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compliment the aims of the Minority
SafePack Initiative?**

Craig Willis

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Would an EU-wide basic income compliment the aims of the Minority SafePack Initiative?

The broader goals of the Minority SafePack Initiative call for a pact between minorities and majorities in order to preserve, develop and promote the linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe in relation to the high number of national minorities inside the European Union. After a successful campaign and the collection of over 1,100,000 validated signatures, the Initiative is ready to be submitted to the EU Commission alongside concrete legislative proposals. This Working Paper examines how the EU-wide proposals for a basic income possibly fit theoretically with the Initiative, discussing basic income more generally as well as two proposals from Van Parijs and DiEM25. Developing four core areas as assessment criteria, the Working Paper finds that basic income theory overlaps significantly in terms of potential impact on the capacity for living in homeland, learning in mother tongue, preservation and development of identity and culture, and aiming for equality. However, these potentially diminish if the amount of a basic income is not enough to meet basic needs, as could be the case with the two proposals analysed – particularly when applied in the EU member states with a higher cost of living. Nonetheless, the differentiation between the Euro-dividend and the Universal Basic Dividend in terms of funding mechanism offers a significant factor which could change the normative understanding of a basic income – with the latter possibly better suiting the idea of a pact between different groups in society, in this case the majority and national minorities.

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1. Introduction

After passing the necessary threshold of 1,000,000 signatures by April 2018, the Minority SafePack Initiative (MSPI) is, at the time of writing in summer 2019, developing “concrete legislative act proposals” before presenting the certified signatures to the European Commission (FUEN, 2019). The citizen’s initiative coordinated by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), is thus at a relevant stage to consider policy proposals which could aid its aims – including those which might have been overlooked to date. Although, as will be outlined in more detail below, the proposals of the MSPI concentrates in a large part on

specific legal instruments regarding protection and equality (FUEN, 2019; MSPI 2013), the language of the campaign and indeed the Pact document is broad. This includes terminology such as ‘preserve’, ‘develop’, ‘promoting identity’, ‘linguistic and cultural diversity’ and the need for a ‘pact between minorities and majorities’ to meet the aforementioned aims (Ibid.). Thus, there is scope to examine broader policy proposals which have similar societal aims and assess how these could be of relevance to the MSPI. One such policy, which also has proposals in an EU wide form, is the concept of a Universal Basic Income (UBI) – known also under different names and variations, which this paper will unpack in due course¹. The large amount of theory behind UBI points at several theoretical benefits which broadly fit within the terminology used in the MSPI, and therefore the purpose of this Working Paper is to examine this in detail. Looking both in terms of broad theory but also specific policy proposals on an EU-wide scale, such as Phillippe Van Parijs’ ‘Euro-dividend’ or the ‘Universal Basic Dividend’ proposed by the political party / movement DiEM25, the paper evaluates whether or how this tool could affect the aims of the MSPI and potentially complement the existing stated policy proposals it has outlined.

To this end, the first part is split into two subsections examining the empirical background and theory of the MSPI and then UBI. This allows the reader to gain an overview of each, given that readership may well be very aware of one, but perhaps less of the other. Following this, an analytical section looks at the two combined, including subsections on how the MSPI would be affected by: 1) UBI theory more broadly, and then 2) Van Parijs’ Euro-dividend and 3) the Universal Basic Dividend in DiEM25’s Green New Deal. In order to conduct this in a coherent and consistent manner, a set of assessment criteria is used based on the most relevant dimensions of the MSPI. This is expanded upon in the consequent section which outlines in detail the four areas of focus; living in homeland, learning in mother tongue, preservation and development of identity and culture, aiming for equality.

2. Outlining the Concepts and Theory

2.1 The Minority SafePack Initiative

The MSPI is an ongoing European Citizen’s Initiative sponsored by the Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN), which as of mid-2019 is currently at the ‘collection closed’ stage but has yet to submit the signatures (European Commission, 2019). It has been a long process for the MSPI which was initially rejected by the Commission at the registration phase



in 2013 but consequently that decision was overturned by the General Court of the European Union in 2017, allowing the initiative to finally be registered (European Commission, 2017; FUEN, 2017). The initial rejection was due to the proposed initiative being “manifestly outside the framework of the Commission’s powers”, but this was rejected by the court (Ibid.) This allowed the collection of signatures to begin in 2017/18 and the 1,000,000 target was fulfilled and exceeded; 1,128,385 signatures were officially validated reaching the national threshold in 11 EU member states (FUEN, 2018). This brought the MSPI to its current stage where it is ready to be submitted to the Commission but by all accounts, is waiting to fine-tune the legal demands and possibly also to assess the new commission and president.²

Of core relevance for this Working Paper is the content and proposals listed in the MSPI, particularly the terminology used beyond the specific legal demands. Although the MSPI document supplied at the time when the initiative was opened in 2017 (and indeed is the PDF still linked to from the official Commission overview page of the MSPI – European Commission, 2019; FUEN 2013) is a 14 page detailed document, it has since been summarised into a four page ‘Pact between minority and majority’ (FUEN, n.d.). This shorter document, available on the MSPI campaign website³, features six statements and a longer text, which can be seen as the basis for the MSPI legal requirements but worded more broadly. Indeed, the final paragraph reads as such:

“We need a pact between minorities and majorities to create favorable conditions for linguistic and cultural diversity to thrive, to preserve and promote the identity of the minority communities, to stop their assimilation, to make them feel entirely at home on the territory where they have been living traditionally, to have a say in decisions that affect their lives, and to exercise autonomously their cultural, educational and linguistic rights” (FUEN, 2019).

