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Transitional Forms of Universal Basic Income as a Real Prospect for Russia*



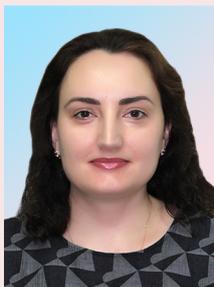
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Abstract. The article presents the research results aimed at developing the theoretical provisions of the universal basic income concept summarizing and systematizing the results of a survey of Russian experts conducted by the authors about its principles, the possibilities of introduction in Russia, priority population categories for testing it, assessing the reality of expanding the tools of universal basic income taking into account the development of transitional forms of its use during the COVID-19 pandemic. The work reveals the relevance of UBI concept development in the context of the need to overcome mass poverty in Russia. The result of the theoretical analysis shows that generally recognized UBI principles (universality, unconditionality, individual nature of monetary payments, their regularity) are justified by long-term trends in social policy evolution. The prospect of introducing universal basic income is presented as a qualitative transition (leap) in implementation of the latter. The social policy measures, closest to implementation of UBI principles, are characterized as its transitional forms including experiments on its introduction. To assess the practical feasibility of UBI transitional forms, the article uses the results of a survey of experts from different Russian regions conducted with the authors' participation and a pilot experiment and modeling of the results of UBI toolkit implementation. The paper proposes a possible scheme for implementing UBI tools in Russia, as well as pilot projects for low-income families with children, graduates of universities and secondary vocational educational institutions during the transition from study to the first place of work, the unstable employed (including the unemployed). The authors assess the paradox of activating the implementation of UBI principles in the context of the COVID-2019 pandemic under unfavorable financial conditions as confirming the reality of the prospects for its transitional forms for Russia. The results of the study can contribute to the development of discussions about the introduction of UBI tools in the Russian Federation, and to the promotion of its wide experimental testing for different population categories. It is advisable to continue research in the aspect of analyzing the experience of developing social support in the context of a pandemic and modeling the possible effects and costs of introducing UBI.

Key words: universal basic income, UBI principles, transitional forms of UBI, socio-economic inequality, effects of UBI implementation, pilot projects for UBI implementation.

Introduction

Abroad, thanks to numerous studies, the concept of universal basic income (UBI) has acquired an independent, detailed content – a fact that allows stating its existence as an element of modern scientific knowledge. The works that comprehensively characterize the main theoretical aspects of the problem [1; 2] are supplemented by research that has an applied focus (compliance of the UBI with the ILO standards [3] and its potential impact on labor supply [4], studying population's

attitude to the introduction of the UBI schemes¹). It is obvious that the system of social support of population, appeared in economically developed countries, has acted as an essential prerequisite for the emergence of such a theory.

In the study of the problem, the Russian specifics are quite understandable. During the transformational crisis (the 90s of the previous century), there was dismantled the former system of social guarantees which claimed to be universal.

¹ Fitzgerald R., Bottoni G., Swift S. *The future of welfare: basic income? European Social Survey. Part of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Festival of Social Science. 2017.* Available at: citizensincome.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/European-Social-Survey-survey-on-Basic-Income.pdf (accessed: January 13, 2021).

Despite the appearance of mass poverty, the UBI idea as a universal social transfer was not at the right time in post-perestroika Russia, as the logic of initial capital accumulation required the redistribution of financial and economic resources of society in favor of a relatively small layer of beneficiaries.

During the economic growth recovery (2000s – present), Russia has significant funds to activate social policy. At the same time, there was a situation when mass poverty was perceived as incompatible with socio-economic progress.

In such a historical context, it became natural for Russian researchers to address the problem of universal basic income. If at first it was mainly about mastering the theoretical achievements of foreign authors [5], by now the analysis of the UBI theory and experiments on its implementation has acquired an independent and detailed character in the Russian socio-economic literature [6; 7]. The article studies the attitude of Russian citizens to the UBI introduction [8] including in comparison with the attitude of foreign respondents to universal basic income [9]. The Russian scientific literature presents both supporters of the prospect of introducing the UBI [10] and authors who critically evaluate such a prospect [11].

