

Place-based Guaranteed Minimum Income in Barcelona: (un)intended inclusionary policy for migrants

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Abstract

Discussions about Basic Income have gained traction recently when debating possible reforms of the welfare state, how to combat poverty and wealth inequalities, and to counteract job losses in the aftermath of the Pandemic. The role of cities engaging in various forms of basic income, such as the Guaranteed Minimum Income, and how they impact specific target groups as migrants and refugees, is still understudied. At the peak of the migration wave in Europe between 2015 and 2016, the European programme Urban Initiative Actions funded a pilot project on Basic Income led by the city of Barcelona. The scheme, called B-MINCOME, is meant to test the efficacy and effectiveness of combining a passive economic support of cash-transfer and active labour market policies geared toward their inclusion and reinsertion in the labour market. In particular, thanks to the integration of local policies and the cooperation across departments, the project has impacted gender inequalities and indirectly helped the regularisation of undocumented migrants. Illustrating the Barcelona case study, the paper demonstrates that first, the approach adopted by B-MINCOME creates (unintended) benefits to migrants, second, that the combination of European and city level funds has fostered experimentation in terms of service design and provisions, and third, that local experimentations can further inform and challenge the design of public policies on inclusion at different scales.

Keywords

Minimum Income, Migration, Inclusion, Neighbourhood

Introduction

Research and activism in favour of Basic Income (BI) has gained great momentum in recent years in the face of growing unemployment and precarious working conditions paired

with social and economic inequality in Europe. Considerable attention has been drawn, beyond economic discipline, to study how BI could reform welfare states (Roosma & Van Oorschot, 2020; Lee, 2018), combat poverties and wealth polarisation (Standing, 2020, Gentilini et al. 2019) and mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of job losses (Johnson & Roberto 2020; Arnold, 2020). (Universal) Basic Income (BI) is a wealth-redistribution economic mechanism with no strings attached, with no distinction between deserving and undeserving individuals and households, essentially circumventing the concept of borders and citizenship (Pogge 2002, 2005; Jordan & Düvell 2003:140-143). Referred as social dividend, the concept of BI has its intellectual roots among utopian and radical thinkers of the 18th and 19th centuries (Van Parijs & Vanderborght 2017), but since a Universal scheme is expensive and demanding governmental and political alignment for its implementation, it is rarely applied in its most radical form (Ghatak, & Maniquet, 2019); other forms of “guaranteed” basic- or minimum- income are more common. These other (guaranteed) forms of cash transfer via means-tests¹ are targeting specific groups, compliant to context dependent criteria. They may be presented as forms of repair to market failures, unemployment insurance, income or welfare support for the households, subsistence in kind. Geographically, social policies involving various forms of direct cash transfers have been implemented in the world north (De Wispelaere et al 2018; Painter, Thorold, & Cooke, 2018) and in the world south (Banerjee et al. 2019; Hoynes & Rothstein, 2019) and in Europe almost all countries contemplate some forms of minimum income (Coadi et al. 2021). The considerable literature on Basic Income has focused on analysing the schemes in relation to the existing welfare regime and the socio-political and economic situations where they have been implemented (Gentilini et al. 2019). The research has primarily focused on the country as a unit, and city-led trials are an ongoing innovation that has not been thoroughly investigated. Furthermore, while BI is lauded as a means to reinforce democratic politics, research tends to underestimate the complexity of BI to achieve social justice. As pointed out by Prof. Gordon at the Symposium on universal basic income² “even the most progressive nation-approach to basic income faces a fundamental social justice challenge in the reality of human mobility” and migration, which is thwarted by the strict correlation between benefit recipient and citizenship. Few authors stress the argument that Basic Income can be seen as one of the most efficient political mechanism in furthering the creation of a more democratic society “which may promote immigrants’ freedom by challenging the long-standing link between national citizenship and rights” (Boso et al 2003). But as of today, most benefit programs tend to be exclusionary, restricting access by citizenship and immigration status. Yet access to welfare support for migrants (Ruhs and Palme, 2018) and basic as much as guaranteed forms of income is a critical concern for better inclusive and

¹ A means-test in labor market policies refers to a method used to determine eligibility for certain benefits or assistance based on an individual's financial means or income level. It is a way to assess whether a person meets the predetermined criteria to receive specific support or services.

² <https://lpeproject.org/blog/ubi-and-immigrants-lessons-from-the-pandemic/>

cohesive policies in an ethnically diverse Europe where strong policing of migration by right-wing parties and a failing welcoming system have exposed people on the move to social risks, inadequate housing, unsafe, precarious, and exploitative working conditions. There are a few recent examples of inclusive types of Basic or Guaranteed Income that have stretched the bounds of nation-based income schemes to help persons on the move, particularly those who are undocumented. Some examples are largely financed by foundations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The non-European BI pilot in New Mexico serves undocumented and mixed-status households and is backed by the New Mexico Economic Relief Working Group, an independent alliance of non-profits and residents³. During the peak of the COVID pandemic, from March 2020 to July 2021, the City of Zurich, through non-governmental groups, gave some financial assistance to undocumented immigrants in the form of direct cash transfers. This assistance was provided while working for the rights of illegal immigrants or insecure migrant women workers⁴. However, the relationship between migration (and undocumented migrant) and access to basic income is contentious, as evidenced by the recent Welsh example, in which the Labour Party was criticised for allowing certain asylum seeker children to participate in Wales' basic income pilot⁵. The case covered in this paper is a municipal-level Guaranteed Minimum Income Pilot named B-MINCOME; it is an experiment aiming at eliminating poverty and social exclusion in low-income neighbourhoods of Barcelona. The majority of the reports, academic papers, and input on which this study is based are concerned with the B-MINCOME scheme analysis and structure, directed at an audience interested in basic and guaranteed minimum income experiments of this type. This paper is intended to offer a different perspective that highlights the position of people with migrant background in the pilot. In reality, the B-MINCOME trial, was aimed at a sample of the population living below the poverty line, regardless of their status and migration origins. Nonetheless, the reflection that prompted the paper's writing is that this pilot was successful in providing direct cash transfers and inclusive policies to beneficiaries the majority of which are non-Spanish native, to the extent that the combination of guaranteed income and labor-force inclusion paved the way for the regularisation of a few undocumented individuals. The first section of the paper provides an outline of the context that spawned the B-MINCOME pilot project. The second describes the pilot's architecture, providing the local socioeconomic environment of Barcelona and explaining the disadvantaged communities inhabited by a majority of people of migrant origin where the pilot has been implemented. With a mix of primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data, the third section looks at the benefit of migrant population in this trial. The conclusion emphasises that, despite the differences between each local trial, pilots

³ <https://www.governing.com/finance/new-mexico-pilot-program-offers-payments-to-immigrant-families>

⁴ Picum, (2022) A snapshot of social protection measures for undocumented migrants by national and local governments, 22 https://picum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/A-snapshot-of-social-protection-measures-for-undocumented-migrants-by-national-and-local-governments_EN.pdf

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-politics-65323243>

like B-MINCOME may enlighten policymakers dealing with migration, poverty, and social assistance, challenging the design of public policies at diverse scales.