From this paragraph, the Pact document as a whole, and the full 14-page MSPI document, the following core elements can be distinguished as stated aims:

- Living in homeland
- Learning in mother tongue
- Preservation and development of identity and culture
- Aiming for equality



These four areas will form broad assessment criteria under which theories on UBI can be analysed. To this end, it is useful to expand on the four categories and explain in detail how they are conceptualised in the MSPI. It is of course to be borne in mind that these categories overlap and influence each other, thus neglecting/tackling one issue may hinder/aid another.

- **Living in homeland:** as detailed above, the MSPI calls for minorities to be able to “feel entirely at home on the territory they have been living traditionally” (FUEN, n.d. p. 2). This of course has wider implications regarding levels of autonomy and links into preservation / development of culture and language and these tie into the consequent categories. But to focus directly on the physical aspect of living in one’s homeland, this relates to factors that might drive minorities elsewhere. Historically this has often been in a forced manner (Stola, 1992; reference), but in the contemporary EU this is usually indirect – for instance having to move to urban areas for economic prosperity. This is a particular issue considering that national minorities often live in peripheral areas and border regions (Council of Europe, 2008, p. 17). As the MSPI states “We have chosen to continue to live in our homeland” (FUEN, n.d.), but the reality is that this often either means an economic sacrifice to remain or internal or cross-border migration elsewhere and sending remittances home to relatives. Furthermore, one of the factors relating to access of education for national minorities is the physical aspect and there are frequent reports where pupils have to travel further (commuting or relocating) to find education in their mother tongue if possible at all.⁴ One of the tools proposed by the MSPI to combat these issues is regional state support, which under current laws could be restricted due to the EU’s state aid rules. Thus, the MSPI calls for exemptions when concerning national minorities receiving assistance in areas which relate to the two further criteria below (MSPI, 2013, p. 13).
- **Learning in mother tongue:** the MSPI states that minorities should be able to use their mother tongue “in everyday life and in the administration” and express the desire that their children are “able to learn in their mother tongue in schools” (FUEN, n.d.). This is seen as a clear aspect of preserving and developing a minority language, as well as the obvious intertwined nature this has with culture and identity. The current picture across the EU varies from state to state but there are often laws permitting or attempting to encourage learning in a minority language. However, as the monitoring cycles of the FCNM show, issues remain across the board even in areas where there has been



substantial progress. Thus, the MSPI calls for the EU to “adopt a systematic approach to its language and culture policy”, including to adjust funding programmes for small regional and minority language communities (MSPI, 2013, pp. 5-6). Further, the MSPI suggests that “making small grants available for small communities can make a huge difference for linguistic diversity in Europe” (Ibid). It also calls for the establishment of language diversity centres to be funded by the EU and to have a mandate to “raise awareness of the importance of linguistic diversity and language learning” (Ibid.).

- **Preservation and development of identity and culture:** Similarly connected to the above, the preservation of identity and culture obviously involves linguistic aspects. As a result, this assessment criterion will focus more on the two former aspects and the not-so-strictly linguistic elements. For instance, the MSPI calls specifically to preserve and develop culture and identity alongside language and stresses the communal aspect of this. It calls for the pact to “stop the assimilation” and “exercise autonomously their cultural, educational and linguistic rights” (FUEN, n.d.). This therefore involves avenues such as media and the ability to receive and disseminate in one’s own language, for which the MSPI calls for an improvement in the access to neighbouring countries media within the EU – especially relevant for minorities with kin states. Furthermore, the MSPI requests that regional funding be made available for supporting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity; whether that be through subsidising media outlets and mediums, in the education sector or general social policy.
- **Aiming for equality:** the MSPI makes several direct and indirect references to the concept of equality. It calls for equal rights as EU citizens in areas which relate to the above (culture, language, identity), as well as focusing on equality in terms of legal anti-discrimination. The MSPI requests the strengthening of anti-discrimination legislation across the EU as well as support for stateless minorities, in particular Roma. Thus, there is a strong focus on improving the situation of minorities by reducing the discrimination they face, whether this be institutionally or in everyday life.



2.2 Universal Basic Income

The concept of a UBI takes many different names and is both a theoretical concept as well as a concrete policy proposal in varying forms. This section provides an overview of UBI and its broad aims, plus also discusses two specific policy proposals that have been theorised for the EU level.⁵ It is important to distinguish how these differ from the broader theory, in order to be able to demonstrate the variances of proposed UBI and their likelihood of bringing the theorised benefits outlined. This is followed by subsections looking specifically at the four areas of the MSPI outlined above.