Research projects, supported by scientific foundations, are being implemented on the UBI problem. It is not difficult to predict that their inclusion in the analysis of this problem will not remain without influence on the national social policy which is always, explicitly or implicitly, based on theoretical premises.

The purpose of the study is to develop the theoretical provisions of the UBI concept, generalize and systematize the results of a survey of Russian experts on its principles, the possibilities of introducing it in Russia and priority categories of population for testing it, assess the reality of expanding the UBI tools taking into account the development of transitional forms of its use during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hypothesis of the study is that the formation of the UBI theory and the experience of practical implementation of its principles have reached a level where there is a real prospect of using the transitional UBI forms in Russia.

Main theoretical and methodological provisions of the research

The Russian socio-economic literature translates the English term “Universal Basic Income” (UBI) in two ways: as “безусловный базовый доход” [12] and as “безусловный основной доход” [13]. The term “basic” may implicitly mean the connection of this income with the satisfaction of basic or innate needs that form the initial level of the system of needs. The term “basic”, allowing the use of the term “basic” as a synonym, in this context does not have such a rigid associative binding to the initial level of the pyramid of needs.

In the current Russian conditions, it is preferable, in our opinion, to use the term “basic income”, as we are talking about its purpose for all Russian citizens and the establishment of a minimum amount that allows meeting the initial needs that provide basic conditions for the consumption of goods and services. The basic income is the basis above which a variety of income paid according to other criteria rises [6].

The basic UBI principles are: 1) *universality* – it is assumed to be paid to all citizens of the country; 2) *unconditional* – the payment is made regardless of whether a person works or not; 3) *the monetary form* of the transfer is due to the specifics of the market economy and provides “freedom of consumer choice”; 4) *individual nature* of the payment – the recipient of such income is every member of the family, and not only the one who performs the role of its head; 5) *regularity* of payments as a prerequisite for meeting reproducible basic needs.

All these principles seem obvious within the framework of the already established UBI

understanding. In fact, they are not the result of speculative construction, but reflect long-term trends in the evolution of social policy.

The support of society for its members is a regularity of social life. During the Middle Ages, regular assistance to the needy was provided by the church, peasant communities, private benefactors, that is, non-state institutions. Under such conditions, the scale of social support, as a rule, was extremely limited both in terms of the coverage of recipients and in terms of the level of payments. Social assistance to members of society from the state was of an episodic nature, carried out during extraordinary events (wars, crop failures, natural disasters, etc.).

Since the 18th century, the transition to a system of regular state transfers addressed to the poor began. In the 19th century, social assistance was supplemented by social insurance: in the first case, it was about the redistribution of funds from the better-off in favor of the less well-off, and in the second, there was assumed mutual support of workers [1].

Even if the support takes the form of payments from social insurance funds that provide for co-financing from potential recipients of money or related services, it assumes an active role of the state in determining the rates of insurance premiums, in covering the deficits of extra-budgetary funds, etc. The required resources are provided through the redistribution of part of GDP through the state budget. Although, for example, the receipt of a pension and its size depend on the length of service and the amount of earnings, this relationship is not direct: the recipients of the pension are non-working people, the total amount of the pension received does not necessarily coincide with the amount of insurance premiums, etc. Therefore, we can agree with the point of view that the modern social insurance system largely plays the role that private charity and social assistance performed in the past [14].

In economically developed countries, the scale of social support and their coverage of population differ. When comparing the current situation with the one that existed before the First World War, the general progress of the system of social transfers is obvious both in the coverage of population and in the amount of benefits. Thus, there is a tendency to universalize the provision of social transfers, to strengthen their unconditional nature, and to increase their role in meeting the needs of society members.

