



EUROPE

Rue Hector Blondiau, 22 7070 Mignault (Belgium)

Tél. FR. : Brasseur J.P. 0499 35 85 72

ENG. : Roussel Pascal 0473 97 49 67



info@vivant.org

www.vivanteurope.org

*In Favour of a Social Europe,
the Developing Countries,
more Humane and
Environment-Friendly Globalisation*

ELECTRONIC VIVANT- EUROPE

N° 21 (August 2005)

MANIFESTO OF VIVANT (extracts)
(Belgium)

- Summary:**
- 1. Vivant Strives for the Accomplishment of the Ideals of the French Revolution**
 - 2. Equality Before the Law for All**
 - 3. Mutual Granting of Basic Income**
 - 4. Basic Income and Social Capital**
 - 5. International Solidarity**
 - 6. Basic Income and Development Cooperation**
 - 7. Solidarity with the Handicapped**
 - 8. Two Effects of Basic Income**
 - a) Basic Income Brings People Together**
 - b) The Right to Intellectual Work and Care Work for All**
 - (1) Won't a Basic Income Produce Profiteers?**
 - (2) People Don't Work Only for the Money**
 - (3) Basic Income and Human Rights**
 - 9. World as a Work of Art**
 - a) Environmental Effects of Basic Income**
 - b) Society as an Open Work of Art**
 - c) A Basic Income for the Rainforests?**

1. Vivant Strives for the Accomplishment of the Ideals of the French Revolution

One of the ideals of the French Revolution is **freedom**. Having a Basic Income gives you the freedom to choose whether you want to work or not, and whether you want to work full-time or just a bit. Stepping over from a salaried position to free-lance work becomes less hazardous. It becomes a lot easier to combine work with study, or even to stop working entirely to do other things. Your means of existence will always be guaranteed by your Basic Income. If you work, you simply earn more on top of your Basic Income. The choice is up to the individual. **At Vivant we believe that the individual is perfectly capable of deciding on the best way to use his/her freedom.**

Freedom of choice and self-determination is something Vivant considers essential. It must be distributed equitably in the form of opportunities for free choice. **Equitable freedom is at the centre of Vivant's concerns in all fields.** For in the last analysis the various fields of life are all related.

2. Equality Before the Law for All

Vivant pleads for complete equality before the law of all permanent members of the Belgian community based on law. Everybody has exactly the same rights and responsibilities as everybody else.

Vivant views the notion of absolute equality before the law as a fundamental **and unassailable acquisition** of the Enlightenment.

Belgian nationality is the outward sign of this equality of citizens before the law. The Belgian identity card is a sort of membership card for the Belgian community based on law. Vivant rejects the classical notion of "nationality". For Vivant, **to be a national of a country means that one is part of the society of that country, no more and no less.** The cultural or ethnic origin of an individual is therefore entirely insignificant. As far as Vivant is concerned, proof of nationality could just as well be given a different name. All individuals residing legally and permanently in Belgium have the same rights and the same responsibilities towards the community. To become a member of the Belgian community based on law, all you have to do is request it. Belgian "nationality" is granted without a waiting period, without examination and without the application of any other criteria of appreciation. After all, a baby born in Belgium does not have to take a test or wait five or ten years in order to prove that he/she has become "integrated". Obviously, you will have to give up your old citizenship on becoming a Belgian citizen. Vivant is against double nationality because it creates legal inequalities between the citizens of the same community based on law.

Note that the Basic Income is independent of a person's nationality. It depends only on a person's legal and permanent residence in the country. Foreigners who live in Belgium therefore have the right to a Basic Income, as do recognized refugees and candidate refugees, on the condition that they do not receive one from another country.

3. Mutual Granting of Basic Income

Vivant supports the introduction of a universal, unconditional and individual Basic Income.

Vivant also wants the introduction of a Basic Income **to be decided on democratically**. This means that the members of the community expressly and effectively recognize each other's unconditional right to live. That is solidarity in its purest form.

4. Basic Income and Social Capital

The introduction of a universal, unconditional and individual Basic Income provides people with the necessary opportunities to produce social capital, and at the same time generates social capital.

What is social capital? **Social capital is the foundation of the whole economy.** It comprises the trust that members of the community have in one another and their willingness to help each other out and to cooperate. To take a simple example, in our society you can ask anybody on the street for directions and expect an honest answer. Even such a simple example of social capital has economic importance. Lorry drivers in unfamiliar areas can save a lot of time by asking directions. And even if they do not stop to ask the way, they know that they could, and are therefore able to get on the road with a tranquil mind.

