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# Contradictions in the social perceptions of the distribution of wealth Performance principle or a fundamental social right?



## ABSTRACT

Unconditional basic income is a universal cash benefit which does not require a means test and is not linked to employment. Its universality and unconditionality distinguish it from the transfers in the current system of redistribution, which are subject to income and asset tests or willingness to work. There is a growing interest in basic income, yet the values and instinctive responses which its unconditionality and universality produce in people have not been fully explored. The aim of this study is to investigate the values which emerge in relation to unconditional basic income in Hungary in the comments section of YouTube videos on this topic. Our research applies a mixed-method approach; data collection, sentiment analysis, and the bag of words model were implemented using relevant pieces of software, while categorisation was carried out by manual coding. The results show that a negative attitude towards basic income is predominant, and the primary value pattern is related to the performance principle. Regarding the perception of the distribution of wealth generated in the labour market, the comments we examined emphasise performance-based distribution as opposed to the possibility of a fundamental right. In the value system of people social security is strongly linked to work.

## KEYWORDS

performance-based distribution, work-based society, text mining, computer-assisted text analysis, unconditional basic income

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## INTRODUCTION

Economic and social transformations over the past few decades have substantially shaped the world of work. The development of telecommunications technology has affected global labour market developments. People have diverging attitudes towards technology related to Industry 4.0, which creates new jobs and improves workers' employment flexibility in some sectors but reduces the demand for human labour in others (NEUMANN et al. 2021, NARAYANAMURTHY – TORTORELLA 2021, GRYBAUSKAS et al. 2022).

Alongside globalisation and technological progress, global events, such as the COVID19 pandemic and the following economic difficulties, are adding to economic uncertainty. Uncertainty is associated with increased stress and frustration, negatively affects selfconfidence, and reduces people's belief in their ability to exercise control over their own lives (KALLEBERG 2009, MALLESON – CALNITSKY 2021).

In parallel with these processes, values and attitudes towards work are shaped at the societal level. For the younger generation, traditional work values are less important in their job search. While members of earlier generations remained loyal to a single job for almost their entire career, members of the younger generation may engage in job search three or more times during their career (PÉREZ-PÉREZ et al. 2018). Long-term commitments are increasingly replaced by flexible, short-term contracts, which are expected to be even more common in the future (PIĄTKOWSKI 2020). Increasingly unpredictable career opportunities could lead to fluid career paths without clear boundaries, which puts pressure on the labour market (STARR-GLASS 2019). In the labour market, there is growing emphasis on new skills and competences such as creativity, active learning, digital skills, knowledge sharing, complex problem solving, the ability to innovate, flexibility, proactive participation, or emotional intelligence (STARR-GLASS 2019, PIĄTKOWSKI 2020). In the future, the need to adapt to a globally changing labour market seems inevitable. Understanding how society responds and adapts to these challenges is therefore increasingly important.

Modern capitalist societies can be seen as meritocratic, performance-based societies (AULLENBACHER – GRUBNER 2021). It could be interesting to examine people's attitudes towards

distribution as to whether the global transformation of work has brought about a discernible shift away from the preference for performance-based distribution. Unconditional basic income provides an opportunity to examine this as it represents a form of distribution which contradicts the current performance principle. Its universality and unconditionality also distinguish it from the benefits in the current redistribution system, which are subject to income and asset tests and require the willingness to work.

In the media and in political or everyday discourses, the COVID pandemic revived the debate on unconditional basic income (LAÍN – MERRILL 2021). Despite the growing interest in this economic policy instrument, it has not been extensively explored what attitudes, instinctive reactions, and values people associate with unconditional and universal basic income. The study of values can help explain interesting social phenomena (HITLIN – PILIAVIN 2004).

In this study, we examine the range of attitudes towards unconditional basic income, focussing on the dominant values in the perception of the distribution of wealth generated in the labour market. When considering the perception of distribution, it is important to underline that there may be a link between the perception of distribution and actual trends in the labour market and distribution, but no clear conclusions can be drawn about the trends.