The tendency to expand the range of recipients of social transfers while maintaining the principle of conditionality leads to an increase in the costs of administering social assistance programs and creates prerequisites for corruption in their implementation [11]. Consequently, with the development of the system of gratuitous payments, their conditional nature begins to contradict the social orientation of the economy.

After the industrial revolution, the development of public education system was required for economic progress. Although educational services are not considered to be pure public goods, the predominant principle of their provision to students has become free of charge. There is a tendency to increase educational level, the coverage of which within certain age cohorts of population is universal.

In modern economically developed countries, the medical sector is financed on a larger or smaller scale by the state. The volume of these services for a particular patient does not depend on the labor contribution or solvency, which gives reason to speak about the unconditional aspect of such medical programs. Taking into account the increase in the average duration of training in all countries of the world, the tendency to increase the share of public spending on medical services in GDP, it is necessary to state a long-term trend of increasing the role of unconditional (free of charge) services provided directly aimed at preserving and developing human abilities.

At one time, the principle of functioning of free (for consumers) education and health systems was characterized as distribution “in proportion to needs” [15]. It is assumed that all people who have relevant needs can satisfy them for free. At the same time, the distribution “in proportion to needs” was not identified with the guarantee of full satisfaction of needs (for example, until now only universal secondary education is guaranteed, but not higher education). In our opinion, the operation of this principle is also legitimate in modern research.

It is obvious that for socially significant services, the implementation of the distribution principle in proportion to needs has acquired a universal and unconditional character or is approaching it. It is essential that these services are provided free of charge to those who would be able to pay for them in a volume guaranteed by the state. Therefore, free of charge is not caused by insolvency; it is a manifestation of a universal social guarantee.

When ensuring the needs for material goods (consumer goods, housing, etc.), the situation is different. The recipients of social transfers are those who lack the funds to purchase the necessary life benefits.

In our opinion, there is a contradiction inherent in modern society between the tendency to the predominance of the distribution principle in proportion to the needs in areas that directly ensure human development, and the binding of the consumption volume of material goods mainly to the amount of monetary income the distribution of which is characterized by significant inequality.

This contradiction gives rise to two opposite tendencies: to the development of the distribution principle in proportion to needs including in relation to certain consumer goods (personal hygiene products, medicines, textbooks, etc.), and to the curtailment of this principle which leads to a deepening of inequality in consumption.

In our opinion, the current situation in the movement of this contradiction is a milestone.

Material goods are distributed in proportion to the needs of significant categories of population today. The universal distribution nature is a natural prospect in the implementation of such a principle. Consequently, a kind of “leap” has matured, characterized by a transition from transfers, each of which is addressed to a certain category of population, to the appearance of payments for everyone. It is this historical context, in our opinion, that generates an increased interest in the UBI problem and motivates realization of pilot projects to implement certain of its principles.

As universal basic income does not claim to fully meet the needs, it should exist along with other transfers focused on the special needs of socio-demographic groups. This allows preventing possible criticism of the UBI regarding the fact that its use as a transfer of the same value for everyone would ignore the specifics of the needs. Obviously, the approach involves limiting the size of the database compared to the option of reducing the social support system to a single transfer.

Distribution in proportion to needs does not exclude the receipt of benefits through the use of money. Gratuitousness is realized here by providing free funds.

The creation of the Association of Basic Income Supporters in 1986 was the beginning of a broad promotion of the UBI concept. The latter has become particularly relevant in connection with the global economic crisis in 2007–2008. Interest in UBI idea continues growing, taking into account the threat of mass technological unemployment as a result of the processes of production robotization, and the use of artificial intelligence and other digital technologies [16].

It is worth noting that the need for a transition period in the UBI use is not always taken into account. This is, in fact, the project of establishing universal basic income at a level above the poverty line [17]. Such a level cannot be achieved without an “instant” breakdown of the system of social

transfers and relevant institutions which is not feasible and would lead to harmful consequences. The position on UBI introduction initially at a level compatible with the preservation of the existing social support system seems to be more verified [18].

