax	€1 at 3% on businesses 'with total annual worldwide revenues exceeding €750 million, and those with EU annual revenues exceeding €50 million'	European Parliament 2018: 6; European Parliament 2021: 16

Corporate tax contributions/Common consolidated corporate tax base	€2 at a call rate of 3%; more maximalist estimates go up to €100 in the case of a full Europeanisation of corporate taxation at 30%	European Parliament 2021: 17; Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 238
VAT	€200 at 19%	Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 239
Luxury goods tax	Heavily dependent on taxed goods.	
Income tax	€1,031 at a 45% flat tax. As this would replace other taxes, revenue would realistically be much lower at an additional EU-level income tax. €562 by raising the top tax to 70%. Important: Based on the context of the UK, values transferred from GB£ to € at an exchange rate of 1.1248 to 1 (average 2020). Values will likely diverge strongly for the EU.	Ghatak and Jaravel 2020
Inheritance tax	€2 to €12 with potential for future increases (based on revenues per GDP in existing inheritance tax regimes)	Jestl 2018
Wealth tax	€40 to €385 depending on design and tax avoidance. €74 assuming a strongly progressive model and some tax avoidance. (Source values applied to 2020-EU27 data)	Kapeller, Leitch, and Wildauer 2021
Land value levy	€25 assuming a revenue of c. 1% of GDP (assumption based on revenue data of existing land value taxes, eg in Denmark); Farley suggests a far more optimistic model for the UK	Milan, Kapfer, and Creutzig 2016; Farley 2016
Robot tax	Context-appropriate research is still lacking	

Current research on heterodox modern monetary theory further suggests that UBI could partially be deficit-financed without causing substantial problems. In this setting, the state would use quantitative easing within the limit of output GDP to avoid inflation (Andrade, Crocker, and Lansley 2019). We excluded this approach from the above list for reasons of simplicity and as economic research on such approaches is still in earlier stages of evolution than research on taxation.

In addition, saved costs from some welfare schemes that become obsolete, from lower UBI levels for children, and from voluntary UBI donations, could act as complementary financial relief. Should funding fall short nevertheless, the UBI could first be increased to sufficient levels for specific population groups who are in particular need, and then increasingly expanded to other groups. For instance, it is estimated that an unconditional child benefit of €100 per month would be feasible at a 1 percent VAT. Similarly, an unconditional pension of €500 per month for all Europeans older than 70 could be funded via a 6 percent VAT (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 239). Again, the scheme could initially be introduced to the whole population at very low benefit levels to ensure financial feasibility. As even a UBI solely financed through a relatively low CO₂ tax of €35/t would likely be a net benefit for low-income groups (Gechert and Dullien 2021; Kalkuhl, Knopf, and Edenhofer 2021), introducing the idea of UBI slowly and cautiously would be a low-risk approach that could, after long-run increases, unfold its enormous potential. As the following section elaborates, we propose a stepwise introduction either way that could in principle be temporarily paused at any point.

How is it introduced?

Similar to the different phases of building up revenue, the UBI itself should also be introduced gradually. First, income from the CO₂ tax would provide the material basis to introduce the policy itself at a very low initial level. Effectively, the flat-rate paybacks of the CO₂ tax would represent an introduction of a varying UBI without necessarily

framing them as such first and foremost. They could primarily be introduced as a way to achieve a socially just transition to a more ecologically sustainable society. However, they would also be a low-risk way of introducing the administrative framework and the idea of a very basic UBI which could then gradually be expanded through the introduction and adjustment of revenue sources. Then, biannual targets should be developed that would first introduce the actual UBI at the same, initially low level in all member states. This would disproportionately benefit poorer member states with lower costs of living and therefore contribute to bringing about upwards convergence within the EU. The UBI would then be raised step by step as resources increasingly become available. Once the first at-risk-of-poverty threshold in a member state is reached, the UBI in that state will not keep rising, except for adjustments to changes in the respective at-risk-of-poverty threshold. For all other member states, the UBI level will keep rising until the respective at-risk-of-poverty threshold is reached so that the member state with the highest income levels would reach the targeted UBI level last. To ensure that the UBI does not become a purely procyclical investment tool due to its proposed dependence on partly volatile resources, there should be a strong and deliberate automatic stabilisation component built into the scheme: in times of economic prosperity and high income through revenue streams, parts of the available funds should be set aside to ensure payments can continue during times of crisis.