Today, digital data is increasingly important for understanding social processes. The computationally intensive analysis of large data sets allows social sciences to explore opinions and attitudes which are not accessible through traditional methods, either because the topic involves sensitive elements or because it is difficult to operationalise properly (NÉMETH et al. 2020). The focus of this research is a difficult issue to examine because people do not have personal experience with basic income, which has not been introduced in Hungary. Therefore, by analysing the comments written in the YouTube comments section for Hungarian-language videos related to the topic, we would like to better understand the attitudes of the people who comment on this economic policy instrument.

In the first part of the paper, we summarise the possible interpretations of unconditional basic income, and then, based on empirical data we collected, we analyse the comments on the video-sharing platform to see what patterns of values can be identified among people who contribute to the discussion about this economic policy instrument.

## **POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS OF UNCONDITIONAL BASIC INCOME**

Unconditional basic income is a cash benefit paid at regular intervals, which by its universality covers everyone, bypassing means tests and work requirements (VAN PARIJS 2004). Internationally, it is commonly featured in media coverage as well as economic and sociological discourse, with a debate about the feasibility of such an economic policy instrument. The debates unfold over four main questions (GILBERT et al. 2018):

### **Is a benefit such as basic income affordable?**

The key question for a welfare benefit is whether it can be funded in the long term. The size of welfare programmes and the tax burden they impose determine the debate about welfare states (TOMKA 2008). Proponents argue that despite its universality, unconditional basic income can

be funded by reducing administrative costs and bureaucratic burdens of existing social protection systems through abandoning means tests and willingness-to-work tests (RAVENTOS 2007, HIRSCH 2015). Thus, the question is whether the social consequences of welfare programmes should be judged positively or negatively, as this could indicate the extent to which it is worth bearing the burden of the potential economic consequences.

### **Is it a fundamental right for members of society?**

The answer to this question is not self-evident, either. SACHS (2015) argues that the related social dilemma is characteristic of certain value systems, which, like in several Central European countries, is also present in Hungary. At the heart of the dilemma is the extent to which individuals are willing to bear costs for the benefit of the entire community, knowing that this could also improve the functioning of the economy. According to those who view basic income positively, beneficiaries are not stigmatised and can avoid being relegated to the status of claimants (VAN PARIJS 2004). Eliminating stigmatisation would allow for the dissolution of the categories for deserving and undeserving poverty, which has a degrading and demotivating effect for those who fall into the undeserving category. The right to protection can be claimed because it implies collectively valid and legally institutionalised guarantees which are independent of individuals' personal characteristics and merits (CASTEL 2005b).

The lift effect theory (HRADIL 1995) may support the fear that unconditional basic income would not be effective in reducing inequalities, and the distinction between the deserving and undeserving would remain. According to Hradil, as overall welfare rises, the position of all social groups improves, which in fact results in no change in inequality. This view suggests that poverty cannot be completely eradicated by any universal benefit, but such a policy can reduce destitution by providing a life of material, intellectual, cultural, and political dignity (ARTNER 2014). As regards basic income, the question is whether individuals recognise any level of support as a fundamental right and, in light of the social dilemma, whether individuals are willing to bear costs for the sake of a generally higher standard of living and thus for the entire community or instead believe that everyone is responsible for their own prosperity.

### **Is it feasible to implement given the various related interests?**

The moral notion that the increasing leisure time of a happy and productive population could pose a significant threat to the established order perpetuates in our society the view that work is a means of self-fulfilment (GRAEBER 2018). According to this approach, work is a moral value in itself, and those who are not willing to subject themselves to work discipline are not worthy of support. This system managerial feudalism, in which economic forces provide incentives, and people work more because their thinking is dominated by the idea that the desire for consumer pleasures can be satisfied by laborious work, as in Weberian thought. According to this view, work in the labour market is performed, beyond the gain of income, as a principled duty, so that productive and useful work is part of a human life which is considered meaningful (WEBER 1930).

Opponents of a basic income argue that its unconditional nature would threaten the attitude that the desire for consumer pleasures can only be satisfied through hard work. They

argue that this benefit does not fit into the current operation of the welfare state, as workfare systems are paternalistic, link benefits to work, and stipulate that individuals must show a willingness to work in exchange for a welfare benefit (STANDING 2012). However, the unconditional nature of basic income means that these conditions cannot be enforced. If basic income were to have the effect of reducing the number of workers, it would also have the effect of reducing consumption, thus impeding the growth rate of the economy (BAKSAY et al. 2017). This would result in capital migrating to more favourable investment areas (ARTNER 2014). The real threat of capital flight, which could jeopardise the efficiency of capital and profit-oriented production, is perceived by economic forces as well as policy and decision makers. In summary, there are multiple counter-interests in relation to the implementation of unconditional basic income.