The implementation of universal basic income depends on the development degree of the social support system, as the development of the latter implies an expansion of the circle of recipients of social benefits, an increase in the level of cash payments, that is, it reflects the UBI principles, although in a form that is not quite adequate to it.

From this point of view, we can note the spread of money transfer programs, described in detail in the scientific literature with a wide coverage of recipients: child support, guaranteed minimum income, negative income tax, etc. [1]. All of them, to a greater extent than traditional social transfers, reflect certain UBI principles. For instance, a negative income tax under certain conditions has the same distributional consequences as UBI, although it does not have the same universality [11].

We share the position that in the UBI absence, the use of such programs can significantly change the status quo in favor of a full-scale UBI implementation [14]. It seems that all this allows characterizing these programs as transitional forms of universal basic income.

A specific transitional UBI form is “experiments” on its implementation [19]. An experiment in this context means the payment of a transfer to each member of the group covered by the pilot program and previously not eligible for this payment. In relation to the specified group, the transfer has an unconditional character. This practice is called an experiment, as it is supposed to compare changes in the level and quality of life of a group of transfer recipients and a control group, when positive changes are used to further promote the concept and practice of the UBI.

The limited role of experiments is rightly noted: the main attention is paid to the analysis of transfers’

effects directly at the recipient level, whereas when implementing the universality principle, derivative effects at the macro level are fully manifested including those remote in time from the moment of the transfer; any experiment is not able to fully implement the universal basic income [20]. At the same time, the form of the experiment reduces the degree of possible opposition to the use of the transfer, as it leaves open the question of the stability of its payment. The evolution of “experiments” leads to the implementation of the UBI principles in transfers to such social communities (residents of a city, region) that go beyond small social groups [21].

The introduction of universal basic income as a large-scale social innovation will undoubtedly have a number of socio-economic consequences. The systematization of the potential UBI effects was carried out, for example, by K. Widerquist [20] and R. Kapelyushnikov [11]. Although the list of the UBI consequences, both positive and negative, is largely identical in these works, their authors come to a directly opposite assessment of the prospects for UBI implementation: K. Weiderkvist considers UBI feasible, and R. Kapelyushnikov says that it is utopia (in practical terms).

It seems that the uncertainty about the future of universal basic income will be overcome including through the use of the transitional UBI forms.

Data and methods

In the *theoretical part* of the study, we proceed from generalization of the historical practice of developing the social support system of population, guided by the unity of inductive and deductive methods of analyzing the development of social phenomena, the interrelationships of their historical and logical forms, dialectical principles of unity and struggle of opposites, the transition of quantitative changes into qualitative ones, the negation of negation and other general philosophical laws of the society development.

In terms of *empirical research*, the authors rely on the following data and methods:

1. Data obtained during a survey [22] of Russian experts, conducted with the participation of the authors in August – October 2020 in order to assess the feasibility of the UBI concept in Russia. The survey was conducted by correspondence questionnaire. It was attended by 52 experts including 27 regional experts (from the Republic of Crimea, the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), the Chuvash Republic, the Vologda, Voronezh, Nizhny Novgorod and Sverdlovsk Oblasts) and 25 experts from Moscow. The experts represented the research community (13 people), leading universities (13 people: heads of scientific departments, researchers, heads of departments, teaching staff), the business community and trade unions (12 people: experts from among senior executives, the executive committee, advisers to the head), as well as state and municipal authorities (14 people: heads of higher and middle level, specialists of regional executive authorities, city departments). Among the experts, 28 people have an academic degree: twelve are Doctor of Sciences (Economic and Technology), 16 are Candidates of Sciences (Economics, Sociology, Politics, History, Technology, and Physics and Mathematics) [22].

2. The results of a pilot experiment to establish an additional monthly social payment to the target group up to a guaranteed minimum income. A pilot experiment was conducted with the authors' participation in the Vologda Oblast in 2018. The target group consisted of low-income families with children who are recipients of social support measures. The pilot experiment is presented in more detail in [23].

