

# WORDS BEYOND THE PANDEMIC: A HUNDRED-SIDED CRISIS

Coord.: José Reis  
A collective work by CES



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Centro de Estudos Sociais  
Universidade de Coimbra



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# EMERGENCY BASIC INCOME

Nuno Serra

The need to immediately protect income, the economy and employment in the face of the abrupt emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic (and the threat of its rapid spread) focused mainly on access to lay-offs for workers and support for businesses, with measures to support self-employment and strengthen existing social protection mechanisms adopted only later.

However, this approach, focused mainly on the supply and the formal dimensions of the labour market, has not only failed to prevent the emergence of dismissals in many companies (including publicly supported companies), but has also left a very significant part of more atypical and precarious employment situations, as well as many of the more informal areas of our economy, uncovered.

It is well known that a more comprehensive, simple and agile response would immediately come up against the obstacle of European commitments, aggravated by the uncertainty and slowness, even if relative, in ensuring the necessary solidarity of the European Union with the different countries. And it is also certain that a more extensive and automatic approach of this kind, in support of all situations of need, would require new response mechanisms to be created, despite the potential benefit of avoiding the sectoral proliferation of measures.

Today, there is a clear notion that the future most likely carries the risk of a repetition of pandemic crises such as we are going through,

or situations of calamity with similar impacts on the economy and society (associated, of course, with phenomena related to climate change, but not only).

This fact should therefore lead us to consider the need to develop a new, more comprehensive, simple and agile response to crises of this nature. In other words, situations with a sudden impact on the economy, employment and income.

That new response could consist in the creation of support for emergency situations, capable of ensuring the well-being of all individuals and families and mitigating – by protecting consumption capacity – the impact of crises on different economic activities (or at least part of them). Such a measure would be especially targeted at situations of greater fragility and lack of protection, so as to ensure temporary access to basic income.

It should be emphasised that this measure, which could be called Emergency Basic Income (EBI), cannot and should not be confused with the proposals to implement an Unconditional Basic Income (UBI) nor with the current Social Integration Income (SII). In the first case, because the Emergency Basic Income is temporary and not universal (unlike the UBI) and, in the second case, because it is not conditional upon any integration contracts (which characterise the SII).