

Hello and welcome to the 17th BIEN Congress in Lisbon!

On behalf of the organization and the Portuguese Basic Income Association, I would like to thank you all for coming! We are so happy to have gathered here participants from all over the world: we have people from Australia, Taiwan, Belgium, Holland, United Kingdom, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, United States, South Africa, Finland, Sweden, Hungary, Canadá, Czech Republic, Brazil, Germany, Chile, Argentina, South Korea, New Zealand, Japan, France, Poland, Turkey, Italy, Guatemala, Mexico, China, Estonia, Switzerland, India, and of course, Portugal!

[On behalf of the organization and the Portuguese Basic Income Association, I would also like to warmly thank our partners who have been so generous in helping us prepare this congress:

We would like to thank:

- The Centre for Ethics, Politics and Society (CEPS), University of Minho;
- The Centre for Research in European, Economic, Financial and Tax Law (C I D E E F F), University of Lisbon; in particular professor **Nazaré da Costa Cabral**
- The Lisbon School of Economics and Management (ISEG), University of Lisbon; in particular professor **Carlos Farinha Rodrigues** and **Lurdes Rua**
- The Portuguese Centre for Global History (CHAM), New University of Lisbon; in particular professor **Luís Manuel Bernardo**;
- The party *People, Animals and Nature* - Pessoas, Animais, Natureza (PAN); in particular **Francisco Guerreiro** and **Naíde Muller**
- The movement Unconditional Basic Income Europe (U B I E); in particular **Anja Askeland** and **Barb Jacobson**
- The journal ECO123; in particular **Uwe Heitkamp**
- The Foundation for Science and Technology (F C T).
- [Finally, we would also like to thank the vice-president of the Assembly of the republic, **Jorge Lacão**, and the Representative of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity, and Social Security, José Luís Albuquerque, for opening our congress. And Karl Widerquist, BIEN Vice-Chair]

We are about to start the 17th BIEN Congress on Implementing Basic Income. In the next three days we will have the honor to present great keynote speakers who are either world class authorities on Basic Income, or pivotal political figures who are actively promoting Basic Income in their countries and beyond.

[Let me quickly go through the program with you now]: We have three days ahead of great talks and events, we will start today with a talk by Guy Standing, followed by four

parallel sessions. [During the indicated two pauses, vegan refreshments will be available today right next the entrance of the Sala do Senado.]

At 12:45, please meet at the outside stairs of the parliament for a group photo!

In the afternoon, we will have a plenary session about Basic Income experiments, with Evelyn Forget from Canada, who will speak about four different Basic Income experiments; Karen Glass, also from Canada, who will talk about the Basic Income experiment in Ontario; Elizabeth Rhodes will speak about the Oakland experiment in the United States; and Joe Huston will talk about the Give Directly experiment in Kenya. We will then have four more parallel sessions and meet at 6pm for the first part of the BIEN General Assembly meeting.

We will have 37 parallel sessions all fascinating. Let me mention a few examples; on day one, session 1 will be on Basic Income and politics, with representatives of portuguese political parties. On day 2, session 9 will be on conditional transfers in Portugal. Parallel session 15 on corporate perspective on Basic Income, will have the participation of Philippe van Parijs and Portuguese CEOs, this session will be in English. On day 3, session 27 will gather portuguese intellectuals that will discuss Basic Income and the future of the welfare state.

On Tuesday and Wednesday we will be at the ISEG, School of Economics and Management of the University of Lisbon [right across the street as you may have seen in the map, if you need help please ask at the organization tables].

On Tuesday, we will have a morning plenary session with Philippe van Parijs from Belgium, Ronnie Cowan from Scotland, Enno Schmidt from Switzerland, and Cosima Kern from Germany. That will be followed with three sets of parallel sessions with six events each. We will end with Lena Stark from Sweden, Ping Xu from Taiwan, and Masahiko Yamada from Japan.

After refreshments, there will be a screening of the new documentary, “Free Lunch Society”, followed by a debate. The debate will be broadcasted live on Facebook.

On Wednesday we will have parallel sessions followed by the BIEN Affiliate Session at 11:15am; after lunch we'll have another set of parallel sessions, and at 4pm we have Eduardo Suplicy from Brazil, and Francisco Louçã from Portugal. We will close with announcements regarding the next BIEN conference and the second half of the BIEN Assembly Meeting.

Now, if I may, I would like to add some quick personal words. My background is in Philosophy of Mind, and there is a book from the 80s on artificial intelligence that was instrumental at the time and has always been one of my favorites: Marvin Minsky's *Society of Mind* [It's ok if you never heard of it.] Minsky's main idea was simple and brilliant: he portrayed the brain and the mind as a "society" of tiny components that all work together to create something greater than themselves. In the same vein, there is another popular book by Susan Blackmore, *The Meme Machine*, that uses the original idea of a Meme presented by Richard Dawkins, in his book, *The Selfish Gene*. In this context, Memes are not those silly viral posts on the Internet. Memes here are ideas that self-replicate, like genes. Certain memes, that Susan Blackmore called Memplexes, are replicated together, such as religions and cultures. These Memplexes quickly spread out in the world, assuming important roles in our culture and in our political thinking.

Now, Basic Income is definitely a fast-spreading Memplex these days, and we are here to work together as a collective mind to develop, think and improve on it as a group. We are here as a *Society of Mind* in a larger scale. We have people from all around the world, and I am sure each of us will go back to all the countries and areas we came from and keep spreading the idea of Basic Income so that it continues to grow exponentially as it has grown so far. These meetings are crucial think tanks. All great ideas come, not from just one person, but from a *Society of Mind*, and the BIEN Conferences are instrumental in making this happen for the idea of Basic Income.

Locally, we have already been inspired by this Congress. The Portuguese Basic Income Association intends to organize an international congress on Basic Income Pilots from around the world in 2018. We also hope that the impetus provided by this Congress and the upcoming conference can help us create more and better pilot programs, always with the aim of paving the way for a full implementation of Basic Income.

**Thank you all for coming and we hope you have a great and productive three days. Together we are changing the world.**