To enhance feasibility and positive effects on convergence, the highest UBI would not be allowed to exceed 60 percent of the EU-wide median income. Such a cap would imply that the UBI would initially not entirely cover the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in high-income countries as long as incomes between EU member states are highly unequal. However, the UBI would emancipate individuals, with a special priority focus on those who are most in need, applying a limit at the upper end to make the overall scheme more feasible. This cap would also have other functional benefits. It would (a) incentivise richer member states to support upwards income developments in poorer member states, (b) imply moderate redistribution within the EU ⁽²¹⁾, (c) avoid

overly extreme gaps between UBI levels in different member states, (d) cushion the volatility of income levels in crises, (e) add a palpable layer of interpersonal solidarity to EU citizenship^(47,50) across member states, and (f) keep the overall costs of a UBI lower as long as poorer member states cannot yet provide significant financial contributions.

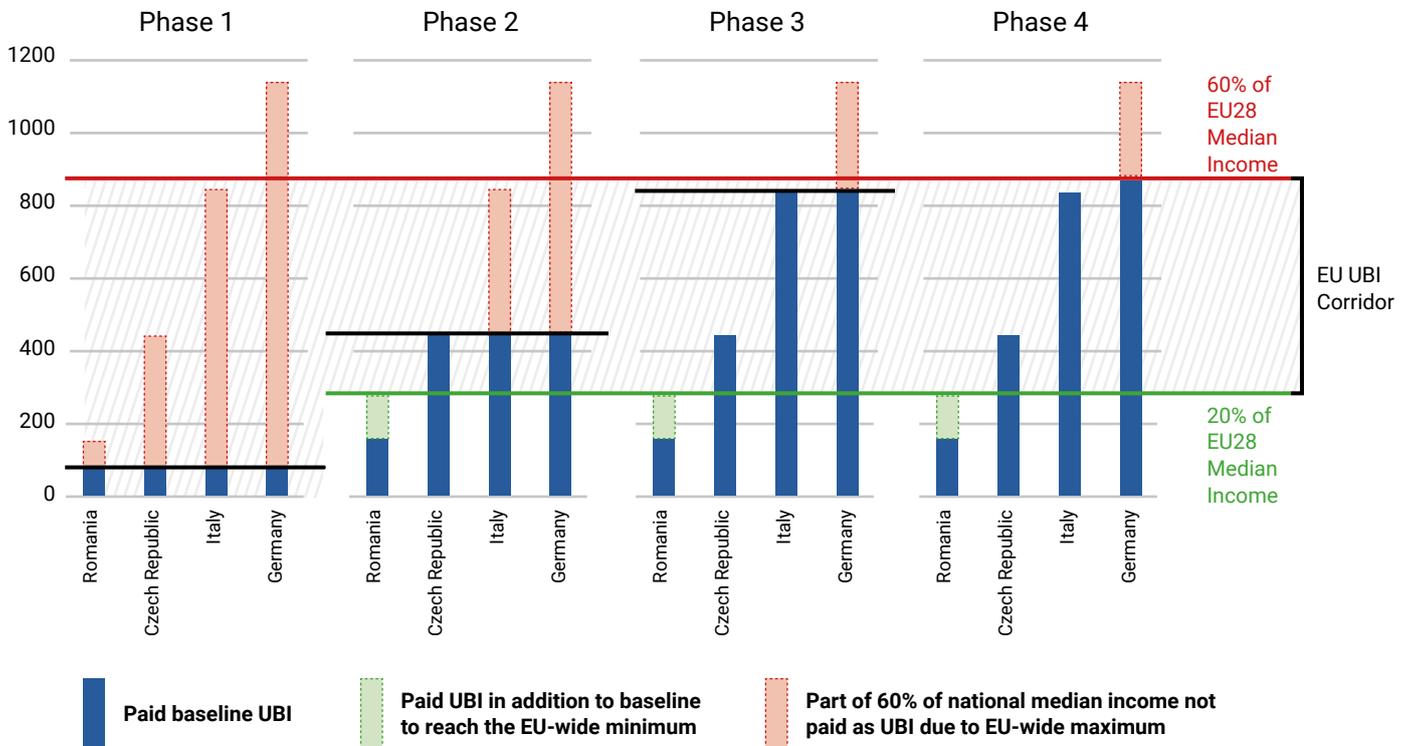
Furthermore, we acknowledge that income levels in poorer EU member states might not suffice to sustain a dignifying standard of living despite lower costs of consumption. Thus, we also propose a floor of 20 percent of the EU-wide median income below which the EU UBI should not be allowed to fall⁽¹⁾. While this could potentially imply problematic short-term impacts on labour markets in the poorest member states^(27, 31), it would also be a massive boost for the economies in question^(7, 29, 32, 33, 34, 37, 38), thus most likely stabilising labour markets in the longer run. The result would be an EU UBI corridor between 20 percent and 60 percent of the EU-wide median income within which nationally adjusted UBI levels could vary.