This study is based on anonymized interviews and focus groups (conducted throughout the two years of implementation 2017-2019) with B-MINCOME beneficiaries, policymakers, civil servants, educators, psychologists, social workers, and service providers, as well as field work, with the author recording the B-MINCOME project implementation process during the UIA programme, integrated and supported by desk-research including academic journals, reports, and quantitative analysis published by the B-MINCOME project partners⁶.

European, national and local contexts for the Barcelona pilot

The B-MINCOME project was put into effect in November of 2017 and went on until the end of 2019. Co-funded by the European Union's Urban Innovative Action (UIA) programme⁷, with about five million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and nine million from the Municipality of Barcelona, B-MINCOME is a city pilot based on the idea of universal minimum income as the pillar for a new participative and community-based approach of social support. The aim is to test schemes for cash-transfers on a randomised selection of welfare recipients, conditionally or unconditionally provided with "active social policies" (Tabin & Perriard, 2016). To promote socially active policies, a selection of strategies have been proposed to maximise the employability of B-MINCOME's participants. This includes providing training for setting up cooperatives and small businesses, giving them the opportunity to develop professionally, as well as offering psychological and social support.

The primary purpose of the project was to enhance the life of people living in deprived parts of Barcelona, reducing their dependence on government funds and eventually providing data to determine which of the B-MINCOME approaches is the most efficient and at what cost, so it can be consolidated into upcoming policies (Colini, 2018; Riutort et al., 2021). Experimenting with this local pilot in Barcelona is made possible by the diverse debates within the context of the larger discussion of providing all European citizens with the same access to the job market, a minimum income to reduce poverty (Roosma, Van Oorschot 2020; Schilpzand 2019; Vlandas, 2019; Scharpf, 2000) at the European, national and local governmental scales it's rooted in. Prior to the commencement of B-MINCOME, 119 million persons (23.7% of the EU population) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2015 (Eurostat 2016)⁸. Fiscal

⁶ Ajuntament de Barcelona, The Young Foundation - Think Thank, IVALUA, Catalan Institute of Public Policy Evaluation - Research centre, Autonomous University of Barcelona. IGOP. Institute of Governance and Public Policies - University, - University, ICTA (Institute of Environmental Science and Technology) of the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the Data Management Group of the UPC. Polytechnic University of Catalonia, NO-VACT (International Institute for Non-violent Action).

⁷ Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020. <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en>

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion.

compact and austerity measures had brought welfare reforms in many states (Taylor-Gooby, Leruth and Chung, 2017; Gonzalez Begega and del Pino, 2017): South European countries like Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy were the most struggling (Petmesidou and Guillén, 2017), especially in redesigning their institutional architecture nationally and locally, because of the little resources available for political compromises or more inclusive (and potentially costly) reforms (Kazepov interview in Colini 2017). The euro area (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 8,7% in December 2017 and down from 9.7% in December 2016. This remains the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since January 2009 period of the crisis⁹.

The minimum income schemes existing in all Members states were insufficient¹⁰ and still vary across countries for their coverage, comprehensiveness and effectiveness. Ever since, there has been an improved recognition among European Institutions and Member States of a minimum income schemes importance (Frazer & Marlier 2016, Coady et al. 2021)¹¹. Building on previous policy initiatives¹², EU has promoted effective minimum income schemes and the active inclusion approach through the European Pillar of Social Rights (principle 14)¹³, in line with the 2015 SDGs, (SDG 1, SDG 5 and SDG 8 /10). However, the journey to realise a pan-European scheme of Universal Basic Income, as e.g. the one tested in Finland and promoted by activists networks in Europe¹⁴, is far, as far is a pan-European scheme for a Minimum Income. Even though the Council adoption in January 2023 on the "Recommendation on adequate minimum income"¹⁵ sets out new guidance on how Member States can modernise their minimum income schemes to make them more effective. Until now, the EU recommendations and "soft laws" have not made consistent progress in this sense. While social protection sys-

⁹ [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8631691/3-31012018-BP-EN.pdf/bdc1dbf2-6511-4dc5-ac90-dbadee96f5fb#:~:text=Spain scoring unemployment rate at 16,4% in 2017. \(accessed 30.04.2023\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8631691/3-31012018-BP-EN.pdf/bdc1dbf2-6511-4dc5-ac90-dbadee96f5fb#:~:text=Spain scoring unemployment rate at 16,4% in 2017. (accessed 30.04.2023))

¹⁰ In 2013 the Commission asserted that "the adequacy of these schemes can [...] often be improved. The level should be high enough for a decent life and at the same time help people to be motivated and activated to work." (2013 European Commission's Social Investment Package SIP)

¹¹ Today, as in 2022, the minimum wage today exists in 21 EU states, with figures ranging from EUR 1,000 in Slovenia to EUR 2,000 in Luxembourg. In Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France, the minimum wage has been set above EUR 1,500. In the case of Spain, the Sanchez government has raised the minimi income to 1000 euros in 2000 euros for 14 wage-month.

¹² Council Recommendation 92/441/EEC (on common criteria concerning sufficient resources and social assistance in social protection systems calls on Member States to recognise the right to social assistance and sets out principles and guidelines to implement this right), Commission Recommendation 2008/867/EC (Commission Recommendation of 3 October 2008 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (notified under document number C(2008) 5737) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex:32008H0867> (accessed 24.10.2022) and European Parliament resolution of 6 May 2009 on the active inclusion of people excluded from the labour market (2000/2335(INI)) Council agree an EU target for minimum income schemes and contributory replacement schemes of providing income support of at least 60% of national median equivalised income, to agree a timetable for achieving this target in all Member-States and to provide targeted additional benefits for disadvantaged groups which cover extra costs.

¹³ Everyone lacking sufficient resources has the right to adequate minimum income benefits ensuring a life in dignity at all stages of life, and effective access to enabling goods and services. For those who can work, minimum income benefits should be combined with incentives to (re)integrate into the labour market.

¹⁴ <https://www.ubie.org/>

¹⁵ Proposal for a COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION On adequate minimum income ensuring active inclusion COM(2022) 490 final 2022/0299 (NLE)

tems is primarily a responsibility of the Member States, the EU can only promote social inclusion (Title X, Social Policy Chapter of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union)¹⁶ and achieve its objectives through non-legal cooperation, which may not lead to any harmonisation of the laws and the regulations of the Member States (Tosics, Colini, 2022). Therefore, the power of devising a minimum income support and its context experimentation remain competence of the Member States. However, in the case of B-MINCOME the opportunity for "basic income at municipal-level" experimentation (Riutort et al, 2023) is provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)¹⁷ in the Cohesion Policy period 2014-2020. Usually managed by central governments through Operational Programmes¹⁸ ERDF was channelled in the case of B-MINCOME through Urban Innovative Action (UIA) programme¹⁹. Here, cities administrations can directly manage the funding bundling with local co-funding to execute pioneering concepts co-designed with local stakeholders and partners from the public, private sector, including NGOs, associations and research entities.

