

## UCM Experience Day PBL Task:

### Basic Income as the way to end poverty?



Harry and Elizabeth, two UCM students, walk into their student house. They have just come from a TEDx talk in the Theatre on the Vrijthof. In the kitchen, they stumble upon Robert, one of their other housemates. They get into a conversation.

HARRY: Nothing like a good TED talk. They always make you think about the world in a different way.

ROBERT: I guess they have their moments. What was it about?

ELIZABETH: Well, there was this guy who talked about Basic Income. It was really cool.

ROBERT: What's that? It sounds pretty stupid.

HARRY: The idea is to give every citizen a certain amount of money, maybe €800 every month, no strings attached. They had a referendum about it in Switzerland, a few years ago. And with the economic devastation going on after Corona, people are talking about it again, as the best way of supporting people in need.

ROBERT: Free money monthly? That's a dumb idea.

ELIZABETH: No, it's wonderful. It's a great way of ending poverty. Much better than the social security we have today. If we just give everyone money, poverty is gone.

ROBERT: It's a terrible way of ending poverty! Number one: it's far too expensive. Basic economics says we simply cannot afford it.

HARRY: Well, there's lots of money hidden away in Panama and Switzerland, and big companies don't pay a lot of taxes. With all the inequality in the world, I think, from the perspective of political philosophy, we can make rich people pay more.

ROBERT: There are other problems too, you know. If we just give people money, everyone will stop working, and then the economy will collapse. All these people won't be contributing members of society anymore. And they will all get depressed, and feel useless.

ELIZABETH: Well, that's a big psychological question. How do you know? Maybe people will spend more time doing volunteer work or caring for others. That's work too, you know.

ROBERT: But there's a third problem. If we give people money, they will do all kinds of stupid things, like buy alcohol and drugs. It's far better to steer poor people in what they spend their money on, for example by giving them coupons or vouchers, that they can only spend on housing or food.

HARRY: That's like saying people are too stupid to run their own lives, and that you can decide for them what they need!

ELIZABETH: That's really paternalistic!

ROBERT: Och, UCM hippies...