The following graph depicts how such a corridor would influence monthly UBI levels in different hypothetical phases of a stepwise introduction of the scheme. It uses Romania, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Germany based on 2018 median income data (Eurostat 2020a) as examples. The EU28⁶ at-risk-of-poverty threshold cap is depicted as a horizontal red line. The green line represents the minimum UBI floor while the horizontal black lines stand for phase-specific caps. The solid blue parts of the graphs indicate how much UBI a person would have received in these countries per month if the scheme were in place at 2018 at-risk-of-poverty thresholds. The orange bars indicate the part of the theoretical maximum UBI level in each country that would have exceeded the cap and therefore not been paid out. The green parts of the bars stand for money that would be paid in addition to the country-specific at-risk-of-poverty threshold due to the minimum UBI floor. In phase one, all UBI levels are

set purely based on revenues from dedicated taxes such as a CO2 consumption tax. Thus, no minimum UBI floor is set yet and UBI levels in all countries are equal. In phase two, the at-risk-of-poverty thresholds of Romania and the Czech Republic are reached so that the UBI levels only increase in countries with higher at-risk-of-poverty thresholds in phase three. Finally, phase four only caps the UBI based on the EU28-wide at-risk-of-poverty threshold. This would complete this model of a hypothetical stepwise introduction and make further changes in UBI levels entirely dependent on changes in at-risk-of-poverty thresholds in single countries and across the EU.

6 We include the UK in the EU28 to accurately capture pre-Brexit data.

Fig. 3: Phases of introduction
(Eurostat 2020a, own calculations)



In practice, we propose a much more fine-grained and flexible introduction of the scheme over a timespan of roughly four European Parliament election cycles, with biannual assessments of appropriate level adjustments by a non-partisan expert committee. However, we acknowledge that the actual implementation would depend on myriad external considerations that might heavily impact a realistic timeframe for achieving the presented goals. A gradual introduction would allow the EU to react to external shocks while avoiding extreme disruptions of national economies. Furthermore, it would temporarily make poorer member states more economically attractive, thus potentially limiting brain drain and contributing to upwards convergence. The proposed introduction would also help overcome large-scale poverty in the most deprived states quickly at a comparatively low initial

cost. This would be a considerable contribution to the functioning of the internal market and freedom of movement: first, it would reduce the likelihood of forced labour migration; second, it would generally make labour migration more of a decision by emancipated individuals; and third, it would socially protect those who contribute to overall European wealth by moving to work in places where their labour is most needed.