This is typical of social capital. It inspires confidence and the assurance that is necessary for being an active agent in the economy. This trust in other people, the expectation that others are reliable, that they will help you out if you need it – this is a productive force. A climate of trust and mutual respect is a necessary ingredient in human life.

Social capital is a real factor of production (alongside work, raw materials and machines for example). Clearly therefore, investing in social capital has economic consequences. If the social capital diminishes within a society, it can be felt in declining productivity.

Another happy characteristic of social capital is the fact that the more you use it, the bigger it gets. It is the same with ideas. Developing and using an idea generates more ideas. **In other words, use of social capital creates social capital.** Create new relations of cooperation on the basis of mutual trust and it's plain sailing.

If we as a community together decide democratically that everybody has a right, unconditionally and individually, **to a decent Basic Income, then this Basic Income will engender an enormous amount of social capital.** Such an event would in effect mean that every individual is explicitly granted the right to exist. The right would no longer be theoretical but effectively recognized by democratic decision. In giving to each other a Basic Income we explicitly give each other the opportunity to participate in all forms of work, including intellectual work and care work (see Glossary) – all unconditionally. **In this way everybody increases the credit at the disposal of the community in the form of social capital.**

5. International Solidarity

A Basic Income is a sign of solidarity beyond the bounds of the small circles of similarly minded people, people of the same colour or people from the same place.

If a Basic Income is first introduced in Belgium or Europe, all those who reside here legally and permanently will receive the same Basic Income. But this should not be to the disadvantage of those living in communities where the system has not (yet) been introduced. For Vivant, open and honest

trade relations with the South are an expression of the same solidarity between people. Vivant does not want to create a European "stronghold" with the introduction of a Basic Income. A Basic Income is not a question of favouring one's own people. In the end it is the responsibility of every community based on law to democratically decide on the introduction of a Basic Income. In order to be an expression of solidarity, the decision must be taken by mutual agreement. To bring our social security system into equilibrium with the forms of social security existing for example in so-called low-wage countries, is one of the greatest challenges that now face us. It is the responsibility of every community based on law to prevent exploitation abroad as well as at home. European fair trade organizations can lend valuable advice on this matter.

6. Basic Income and Development Cooperation

Vivant also supports the movement to free third-world countries of their debts. These debts have mostly been contracted by authoritarian regimes. The banks authorized loans without carefully examining the risks. In general, the population of these countries did not participate in the decision to grant the loans and benefited even less from the money allocated. It is therefore not fair that the living standards of these people should fall in order to reimburse the debts or pay the interest on the debts.

Vivant is also of the opinion that the introduction of a Basic Income in third-world countries would be an effective way to spend the budget for development cooperation. It is possible to give a Basic Income of €40 (BEF 1,614 or \$36) to every Nicaraguan with 1% of our GNP. For the Nicaraguans, this is equivalent to a spending power of €247.89 (more than BEF 10,000 or \$223), because basic products in Nicaragua are less expensive than here. At the same time a local economic market is created in that country. **A Basic Income also gives maximum autonomy and freedom for own initiative to the individual people who receive it.**

7. Solidarity with the Handicapped the Sick and the Underprivileged

Vivant is convinced that the handicapped should not be considered a separate group within the community. **Every person with a handicap has the right to a Basic Income** like everybody else, but he/she also receives supplementary financial help. This supplement is necessary in order for the handicapped to be able to participate fully in the community. Vivant aims to offer the handicapped full opportunities for integration, without too many complications, rules and regulations or paper-work. Vivant also aims to provide **for their specific** needs in matters of housing and health care.

Nor can the sick be fobbed off with just a Basic Income. For Vivant, everybody automatically has the right to reliable health insurance, including those who have never worked.

Of course the Basic Income does not solve all social problems. In some cases emergency relief will still be necessary. **Creating the necessary means to do this is also a question of solidarity.**

8. Two Effects of Basic Income

While the present social security system **encourages people to live apart**, with a Basic Income more people would probably choose to live together. Everybody is also enabled to do intellectual and care work. The environmental effects of a Basic Income are also not to be neglected

a) Basic Income Brings People Together

Human beings are naturally gregarious and sociable. They like to be and live with others. If they choose to live together, they do so for the sociability and because it is more economical.