3. The data, obtained based on the results of modeling the results of the implementation of a hypothetical program for the payment of conditional basic income to registered unemployed with the authors' participation. It was carried out on the basis of an expert simulation model of the GDP reproduction of the Russian economy P1-4 [24].

Research results

The theoretical study made it possible to identify trends in the development of forms of social support for population, to justify the maturation of conditions for the transition from its targeting to the expansion of the universality and unconditionality of social payments.

The results of an *empirical studying* in terms of identifying expert assessments of Russian specialists about the UBI feasibility in Russia indicate the following. Among experts, as the results of the 2020 survey showed, there is a relative predominance (54.9%²) of the position on Russia's readiness to introduce universal basic income: 49% believe it is advisable to introduce the transitional UBI forms, and 5.9% are confident that the Russian Federation is ready to introduce universal basic income in full compliance with the entire set of criteria inherent in it. Accordingly, 45.1% of experts are convinced that Russia is not ready in principle for the UBI introduction – neither for its transitional forms, nor for its implementation on the basis of the entire set of criteria identifying it. Thus, the majority of Russian experts assess the prospect of introducing a database rather as a real one: if not in full form, then in partial, transitional forms [22].

Based on the expert assessments, which were generalized and systematized [22], the authors have determined the following *possible scheme for the UBI toolkit implementation in Russia* which defines the main “contours” of the UBI implementation in the country as proposals for further discussions and research (*Tab.*).

The UBI toolkit is appropriate for solving (mitigating) the problems of poverty and socio-economic inequality in Russia, ensuring a minimum living standards for vulnerable categories of population. According to the results of the 2020 survey, there were identified quite consistent positions among Russian experts regarding these

² Hereinafter – as a percentage of the number of experts who responded.

Potential scheme for the implementation of the UBI toolkit in Russia (based on expert assessments, 2020)

UBI scheme component	Description (comments)
1. Purpose of introduction (problems that can be solved/mitigated)	Mitigating (overcoming) the poverty problem, socio-economic inequality, ensuring a minimum living standards for vulnerable categories of population
2. Key criteria that should be met when introducing	Individuality, monetary form, regularity
3. Implementation forms	Guaranteed minimum income, support for the most vulnerable groups of population
4. Implementation method	Supplement (replacement) of existing social support measures/mechanisms
5. Pilot (experimental) testing	Appropriate
5.1. Целевые категории Target categories	1) Low-income families with children; 2) graduates of universities and secondary vocational educational institutions during the transition from study to the first work place; 3) precariously employed (workers who have to put up with the loss of part of the labor and social guarantees of standard employment that are significant for them)
5.2. Method of forming target groups	To form target groups from among representatives of target categories for several representative entities of the Russian Federation
5.3. Duration	At least 2–3 years
Source: author's calculations based on [22].	

goals: they were supported by more than 60 to more than 90% of the experts who answered the corresponding question (there was an opportunity to choose several answer options).

According to the experts (more than 80%), it is advisable to implement pilot projects that allow testing its transitional forms in order to appraise and test possible risks and potential positive effects when implementing the UBI toolkit in Russia. At the same time, first of all, it is necessary to focus on such identifying criteria as individuality, monetary form, and regularity of payments. Our survey has showed that more than 60–80% of experts consider these criteria to be the key ones. The principles of universality and unconditionality, which are fundamental in the UBI theory, are of secondary importance at the stage of the transition period, as experts believe.

The UBI implementation forms in Russia can be, first of all, a guaranteed minimum income and support for the most vulnerable population groups. The 2020 survey has revealed support for these UBI forms among more than 70 and 50% of the experts who responded (possibility of a multiple answer).