In essence, the UIA programme, commenced in 2016 and based on thematically-oriented calls for fresh ideas to be tested in European cities, enables cities like Barcelona to try out a project such as B-MINCOME pilot. On the other hand, the environment in Spain in favour of trying the pilot were grounded on the issues related to the existing but insufficient measures on cash transfer (Pérez 2018; Noguera, 2019). While the central government covers the contributory benefits (unemployment and retirement), the autonomous and local governments must finance the rest of non-contributory benefits such as assistance, emergency aid and those of last resort, which are much more limited both in terms of their amount and their redistributive capacity (Navarro-Varas and Porcel, 2017:57 in Lain, Torrens, 2019). Moreover, the Spanish multilevel governance structure reinforces the fragmentation of the portfolio of social benefits, lacking of coordination between the central government, the autonomous communities and the town councils (Ayala, 2018 in Lain, Riutort, Julià, 2019). At the end of the 1980s, autonomous communities in Spain had reached an agreement to promote systems that guaranteed a minimum income, known as social salaries or the minimum integration income - Renta Mínima de Integración (RMI) (Salinas et al. 2019). In this frame, first pioneered in 1989 in the Basque country, some regions such as Catalunya had been experimenting a regional version of Minimum Income Scheme called Renta de Garantía de Ingresos (De La Rica and Gorjón, 2018). Because of the financial crisis, the numbers of requests for the RMI doubled. Despite that, the Catalunya regional government toughed the conditions to access the monetary support (in this region called PIRMI) with the effect that "the level of cover was notably

¹⁶ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT>

¹⁷ ERDF aims to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions.

¹⁸ Multiregional OP for Spain ERDF 2014-20, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/in-your-country/programmes/2014-2020/es/2014es16rfop002_en

¹⁹ Article 8 of ERDF, CP 2014-2020 https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/legislation-and-guidance/regulations/2014-2020_en

reduced, and left a large number of households outside the protection system” (Salinas et al 2019: 4). This development provided the ground for a political debate in Barcelona in favour of some sort of local-Basic Income, leading to the experimentation of the B-MINCOME. Just two months before the official starting of the B-MINCOME pilot, on the 12th of July 2017 the Catalan Parliament unanimously passed a bill to provide a legal framework guaranteeing citizenship income (RGC-Renta garantizada de ciudanía) for Catalan citizens²⁰. Among the criteria²¹, one was residency in Catalonia for at least two years. The Catalan government and the promoters of the citizens’ initiative began outreach programs and the first payment started in mid-September. The Government of Catalonia is responsible for the RGC deployment through its competent Ministry and the Public Employment Service of Catalonia. This regional law was deemed compatible with the B-MINCOME pilot completely designed managed at local level by the municipality of Barcelona starting the same year. At the local level, the argument in favour of the pilot was supported by the 2015 local election of the mayor Ada Colau, with the activists-led party Barcelona en Comú (BeC). Characterised by a socialist, solidarity-based, pro-migrant²², inclusive and feminist political agenda, BeC had in their political manifesto strategies to combating poverty and inequality between different parts of the city that had been accentuated with the crisis of the years 2008-2013: “Barcelona considers it a priority to reduce inequalities in income and safeguard the social rights of its residents, to increase fairness and training and educational opportunities, and to strengthening social and community support networks for eradicating stigmatisation and segregation and reducing territorial inequalities”²³. In 2016 at the time of the submission of the B-MINCOME project, several other strategies, planning instruments and projects worked in synergies in the B-MINCOME area to

²⁰ Ranging from a mimino of 664 euros for single household to 1,208 for five people, the Guaranteed Citizenship Income (RGC) is a subjective right and consists of two economic benefits a guaranteed and unconditional benefit, subject to the requirement of the law; and a complementary service of activation and insertion, conditioned by the commitment to develop, and, if applicable, follow a social inclusion or employment insertion plan. <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/implementing-universal-basic-income-catalonia>.

²¹ The conditions for receiving the RGC are being older than 23 years old, not having any other income or benefits, being a resident of Catalonia (and having lived in the country for at least two years) and not owning any properties other than one’s own home. The only exception will be one-parent families with temporary jobs.

²² Ajuntament de Barcelona (2019): La població estrangera a Barcelona. La població de Barcelona nascuda a l’estranger. Gender 2019. Informes estadístics 79. https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/estadistica/catala/Estadistiques_per_temes/Poblacio_i_demografia/Documents_relacionats/pobest/a2019/index.htm

²³ http://www.bcn.cat/barcelonainclusiva/ca/2018/6/strategy_inclusion_2017-2027_en.pdf

improve the quality of life of inhabitants e.g. Acuerdo Ciudadano por una Barcelona Inclusiva²⁴, the EDUSI²⁵, Salut als Barris²⁶ etc. The combination of all of these circumstances allowed for local innovation that had no precedence in Spain or Europe.

The B-MINCOME implementation and its effects

The ambition of B-MINCOME was to test the efficacy and effectiveness of combining a passive economic support of cash-transfer and active social policies. The passive economic support was meant to help families experiencing poverty to cover the basic costs for nutrition, education and clothing and comes to the households as Municipal Inclusion Support (Suport Municipal d'Inclusió, SMI), namely a Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) amounting to 4 200 000 000 EUR for the years 2017-2018-2019²⁷ for an initially planned amount of 1 000 households. This is combined with an experiment on local digital currency (REC)²⁸ and four active social policies. At the outset of B-MINCOME in 2017, Barcelona despite being the richest city in Catalonia, ranks high in issues such as unemployment, access to affordable housing and poverty. According to the data of the municipality of Barcelona, the city's level of unemployment reached 80,344 in mid 2016, amounting to 13.4% of the labour force in the second quarter of 2016, 4.2 points above the European average²⁹. In the same period was registered an increase of temporary and precarious jobs, which represented 85% of working contracts³⁰, and an increase of incoming newcomers from third country nationals³¹ looking for job opportunities. The income gap between rich and poor was dramatic, with overall population income decreasing of 27 % (yet richest population income increased of 11%)³². With the booming investment from late nineties to the financial crisis, the real estate sector has been the centre of speculation with the false promise of mortgages leading to massive evictions (Coq-Huelva, 2013; Garcia-Lamarca and Kaika, 2016). At the time of B-MINCOME design, in the whole of

²⁴ This agreement brings together several social, private organizations and public entities whose main objective is the coordinated deployment of actions within the framework of the "Strategy for inclusion and reduction of social inequalities 2017-2027".

²⁵ EDUSI is the Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development Strategy of Barcelona City Council that is being implemented in the 10 neighborhoods of the Eix Besòs, within the framework of the Multiregional Operative Program of Spain (POPE) 2014-2020, managed by the Ministry of Finance and public Function. The total subsidized amount for the implementation of the Strategy is €30M, with a co-financing by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of 50%.

