

Theses for a sustainable organization and evaluation of "work"

*A contribution by the International Association of Elder Professionals
(IAEP e.V.) to the discussion on the "Basic Income"*



The theses presented here are intended to contribute to a factual discussion on the organization of future working environments in an increasingly digitized society. They mainly concern aspects that remain unnoticed in the current discussion, which is sometimes emotional and often prejudiced, with regard to participation in work and income.

1. Work as a fundamental factor of existence

Human life to be satisfying requires social inclusion, a subjective certainty about the sense of existence as well as the access to funds for the procurement of goods and services. Well-organized work can meet all three needs. If goods and services are generated through work, money can be seen as a means of obtaining them, and its value may be derived from that.

As people become aware of themselves, thoughts and questions arise about the meaning of one's own life. If subjectively satisfying answers cannot be found, individual and social anomie are emerging, i.e. a state of missing or weak social norms, rules and orders.

2. Social integration

People depend on other people for their biological development, for their physical supply, for their individual personality development, for the maintenance of their social identities and for the successful management of their own lives. We need personal recognition (sympathy) and social inclusion (integration).

3. Organization of socially required work

In a philanthropic and stable social system, the fields of work have to be planned, organized and continuously adapted to the social requirements, on both the micro and the macro level. Work performance is thus not only to be seen in the context of today's prevailing form of employment or self-employment, but in the overall framework of the achievements required by society.

4. Availability of money as a means of procurement

Self-sufficiency is today hardly possible due to technological progress and the associated division of work. Products and services are therefore exchanged for money, so that the availability of money to safeguard life is indispensable. However, it is not enough to live a satisfying life.

5. Individual income

With a few exceptions, people want to be recognized by others and to be affirmed through achievements. Even children have a strong interest in participation and experience of joined work. Infrastructure (water, electricity, transport, communication and training systems) as well as personal access to tangible and intangible production and loan funds, to organizations and institutions are preconditions for enabling work enjoyment, self-organization, creativity and productivity.

6. Basic income as a total social option

The gentle development of a system of basic income (guaranteed income) for each member of society could not only be beneficial to the individual but also to institutions such as family and business as well as to society as a whole in business, culture, politics or external relations. The individual desire for higher purchasing power, i.e. higher income, motivates independent or dependent paid work. Justifications in favor of individuals, however, neglect beneficial effects for companies (for example with regard to the recruitment of qualified workers), for the macroeconomic supply system (infrastructure, large-scale technology, markets) as well as for the economic cycle.

7. Effects

The introduction of a basic income would have a significant impact on the labor system, in particular on the currently prevalent system of dependent employment: many would have the desire to terminate their "alienated" employment relationship; this would involve a decline in the production of goods and services. Conversely, however, a change in the way people deal with one another in culture and politics can be expected: on the one hand within the system of legitimate recipients of basic income, on the other hand with regard to the unauthorized or the outside world (population groups, rich vs. poor regions, etc.).

8. Careful and systematic approach

Appropriate planning, the design of scenarios, appropriate experiments and a monitoring of productivity development are required for a conflict-free and problem-free introduction of a basic income and the related adjustments of the work organization, for example, in terms of supply, claims, expectations and financial budgets. Likewise, accompanying research and public supporting activities are required. Previously, political parties would have to be won in the "representative democracy" as they have to pass the corresponding laws in the parliaments.

A sudden general introduction of the basic income should be dispensed with - even in discussions. Rather, alternative approaches should be thought of carefully by anticipating their consequences. For example, only certain groups of the population could be beneficiaries, such as young or older people, artists, landscape gardeners or organic farmers or even inhabitants of selected regions. Most radically (in the multiple meaning of this word) would be to guarantee a lifelong basic income to all newborns of a country "regardless of their descent, religion or parenthood". Clearly, measures for preventing abuses will have to be defined and established.

In any case, gradual as well as financially controllable and feasible changes could be made to improve the quality of social and personal life to reduce monetary dependency and subsequent existential fears, humiliation and subjugations.