



## Universal Basic Income: Far-Fetched Or Future Fact?

Universal Basic Income is a mega-trend outcome of the Fourth Industrial Revolution where robots replace humans en-masse. Technocracy's city-state concept will reduce the value of human labor to near-zero, requiring government support for all. This kind of subsistence living is tantamount to slavery and permanent poverty. □ TN Editor

It is a utopian idea, literally, but is enjoying a renaissance as politicians and policy wonks grapple with technology-driven changes that could redefine our very understanding of work.

If robots and machine intelligence threaten to render many white-collar jobs obsolete, then what will people do for money?

Enter the concept of a "universal basic income", a flat sum paid to all regardless of your existing wealth or ability to work. It is one of the rare ideas that has support from both the libertarian right — which favours tearing up the welfare state — and the left wing.

In France, Benoit Hamon has emerged as the surprise Socialist candidate for April's presidential election first round, on a radical programme that includes such an income — to be funded in part by a new tax on industrial robots.

National or local governments in other countries such as Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, Scotland and Brazil are already evaluating how such a revenue might work in practice.

Finland is furthest down the road. On January 1 it started a two-year trial to give 2,000 unemployed Finns a monthly unconditional payment of 560 euros (\$590).

At the least, advocates argue, a basic income could replace the thicket of unemployment benefits currently on offer in many advanced economies. Those can, perversely, discourage people from retraining in new fields or taking on lower paid work that society needs, such as care for the elderly.

- Less is More -

At its most ambitious, the proponents say, it would give everyone a safety net and encourage new modes of thinking: work might no longer define our lives and instead we might find productive existences in volunteering for the greater good, or in the creative arts.

“There’s a whole new suite of technologies coming on stream and people will need to adapt somehow,” said Anthony Painter, director of the Action and Research Centre at the Royal Society of Arts in London, which in December released a research paper after a year-long study into the idea.

“The basic income just gives them a fighting chance,” he told AFP, stressing the more immediate benefits that would come from redrawing the existing tangle of support for the jobless.

If mass unemployment and fears of technology are modern trends, the concept of a universal income goes back centuries.

In his 1516 book “Utopia”, English philosopher and statesman Thomas

More imagined an ideal republic where private property is abolished and all receive a basic stipend.

It is a pre-industrial society, of course, where agriculture is the foundation of the economy and people's needs are basic.

[Read full story here...](#)