²⁶ Salut als Barris on social health inequalities in neighbourhoods through community-based interventions <https://repositori.upf.edu/handle/10230/47280?locale-attribute=es>

²⁷ Conform to the law 27 July 13/2006 for socio economic support

²⁸ <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/news/bmincome-project-launches-its-pilot-project-social-currency-eix-besos-area-stimulate-local>

²⁹ <https://www.barcelonactiva.cat/documents/20124/259890/Estrategia-Ocupacio-Barcelona-ENG.pdf/6557e7bf-643c-d8e4-ab77-de07d0227a1f?t=1602690431165>

³⁰ Dep. of Enterprise and Employment (GC), Dept. of Statistics, AB. Montly 2017

³¹ Ajuntament de Barcelona: Open Data BCN. Available at: <http://opendata-ajuntament.barcelona.cat/data/en/dataset>

³² Interview (2018) to Luis Torrens Melich director de Planificació i Innovació de l'Àrea de Drets Socials de l'ajuntament de Barcelona and Power point presentation.

the Barcelona province 35,234 evictions have been registered between 2008 and 2015, with a notable increase from 2,661 to 7,796 between 2008 and 2014³³. With the unaffordability of housing, the number of homeless people was increased by 162,3% since 2014, with 25% of this figure directly related to evictions³⁴. Because of the uneven impact of these concerns, ad hoc programmes and policies targeting specific poor areas have been required (Plan de Barris 2016-2020)³⁵. In the case of the B-MINCOME pilot, the targeted neighbourhoods³⁶ are among those with the greatest rates of unemployment, as well as households in vulnerable³⁷ and precarious³⁸ situations in the city. The investments of B-MINCOME covers inhabitants living in ten neighbourhoods which are administratively managed by the districts of Nou Barris, Sant Andreu, Sant Martí in the north-eastern part of Barcelona called Eix Besós, edging with other municipalities belonging to the Barcelona Metropolitan area (Fig.1)³⁹.

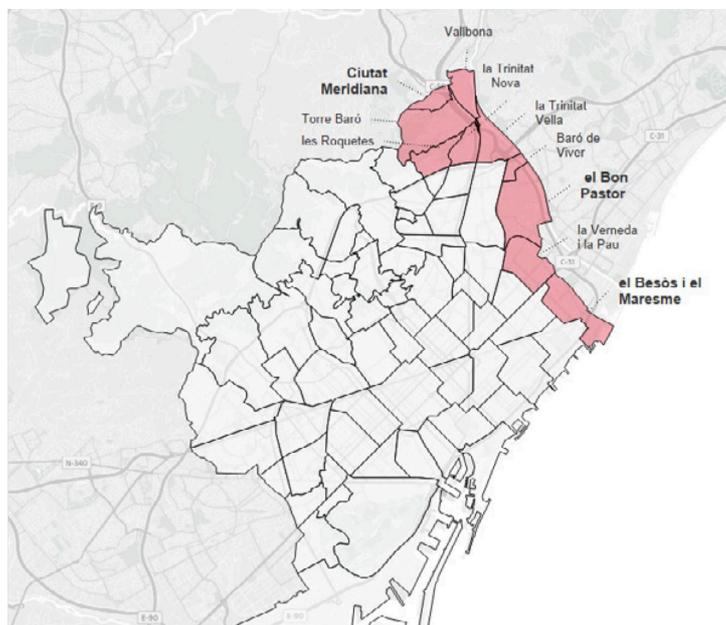


Fig. 1 B-MINCOME 10 neighbourhoods

Source:

<https://youngfoundation.b-cdn.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/B-MINCOME-Report-26.11.19-Web.pdf?x62888>

³³ Right to housing plan Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2016-2025. http://habitatge.barcelona/sites/default/files/documents/barcelona_right_to_housing_plan_executive_summary.pdf.

³⁴ Data provided by Maite Arrondo, responsible for “Intermediation service for people in the process of evictions and occupancies” “Good practice URBACT power point presentation <http://urbact.eu/intermediation-service-people-process-evictions-and-occupancies>

³⁵ <https://www.pladebarris.barcelona/>

³⁶ Ciutat Meridiana, Vallbona, Torre Baró, Roquetes and Trinitat Nova (District of Nou Barris); Trinitat Vella, Baró de Viver and Bon Pastor (District of Sant Andreu) and Verneda-La Pau and Besòs-Maresme (District of Sant Martí)

³⁷ <https://www.conselldeciutat.barcelona/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2017-Dictamen-Grup-Treball-Desigualtats-Vulnerabilitats.pdf>

³⁸ https://iermb.uab.cat/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PAPERS_63_ART-4.pdf

³⁹ Santa Coloma, Santa Adrià, Montcada and Badalona

The area along the river Eix Besós, is a location historically known among newcomers and blue collar workers to the city, originated as informal shantytown settlements home to poor families and immigrant workers during the first half of last century, later replaced by modern building blocks from the 1950s. (e.g. history and the social struggle in low-cost housing block of the Bon Pastor neighbourhood called *Casa Baratas* in Portelli, 2015). At the B-MINCOME starting date, Eix Besòs, had a slightly higher proportion of population born outside of Spain (28%) compared to the municipality of Barcelona (25%)⁴⁰ with a the percentage of presence of people with migrant background varying among the neighbourhoods. In the district of Sant Andreu the percentage of people of foreign origin in the neighbourhood of Trinitat Vella is 27.8, more than 10 points above the percentage in Barcelona (approximately 16.6), but in the neighbourhoods of Bon Pastor and Baró de Viver the percentages of residents of immigrant origin are respectively 11.1% and 10.3%⁴¹. Besòs presents also diverse realities where high levels of social vulnerability can coexist with low levels of residential vulnerability, with different tenures such as micro-ownership and private sector rented housing⁴². Housing overburden cost is an issue for the inhabitants in Besòs territory: households with an average income of €25,000 per year must allocate much more than 30% of their income to pay an average rent (in the B-MINCOME areas: e.g. Sant Andreu 38% of the income; in Nou Barris, 34%).⁴³ Beneficiaries⁴⁴ of the pilot had therefore a more vulnerable socio-economic condition than the average population at risk of poverty in the city⁴⁵, which brought the Area for Social Rights, Global Justice, Feminism and LGBTI Affairs of the Barcelona City Council, to launch the B-Mincome in these districts. Together with a consortium of public and private entities⁴⁶, Barcelona City Council started the pilot in 2017 with the selection, information and involvement of beneficiaries and coordination among the partners, and NGOs involved in the implementation. The remaining years until 2019 represented the project's actions delivery in which the participants factually received the monetary support (Municipal Inclusion Support-SMI), took part to the activation policies. For the duration of the project the Municipal Inclusion Support

⁴⁰ Ajuntament de Barcelona: Open Data BCN. Available at: <http://opendata-ajuntament.barcelona.cat/data/en/dataset>.

⁴¹ Ayuntamiento De Barcelona, (2018) ESTRATEGIA D'INCLUSIO SOCIAL A L'EIX BESOS Sintesi estratègica integral dels barris de l'Eix Besos <http://www.bcn.cat/barcelonainclusiva/ca/2018/2/SEstrategicaBesosSADEF2018.pdf>

⁴² The survey published by IERM (IERM, 2020) analysing the Besos area counted 14,813 homes for social policies in the municipalities known as Besòs territory, which represents only 1.8% of the total residential premises.