The UBI toolkit can be implemented as a supplement or replacement of existing measures/mechanisms of social support. Experts' opinions are divided on the question of the appropriate

method of implementing the universal basic income in Russia (at the same time, it is possible to choose several answer options). Slightly more than half (53.1%) of the experts who answered believe that it is necessary to supplement the existing social support measures, while the rest (46.9%) believe that the UBI can replace them. The solution to this problem can be found in the proposal formulated by one of the experts: *“At the first stage, it could be a tool that complements existing support measures, and after the transition period, it could be a tool that will replace existing support measures (or most of them)”*³.

The following target categories of population are proposed for the pilot implementation of the UBI toolkit of pilot projects.

1. *Low-income families with children.* During the 2020 survey, this category received the greatest support among Russian experts (80%). It is families with children under 18 years of age that traditionally represent the most massively low-income households in Russia (2013–2018 – more than 70–80%)⁴. In 2020, additional social support measures, taken by the Government of the Russian Federation to combat the consequences of the COVID-19, were

³ The expert preferred that his questionnaire be processed anonymously.

⁴ Distribution of low-income households by main categories. Rosstat. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13397> (accessed: January 25, 2021).

most focused on families with children including those with low incomes. Some measures were provided on the basis of principles that bring them closer to the UBI tools, for example, a one-time payment of 10,000 rubles for each child aged 3 to 16 years, regardless of the per capita income of the family⁵.

2. *Graduates of universities and secondary vocational educational institutions during the transition from study to the first work place.* This category of population was supported by experts during a survey on the possibility of implementing UBI in Russia (52%) for pilot testing of the toolkit. Young people entering labor market for the first time are one of the most vulnerable categories of economically active population [6]. The unemployment rate among young people aged 15–19 (24.7%, 2019) and 20–24 years (14.4%) is noticeably higher than in the age groups of 30 years and older (4.4% or less) and on average in the population (4.6%)⁶. For young people, the transition to stable, satisfactory employment takes an average of 2–4 years [6], it is often associated with negative work experience in conditions of unstable employment [25; 26; 27, etc.]. The unstable situation of young people in the field of employment leads to an unfavorable, unstable financial situation: the share of young people aged 18–29 among the low-income population was about 12–16% in 2013–2018⁷.

3. *Precariously employed*, which means the workers who have to put up with the loss of part of

the labor and social guarantees of standard employment. 48% of experts recommend it as a target for the experimental introduction of a database in our country. Unstable employment not only leads to a decrease in the quality of employment of employees, but also has a negative impact on the level and quality of life of households [28; 29, etc.].

The extreme form of unstable employment (temporary absence of employment, exclusion from the sphere of sustainable employment) is unemployment. The unemployed have higher risks of poverty relative to population in general⁸. Among the experts in the survey on the possibility of implementing the UBI in Russia, 40% recommended registered unemployed as a target category for the experimental UBI introduction.

The selected categories of the population are low-income families with children, graduates of universities and secondary vocational educational institutions during the transition from study to the first work place, the precariously employed including the unemployed. They are characterized by the most vulnerable position and have poverty risks, low level and quality of life which corresponds to the goals of introducing the UBI tools in Russia, put forward by experts during the 2020 survey.

To conduct a pilot (experimental) implementation of the UBI toolkit in Russia, we propose to form groups from among representatives of target categories in several representative Russian regions. This method of forming target groups for pilot projects was supported by 54.2% of experts during the 2020 survey; according to experts, specific options for its implementation may be the following: 1) one region from each federal district; 2) entities with different living standards from each federal district (for example, two regions from each federal district); 3) divide all regions of the

⁵ A one-time payment in the amount of 10,000 rubles to citizens of the Russian Federation residing in the territory of the Russian Federation for each child aged 3 to 16 years who has Russian citizenship. Social support. Measures of the Russian Government to combat coronavirus infection and support the economy. Available at: http://government.ru/support_measures/category/social/ (accessed: January 12, 2021).

⁶ Results of the sample survey of the labor force. Rosstat. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/11110/document/13265> (accessed: May 25, 2021).