### **Does it disincentivise work?**

One of the most common fears about unconditional basic income is that it would reduce the motivation to work by separating income from labour market participation (BERGMANN 2004). A fundamental element of work is to provide a living, but beyond guaranteeing income, work has several social aspects (MEYER 2017). According to these, work ensures social integration, structures human life, regulates daily routine across activity and leisure time, enables the maintenance of a social network, and creates a sense of security for the worker. Unconditional basic income could transform these norms by challenging the importance of work, which is why there is so much uncertainty surrounding the issue.

Nonetheless, the importance of work is maintained by people's intrinsic motivation, which acts as a compelling force on individuals, motivating them to act rather than to do nothing (FROMM 1941, KEYNES 2017). Since the motivation to act is not based on basic physiological needs but a deeper impulse, namely the human will (SCHOPENHAUER 1992), unconditional basic income would not easily influence internal factors besides removing the compulsory character of work and satisfying basic physiological needs. This is because it would not satisfy the desire to accumulate wealth and could hardly replace the psychological significance of work. On the one hand, unconditional basic income would enable the satisfaction of basic needs as opposed to the standard of living to which people have become accustomed (BECK 2000). On the other hand, it would free people from the constraints of work but not from meaningful work. Despite the fact that capitalism is based on labour, which provides an identity for the worker, SZELÉNYI (2014) argues that there will always be people who would not have an incentive to work if an unconditional benefit were to be provided, which could function for them as a guaranteed unemployment benefit.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most common fears about unconditional basic income is that it would reduce the motivation to work (BERGMANN 2004). This concern is based on the sharp contrast between the provision of a basic income as a fundamental right and the principle of performance-based distribution, which is considered to be the basis of modern capitalist societies (AULENBACHER – GRUBNER 2021). It is therefore important to examine people's attitudes towards distribution as to whether the global transformation of work has brought about a discernible shift away from the preference for performance-based distribution. Unconditional basic

income provides an opportunity to examine this as it represents a form of distribution which contradicts the current performance principle.

Media reporting, political party campaigns, pilot programmes of certain countries, and thus the vernacular interpretation of basic income endow the term with more diverse content and more flexibility as compared to Van Parijs' conceptual definition (2004) used in the literature. Even among the YouTube comments we analysed, it is not possible to determine the exact definition of basic income on which people form their opinions. We hypothesise that watching YouTube videos provides a relatively consistent insight into the application of basic income. Based on the above, the focus of this study is to examine people's comments to uncover their attitudes, instinctive reactions, and values associated with their understanding of the economic policy instrument.

Based on the above, the following research questions are formulated to better understand the attitude in society towards unconditional basic income:

What are the central concepts in the corpus of YouTube comments which underpin the understanding of unconditional basic income in society?

What is the perception of unconditional basic income in YouTube comments, which express the attitude of users on the analysed online platform towards this policy instrument?

What value patterns do users exhibit who compose YouTube comments on basic income?

## METHODS

### Data collection

YouTube is one of the most popular video sharing platforms, with over 2 billion registered users (<https://blog.youtube/press/>). The importance of the site is demonstrated by the fact that content producers upload about 500 hours of new content to the platform every minute. Analysing the comments on videos, even if the user has not viewed the video in its entirety, can provide useful information on how the group of commenting users interprets unconditional basic income.

On social media platforms and video-sharing platforms, behavioural engagement is usually expressed symbolically by the individual, through likes, comments, or shares (DUBOVI – TABAK 2021). Posting comments presupposes active interest at a higher level as compared to the role of a passive observer (KHAN 2017). The ability to participate in the process of argumentation, which could occur by responding to other people's comments, making statements, and refuting or supporting claims, constitutes a form of cognitive engagement (LUCAS et al. 2014). It is important to note that the opinions expressed by YouTube users cannot be considered representative of Hungarian society as a whole.