2.2.1 Definition and Overview

UBI is referred to by a number of names which have differing but often overlapping implications. Terms such as ‘unconditional basic income’, ‘citizens basic income’, ‘universal basic dividend’, ‘guaranteed minimum income’, and just plainly ‘basic income’ have all been used in literature, but at the broad theoretical level ‘universal basic income’ tends to be the most common term used, and thus is the term used by this Working Paper. At this theoretical level, UBI generally refers to a few key aspects and the following definition / framework – based on the core UBI scholars work which is quoted throughout – is what the author of this Working Paper considers to be integral. A UBI assumes **a universal payment made periodically to all members of a given society, that should be unconditional and of a financial amount high enough to cover the basic needs of an individual**. To expand on a few of the terms mentioned, periodically is usually felt to mean monthly although there are proposals on an annual or even once in a lifetime basis. However, most scholars and indeed empirical proposals and trials have felt that a monthly payment is the most optimal to bring about the intended benefits. ‘To all members of a given society’ refers to the universal and unconditional aspects, whereby all individuals should receive the UBI regardless of their income/wealth or any demographics such as age – thus no means testing and no discrimination. In all likelihood, there would need to be some limitations on residency / citizenship, but this should be as open as possible whilst bearing in mind migration aspects – for instance the Permanent Fund Dividend in Alaska stipulates at least one-year residency (State of Alaska, n.d.). ‘High enough to meet basic needs’ has been interpreted in different ways, advocates on the left see UBI as an addition to other forms of welfare and those on the political right see it as an opportunity to streamline government spending (Torry, 2013, pp. 211-239; Murray, 2008; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, pp. 170-215). However, most scholars suggest that a UBI



would replace many existing benefit/welfare payments such as unemployment benefit, minimum state pension, universal child allowances etc.

In terms of the intention of a UBI, this also varies across the literature. It is seen as a tool of social and redistributive justice (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017) in a manner that increases individual freedom (Standing, 2017), but also as a method of alleviating poverty (Torry, 2013, pp. 161-168). In addition, scholars envisage UBI as a tool of lowering discrimination in the existing welfare system (Torry, 2013, pp. 113-130), but also in a libertarian vein in terms of reducing government intrusion (Zwolinski, 2011) – with obvious links to increasing freedom. Finally, as mentioned above, UBI is also seen as a tool of streamlining government spending by eradicating / reducing the varying administrative departments processing and monitoring welfare payments (Murray, 2008). These aspects obviously have overlapping features, and the areas of core relevance to the MSPI will be expanded upon in the analysis section below.

Regarding the financing of a UBI, myriad sources have been suggested; from traditional forms of welfare revenue such as income taxation or sales tax and the general pool of government funds, to more specific sources of wealth (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017, pp. 133-169). Indeed, the narrative of a dividend as opposed to an income / payment has been recently pursued by a number of proposals and scholars. Barnes (2014) details how this could be funded through perceived communal wealth sources, both natural and man-made, in order to create a dividend for all of society to benefit from. Such sources include carbon taxation, financial transactions taxation, and taxation on natural resources such as oil – using the example of the Alaskan Permanent Fund Dividend. This mechanism, using a sovereign wealth fund, has been discussed in detail by Angela Cummine (2016) as being the optimal way to share the benefits of a communal wealth source.

2.2.2 Van Parijs' Euro-dividend

The Euro-dividend was a term first used by philosopher Phillippe Van Parijs, who has been one of the prominent UBI scholars since the early 1990s⁶. It has since been picked up Europhile UBI advocates across the continent and found its way into other consequent literature.⁷ In Van Parijs' words, the Euro-dividend proposal consists of “paying a modest basic income to every legal resident of the European Union”, although he also stipulates that it could be limited to just Eurozone countries (Van Parijs, 2013). His suggestion is that it should be funded by a harmonized Value Added Tax (VAT) base rate of around 20%, and that the payment could

vary from country to country in relation to the cost of living, as well as varying within an age demographic bracket – with young people receiving less. Although Van Parijs did not state in his original Euro-dividend text an amount, he has added in interviews that this could be €200 a month, acting as an unconditional floor and not a reduction of existing benefits (Bidadanure, 2013; EURACTIV, 2014). Similarly, the Unconditional Basic Income Europe movement suggests that a figure of €250 for a Euro-dividend would be a good starting point (Lausevic & Tanarro, 2018).

Van Parijs separates his justifications for the Euro-dividend into four core reasons: interstate migration, interstate transfers, free movement within the EU, and the legitimacy of the EU. These are developed in further detail below.

Interstate migration and transfers: Van Parijs (2013) argues that unlike the USA, there is much less interstate migration – six times less – suggesting that linguistic barriers are a significant reason. Thus, he argues, more redistribution is needed to compensate this. Similarly, there are much less net transfers between EU member states in comparison to the USA and thus less of a ‘buffering mechanism’ against economic downturns in certain areas. Instead of developing an “EU-wide mega welfare state”, Van Parijs suggests that something more modest and compatible with the EU’s subsidiarity principle is needed.

Linguistic and cultural diversity: similar to above, Van Parijs expands to add that the EU as a whole is much more diverse than the USA in terms of language and culture and thus it is more costly for individuals to move, both in terms of reduced benefits and increased costs. He extends this to the member states receiving economic migrants and suggests that the situation would be more stable and digestible if the economic pull factor of migration was reduced by providing a Euro-dividend. Consequently, this would be more politically sustainable and socio-economically efficient as well helping to preserve existing peripheral communities by reducing the incentive to leave.