⁴³ <https://iermb.uab.cat/ca/estudi/vulnerabilitat-residencial-barris-besos-diagnosi-estat-habitatge/>

⁴⁴ A total of 1.525 applications were received, of which 1.527 met all the requirements (almost 40% of the applications received were excluded, most of them for exceeding the established income threshold) (Riutort et al. 2021).

⁴⁵ Barcelona sample of the Spanish National Statistics Institute "Study into Living Conditions", 2016 and ECVUSS - "Study into Living Conditions of Users and Social Services", 2016.

⁴⁶ See footnote 6.

(Suport Municipal de Inclusió, SMI) was provided to 950⁴⁷ households which were randomly selected from eligible applicants⁴⁸ from the 1000 initially planned (Fig.2).

The selection criteria for eligibility regarded age, living situation, residence in the Eix Besós neighbourhood, monthly income threshold, social service status (participants must be already beneficiaries of social support)⁴⁹. The project had four different modalities concerning the conditionality of the SMI benefit (conditional, unconditional) and the withdrawal rate of the benefit (unlimited, limited), which allowed the “City Council “to test already existing different modalities of cash transfer (with the unconditional close to the model of universal basic income) within the same SMI scheme which would have not been testeable without this programme⁵⁰” (Riutort et al. 2023).

⁴⁷ https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/bmincome_executive_report.pdf

⁴⁸ The participation is voluntary and beneficiaries must meet the following criteria: Official residence in one of the 10 neighbourhoods of the Besos area of the city; Living in the city for at least two years; At least one family member must be between 25 and 60 years old; Family's annual income in 2017 should be below the annual cost of the family's basic needs.

Due to legal reasons, only applications from families that were active users of social services could be considered. Therefore, households had to be a current beneficiary of Barcelona's municipal social services, which means having an open Social Service file, having received the 0-16 municipal benefit for low income families with children between 0 and 16 years of age or having taken part in the Labora program in the previous 12 months.

⁴⁹ At least one member of the household must be aged 25 to 60 on 31 July 2017.

All members of the household must effectively live together throughout the project. All members of the household must have been registered as Barcelona residents since June 2015, live in one of the Eix Besós neighbourhoods and make a commitment to live there from October 2017 to September 2019. Homeless people as much as squatters may be potential beneficiaries of B-MINCOME as long as they have been registered in the Municipality and have an address in the target territories of Eix Besós. They must be service users with an open Social Services file or have applied for and met the requirements for obtaining an allowance for children and/or adolescents aged 0 to 16 in 2017; or be taking part in the Labora programme or have taken part within the last 12 months, or be a Social Insertion Service (SIS) user. They must voluntarily accept the conditions for receiving the benefit, accept monitoring to compile household information, consent to monitoring for the purposes of carrying out anonymous evaluation studies, agree to provide information on additional income they might receive, and consent to an app being installed in their mobile phones that will manage the information, payments and activities associated with the project.

⁵⁰ The word programme here refers to the B-MINCOME Project

The receipt of the SMI benefit is “Conditional” on participating in the assigned activation policy. The SMI benefit is received “Unconditional” namely regardless of participation in the assigned activation policy. “Limited” or “Unlimited” according to whether the additional income altered the amount of the initially estimated SMI which beneficiaries see reduced pro-

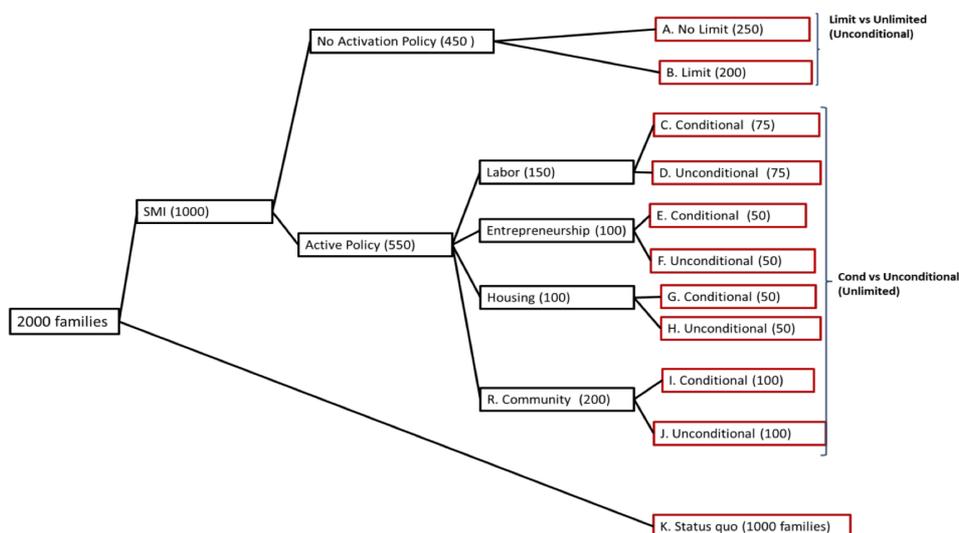


Fig.2 Graphic of the B-MINCOME pilot concerning the trial with active and passive labour market policies with the expected number of household participating, Source: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona 2017.

portionally to any additional income they might earn or not (Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini 2019, Colini, 2017)⁵¹. According to Riutort et al. 2023, the “tested a cash transfer scheme (is) different from traditional means-tested benefits, and also because at least one of the treatment groups was fully unconditional and unlimited” which makes it de facto B-MINCOME a trial on municipal form of Basic Income.

Among those participants receiving the SMI⁵², 798 were women and 152 men (84% and 16%). The over-representation of women is due to the fact that the majority of those attending social services are women (71.8% compared to 28.1% of men)⁵³. The active social policies part of the pilot were related to employment, social economy, community participation and housing.

⁵¹ For additional information on the amount of SMI received by each group tested refer to Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019 Barcelona city council new welfare programme: Economic evaluation results. IVALUA

⁵² The amount of the benefit depends from two factors: the household’s monthly income and its basic needs calculated using a formula that consider the household size and composition, among others.

⁵³ https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretsocials/sites/default/files/arxiu-documents/bmincome_executive_report.pdf

These were meant to primarily benefit the people participating in the B-MINCOME, with the creation of jobs opportunities, which would make up themselves an added value for the target districts in terms of social inclusion, fair and circular economy. The Policy 1: “Promotion of entrepreneurship and active employment”, implemented in collaboration with Barcelona Activa⁵⁴, provided employment contracts lasting 12 months, preceded by a three-month vocational training course led by associations and NGOs mostly active in the target area. The Policy 2: Social economy active policy supported participants in creating cooperative, social, solidarity economy and community-interest projects, under the coordination of the Instituto Municipal de la Vivienda y Rehabilitación de Barcelona⁵⁵: The policy 3: "Community active policy" engaged local citizens in the active and democratise life in the neighbourhoods, through the participation in projects that would benefit local organisations and community associations together with the Dirección de Servicios de Acción Comunitaria en colaboración con varias entidades sociales y de dinamización⁵⁶: The policy 4: “Housing rent aid” was aimed at providing a source of income to household participating in the project by renting out one room to temporary users, but was not implemented. Despite the fact that the local government's ex-ante analysis revealed that stark inequalities in the B-MINCOME zones are linked to housing unaffordability⁵⁷, the housing Active policy was discontinued. Because the precondition for this active policy was the ownership of a property to be rented, most welfare recipients chosen for the B-MINCOME project were unable to participate, either because few pilot participants had the dual condition of being a homeowner and a welfare recipient, or because there was no available space for renting out; other reasons included suspicion towards hosting outsiders, or because the renting out of extra rooms was already taking place informally (Interview with Ayuntamiento)⁵⁸.