As part of the cross-sectional data collection, YouTube videos were listed on 2 January 2023. Searches were carried out for the Hungarian equivalents of the terms "*unconditional basic income*" and "*basic income*" in incognito mode, excluding search preferences associated with a specific user account. The researchers did not watch the videos as the research does not focus on the content of the videos. An objective sample was sought in order to determine the average user's perception of basic income, irrespective of political affiliation.

The final analysis included 32 videos produced over a long period of time, between 2013 and 2022. For each video, the available database included the following metadata: video identifier, comments associated with the videos, number of likes and date of publication for each comment.

The YouTube API (*Application Programming Interfaces*) enables the collection of comments, so such data is considered public, which means that it can be viewed without subscribing to the data source and without explicit permission from the author of the comment. Following the corresponding best practice (REILLY 2014), we do not publish the titles of the videos for privacy reasons, so no third party can trace back the source of any comment. Moreover, in the analysis we also avoid quoting comments verbatim and paraphrasing them. The data available does not contain personal information such as name, age, place of residence, or education, so the database uses only aggregated information and does not allow conclusions to be drawn on socio-demographic background. The innovative nature of the methodology applied in the research means that it does not follow the usual standard procedures for analysing the phenomena of reality. The thoughts, ideas, and attitudes on which this research is based can nonetheless be explored using such method.

The other source for the comments database was the social listening software SentiOne (<https://sentione.com/>), where we also conducted cross-sectional data collection by searching for the Hungarian equivalents of the terms “*unconditional basic income*” and “*basic income*” on 21 May 2022. This mention-based search engine performs searches on various online platforms (social media, blog, forum, website), from which it produces a database. Its results contain the terms as mentioned either by themselves or within contexts. The detailed results provided by technology enable a qualitative approach with detailed analysis and categorisation (VANCSÓ – KMETTY 2021).

Data collection from two sources, YouTube API and SentiOne, was necessary because the YouTube API provides a longer time span for accessing comments, while SentiOne only provides data going back three years. Despite this limitation, collecting data using the SentiOne software had the additional advantage of allowing the data to be interpreted in context.

## Data cleaning and analysis

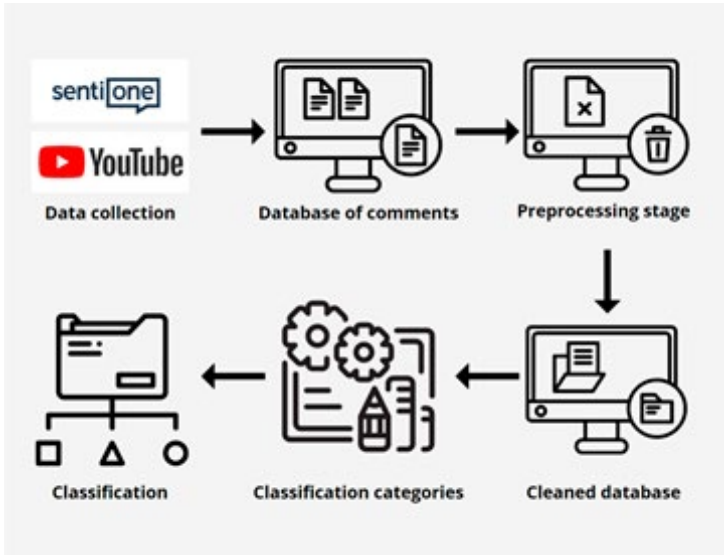
The comments obtained were used to produce our text corpus, which underwent several filters before the pre-processing phase. The following were removed from the database:

1. Duplicative comments.
2. Comments without explanation; comments consisting of emoticons; obscenities.
3. Comments about the video creator or the operation of the channel.

As a result, of the thousands of raw comments, 710 were included in the final database. The size of this dataset is irrelevant as to whether it constitutes Big Data; in deciding this question, the determining factor was the unstructured and non-standardised nature of the texts (NÉMETH et al. 2020). The amount of information produced in the world is growing rapidly and is increasingly stored digitally. This digital data can be considered Big Data (SALGANICK 2017).

To facilitate data analysis, the pre-processing phase included the cleaning of the corpus (NÉMETH et al. 2020, MÉSZÁROS – SEBŐK 2018). Three important pre-processing steps are necessary: the removal of stop words, tokenisation, and stemming (MÉSZÁROS – SEBŐK 2018,

ÇOBAN et al. 2021). We performed the pre-processing steps using the toolkit called Magyarlanc (ZSIBRITA et al. 2013), which resulted in a cleaned database. We then developed the categories of classification for the analysis using the bag of words method, performed sentiment analysis, and finally categorised the collected comments according to the pre-defined classification. The process of data cleaning and analysis is illustrated in Figure 1.