Free movement: the four freedoms of the single market have “eroded member states capacity to perform redistributive tasks”. To address this, Van Parijs argues that the European market needs to “operate on a foundation of something like a Euro-dividend” in order to combat the obsession with competition that member states are currently engaging in.

Legitimacy: the final aspect Van Parijs discusses concerns the image that sovereign governments and citizens often have of the EU as lacking legitimacy. A Euro-dividend, according to him, would offer a very tangible policy which would show the EU is doing something for all of its citizens rather than just the elites and circles around Brussels. He uses the example of Bismarck and his unified Germany, suggesting that the EU can use a Euro-dividend policy to increase its legitimacy across all of the peripheral and working-class sections of the block.

There is of course opposition to such a project, not least from general Eurosceptics and those of a firm intergovernmental approach to the EU, sceptical of moving towards federalism or too much supranational policies. This involves objections on the grounds of fairness and not wishing to give people ‘something for nothing’, but Van Parijs counters this with highlighting the benefits of European integration, both historic in terms of post WWII peace but also ongoing in terms of economic aspects. His point here is that the financial benefits of this are not fairly distributed at present and a Euro-dividend would go some way to achieving this. Further, he also points out that other criticism will point towards more progressive or complex targeted funding options, but this undermines the simplicity of a UBI or Euro-dividend and the lower costs and higher visibility that is associated with that. Furthermore, several UBI scholars have argued that a figure which doesn’t meet basic needs (as the €200 Euro-dividend would not) would be too low to constitute a UBI and the theoretical benefits this would bring. A Euro-dividend would thus be only a partial income but perhaps a steppingstone towards a full UBI, creating the institutional mechanism which could be built upon in terms of monthly amount.

One final aspect to note is the potential opposition he expects from the use of VAT as a funding mechanism; Van Parijs acknowledges that something like a carbon tax would be desirable but would not be adequate in funding amounts. Further, funding from personal income tax would be difficult politically and on the grounds that it is less harmonised across the EU – whereas an additional VAT could be harmonised easier. These arguments will be returned to in the analysis as well as in the consequent section on DiEM 25’s Green New Deal involving a universal basic dividend – so named because of its desire to not use taxation as a funding mechanism.

2.2.3 DiEM25’s Universal Basic Dividend

One of the other concrete proposals for an EU-wide UBI is proposed by the political movement Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25). With former Greek finance minister Yannis



Veroufakis as the movement's figurehead, the group describe itself as a “pan-European, cross-border movement of democrats” and recently stood as a party in the 2019 European Parliament elections in Germany and with its MeRA25 party in Greece. The movement does not specifically define itself in terms of a political positioning on the right-left spectrum, but regularly state that Europe needs a ‘new left’ (Malaquias, 2017; Bertoldi, 2017) and its diagnosis and proposed solutions can be seen as socialist / radical left-wing and are supported by similar political parties and activists across Europe (Oltermann, 2016; DiEM25, n.d.). One of the proposed solutions is the introduction of a ‘Green New Deal’, referred to also as a ‘New Deal for Europe’ in their European Spring programme for the 2019 elections, for which they explicitly mention the concept of a UBI and their stance towards it (DiEM25, 2017; DiEM25, 2019). This white paper states that DiEM25 rejects the idea of a UBI if funded by taxes and proposes instead a Universal Basic Dividend (UBD) to be funded by returns to capital – this will be developed below. However, there are some strong similarities and DiEM25 clarify that they foresee the UBD being paid to “every citizen” (Ibid.). Although the funding mechanism is described in detail, DiEM25 do not specify in their Green New Deal an intended amount or the frequency of such payments, but in the European Spring programme they state that “each year, the Fund will distribute a Universal Citizen Dividend that allows each and every citizen to enjoy the fruits of economic activity”, something which they state would be the “first step toward the creation of a universal basic income”. Thus, it is a little unclear what their specific proposal would be or its amount; it can be assumed to be a partial income and for the purposes of this analysis possibly similar in range to that of the Euro-dividend. What is most important for the purposes of this Working Paper and how a UBI would relate to a MSPI is the funding mechanism / sources, for which DiEM25's proposal offers a clear differentiation from Van Parijs' Euro-dividend.

DiEM25 reject the idea of using taxation to fund a UBI on the grounds that it would “undermine the existing welfare state and sow the seeds of antagonism between the working poor and the unemployed” (DiEM25, 2017, p. 19). Instead they would fund their UBD through return to capital into a European Equity Depository, previously referred to as a Commons Capital Depository (Ibid, p. 22-23). This would essentially act as an independent fund similar to a sovereign wealth fund – such as in Alaska or Norway – and be owned by the citizens, which in this case would be EU-wide. The depository would be funded by profits from existing central bank assets, shares from corporate IPOs – “especially for companies that commercialise technology developed from public funding”



(DiEM25 Communications, 2017), plus a pan-European inheritance tax and pan-European carbon tax.⁸ Thus, it would not use sales taxes, income taxes or corporation taxes. The depository would then pay a dividend to all citizens, which seemingly would be annually. DiEM25 also stress that this should not replace any existing welfare payments or unemployment insurance.