An examination of each active policies is not concerning this paper, it is worth noticing that ex post analysis elected as most effective the policy offering employment contracts (Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019, Hill-Dixon 2020), and the policy of community organising (Colini 2018, 1b) for the capacities to encourage inhabitants to create networking and exchange opportunities for solidarity based economies. The overall evaluation of the Pilot is based on the outcomes of the Pilot modes into which beneficiary groups have been separated⁵⁹. For the purpose of this paper it is worth highlighting that the quantitative analysis of the impact evaluation on individuals (Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019) shows that the implementation of

⁵⁴ Barcelona Local Development Agency <https://www.barcelonactiva.cat/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.habitatge.barcelona/es/quienes-somos/instituto-municipal-vivienda-rehabilitacion>

⁵⁶ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/acciocomunitaria/es/presentacion>

⁵⁷ The Study for the Right to housing plan 2016-2005 shows that the biggest effort for dwellings to pay for housing is made in the neighbourhoods with the lowest income.

⁵⁸ Information collected during a series of site visit and stakeholders encounters between 2017-2019 by this paper author in the role of Expert for the EU UIA programme.

⁵⁹ Evidence on the projects results comes three round of interviews (2017-2018 and 219) by UAB and ICTA (B-MINCOME 's impact on life satisfaction, 2019) and the economic evaluation results of Ivalua (Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019).

the Pilot has reduced the probability of suffering to severe deprivation⁶⁰ by 8 percentage points but does not sensibly reduce the effects of deprivation (except for reducing the scale of going to bed hungry of 0.13, reducing food insecurity by 0,16 percentage points). In terms of residential exclusion which affects most vulnerable population including migrants in the mix Besos, B-MINCOME reduces the probability of falling into arrears, but the evaluation did not record any distinguishable effect on utility expenditures, neither in avoiding case of eviction (Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019: 56). In case of labor participation, the result of the evaluation showcase across different groups the reduction of the probability of working by 13 percentage points by the reception of SMI (Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019: 58). However, this data strangely excludes the beneficiaries of the activation policies in the labour market through training and actual employment , which are de facto those policies most relevant because the inclusion of undocumented migrants. Significant improvements in the health dimension, e.g. improved physical health during the course of the programme, was also not significant. In terms of financial situation, B-MINCOME had a positive effects on the household satisfaction, reducing the probability of borrowing money in 7.1 percentage points and about 12 percentage by the end of the project was able to reduce the dependency to cash transfer.

However the evaluation B-MINCOME effects may not portray the full picture and the results might be mislead interpretation of the success of the pilot. Even though there is no evidence that household managed to get out of the economic and housing precariousness they experience before B-MINCOME, yet the qualitative evidence mentioned below shows for instance that the programme represented “the chance to acquire economic independence, and an opportunity to better plan the future” (Riutort et al. 2023). The various modalities of SMI distribution stemming from the combination of conditional/unconditional, limited/unlimited together with the three active policies creates a wide discrepancy in terms of efficacy for the groups/ individuals involved (Blanco et al. 2021). The following chapter will examine how the combination of SMI distribution and active policies, particularly policy one involving the provision of regular contracts, has been a game changer in the process of including people with migrant backgrounds, particularly those with unclear status excluded from the labour market.

B-MINCOME through the lenses of (undocumented) migrants inclusion

The years before the B-MINCOME kicking off, the number of inflows increased, reaching its highest level since the financial crisis, with Moroccan being the leading nationality of immigrants in 2016, and with an increase as well of irregular border crossings in 2016 and 2017, compared to previous periods (OECD, 2018)⁶¹. Migration in Spain is a fairly recent phenomenon; until the end of the 1990s., Spain did not record significant migration inflows, but

⁶⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Material_deprivation

⁶¹ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/migr_outlook-2018-40-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/migr_outlook-2018-40-en

during the 2000s, Spain became a top destination country for international migrants receiving inflows from Latin America, Eastern Europe and North Africa. While the balance between immigration, and outmigration has been fluctuating over the last twenty years, the number of incomers has been steadily growing until the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, when the number of first residents permits offered to non-EU citizens dropped by half⁶² (Fig. 3).

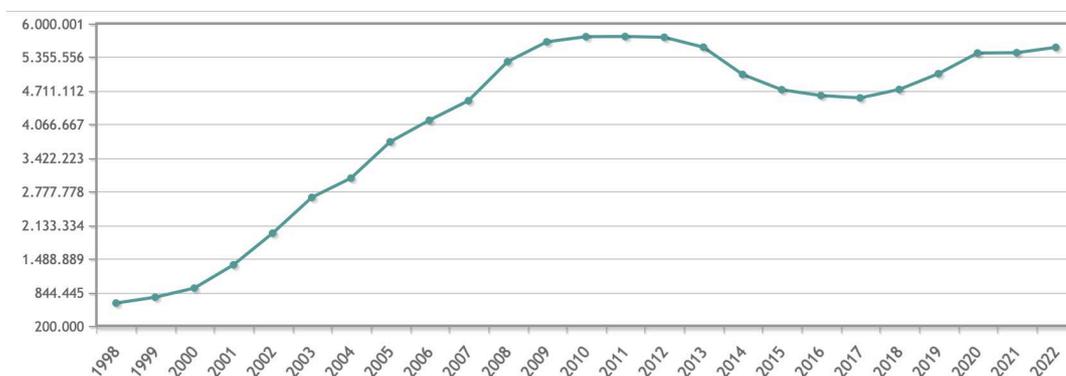


Fig.3 Presence of third country nationals in Spain from 1998-2022

Source: <https://www.ine.es/jaxi/Datos.htm?path=/t20/e245/p08/l0/&file=01004.px#!tabs-grafico>

As the economic crisis showed its effects in terms of unemployment: it became more difficult for migrants to find a job, to renew their permits, apply for the regularisation process which relies on a job contract or employment offer. One challenge after the crisis onward was therefore maintaining the legal status, if loosing a job (OECD 2012)⁶³. Non-EU nationals who are unemployed can receive Spanish social security programs through a combination of two basic entitlement patterns, including their participation in the labor market (for programs based on social insurance) and their presence in Spanish territory (for schemes based on a universalistic logic) (Lafleur & Vintila, 2020: 408). People with migrant background may benefit from various programmes, local initiatives, offering training courses to improve the accessibility in the job market. Nevertheless, migrant workers often face disadvantages because of inadequate education, non-recognition of their competences and qualifications, discrimination, lack of access to information and insufficient or inadequate command of the host country's language. More often for undocumented migrants the sole chance is finding employment in the informal economy, and also autochthonous and migrant with work permits, unable to obtain employment in the regular sector, may also be forced to turn to the black market for jobs. In all these cases, workers are unable to take advantage of contributory social insurance plans' protection provided by the National Social Security Institute (Instituto Nacional de la Seguridad Social, INSS), thus making people with migrant background more at risk of poverty

⁶² <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/MPIE-SpainMigrationPathways-Final.pdf>

⁶³ OECD (2012), *International Migration Outlook 2012*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2012-en. https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2012/spain_migr_outlook-2012-40-en#page1

while residing in Spain. The B-MINCOME pilot was not expressly designed to address the inclusion of migrants and refugees, but interestingly enough, the results of the pilot implementation reveal that the majority of beneficiaries of SMI and Active Policies in the pilot have a migratory history. Out of 950 participants less than 363, representing the 38.2% of all participants are of Spanish origin, while the rest came from 35 different countries: nationalities outside of the EU were the most numerous (47.1% in total), being Morocco and Pakistan the most representatives (Table 1).