**1. Figure: From data collection to classification. Source: Author's own elaboration.**

The most effective way to reveal the characteristics of a document is to examine the frequency of words and phrases (MÉSZÁROS – SEBŐK 2018). This is commonly carried out using the bag of words method. In this method, we analysed the frequency of each term within the available corpus. We identified the most frequent terms and combinations of terms, which we classified into five groups each based on negative and positive evaluations. By identifying the central concepts in the corpus based on the YouTube comments section, we sought to identify the terms which commenting users chose when interpreting unconditional basic income.

Platform users' position on unconditional basic income may provide interesting insight on this policy instrument. Sentiment analysis provides the tool to examine this by revealing the attitudes and polarity of opinions expressed by the author of the analysed text (NÉMETH et al. 2020, THELWALL 2017). We conducted our analysis using the Hungarian Sentiment Lexicon, which contained the polarity of words (SZABÓ 2014). We used this procedure as a semi-supervised method, whereby we switched to manual coding when the machine could not automatically categorise the given text fragment due to colloquial phrases. The sentiment analysis of the corpus helps understand whether the acceptance or rejection of unconditional basic income is more dominant among commenting users and reveals the attitude of users on the examined online platform towards this economic policy instrument.

Based on the five groups each for negative and positive evaluation formed using the bag of words method and sentiment analysis, the comments were categorised using double-blind

coding. The main advantage of this approach is that the researcher's meaningful interpretation of the text, which can detect irony, slang, or indirect references, yields more valid results than automated coding (MÉSZÁROS – SEBŐK 2018). This identified the most frequent value patterns related to unconditional basic income on the YouTube platform.

## RESULTS

### Central concepts in the examined YouTube comments section corpus

In our first research question, we sought to describe the concepts determining the interpretation of unconditional basic income in the examined YouTube comments. We analysed this by identifying the most frequent terms using the bag of words method. Due to the research topic, the most dominant term in the corpus is “basic income”. In addition, three key dimensions can be identified. The first dimension relates to work, with “working”, “money”, “free”, and “labour” as key concepts. These terms make clear reference to our current social order, in which work is central to individuals' lives. The next dimension is the moral category, with terms such as “human”, “right”, “need”, “benefit”, “societal”, and “social”, which, unlike the terms of the previous dimension, can refer to the moral and welfare aspects of unconditional basic income. The third dimension relates to large systems and includes the words “government”, “state”, and “capitalism”, which suggest that the subject of unconditional basic income is difficult to separate from the interpretation of current economic and social conditions.

The frequency of occurrence of words and phrases illustrates the central concepts in the examined YouTube comments corpus. A list of terms can help classify individual comments and map the logic between them (OLÁH 2021). The starting point for developing a word list was the approach developed by Gilbert (GILBERT et al. 2018), mentioned at the beginning of this paper. According to this approach, the debates on unconditional basic income unfold around four main aspects: funding, moral philosophy, feasibility, and motivation. Accordingly, the first category of our word list consists of terms related to the funding of the basic income (two dimensions: affordability and unaffordability).