The key differential between the Euro-dividend and DiEM25's UBD is thus the narrative around the funding, stating that "it shouldn't be people paying themselves; nor companies paying for something extra" (DiEM25 Communications, 2017). An AcTVism.org interview with Varoufakis in 2017 summarises this logic and is worth quoting at length:

"DiEM25 is against the idea of a Universal Basic Income that is funded through taxation. Because if you tax workers so that other workers don't work and sit on their couch – and they have a right to do this and watch television whereas others are working for them – this is corrosive politics. It is going to turn one segment of the working class against another. And especially if it's a universal income – the rich get it as well – why should a poor person pay taxes for a rich person to receive additional income to the mountains of money that they already have?.....This is the fundamental distinction: fund a universal basic dividend – but not from taxation, but from the returns of capital – and that's DiEM25's position." (Raza, 2017).

Thus, it can be observed that DiEM25 are conscious of any programmes that will seem to pit the rich against the poor or the unemployed against the working – an analysis very much along class lines. However, it is possible to view similarities between minority and majority communities and the idea of creating a pact between the two as opposed to pitting them against one another. This is developed further in the analysis section below.

2.2.4 Basic Income Summary

The three subsections above have shown that UBI differs from the general theory to the specific EU policy proposals but some key aspects are retained throughout. Both proposals are universal / unconditional in their reach and this ensures that they meet the theoretical benefits that come with universality / removal of means-testing. This also differentiates both policy proposals from almost all of the empirical cases / trials of UBI to date, which have mostly used selected groups with a limited number of participants or have been saturation sites at a village / town level only. In terms of the amount proposed and the frequency of payment there are differences



between the two, likewise with (and as a result of) funding mechanisms which also differ. First, regarding the amount and frequency, the Euro-dividend suggests a figure of around €200-250, on a monthly basis, whilst the Universal Basic Dividend does not specify details – however, based on the information that is given, it seems likely that this would be of a similar low amount but possibly on an annual basis.⁹ Thus, both policies cannot be viewed as adequate to take care of basic needs, either monthly or annually. This means that several of the core theoretical benefits will not be met; it will not be enough to replace work income or current replacement welfare benefits. The analysis below develops this further, in terms of what effect a partial universal income can have.

In terms of funding mechanisms, these are the two key differences between the two EU-wide policies analysed and indeed the justification for comparing the two. General UBI theory often does not indicate a specific funding mechanism to be used (in favour of another), but, as the subsections above demonstrate, the normative understanding / social acceptance could vary greatly depending on how the funds are obtained. Van Parijs states that the Euro-dividend would promote solidarity as it would be funded through an extra (sales) tax which all EU citizens would pay, whereas DiEM25 and Varoufakis suggest that using such income streams would lead to pitting segments of society against one another. Their suggestion is to use profits from capital, which have been facilitated by the overall wealth of society, and then provide a dividend to be channelled through an EU-wide sovereign wealth fund co-owned by all citizens. The idea here seems to be to take away the emphasis of taking one person's hard-earned money and giving it to another, rather providing everyone with a share of a society's prosperity. These normative differences could play a key role in whether a UBI is a popular policy or not.

3. Analysis

Using the four assessment criteria outlined in section 2.1, this analytical section unpacks the three differing UBI policies which formed section 2.2 and what affect they could have on national minorities – individually and at the community level. Each subsection therefore contains separate paragraphs for each proposal as well as a short summary.

3.1 Living in Homeland

If paid at a level where an individual or family could meet their basic needs, then a UBI has the potential to prevent or reduce the need for migration within a state or to a neighbouring



state in search for employment. Furthermore, the universal aspect would ensure that everyone (minority and majority) living in an area would also have their basic needs taken care of and in the case of peripheral towns and regions, this could have a substantial effect. Whilst the MSPI calls for further regional support, as acknowledged, this may be restricted due to existing EU state aid legislation. The MSPI suggests exemptions to overcome this, however, the EU could resist this for a number of reasons – including the potential precedent this could set for further changes. Thus, a policy such as a UBI would be under the competence of the Member State (welfare) and would not be discriminative against one group or another. Alternatively, this could be at the EU-level and thus create a new legal basis – whether through a sales tax or an EU depository. Of course, a UBI at a basic level would not be desirable for all to simply give up work, but it could facilitate part-time work or allow one family member to stay at home – with potential knock-on effects to staying in education/re-training etc. In short, it would provide more flexibility and increased freedom for individuals, of which one choice could be to remain in one's homeland (when previously not financially viable). This could also be the case in terms of cross-border migration, in both directions. National minorities residing next to a less-economically prosperous kin-state may now have more financial means to choose their position, whilst in the other direction minorities may have the finance to remain in their home territory rather than being economically forced to move to a more prosperous kin-state.

The key difference between a theoretical full UBI and the two EU-wide policy proposals is the amount to which basic needs are taken care of. An amount of €200-250 a month is below the minimum wage in every EU Member State. Thus, for the most part it will not be enough to provide full economic freedom and the increased choices that would come with this. However, in many parts of the EU this would constitute a large chunk of a monthly wage, especially when factoring it in on a family level. A family of four would (if paid equally to adults and children) receive €800-1,000 a month. This could be the difference between a bread-winner having to leave their family and search for work in an urban centre or more prosperous country, now able to remain in their home region and survive on a lower wage or part-time position. Furthermore, Van Parijs directly acknowledges the effect a Euro-dividend could have on creating a more manageable level of interstate migration, as well as preserving linguistic and cultural communities as a result.