⁷ Distribution of low-income population by the main socio-economic groups. Rosstat. Available at: <https://rosstat.gov.ru/folder/13397> (accessed: May 25, 2021).

⁸ Social status and living standards of the Russian population in 2019. Rosstat. Available at: https://gks.ru/bgd/regl/b19_44/Main.htm (accessed: May 25, 2021).

Russian Federation into four quartiles according to the population income level and take one region from each quartile for conducting the experiment; 4) 2–3 least financially secured entities of the Russian Federation, as well as 2–3 most secured financial subjects (except Moscow, the Moscow Oblast and St. Petersburg), etc. [22]. The duration of such pilot projects should be at least 2–3 years. This also corresponds to the prevailing position among Russian specialists who took part in the expert survey of 2020 [22].

More specific authors' proposals regarding the schemes for the projects' implementation for the pilot (experimental) implementation of the UBI tools in Russia for the selected target categories of population are as follows.

A potential scheme for implementing the UBI toolkit in Russia for low-income families with children. For this population category, the authors propose the UBI toolkit implementation in the form of a guaranteed minimum income (GMI). It should be established as a differentiated monetary additional social payment, i.e. it does not cancel, but complements the existing system of targeted support. This payment will bring the per capita income in low-income families with children to the value of the regional minimum wage (MWreg), respectively, its monthly amount will be set taking into account the existing income deficit in families relative to the MWreg. It should be addressed to low-income families with children, in which the per capita monetary income after providing them with existing federal and regional regular targeted support measures⁹ does not reach the value of the MWreg, and should be assigned to one of the adult members of such families. In order to increase the targeting of payments, we propose to use a differentiated regional living wage which will allow taking into

account differences in the composition and size of families with children, as well as equivalence scales, which make it possible to take into account savings on consumption. The scale previously developed by the authors can be used as an equivalence scale (see [23, pp. 12–14]).

Thus, the UBI in the transitional implementation scheme of its tools will be a differentiated targeted family benefit and is intended to solve the problem of absolute monetary poverty in the most vulnerable category of population with high poverty risks (low-income families with children) and increase the effectiveness of the current system of their targeted support.

The possibility and effectiveness of this tool for low-income families with children was confirmed during a pilot project previously implemented with the authors' participation in the Vologda Oblast. Within the framework of the project, the target group of low-income families with children receiving social support measures was paid guaranteed minimum income (GMI). As a result, the families of the target group of the GMI project helped to raise per capita incomes and overcome extreme poverty, solve problems with providing the necessary basic needs (improving nutrition, solving the problem with debts, etc.) [23, etc.].

According to the authors, the implementation of the proposed scheme for the use of the UBI toolkit in relation to low-income families with children, within the framework of a pilot project in the regions, should also be accompanied by a solution to the problem of increasing the labor potential in families. The basic grounds for the pilot project can be: 1) the establishment of a long-term (regular) payment for families with limited labor potential and a high dependent burden (for example, for families in which adult family members are forced to take care of young children, elderly relatives, etc., for families with disabled people, disabled children, etc.); 2) the establishment of a payment for a limited period for families with

⁹ When determining the per capita income in terms of support measures, it is proposed to take into account regular federal and regional state support, except one-time cash payments and social assistance for housing and utilities.

underutilized labor potential with an obligation to increase it (for example, a social contract) with the assistance of labor and employment authorities.