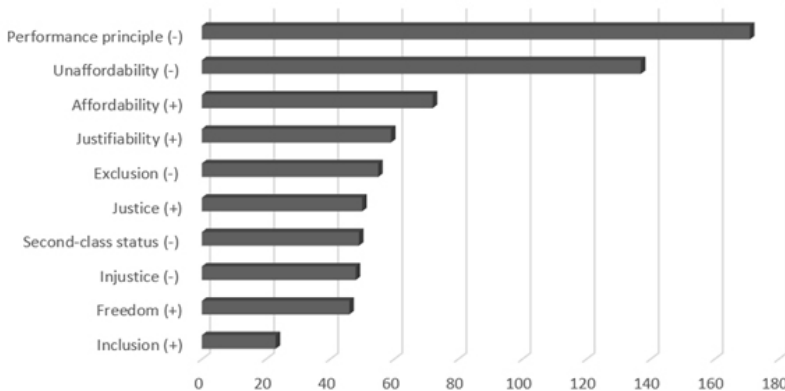
The second category comprises considerations of moral philosophy, primarily related to the unconditionality of the benefit (two dimensions: justice and injustice). We split the third pillar of Gilbert and colleagues' work, feasibility, into two parts, as we consider that this way the issue can be examined comprehensively. On the one hand, feasibility is related to universality (the dimensions of inclusion and exclusion). On the other hand, the arguments are also linked to subjective well-being (the dimensions of freedom and second-class status), which comprises the psychological and social consequences of implementation. For the fifth category, the focus is on the questions of motivation linked to the transformation of the normative system (the dimensions of justifiability and the performance principle). For each of the five categories, a distinction can be made between a positive and negative dimension, just as the theoretical framework also highlights the inherent dichotomy in the assessment of unconditional basic income. The keywords for each group (ten groups in total, five positive and five negative) were generated by examining the frequency of words and phrases and categorising the comments into these groups in subsequent stages of the research.

The polarity of these groups was determined by sentiment analysis, using the available lexicon (SZABÓ 2014). Of all comments, 65% were classified as negative, while 35% were positive.

We categorised the positive terms in connection with basic income into five groups: affordability, inclusion, justice, justifiability, and freedom. We also classified the negative features of unconditional basic income into five groups, which are the opposites of the positive features: unaffordability, exclusion, injustice, performance principle, and second-class status.

## Value patterns in comments

The word lists described above formed the basis of the classification, whereby each comment was categorised into one of the five positive or five negative groups using manual coding. In doing so, we were interested in detecting dominant value patterns which characterise the writers of comments on unconditional basic income. Figure 2. shows the categories.



**2. Figure: Dominant value patterns (number of comments). Source: Author's own elaboration.**

As regards funding, the two extreme positions are affordability and unaffordability. Following the classification, the second and third most common values pertain to the issue of affordability, which appears to concern commenting users the most. A higher proportion of the analysed comments consider unconditional basic income to be unaffordable as opposed to fundable and feasible.

The most frequently mentioned aspect among commenting users is the performance principle, which does not appear to reconcile with the idea of a fundamental right. Among all the examined categories, the gap between the two ends of the spectrum is the largest with respect to the change in the normative system. Indeed, 24% (171 comments) make reference to the performance principle, which is in contrast to the 8% (59 comments) which can justify the existence of basic income.

There is also a fairly large difference between the two values of universality: among negative judgements regarding basic income, exclusion is the third most common value, while its opposite, inclusion, is the least common.

As for unconditionality, commenting users appear to support the two extremes in almost equal proportions, with justice mentioned in two more comments than injustice. The two poles

of subjective well-being are also close, with second-class status mentioned in only more three comments than freedom.

It is also striking in Figure 2 that positive value patterns (inclusion and freedom) emerge in a small proportion of comments. Among the positive arguments, feasibility has the highest support, well ahead of the other positive categories but still lagging the categories with a negative approach which were mentioned the most (unaffordability and the performance principle).

## DISCUSSION

### Assessment of unconditional basic income

Of the analysed comments, 65% were negative and only 35% expressed support for a feature of this economic policy instrument. The reason why negative attitudes are almost twice as high as positive attitudes could be due to media coverage, which portrays novel and seemingly unpredictable topics as a risk to the idealised order of society (KITZINGER 2000). Unconditional basic income creates distrust among individuals. The feasibility of its implementation raises numerous questions, and the related discourse is full of doubts and unanswered questions. These questions relate to one of the most sensitive and crucial areas of human life, namely subsistence. People sense the strongest threat in relation the issue of existential vulnerability, as human nature constantly strives for subsistence (POLICY AGENDA 2018). Thus, the high proportion of negative value judgements appears to be a logical response in the comments.

The identification of the most frequently occurring terms also confirms that the comments focus on existential security. As regards the distribution of wealth, one may consider two types of distribution systems: the market system and redistribution by the welfare state (ÖRKÉNY – SZÉKELYI 2011). This dichotomy is also reflected in the analysis of frequently occurring terms. On the one hand, certain words symbolise the existence which can be achieved through the labour market (e.g. working and labour), and on the other hand, the need for a welfare contribution to ensure a livelihood also appears (e.g. benefit and social).