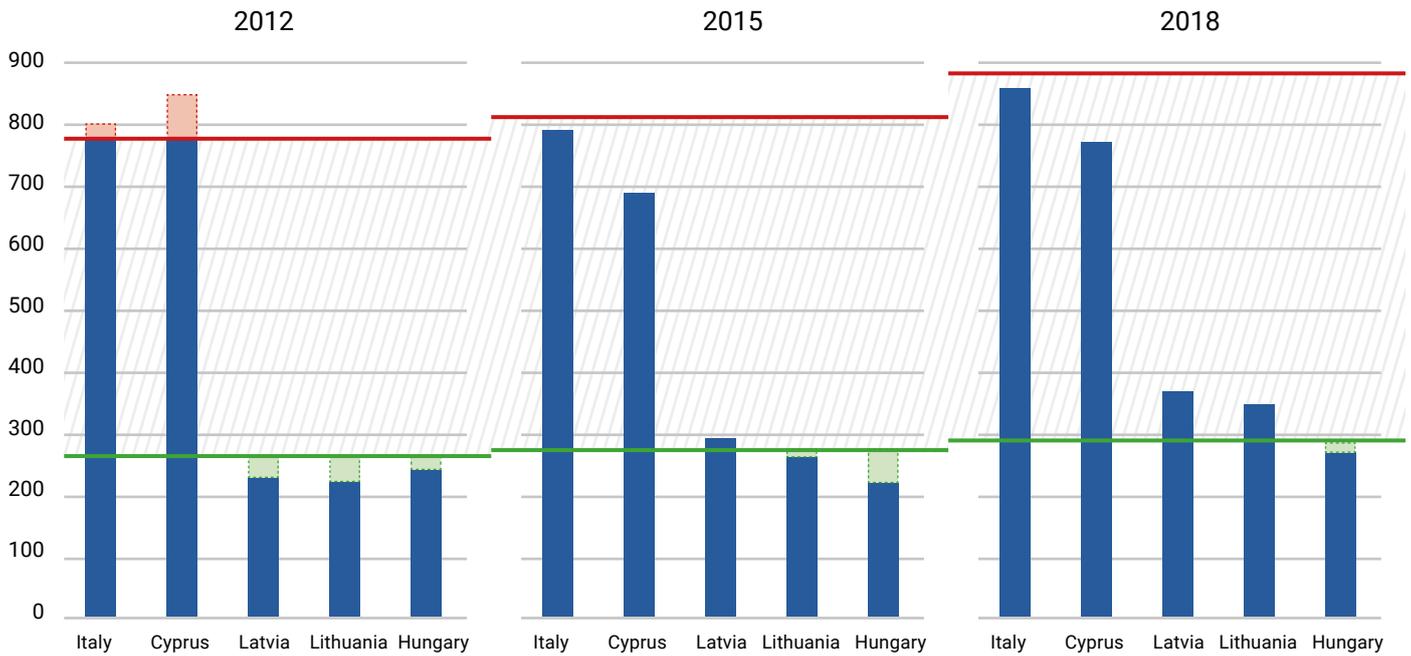
Another crucial factor in the implementation of the proposed UBI consists in income changes over time. As the proposed UBI levels themselves along with the UBI corridor are dependent on median income levels, they are prone to variation. The following graph depicts the effect of the UBI corridor on a few select cases close to the corridor's borders between 2012⁷ and 2018. As median incomes in Italy and

⁷ We acknowledge that the EU did not have 28 member states in 2012. However, we assume a composition of the EU28 before Brexit for this depiction to indicate potential policy effects more clearly.

Cyprus dropped relative to the EU-wide median, both would have been subjected to the upper UBI limit in 2012 but not in 2015 and 2018. Effectively, this would have cushioned the effect of income losses in these countries. At the lower end, a rise in incomes would have moved Latvia and Lithuania away from

the group of countries receiving an additional UBI above 60 percent of their respective median incomes. However, this would not have implied an effective loss of income for the respective citizens, as UBI levels would have kept rising along with income levels overall.

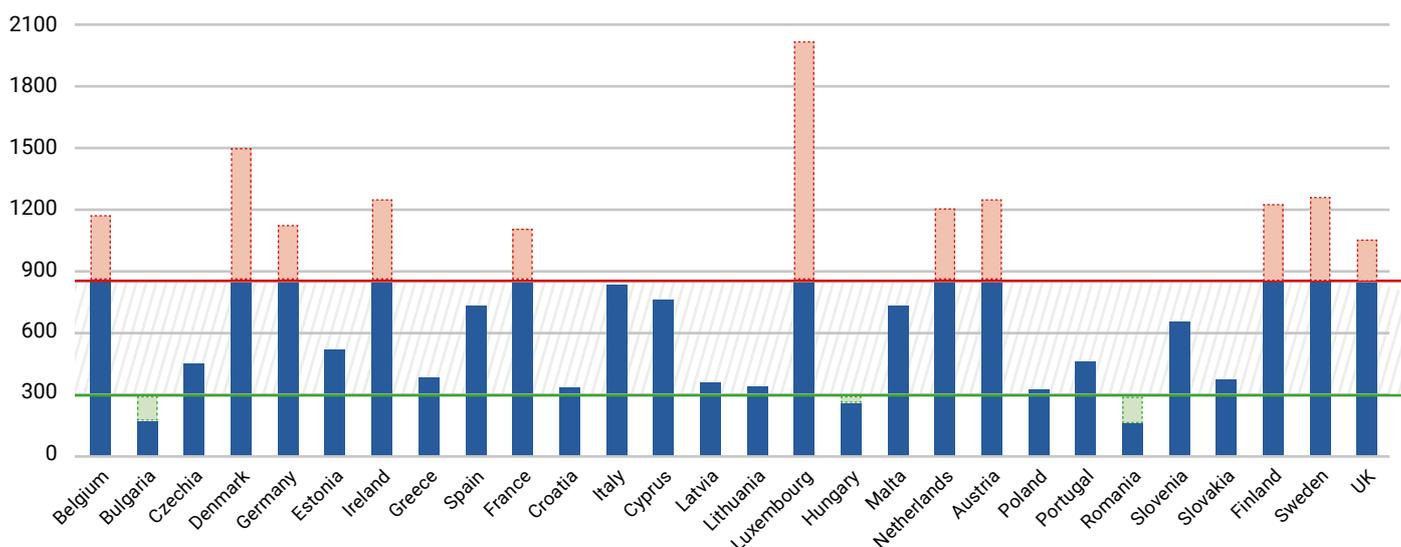
Fig. 4: Income changes over time
(Eurostat 2020a, own calculations)