Country of origin	Nr	%
Spain	363	38,21%
Morocco	133	14%
Pakistan	79	8,31%
Honduras	49	5,15%
Dominican Republic	36	3,79%
Other	214	22,52%
Nd	76	8%
Total	950	100%

Table 1. Percentage of people with migration background in B-MINCOME. Source: Riutort et al. 2019.

Indeed, the tall presence of non-native Spanish speakers challenged the application of the trial. Some problems have been registered in the preparatory phase of the project, when communication about the project was provided through meetings at the social centre of each district, via snail mails and questionnaires sent to potential beneficiaries. Some invitation letters were disregarded or needed cultural mediation by social workers to inform potential beneficiaries⁶⁴. *“I joined the project because I simply need and want to work! ... but some people did not because at the beginning they did not trust the project not really understanding what was it about.”* (Colini 2018). About half of the families who joined the project were known to public social services before B-MINCOME, because of the use of social services, but the other half was mostly individuals and families who met social workers for the first time through B-MINCOME (Colini, 2019 1b). The language-gap detected in the first phase, was then echoed throughout the duration of the project. The complex nature of the trial created misunderstandings and some discontent especially regarding the conditional and unconditional modality of reception of the Municipal Inclusion Support (SMI) and the random allocation to active policy

⁶⁴ For the quantitative analysis cfr. Sabes-Figuera & Todeschini, 2019:32,33

programme felt as inappropriate by some participant even if opportunity to express preferences was provided at the outset of the pilot⁶⁵ (Colini, 2018).

The lack of command of Spanish language made difficult to enter the job market and for many the Municipal Inclusion Support (SMI) provided through B-MINCOME has been the sole income as demonstrated in some individual account reported by the qualitative analysis of The Young Foundation : *“Maria Isabel is a 33-year-old Ecuadorian woman who had been living in Spain for six years, but could not enter formal employment because of her immigration status. As a result, her €454 B-MINCOME income has been her sole income for herself and her son”*. (Hill-Dixon et al. 2020:26). *“Some participants used the income to pay for care services and medication which were otherwise inaccessible to them, due to gaps in public provision or due to immigration status.”* (Hill-Dixon et al. 2020:5). Women beneficiaries of the Active Policy on “Promotion of entrepreneurship and active employment” declared that the SMI was an important element of attraction for them joining the programme. According to the criteria of the B-MINCOME one member per selected household can join the pilot, and often, since men in the family have easier access to minor jobs or employment, it is women who eventually are chosen to attend the pilot. This is also convenient for them, since they can bring their babies or toddlers to class and have teaching classes offered at different times of the day to fit with their family needs (Colini, 2019 1a). Another direct impact of the program is that several migrant families have been able to better connect with (or financially support) their relatives living abroad, as well as being able to save to travel to their countries to visit their relatives (Riutort et al., 2019). B-MINCOME enhanced the way social support was offered to the most vulnerable: social workers reported feeling constrained in their ability to record and respond appropriately to the different types of exclusions and disadvantages, which were often complicated by ambiguous or uncertain status. Throughout the pilot's duration, several B-MINCOME participants faced repeated eviction threats, were evicted, faced domestic abuse, and were obligated to care for the elderly or the disabled at home, adding a layer of uncertainty due to their illegal status. *“Usually (in our job as social workers) the demands we get are very direct and almost exclusively related to monetary support, such as how to buy food, books for the children and other basic needs. Once the basic economic necessities are covered, such as through the B-MINCOME, the family could talk more with us and speak more directly about implicit or hidden demands such as how and why they have difficulties finding work”* (Colini, 2019 1b: 12 focus group with social workers in B-MINCOME).

A holistic approach to the individual was possible through the collaboration that grew organically from the dialogue between Social workers of the Area of social Rights of the Barcelona Municipality and the social educators hired to deliver active policies in B-MINCOME:

⁶⁵ For in-depth analysis of the discontent cfr. Hill- Dixon et al. 2020

“I have a family of foreign origin (beneficiary of the B-MINCOME pilot) which requires a lot of attention. It is a clear case of domestic abuse and the woman was in need of protection.” (Social worker in Colini 2019 1b: 13)⁶⁶. In this case, the social worker serves as reference point for the administration: it filters the case, which is then submitted to Ethics Committee of the social services at regional level (Comité de Ética de los Servicios Sociales de Cataluña), which can evaluate the proposal concerning the person/family in distress⁶⁷. This necessitates collaboration across departments that extends beyond the project's initial goal; without the framework established by the pilot, a comparable situation may have gone undiscovered by public authorities because the case was not known or registered by social workers prior to B-MINCOME. Furthermore B-MINCOME has played a prominent role in terms of improving solidarity-based relations, fostering interaction between culturally diverse groups (by origin, religion, culture) that otherwise would not have connected (Blanco et al. 2019, Blanco et al. 2021). The approach adopted by the Active Policy on “community participation” promoted workshops around place and memories, local knowledge sharing, with convivial gathering, art and community organising (Colini 2018b), which instilled in the participants a feeling of belonging to a common group while breaking cultural stereotypes. Among people with migrant background, women have been particularly benefitting from Active Policy on “promotion of entrepreneurship and active employment”, because they could access training and find a job for the first time outside the family circle, thus helping them to become more independent (Colini, 2018b). Some belong to the Roma ethnic minority, generally integrated in the neighbourhood, composed by a mix of long-time residents and newcomers with various migration paths, with language issues, lack of basic education. It is usually a male-oriented family structure, where women are expected to bless the family union with many children and do not have much leeway to make decisions. Divorce is not well accepted either, due to evangelic beliefs and community customs. *“We have cases in our B-MINCOME groups of single mothers or women who have difficulties in joining the B-MINCOME activities mostly because customary social traditions, patriarchy and religion play an important role among Muslim women, especially for the participants coming from the Middle East and North Africa”* explains the worker for Barcelona Activa⁶⁸ at B-MINCOME (Colini 2019a). *“With this project my whole family benefits: I am father of five children, we are gitanos travellers and we have been living 7/8 years here in Spain, in the past in Turkey, some others years in Romania, France etc.*

⁶⁶ It was decided to separate the woman from her husband, which was a decision taken together with the Office for Social and Economic Benefits from the Municipal Institute of Social Services SOC Oficina Municipal de Prestaciones Sociales y Económicas. https://guia.barcelona.cat/en/detall/oficina-de-prestacions-socials-i-economiques-de-l-institut-municipal-de-serveis-socials_99400456053.html

⁶⁷ “ Eventually, the woman was accommodated in a welcome centre together with her children. Two children are with the mother and one with the father. This also required SW to visit the father’s house since the child is a minor.” (Colini 2019 focus group with social workers in Bmincome: 13)

⁶⁸ Barcelona Activa, parntering the B-MINCOME pilot, is the in-house Barcelona Local Development Agency fostering employment entrepreneurship and supporting companies with a focus on local development, which acted in B-MINCOME as game changer for some people with undocumented (im)migration status.