### Forces affecting existential security: the normative system and funding

The classification reveals that the most frequent value patterns about unconditional basic income relate to the emphasis on the performance principle and to the unaffordability of the policy. These two negative value patterns are closely linked to existential security, which in turn explains their predominance.

In the context of the performance principle (the negative dimension of the normative system), comments closely associate work with value creation and a sense of vocation. Hungarian people are typically work-centred (KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY 2014), so recognition and success through labour play a primary role in their lives, as also emphasised in the comments. Therefore, a large percentage of the commenting users wish to think in terms of a work-based society, which they do not consider to be compatible with the potential loss of performance which may arise from unconditional basic income.

KAPITÁNY and KAPITÁNY (2014) see the possibility of exiting over-centralised system of work as a possible solution. This would increase the importance of self-reliance, whereby individuals can pursue their own goals through activities of their own choice, which would improve their performance and give them greater satisfaction. Self-employment is possible through farming or small entrepreneurial positions and by performing meaningful work. Regarding unconditional basic income, this freer form of work, which reflects a transformed concept of labour, is expressed in the group of values termed justifiability (the positive dimension of the normative system). Relatively few comments mentioned the justifiability of unconditional basic income because in the current economic and social system, a free concept of work appears distant. The reason is that market conditions and the functioning of the political system are not conducive to the freedom of labour (KAPITÁNY – KAPITÁNY 2014). HONNETH (2009) points out that the trend of intellectual disengagement from the world of work is not in line with the general mood of the population, as a large section of the population still defines its social identity in terms of its role in the labour process. This is illustrated by the dominance of the performance principle over the justifiability.

### **In the intersection of interests**

The fifth most frequently mentioned category is exclusion (the negative dimension of universality). Such comments are characterised by a strong scapegoating mechanism. This can be seen as a kind of mass psychological phenomenon, whereby precisely those individuals who suffer the most from social problems are named as the cause of the problems (CSOBA 2011). This mechanism is generally not based on proven facts but rather on prejudices. Commenting users would strongly prefer excluding members of minority groups from unconditional basic income, including families with several children and those in public employment programmes, who are portrayed as undeserving of a universal benefit.

As the work-based society is an important determinant of public opinion, commenting users' primary concern with these groups is unemployment. The unemployed are attacked primarily because they are perceived by the rest of society as withdrawing from their social obligations by receiving social benefits and not engaging in the production of social value (CSOBA 2011).

According to Castel, the feeling of resentment is a combination of envy and contempt (CASTEL 2005a). The fact that this feeling is fuelled by social inequality leads individuals to blame their own misfortune on the social hierarchy, either on the social group immediately below or the one immediately above them. The feeling of resentment triggers a strong frustration that develops defensive attitudes in individuals, which leads them to regard anything new as alien, to reject pluralism, and to refuse to tolerate such differences. Within the category of exclusion, commenting users identify the social group of immigrants as being directly below them and the affluent as being directly above them, who should not be entitled to a benefit such as basic income under any circumstances. High-income people are not considered to be in need of a universal benefit (TANNER 2015, PIACHAUD 2016). The desire to exclude immigrants may also have been reinforced by anti-immigrant political rhetoric. In Hungary, anti-immigrant rhetoric has been observed since 2010 (DESSEWFFY et al. 2018). In summary, the comments reflect the rejection of universality and the exclusion of certain groups more often than the attitude of inclusion.

In their study, ÖRKÉNY and SZÉKELYI (2010) reconstructed what people considered to be just and unjust, and what principles they chose when talking about a more just world. Typically, the most accepted principle of justice was found to be the individualist ideology (emphasis on individual performance and merit, the system is based on the principles of neutrality and equal opportunities), but egalitarianism was also relatively highly accepted (inequalities are reduced, the state becomes the normative regulator of social distribution, emphasis on collective institutional responsibility). The high level of support for work-based society emphasised earlier is confirmed in the analysis by ÖRKÉNY and SZÉKELYI (2010), with the ideology of individualist orientation considered as the most just principle. This emphasises individual performance and merit in the functioning of society. The close proximity of the two dimensions in the category of unconditionality is explained by the primacy of the individualist principle and the strong but not dominant position of the egalitarian principle. Within the dimension of injustice, the prevailing individualist principle of justice is apparent as its proponents emphasise that the system is based on the principles of neutrality and equal opportunities, whereby everyone has an equal chance of getting ahead. Rights cannot be guaranteed *ab ovo*, as this would only lead to a reduction in social contributions. As for the justice dimension, commenting users consider that redistribution by the welfare state is necessary. This can help avoid social exclusion, ensure the well-being of citizens, reduce social inequalities, and create conditions for a decent human life (ÖRKÉNY – SZÉKELYI 2011). The emphasis on these two principles within society makes it difficult to assess unconditional basic income from the perspective of justice.