Taking into account all EU28 states based on data from 2018, the ideal-typical long-term goal of a UBI would have been at the following levels within the UBI corridor:

Fig. 5: EU28 UBI levels, 2018
(Eurostat 2020a, own calculations)

Hypothetical EU28 UBI Levels in 2018



The immense costs associated with the ideal-typical final goal of the proposed scheme make clear why a cautious, gradual introduction is important for a successful implementation. Table 6 shows the monthly UBI adjusted to the UBI corridor, the impact of this corridor on the respective UBI level, and the total yearly costs if the scheme were fully implemented at ideal-typical levels. The values represent the year 2018 under the simplifying assumption that the entire UBI was paid to the whole population without special arrangements for minors and with no high-income individual dispensing with their claims.

They are based on 60 percent of the respective median incomes since these were always slightly higher than 50 percent of the mean incomes. While these values would considerably decrease with the specifications for minors, the potential results of the nudge element, and due to Brexit, assuming full payments to the whole population avoids the risk of underestimating costs. Orange cells indicate that the UBI corridor would lower the UBI that is paid in a country, green cells represent an increase in UBI due to the corridor and blue cells mark that the corridor would have no influence.

Table 6: UBI levels and costs, 2018

(Eurostat 2020a, own calculations)

Country	Monthly UBI including UBI corridor limits (in Euros)	Influence of UBI corridor on paid monthly UBI (in Euros)	Yearly costs at final levels (in Euros)
EU28	872.05	-	4,498,405,831,207.40
Belgium	872.05	-312.25	119,281,674,449.40
Bulgaria	290.68	+111.18	24,591,928,598.80
Czechia	454.40	0	57,854,507,904.00
Denmark	872.05	-633.15	60,497,840,874.00
Germany	872.05	-263.60	866,388,836,274.60
Estonia	526.20	0	8,329,533,415.20
Ireland	872.05	-373.95	50,548,120,123.20
Greece	393.15	0	50,674,668,237.00
Spain	739.25	0	413,907,083,337.00
France	872.05	-238.95	700,279,949,988.60

Table 6: UBI levels and costs, 2018

(Eurostat 2020a, own calculations)

Country	Monthly UBI including UBI corridor limits (in Euros)	Influence of UBI corridor on paid monthly UBI (in Euros)	Yearly costs at final levels (in Euros)
Croatia	332.95	0	16,403,086,732.20
Italy	842.20	0	611,275,224,727.20
Cyprus	766.80	0	7,952,353,978.00
Latvia	366.65	0	8,510,880,724.00
Lithuania	344.75	0	11,620,423,437.00
Luxembourg	872.05	-1,141.45	6,299,741,523.00
Hungary	290.68	+19.48	34,108,913,722.20
Malta	739.05	0	4,218,801,889.00
Netherlands	872.05	-328.75	179,793,171,626.40
Austria	872.05	-386.75	92,321,495,248.20
Poland	328.70	0	149,795,244,202.80