Today our social security system splits us up a lot. **It atomises people instead of bringing them together.** Unemployed people who live together lose a part of their benefits. Handicapped people and pensioners abandon their marriage plans because the sacrifices would be too great. People opt to live apart, each on his/her own little island. **This is social security at its meanest.**

A Basic Income does not differentiate between cohabitants and people who live alone, or between heads of families and their "unemancipated subjects". Fraudulent cohabitation is no longer possible. Officials knocking on your door in the early morning in order to check that you are really sleeping alone and other such violations of privacy and of human dignity at last become obsolete. A Basic Income is a strictly individual and unconditional right enjoyed by everybody. Whoever wants to start living together with somebody else does not have to give up any fraction of his/her Basic Income. Cohabitation can never be sanctioned. **In Vivant's system cohabitation is purely advantageous socially and economically.** So people will probably cohabit more. As a consequence, energy and individual consumption will be economized, and this means that Basic Income also has environmental advantages. Perhaps a Basic Income even enables people consciously to choose to consume less. **In any case, free, creative people can freely and creatively choose how they want to live with others.**

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 12

That a Basic Income also has a great effect on the redistribution of wealth can clearly be seen if you look at families where only one of the partners has a paid job. Today, these families mostly belong to the lower income categories. With Vivant's system, the partner who stays at home receives a Basic Income. For most families with one working partner that extra income would certainly not be a superfluous luxury.

b) The Right to Intellectual Work and Care Work for All

Vivant is in favour of the right to paid work for everybody. But work is more than just a paid job on the anonymous labour market of goods and services. That is why Vivant argues that everybody also has the right to intellectual and care work. The economy would not be able to function at all if people did not continuously carry out unpaid care work for each other, nor if people were not able to develop new skills spontaneously. **Even in our present society, people still spend more time on unpaid work than on paid work.**

A student, for example, works. So do people who look after their elderly or sick family members. The activities involved in bringing up children is also "work", even though it does not produce goods and even though it is not always remunerated. **Although that intellectual work and that care work are not remunerated, they are vital for our economy.** It is a question of mutual responsibility for each other.

Of course our society gives some people the means to engage in full-time study or teaching, scientific research or care for the elderly and the sick. These remain sectors where it is necessary to provide paid work.

But studying in the widest sense of the word, as well as caring for our families, are also things that everybody does. **Studying and care are simply a part of a fulfilling life.** To be a fulfilled human being, one needs the space to carry out all these kinds of unpaid commitments. Everybody needs a certain margin in order to be able to develop, to care for children or parents, or simply to carry out voluntary work. All these activities depend on spontaneous qualities such as sympathy, empathy and concern. **These qualities are priceless and cannot be bought.** But you can create the space for them to blossom. **This creation of space** for learning and study, care work and voluntary commitments, constitutes precisely one of the important roles that a Basic Income fulfils.

Without these spontaneous activities society cannot function. Today we act as though only paid work is "real" work, and we often unfairly take advantage of unpaid work, for which there exist fewer and fewer opportunities. **By neglecting unpaid work, we confirm the self-fulfilling idea that people only do things for money.** In this way we are destroying social trust and social capital. A Basic Income counters this tendency. The introduction of a Basic Income is the recognition of each other's capacities for empathy, sympathy and concern. In this way more social capital is built up.

For with a Basic Income you effectively get the space to devote some of your energy to intellectual and care work. It is a form of concrete solidarity.

(1) Won't a Basic Income Produce Profiteers?

"If you don't work, you don't eat!"

"A Basic Income creates nothing but laziness and profiteering!"

"It's actually very unfair – everybody gets the same Basic Income as everybody else. Some people will be giving a lot back in the form of intellectual work, care work and social capital, but others will depend entirely on the Basic Income and not give anything back to the community. Real democracy means giving to each according to his/her needs and everybody contributing according to his/her capacities."

This is the strongest argument against a Basic Income – you have to deserve an income. You have to give something to get it, and so it should not be unconditional.

Then comes the question, What should you have to do to get it? How should your efforts be measured? If we decide democratically to grant each other a Basic Income, we do it of course also to create the opportunity for more intellectual work, more care work and more social capital. **In other words, for imagination, human concern and trust.** For the imagination has to be given free rein in order to produce innovative ideas; concrete human concern is the source of all care work; and trust is the stuff out of which social capital is constructed. But how can you compel the imagination? How can you measure concern or trust? These are things that by definition cannot be enforced or measured. Consequently, the State should not concern itself with them.