In terms of differentiating the Euro-dividend from DiEM25's Universal Basic Dividend, the key aspect would be the normative acceptance of the policy, for which the latter could be more

popular. If sold as a policy that is an equal share of society's wealth, then there could be less of a resistance to population in the peripheral region / people of a national minority 'getting something for nothing' at the expense of others. Similarly, funding sources such as a carbon tax could be seen as a source which has its foundations across the whole country or EU-wide, rather than seen as taking money from economic hubs. A remaining aspect is that there may be resistance on grounds of fairness, based on a narrative that larger economies are contributing more wealth than others. However, it seems likely that this would be far less pronounced than if funding through a very visible taxation such as sales – as Van Parijs proposes.

3.2 Learning in Mother Tongue

The UBI literature makes less obvious reference to language but there are discussions of education, both at the theoretical and empirical level. Particularly when pupils are reaching adult age, there can be a (short-term) financial gain to be made by leaving education and working instead. Furthermore, in certain communities this pressure extends to children – a recurring case with Roma – and parents keen for their offspring to start contributing to the household budget. A UBI that would be universally paid to children as well, would reduce this by supplementing a family's income. A certain amount of evidence of this has occurred in various UBI trials, such as in the 1970's US and Canada trials and in India 2008 trials where education attendance rates increased (Standing, 2017, p. 163, 235). In addition, Standing (2017) suggests that one of the ways a UBI would increase freedom is to learn new skills and competences – implying an extension of education possibilities into adulthood. Whilst these elements concern education in general, they clearly do not immediately have a direct impact on the ability to learn in mother tongue. For this, the links with UBI would be more indirect. Some examples where this may have an effect include; instances where minorities have high dropout rates even where mother tongue learning is available, instances where minorities do not attend school and thus authorities do not feel the need to provide mother tongue learning for them, and instances where minority populations have had to move away from their homeland area for work and into an area where mother-tongue education is not available for them. Moreover, there may be an effect in terms of supply, particularly in areas relying on supplementary classes taught by volunteers for mother tongue learning. As Standing (2017) suggests, the freedom to volunteer would be increased by a UBI – this has also been theoretically applied in the case of minority language instruction and the potential for more teachers to provide their time (Wolf & Willis, 2018). Whilst the MSPI calls for legislation to

strengthen linguistic diversity and the ability to learn in mother tongue for national minorities, there will obviously be a need for increased finance and the MSPI calls for small grants to be made available. A full UBI may replace the need for such small grants, as well as providing the financial security which would allow individuals to give more of their time to a community cause – something which could also help with regard to the language diversity centres the MSPI wishes to see created.

The Euro-dividend in its smaller size would only be able to partially cover the basic needs of individuals and thus diminish such potential of a UBI to provide the financial freedom to stay or return to education. However, in many eastern European countries, €200-250 for 16-year olds could well be a substantial amount of what they could earn from employment. It would certainly replace a part-time income and thus allow a pupil to concentrate on their studies rather than work, a similar situation could occur at university level. Van Parijs makes a direct reference to linguistic diversity and the reduction of pressure to migrate which the Euro-dividend could facilitate. The extent to which this would apply across the EU depends on income levels, it seems likely that a level of €200 a month would not be sufficient to stop inter and intra state migration – although, as mentioned in the above section, on a family of four basis it may go some way. However, these aspects presuppose that mother-tongue learning is already available and provided by the state. In instances where it is not provided, the Euro-dividend could allow certain individuals to reduce their working hours and have more free time to provide volunteer lessons – which certain minority communities rely on to bridge the gap left by the state. This is obviously not ideal and the demands of the MSPI are much stronger, but it would be a start in the absence of alternative solutions.

Again, the difference with the Universal Basic Dividend is mostly the narrative. However, if it was paid annually, it would appear less as a wage supplement and therefore possibly less likely to allow individuals to reduce their work hours / increase their focus on education (learning or teaching). Thus, for these purposes it would seem that a monthly payment would be more preferable. In terms of narrative, it is possible that a dividend may be seen as more equally deserving and therefore have greater support from the majority.

3.3 Preservation and Development of Identity and Culture

One of the main manners in which UBI could affect identity and culture is through facilitating a possible transformation of work, or more precisely current paid work. Where individuals may



currently be financially dependent on existing jobs – sometimes perceived as mundane and not fulfilling, especially in many working-class positions – a policy which replaces income will obviously increase the choice of how an individual could spend their time. This is stated by Standing (2017) who observes that increased freedom could facilitate “the freedom to do creative work and activities of all kinds” (p. 60). Interpreted in the context of national minorities and their identity and culture, this could be in the form of participation, volunteering, or entrepreneurship, in activities relating to cultural heritage – dance, choir, sports etc, or participating in language groups – as a teacher or student. Currently, an argument could be made that volunteerism is limited to those with financial means to support themselves, a UBI could open this up to a wider pool across the economic class spectrum. Furthermore, it may also provide time for more minorities to be more engaged in their local media; directly through having increased time for reading and writing, but also indirectly in terms of the increase in cultural activities which could provide such news stories.

