



Universal Basic Employment

Back in 2015, Europe was absorbing large numbers of refugees and showing great compassion. Today – almost three years later – the political sentiment has changed. The fundamental problem Europe faces is that rapid unregulated change brings uncertainty; which naturally scares people. Out of such fear, instead of sharing available opportunities or resources with others, people start to seek protection or to fence their personal interests. Although many individuals have been volunteering and helping refugees, a majority of politicians meanwhile represent the voice of the growing insecurity of the general public and are thus failing to address longer term refugee integration. Instead of **leading** their countries towards a structured and secure future via a “[Wir schaffen das!](#)” mentality, governments and European institutions meanwhile **follow** their population’s sentiments and address symptoms rather than fight causes.

The above attitude of “fencing oneself out of fear of change” is strongly influencing societies and the currently observed lack of cohesion is certainly not restricted to migration issues. With full employment very likely no longer being available to everyone in the near future, solidarity will however be crucial to prevent social disconnection of the large group of people who may face [inequality](#) by becoming jobless. [Automation](#) and [robotization](#) are meanwhile rapidly becoming dominant production factors. To structurally address the [effects](#) of the 4th industrial revolution, it is essential to share much more evenly and redistribute the remaining available “workload” and its related economic rewards. Without doing so, there will no longer be fair participation chances for everyone in a future society. Communities will become fully split into “haves” and “have-nots”.

As part of its refugee integration framework, Refival has developed [Inclusion Sourcing](#). It is based on affirmative action and it stimulates redistribution of economic activities to where they are needed the most. Its main principle is to relocate geographically independent (primarily Internet based) jobs to rural areas where there are insufficient alternative employment options. This can prevent “forced” migration. Beyond rural revitalization, Inclusion Sourcing can also be used to better balance economical and [demographical](#) developments, like in case of Northern and Western Europe versus Southern and Eastern Europe.

Although Inclusion Sourcing can thus contribute to a better division of the existing available European “workload”, it offers only a relatively specialized partial solution for assigning labor activities within an economy. If, in future, structurally much less employment is available, far more rigorous equalizing measures must be implemented to properly redistribute the total available national income(s) and the related responsibilities or necessary citizens’ obligations. Currently, one of the predominantly proposed general solutions is to provide everyone with a [Universal Basic Income](#) (UBI) so that elementary standards of living are guaranteed and employment becomes a matter of free choice rather than an imperative to survive.

Looking at past experiments with UBI, the results have been quite [positive](#). There has not been any feared great withdrawal or decline in labor participation. In cases where people worked less, this was mostly done in order to improve care for their children or to obtain more education. Also in developing countries the effects of providing UBI have generally been very [positive](#). However, in a society which lacks solidarity, people are afraid that they will have to contribute and work more, whereas others will contribute and work less. With politicians and [labor unions](#) representing such sentiments of their “members”, political support for introducing UBI is still insufficient. Present UBI implementations experiments therefore dominantly focus on increasing the labor participation of [unemployed](#), for example by [incentivizing](#) people to additionally accept low paying and/or low productivity jobs. ***The real “universal” benefits of UBI are mostly excluded from the ongoing experiments. These include basic protection against exploitation by increasingly powerful and irregular employers and the freedom to develop one’s personal skills better and gain access to more satisfactory professional activities.*** By receiving UBI, employees have the possibility to say no if working conditions are unacceptable and are thus in a more balanced position to negotiate with employers.

As an answer to the current absence of cohesion, Refival proposes to use an alternative approach to UBI, which it names ***Universal Basic Employment*** (UBE). Instead of income it defines employment to be a basic right. This means that ***“everyone is entitled to contribute to society and to be financially rewarded for their engagement”***. Such a guiding principle is generating solidarity rather than requiring it because the right on a (derived) basic income is rooted in one’s contribution instead of in unconditionally receiving cash transfers. What UBE fundamentally addresses or changes is the definition of employment. Instead of using the current very narrow “paid job” definition, it considers every positive contribution to society to be an occupation which should be remunerated. Compensation is earned regardless of whether the achievement is a classical “paid job”, care for children or elderly, voluntary work or education leading to personal skills development (which UBE considers to be an investment in quality improvement of a community member’s future potential).

Financially, one option to implement UBE is a [negative income tax](#) system in which some activities are rewarded as tax credits and others as wages. If the tax credits are higher than the income-tax to be paid, people will receive funding instead of pay taxes. Using this approach, a welfare level, a “tax-free” minimum wage level and progressive taxing can in principle be smoothly [combined](#). The main difference between UBE and UBI here is that if the “contribution sum” of tax credits and wages of people is below their required minimum UBE contribution level, people will receive less income than if they would in a comparable UBI approach. However, since there should be enough possibilities to contribute, this situation would be self-imposed and people would likely be living off their savings in that case.

By no means does UBE target to become a forced labor program directed towards unemployed people as this is currently, mostly poorly paid, implemented instead of welfare in some [countries](#). Refival’s concept is to supply a Universal Basic Income to everyone in exchange for an as free as possible choice of one’s contribution(s). Instead of “just” supplying or redistributing income, the task of the society is more advanced and becomes to define and generate a sufficiently wide and optimized spectrum of engagement opportunities (= a mix of regular job, volunteering and skill development types of tasks). All people should this way be able to participate in the economic and/or social future of their community and at the same time maximize their self-development and “contribution satisfaction”. Regardless of the type of contribution, a minimum wage based income should be guaranteed and welfare should be dismantled, except for those being disabled. Such approach simultaneously prevents currently “potentially unemployable” people from starting to live an entirely [virtual](#), media based, life without any proper connection or attachment to their “real” local social environment.

UBE is hereby neither socialism nor communism based. Although it can be implemented in such political environments, it can be equally applied in a capitalistic supply and demand driven society. Practically, this means that the community democratically defines what type of contributions it expects from its members. All such tasks can in principle be financially valued and their fulfillment can be driven by competition. If a society for example requires art, not everyone learning or mastering to draw will automatically be considered an artist, but those with sufficiently matching skills will be enabled to exhibit their work and be rewarded accordingly. Exempted of contribution are only those who are disabled to be involved because of illness, handicaps or by being too young or too old to participate. Important to keep in mind is that the right to contribute is based on more evenly sharing the “workload”. It optimizes the future division between required necessary participation in the “workforce” and leisure time. Time-off can, of course, also be used for education and personal development, but in this case learning does not have to be in relation with any goal of a future contribution to society.

Refival strongly believes that Inclusion Sourcing and Universal Basic Employment can promote a return to solidarity and a growth of [compassion](#) in communities. However, such change can only be accomplished by the involvement of all stakeholders and requires social engineering pilot-projects to achieve optimization. ***Please share my [materials](#) with people who may be interested to participate or [contact](#) me if you are interested to become engaged in Refival's mission yourself.***

[Further Documentation](#)