Table 6: UBI levels and costs, 2018

(Eurostat 2020a, own calculations)

Country	Monthly UBI including UBI corridor limits (in Euros)	Influence of UBI corridor on paid monthly UBI (in Euros)	Yearly costs at final levels (in Euros)
Portugal	467.30	0	57,707,963,005.00
Romania	290.68	+126.48	68,126,747,054.20
Slovenia	662.20	0	16,424,255,232.00
Slovakia	373.10	0	24,369,936,864.00
Finland	872.05	-355.15	57,692,700,198.00
Sweden	872.05	-404.95	105,904,284,433.20
UK	872.05	-201.15	693,526,463,409.60

Based on population sizes from 2018, this would result in average monthly per-capita costs of €731.63 across the EU, if the scheme were fully implemented. However, this assumes a simplified scenario in which children receive full payments and in which every individual takes up the entire UBI. Considering the aforementioned research on funding schemes along with the diverse revenue sources we propose, a cautious and stepwise implementation of an EU UBI seems ambitious but feasible, especially as the amount of €731.63 per capita is an ideal-typical, long-term goal. As long as no other crucial welfare policies are abolished, any additional UBI would improve social conditions for citizens. A gradual

implementation would then be a low-risk and high-potential strategy that allows policymakers to stay within the boundaries of budgetary feasibility while gradually broadening revenue sources and potentially adjusting specific elements of the policy to empirical needs along the way.

Challenges of implementation

As mentioned earlier, the proposal of introducing a UBI at the EU level comes with certain challenges. There are serious doubts as to whether it would be possible without changing the Treaties. This, in turn,

could lead to considerable opposition by wealthier countries that would fear constant transfers between national budgets to their disadvantage. The latter argument would be less of a problem with our proposal than with other concepts of a 'transfer union', as the funding is based on the EU's own resources and transfers between EU citizens. Thus, the proposal would rely less heavily on redistribution between national budgets and would also benefit poorer citizens of richer states.

The more general issue of changing the Treaties can be addressed in three ways. First, some proponents of an EU UBI argue that there is a way to introduce UBI without changing the Treaties (Milevska 2014). Such arguments are rooted in different parts of the Treaties, such as article 3.3 of the Treaty on European Union, which aims to establish a social market economy while fostering social progress, inclusion, cohesion, and justice. Similarly, articles 151 and 153 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU demand social protection and security, improved living conditions, and inclusion. Furthermore, articles 1, 6, 15, 23, 25, 26 and 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU aim to ensure human dignity, individual liberty and social security, freedom of choice regarding occupation, equality, a participatory life, independence, and social integration. Denuit (2019: 210) argues 'that the combination of articles 175(3) and article 352(1) TFEU may provide a suitable legal base for the establishment of the payment side of the EUBI within the existing legal framework of the Union'. He also proposes intergovernmental treaties outside the European Treaties but calls changing the EU Treaties the 'ultimate possibility for establishing' an EU UBI (Denuit 2019: 209).

An EU UBI would strongly contribute to all of these aims and aspirations without harmonising national welfare systems. It would supplement, not replace, national welfare schemes, and it would serve purposes outside of social policy such as the reinforcement of the internal market, de facto freedom of movement, upwards convergence, crisis relief, economic stabilisation, and a simple tax refund. An EU UBI might be introduced through the back door, in the form of an EU fund that is released under the condition that member states

equally distribute the money amongst their citizens. However, such approaches are questionable to say the least. Framing an EU UBI as something other than social policy would be unlikely to work, given the clear social implications of a UBI. Furthermore, framing the social dimension of the EU as an economic tool is associated with considerable drawbacks in itself. Trying to push a UBI through as EU social policy would be even more problematic in light of past hesitations towards centralised social policy at the EU level.

An alternative approach consists in a (semi-) national solution. Member states could either voluntarily introduce UBIs on their own or a binding minimum standard could be used to set a minimum monthly monetary threshold that individuals must have access to. Both approaches have their own problems. The former would be unreliable and potentially linked to unnecessary xenophobic allegations of welfare magnetism against intra-EU migrants. The latter would, again, run into serious hurdles regarding legal feasibility, as it would effectively be a form of EU social policy, most likely in the shape of a Directive.