### **The shackles of our thinking**

In the comments, the two dimensions of the subjective well-being category, namely freedom and second-class status, were equally represented. Values related to freedom such as solidarity, trust, or positive thinking, cover positive changes in the subjective well-being of unconditional basic income. In contrast, second-class status emphasises the increasingly prevalent processes of dependency and polarisation. Second-class status is one of the least frequently mentioned negative dimensions. This may be due to the fact that individuals seek to satisfy their material needs for existential security first, and only after that can they identify higher needs (INGLEHART – FLANAGAN 1987). People are more concerned with securing the material aspects of life, which is linked to affordability and the changing norms of employment, than with the formulation of higher needs, which are more difficult to identify.

Hungary shows signs of closed-mindedness (KELLER 2009), with relatively little importance attached to civil and political liberties, low active political participation in people's daily lives, low tolerance of differences and consequently little trust in others, and little emphasis on self-actualisation values. As a result of these characteristics, the issue of freedom is more dominant than that of second-class status.

As regards subjective well-being, there is a conflict between the argument that basic income can guarantee a higher degree of freedom and the reasoning that dependence on state involvement would increase. According to the neoliberal criticism of welfare systems, increasing state involvement leads to a system which restricts individual freedom (TOMKA 2008), both because

compulsory insurance is contrary to individual freedom of choice and because a system of large tax deductions and progressive taxes violates the right to property. HAYEK (1978) argues that the welfare state undermines the efficient functioning of the market by taking away the wealth of the successful while prolonging the dependence of those in need. Hayek's interpretation shows similarities with the analysed comments which suggest that state intervention needs to be minimised in order not to reinforce dependence on the state.

## SUMMARY

In this study, we focussed on unconditional basic income, which nowadays receives increasingly widespread attention as economic and social processes shift. We sought to explore the values and opinions on this policy instrument in the comments section of YouTube videos on the topic. Our research used a mixed-method approach as the data collection and storage, sentiment analysis, and the bag of words method were implemented using relevant pieces of software, while categorisation was carried out by researchers' manual coding.

The identification of the most frequent words shows that the comments mostly focus on existential security and the world of work. This is the topic which concerns those who comment on the issue of basic income the most. Some words symbolise the existential security attainable in the labour market (working and labour), but others refer to the area of welfare (benefit and social).

In examining the comments, we were also interested in the perception of unconditional basic income and in the value patterns of users on the analysed online platform in relation to this policy instrument. As a result of the research, we classified positive terms regarding basic income into five groups: affordability, inclusion, justice, justifiability, and freedom. We also classified the negative features of unconditional basic income into five groups: unaffordability, exclusion, injustice, performance principle, and second-class status. Negative mentions were almost twice as common as positive ones. The groups were created to correspond to one dimension each of affordability, universality, unconditionality, normative system, and subjective well-being.

Funding is considered a central issue in the context of unconditional basic income, as both positive and negative values were mentioned in a significant proportion of comments. The importance of this category reflects the primacy of existential stability in people lives.

The impact of unconditional basic income on motivation to work is central not only in the literature but also in the comments. The greatest proportion of commenting users emphasise the performance principle. The gap between the two ends of the spectrum is the widest for the shifting normative system as compared to the other examined categories. The emphasis on the performance principle can be explained by the primary role of work-based recognition in people's lives. Although the effects of globalisation transform values and attitudes towards work at the societal level, the meritocratic, performance-based mindset, which is a feature of modern capitalist societies, remains the dominant value in the perceptions of distribution (AULENBACHER – GRUBNER 2021). In conclusion, the analysis of comments suggests that changing work values have not triggered a sharp shift away from the preference for performance-based distribution.

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