My wife is Russian and at home we speak many languages, but we were sin papeles (undocumented) in Spain. I was collecting metal in the trash to make ends meet at home. I am not afraid to say it. With this project my status in Spain has been regularised, and now it is all easier: I have a proper contract, health security, my children are regularised and beside training for the job I have classes in Catalan and Castilian to improve my language” (Colini 2018b: 11). Other insights in the qualitative analysis confirm the positive impacts of B-MINCOME in households with migration background especially women (e.g. individual accounts in Hill-Dixon et al 2020: 37).

In particular, the active policy on “Promotion of entrepreneurship and active employment” delivered in collaboration with Barcelona Activa made possible to offer to B-MINCOME beneficiaries working contracts of 12 months which would then be sufficient for undocumented (im)migrants to regularise their status. This has been made feasible by a combination of the options provided by Spanish immigration regulations and the opportunity offered by the B-MINCOME project. In Spain, an authorisation for temporary residency due to extraordinary circumstances is in force, which is exclusively for third country nationals (called *Arraigo social*). The *Arraigo social*, prescribed by Law 4/2000 on the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration sets up four conditions that a person must meet to get regularised: first, three years of residence in the country – which is possible to demonstrate through the *Padrón* inscription (inscription to the local municipal register); second, no criminal record in Spain or in the country of origin; third, a Rooting report (*Informe de Arraigo*) issued by the administration where the person demonstrates integration (language, social ties, etc.); lastly, a job offer for 12 months. The latter is frequently the most difficult to get, as most arrivals rely on temporary and often illegal work. As matter of fact, the B-MINCOME pilot project, open to migrants whose status was not regularised, supplied the contract that allowed all of the legislative requirements for regularisation to be met. It is quite a complicated legal procedure that needs a lot of fine assessment by specialists and lawyers. But in the B-MINCOME case, this procedure has been eased, because the required assessment has been provided by the municipal service from the migration department SAIER (Service Centre for Immigrants, Emigrants and Refugees)⁶⁹. In other words, the regularisation process through B-MINCOME allows the person to a first residence and work permit for one year, which can be renovated until they get a permanent permit after five years. Hence, the regularisation of the migratory status of people of foreign origin through formal employment as in this case is a positive impact in the short term. “Thanks to the 12-month employment plans (standard policy for occupation plans is 6 months; nevertheless, for this project the contract that had been offered was doubled in length) provided within the framework of the training and employment active policy, seven people have been able to regularise their immigration status, with the double benefit of being able to access to formal labour market and to secure residence

⁶⁹ <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/novaciutadania/>

permits (or other immigration documents) for their children and other family members” (Blanco et al 2021 :70)

Conclusions

The EU funded B-MINCOME tests on the ground the implementation of a guaranteed form (with BI features) of Minimum Income in ten neighbourhoods among the three most deprived districts in the city of Barcelona. Combining European and local funds, the B-MINCOME experiment was able to reach jobless and households with unstable work, low income people and households, the majority of whom had a migrant background, in the restricted duration of the pilot. The study described how this experiment was able to bridge the suggestions and debates on active inclusions at the EU level and Basic Income, as well as highlight gaps in the existing welfare system by experimenting with an innovative municipal-led social assistance. Local political support has been crucial to the piloting of the city-based experiment, whose design and application was fostered by the administration of mayor Colau in Barcelona since 2015. Urban Innovative Action, a program funded with European Regional Development Fund made financially possible the experimentation at city level. The literature on Basic income has propelled to the forefront the effects of city-based pilots in economic and regulatory aspects, but this paper disputed that little attention has been dedicated to the impact on the people with migrant background of such experimentations. Therefore, the paper did not lean on portraying and discussing the lights and shadows of the city pilot, relying on the evaluation, analysis and publication already conducted. Instead, this present account wanted to bring to light an inclusionary approach and measures that had gone almost unreported in the literature about this case, namely that conditions of migrants (women) have been at the center of the implementation process and that persons with a migratory history living in legal limbo were enabled to speed up their process of regularisation owing to this EU funded pilot. The collaboration among the two entities (SAEIR and Barcelona Activa) in the frame of the Pilot, has been crucial to the achievement of this result, whose impact is numerically limited but significant in the wider debate about regularisation of migrants and asylum in Europe.

However, the B-MINCOME has not seen further success scaling up its practices from neighbourhoods to city level, and unclear is whether and how it would be possible to translate this experiment into permanent inter-sectoral revision of draft policies. Questions remains open on on how to minimise the hazards of fragmenting access to services in the face of local experimentation, as well as the possibility of duplicating services offered by various governmental scales, in comparable experiments. The sustainability of this local experimentation as B-MINCOME has been proven difficult, due to the exceptional one-time monetary support of

the EU UIA programme and the political support which was initially granted to the pilot. Tentative of replication via the EU URBACT programme⁷⁰, in transfer networks where other European cities could learn from B-MINCOME experience, has been proven difficult due to the complexity of the Pilot. Nevertheless, new policy learnings are sprouting (Torrens L. Director of the Social rights department in the city of Barcelona informal interview in Feb. 2022): the new Regional Government of Catalunya (Generalitat) has recently created a Special Office to develop a Pilot for implementing a Basic Income in Catalunya under the technical support and knowledge transfer from the municipality of Barcelona Social rights department in charge of B-MINCOME. An agreement is also in place with Esenyurt city council (Esenyurt, city in Istanbul area, 1 million residents welcoming circa 300.000 refugees from Syria) to transfer knowledge of B-MINCOME, and especially active policies for refugees living in Esenyurt⁷¹. In conclusion, despite the limitation in translating this experiment into permanent policies, the paper highlighted how this complex and ambitious experiment conducted by the city of Barcelona, can offer many insights on how city-level pilots may push the boundaries of existing legislation and allow for gradual experimentation in migrant inclusion.

⁷⁰ <https://urbact.eu/good-practices/bmincome>

⁷¹ https://www.esenyurt.bel.tr/home/IcerikDetay?haberdetay?projedetay=Başkan_Bozkurt:_Faaliyet_Raporumuzun_Temelini,_İnsana_Yatırımlar_Oluşturdu.&&id=2064

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