Therefore, the third approach appears to be the most promising, yet also the most demanding one: changing the Treaties – an easy proposal to make but one that is hard to carry out in practice. However, it should not be so quickly dismissed as utopian, given the relatively recent Treaty development as well as the diverse imperfections of the EU (especially as revealed by the last decade of crises) that might make this step necessary in the long run anyway. To slightly reduce complexity, Denuit (2019: 209-10) proposes amending the Treaties through the simplified revision procedure. Changing the Treaties has the added benefit of showing EU citizens loud and clear a vision for a more social Europe that provides more palpable benefits, thus offering a radical alternative to an increasingly unsatisfying and unpopular status quo. This alternative would not aim for re-nationalisation but rather for a determined path to more integration and an ever closer union. Thus, it would introduce a strong and decided opposition to Euroscepticism that would be much easier to communicate than fuzzy demands

for minor technical tweaks in the EU framework.

This implies that legal concerns about an EU UBI are real and need to be taken seriously, but also that steps towards its achievement are not solely blocked by immutable treaties but primarily by the lack of political determination. As we have argued in this paper, the latter is at least in part rooted in misunderstandings about the idea of what a UBI means. There is not just one UBI, but many. However, mutual ideological distrust on the issue may ultimately block progress. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for optimism regarding the future feasibility of an EU UBI. The slow and gradual implementation of our proposal would make it a

low-risk project with massive potential political gains. Survey data and the popularity of an EU UBI in the Conference on the Future of Europe imply strong civic support along with the need for the EU to engage with the idea for the credibility of its civic involvement to be sustained. Empirical evidence along with philosophical and logical considerations strongly suggest that the advantages of a properly designed, progressive EU UBI would largely outweigh its drawbacks. And as supporters of UBI can be found in almost all influential political groups and ideologies, it is not entirely unthinkable that the idea of an EU UBI could become an important part of European political competition sooner rather than later.

Table 7: Policy summary

Recipients	Every EU resident with special arrangements for those younger than 18 years of age. High-income earners would have to actively claim their UBI to receive it.
Amount	60% of the respective national median income or 50% of the average income, whichever is higher; not more than 60% and at least 20% of the EU-wide median income.
Distribution	Throughout the entire adult life directly paid to each individual's bank account every month in monetary form. No replacement of other welfare schemes except for, optionally, those that the UBI would fully cover.
Funding	Combination of new EU-level taxes (financial transaction tax, green border tax, CO2 tax, digital services tax, VAT, taxes on luxury goods and on extremely high incomes, inheritance tax, wealth tax, a land value levy, and a 'robot tax'), an EU-wide sovereign wealth fund, an extension of the European Emission Trading System, and levies on national corporate tax revenue (including an EU-wide minimum corporate tax level).
Introduction	Gradual introduction linked to revenue sources and based on biannual targets in which member states with lower incomes reach their respective UBI level first. To function as intended, it requires changes to the Treaties.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

In a political landscape that increasingly depends on coalitions to achieve social policy progress, we are confident that our proposal for an EU UBI is a sensible compromise between the core arguments of different progressive movements. Social democratic ideals of decommodification, enhanced bargaining power for workers, some redistribution, and the potential democratisation of many spheres of public life are combined with a clear way forward that gives the EU a palpable social dimension. From a social-liberal perspective, the proposed scheme would radically enhance individual independence and freedom with comparatively few bureaucratic burdens. Furthermore, it would introduce considerable benefits for business development (via economic stabilisation) and a practical application of nudges rather than paternalistic state scrutiny regarding who receives a social transfer. Its application focusing on green taxes, sustainable development, and incentives for eco-friendly consumption patterns opens it up for green ideals, while the radical abolition of monetary poverty through applied ideals of universalism without the use of degrading 'desert' tests could cater to actors further to the left.

Ultimately, such a pragmatic compromise creates unavoidable inconveniences for the individual parties involved. However, it is an effective way of assuming control over a salient debate about an increasingly popular policy idea – one that might be the best opportunity that progressive forces in Europe have for bringing about fundamental social improvements in a way that lives up to the challenges of the 21st century. Public opinion data and the enormous popularity that proposals for an EU UBI enjoyed in the Conference on the Future of Europe show that the demand exists. As we have argued, this demand can be fulfilled. It is now up to policymakers to decide whether they have the political will to deliver.

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AUTHORS,
ABOUT FEPS & PARTNERS**

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