Of course a Basic Income is an investment that we make as a community. And of course the community has the right to expect "social returns" from that investment. **But social returns cannot be divided, measured or controlled on the level of the individual.** There is only one norm that

allows us to verify whether the social returns are great enough – the democratic decision of the whole community based on law.

If you view a Basic Income only from the standpoint of those who receive it, then it does create private freedom. But viewed from the standpoint of the community that grants it, its true significance becomes clear. **It is something that we give to each other, collectively, by a democratic decision of the whole community. And for the community taken collectively, it delivers a significant amount of "social return".**

(2) People Don't Work Only for the Money

What motivates people to work? Anthropological and sociological studies show that people do not work primarily for the money. Money is an external motivating factor. People are also personally motivated to do a lot of things. **If you stress the financial aspect of the job in order to get somebody to do something for you, then you even undermine his/her internal motivation.** This discrepancy between external and internal motivation was illustrated in the U.S.A. when blood donors started to be compensated financially for their donations – people who previously did it voluntarily and for free stopped donating blood altogether. External motivating factors (money) can therefore sometimes destroy the internal motivation. Today people are forced to work for money. If people can be motivated to work for the work itself, then the quality of the work they deliver immediately improves. **A Basic Income certainly does not lead to profiteering, but rather to increased social capital.**

(3) Basic Income and Human Rights

A Basic Income is the expression of a fundamental human right, **the right to a decent life.** Without a Basic Income, human rights can hardly be given concrete content. In addition, our economy cannot function without intellectual work, care work and social capital. A Basic Income creates more space for these things too.

Part I of this manifesto began by quoting Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states that we are "endowed with reason and conscience", and that we should act towards each other **in a spirit of solidarity.** This can also be read as, "Human beings are capable of constructing social capital. Without that social capital a decent human life is not possible."

You can of course force people to collaborate entirely within an economic rat race, by making their right to survival and their income depend entirely on their work performance. A society that does this indicates to its people **that they only really count (!) as economic producers,** and not as persons endowed with conscience or as producers of social capital. A Basic Income turns this around, the community letting each person know that his/her conscience and ability to create social capital are important and are given **the space they need to develop. No price** can be put on this realization – but a Basic Income is an enormous step in the right direction.

9. World as a Work of Art

a) Environmental Effects of Basic Income

A Basic Income is the concrete expression of our **respect** for one another. It is a logical consequence of the right to live. This respect for each other's lives is only one aspect of life in

general. By "subsidizing" free time, a Basic Income might enable people to learn to **"slow down", to take more care of each other and of the planet.**

Vivant takes an integrally environmental view of society. It is a view that does not stop at nature conservation, but goes much further – for in virtue of the fact that humans exist, they cannot leave nature alone. If you fence off an area of nature in the interests of conservation, you are already interfering in nature. The fence would not exist if humans were not there. By their mere presence, humans are changing nature continuously. Non-intervention is impossible. **But this human intervention in nature, the cultivation of nature, does not have to come down to exploiting or plundering nature.**

Vivant's central environmental principle is that a "green", or ecological, natural environment is **strictly impossible unless our social fabric develops according to environmental principles.** By showing greater respect for each other, people gain greater respect for nature. As long as society stakes people against each other, as long as we do not unconditionally accept people's right to a decent life, society will never develop a respect for nature.

b) Society as an Open Work of Art

Vivant connects the concept of art with the environment. In a sense, art is the future of humanity. But there is no sense in producing art in a society and a world that are not sensitive to art.

Authentic individual art only blossoms if the whole of society appears as an open work of art, a work of art produced by people working together in a democratic society.

Art is open, creative, unfinished. So are Vivant's aims. We do not know how the forms of property or economics are going to develop in the future. **But we do know that only people who are free can come up with good solutions.** That means people in a democratic society, people who are aware that their right to live is entirely recognized.

c) A Basic Income for the Rainforests?

Is it possible to protect the tropical rainforests without a Basic Income? Is it possible to have a "green" attitude to nature without holding to environmental principles for society itself? Does not nature itself need a "Basic Income" to grow, just like human beings? A Basic Income is the first step. Only if people treat each other with respect will they treat nature with respect, and stop destroying the rainforests. **In the end it is all a question of the same respect for life.**