Wolf & Willis (2018) explore group identity further in the context of national minorities and suggest that, through a UBI, minority identity would become somewhat uncoupled from economic insecurity. This would then allow individuals the choice of minority identity “without facing the economic consequences that such a choice might otherwise have due to discriminatory practices” (Wolf & Willis, 2018, p. 15). This also relates further to the consequent subsection on equality and non-discrimination, but is also relevant in terms of preservation and development of identity and culture – especially with particularly marginalised minority communities. Moreover, this also links to the living in homeland notion above, if there is less migration pressure to leave their homeland, larger numbers will be able to remain and preserve group culture and identity together.

As mentioned in the learning in mother tongue subsection above, Van Parijs makes a direct reference to linguistic and cultural elements, recognising that these factors ensure that within the EU it is more costly for individuals to relocate than in the USA for instance. He thus suggests that a UBI or his Euro-dividend would help to reduce the need for this between Member States, however this logic can also be applied within Member States in the context of national minorities – as alluded to above – and preserve existing communities, which in certain cases would mean along linguistic and cultural lines. For example, with a national minority community living mostly in a peripheral border region which may be enticed to move to an economic urban hub (either in their state or across a border in a kin-state), a UBI would help



to reduce this necessity and present more of a choice to the individual to stay in their homeland, which on a large scale could help preserve the group's identity and culture. Whether Van Parijs Euro-dividend of €200-250 a month would be enough is another question; but, as discussed above, in the less economically developed EU Member States this could be a significant amount. Especially relevant given the vast number of national minority communities in 2004/2007 expansion Member States, such as Slovakia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria.

3.4 Aiming for Equality

Although a UBI would not bring the legislative guarantees of equal rights in terms of culture, language and identity that the MSPI calls for, there are some indirect areas in which it could have an effect. One core aspect concerns the notion of social stigma, where UBI scholars have written in detail about the issues with existing welfare systems and how this could be altered by a UBI. Barnes (2014) suggests that this can lead to a domestic class warfare, with those in receipt of benefits seen as 'economic 'losers' and thus a situation of "those who don't get benefits resent[ing] those who do, and those who do feel[ing] bad about themselves" (p. 41). Torry (2013) also discusses this idea in detail and concludes that existing benefit systems lack dignity – a point which also relates to government intrusion, developed below. In the context of national minorities, where across Europe these are often economically marginalised communities, it is easy to see how such narratives occur – especially given the heightened saliency of the differences if they are along ethnic or linguistic lines. Thus, if wishing to increase equality and reduce discrimination, addressing the existing deficiencies of the welfare system is a necessity. In this context, a UBI would treat everyone equally and in its universal nature be non-discriminatory in that sense. It could also shift the narrative of certain communities being 'takers' from society and could be the grounds for a pact between majority and minority, especially if sold as equally distributing communal wealth – as the intention of the Universal Basic Dividend would be.

A further related issue is the notion of government intrusion and the possibilities for institutional discrimination that arise. A number of UBI scholars pick up on this point and suggest that existing benefit systems can be excessively intrusive and often open to discrimination given the discretion afforded to case workers of welfare (Torry, 2013, p. 127). Further, Standing (2017) outlines that a shift to lower government intrusion could be appealing to the political right and left, in a libertarian sense (pp. 50-51). In the case of national minorities where it has often been previously documented that individuals have faced discrimination in



such systems, a UBI would eradicate this instance of discrimination and ensure that those who need an income floor will definitely receive it and in a dignified non-intrusive manner.

In a broader sense of equality, an EU-wide UBI has the reduction of economic inequalities as one of its core aims. Van Parijs discusses this in the context of the single market and migration pressures and, although it does not explicitly discuss economic inequality, the MSPI does call for equality in general between majority and minority communities and economic inequality is a significant factor. Van Parijs suggests that the Euro-dividend will help as buffering mechanism during economic downturns (such as the Eurozone crisis) and avoid the necessity of large transfers between Member States which often do not trickle down to help those at the bottom of the economic pyramid. So in this sense, national minorities who are not economically deprived within their state but are in comparison to the whole EU, would also benefit from the wider equalising effects of a Euro-dividend – of course even more so if it was paid at a higher rate than the €200-250 that is proposed.

Similarly, DiEM25 also aim at a principle of European solidarity with their Universal Basic Dividend proposal. The suggestion is that this would contribute towards an agenda of liberty and equality, as well as to “bridge hitherto irreconcilable political blocs” and stabilise society (DiEM25, 2017, p. 20). This has economic, social and political implications and demonstrates that they view it as part of a transformative policy agenda. It can also be easily interpreted in instances where national minorities are engaged in political or societal conflict against the majority, and are, as the MSPI identifies, in need of a pact.

4. Conclusions

The above analysis demonstrates that there are certainly similarities between UBI theory and the broad goals of the MSPI, although the effectiveness could vary significantly depending on the specific amount provided by a UBI. Each of the four assessment criteria would be affected by a UBI and there are of course many overlapping elements that would be mutually beneficial – again dependent on the amount provided. Further, it should be highlighted that this effectiveness would be diminished if UBI was used as a right-libertarian excuse to eradicate all existing benefits. It should be viewed as additional to many targeted policy funds and universal welfare such as education, healthcare etc. In addition, the narrative / social acceptance could be vastly different depending on the funding mechanism. In terms of amount it is obvious to



state that a higher amount would be preferable and more effective in terms of UBI's emancipatory potential, but with this comes the challenge of keeping redistribution accepted by majority and minority. Moreover, a suggested amount of €200 per month could have significant impact for minorities in certain EU member states, but will not have the same effects for minorities in Western Europe – thus the support for such a policy within the pan-European minority community, such as FUEN, would be likely to vary.

Further, in terms of format, it would seem most effective to pay a monthly amount as opposed to an annual payment to ensure it is a regular income – even if this differs from the common method of a shareholder dividend payment. The proposal by DiEM25 to use a sovereign wealth fund to redistribute capital wealth as opposed to income taxation appears to have benefits regarding social acceptance but the challenge will be to raise enough funds to provide a meaningful dividend. Barnes (2014) provides a broad interpretation of different funds which could be funnelled through a sovereign wealth fund in this manner. However, that is not to disregard the funding mechanism proposed by Van Parijs' Euro-dividend; sales tax may be a viable mechanism if well-marketed in a positive manner by policy-makers. And one must bear in mind that this debate would be focused much more broadly than in the context of national minorities; yet the end result might be an exponential gain for marginalised communities or economically weaker EU member states.

In terms of opposition to UBI, one of the common rebuttals is that the funds could be used for more targeted policies and thus be more effective to those most in need. This is possibly the case, but as advocates of a UBI have argued, this goal is undermined by ineffective and costly administration, personal intrusion and the incentive traps created by conditionality. Furthermore, it misses the fairness of universality and in the case of the MSPI would not constitute a pact, and thus such policies are open to criticism of one group subsidising another – a harder political sell. Thus, a narrative of distributing an equal share of societal wealth instead of a welfare transfer may suit majority/minority relations – both within and between EU member states.

There are of course limitations to UBI and it is certainly not a silver bullet to fix all problems, nor does it claim to be. In the case of the MSPI, it is clear that UBI would only assist certain goals and there is certainly a need for additional policies such as the Pact calls for. The consideration of a UBI is not to exclude or replace the other demands in the MSPI, however, a UBI could have a transformative effect on the lives of minorities, individually and as a



community, by decreasing existing economic dependencies and thus increasing freedom of choice. Therefore, it may be beneficial for the MSPI team to consider such a policy and how it could play a role. Indeed, it is clear that an EU-wide UBI would encompass a much larger debate affecting the whole of society, and this debate is unlikely to focus on national minorities in particular. The UBI debate will continue and an increasing amount of trials are occurring in different jurisdictions, whether minority organisations choose to pay attention or not. One aim of this Working Paper is to highlight that minority issues can be considered a relevant factor and thus could benefit by pushing a voice into this debate. Likewise, UBI advocates should be aware of the potential support that minority organisations could bring.



Notes

¹ Although, for the purposes of simplicity, this Working Paper will use the term Universal Basic Income and its acronym UBI, except for when referring to specific policy proposals when it will instead use these names.

² This provides a very brief overview of the chronological timeline of the MSPI; the references throughout this paragraph should be consulted for readers wishing for a more detailed analysis of the initiative.

³ <http://www.minority-safepack.eu/>

⁴ Issues such as these are regularly highlighted in the monitoring of FCNM state parties, and is a particular issue for Roma minorities across Europe. Each monitoring cycle and its state report and commentary for each country can be found online: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/country-specific-monitoring>

⁵ The author is aware that there are other EU-wide UBI proposals and movements, but the Euro-dividend and Universal Basic Dividend are held to be the most high profile and it is beyond the scope or necessity of this Working Paper to feature more. One such movement to keep an eye on is the EU Citizen's initiative for an EU-wide carbon fee and dividend currently collecting signatures. As becomes apparent in the section on DiEM25's universal basic dividend, there will be some clear overlaps between the two and their theoretical benefits. For more details on this initiative, see: <https://citizensclimateinitiative.eu/>

⁶ One of the earliest references by Van Parijs specifically to a Euro-dividend was in 2001 in an article co-authored with Yannick Vanderborght (Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2001). He continued to push this idea and it emerged in different areas of his literature, but the most concise article is the 2013 article in a 'Roadmap to Social Europe' (Van Parijs, 2013).

⁷ For example; the Unconditional Basic Income Europe movement uses the concept (Lausevic & Tanarro, 2018), plus it was the focus of a 2018 academic conference at the University of Freiburg entitled 'Basic Income and the Euro-Dividend as Sociopolitical Pillars of the EU and its Member Countries' (Uni Freiburg, n.d.), with a series of presentations focused on Van Parijs' proposal.

⁸ For a detailed overview of DiEM25's proposal, see their recent manifesto (DiEM25, 2019).

⁹ The Universal Basic Dividend is proposed to be funded not through income / sales / corporation tax, but rather instruments such as financial transactions taxes, carbon taxation etc. From existing proposals elsewhere, this can be assumed to constitute a partial basic income rather than something that can be enough to fulfil basic needs. Indeed, DiEM25 state that their policy would be a 'first-step' towards basic income. Furthermore, as Barnes (2014) outlines, a dividend is usually a mechanism associated with shareholders and paid annually – similar to the Alaskan PFD.



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