A potential scheme for the UBI toolkit implementation in Russia for graduates of universities and secondary vocational educational institutions during the transition from study to the first workplace. In order to reduce the risks of increasing the transition period from study to the first workplace, obtaining stable and satisfying employment, and risks of unstable employment [6] for this category of economically active population, the authors propose the following scheme for the pilot implementation of the UBI toolkit. Organization of temporary employment/professional internship for graduates (for a period of one year) at target enterprises according to the profile of the obtained profession, with the assignment of mentors to them at the place of temporary employment for adaptation, professional development, acquisition and development of skills necessary for work and taking into account the specifics of the first workplace. For the period of temporary employment/professional internship, graduates and their mentors are invited to make a monthly payment: graduates – a monthly payment in the amount established by the regional labor and employment authority, in addition to their income from employment in the organization, mentors – in addition to the available income from employment, a monthly payment in the amount not lower than the minimum wage from the organization at the place of employment. After the period of temporary employment, payments to mentors are terminated. For graduates who do not wish to continue working at the enterprise (to conclude an indefinite employment contract), the UBI payments in the form of unemployment benefits will continue, but not more than 6 months, with the obligation to take active actions to find a job.

A potential scheme for the UBI toolkit implementation in Russia for the precariously employed. For employed in the legal sector of the formal and informal economy, who have to put up with the loss of part of the labor and social guarantees of standard employment and who are characterized by a high concentration of manifestations of unstable employment (by the type of contract agreements and employment conditions), we offer to organize and conduct free events for additional professional orientation and professional retraining/advanced training at the expense of the employment service to facilitate the transition to sustainable employment for hire or not for hire. This implies expanding the functions of the employment service to employees with a high concentration of signs of unstable employment. The transitivity of this support form for the precariously employed, unlike others, consists in the fact that instead of regular additional cash payments, they receive unconditional (for this category) professional training services directly aimed at preserving and developing human abilities. Support in the form of an additional regular cash payment (for a certain period) can be continued to those of them who, after training, organize their own business in the form of self-employment and individual entrepreneurship [6].

For unemployed persons registered with the employment service who have an infant child (children), we offer to make a payment within the framework of the pilot project (in case of loss of work by two parents, the payment is assigned to one of them) in the amount of monthly wages for the period of job search, but not more than 6 months, with the obligation to take active actions to find work. Also, when assigning a payment, we propose to take into account the following conditions: loss of work for no more than 12 months before applying to the employment center; employment at the last place of work must be official (at least a year of work); dismissal must be made at the initiative

of the employer; do not include dismissals for misconduct that violates labor legislation. This will reduce the risks of stimulating low-paid workers to dismiss with an increased amount of unemployment benefits, provide assistance to those who have lost legal employment (through no fault of their own, on their own initiative) and “return” them to employment, providing a minimum living standards for the unemployed and their families with a child (children) for the period of searching for a new stable employment.

The feasibility of this transitional UBI toolkit is confirmed by the results of a numerical experiment previously conducted with the authors’ participation. It showed that even with the payment of benefits in the amount of monthly wages to all registered unemployed, it is estimated that the annual total state costs will amount to 3.35% of the amount of potential financial opportunities of Russia, and the initial costs will be fully compensated by additional revenues of the consolidated budget [24].

For employed in the shadow economy, we propose to stimulate their legalization as self-employed and individual entrepreneurs, while simultaneously drawing up social contracts that provide for the UBI payment for the period of adaptation to legal employment forms and preferential taxation with inclusion in mandatory social insurance schemes.

Discussion of the research results

Despite the short history of analyzing the UBI concept in Russia, most experts perceive the idea of introducing universal basic income in its transitional forms as partially or fully implemented.

The formation of this position was undoubtedly influenced by the situation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (recall that the survey was conducted at the pandemic height) including the increase in unemployment and poverty caused by it. Experiments on the UBI introduction were aimed at overcoming them earlier [30]. The coronavirus pandemic required a significant and

rapid strengthening of the existing support system for socially vulnerable groups of population, whose number has grown significantly.

In this situation, in Russian and international practice, the principles of social assistance based on the UBI concept have been more fully implemented than before. In Russia in 2020, this was reflected in the introduction of universal payments: a) in the maximum amount (12,130 rubles) the amount of unemployment benefits for April – June to citizens dismissed after March 1, 2020 (regardless of the length of service and the level of earnings at the previous workplace), and in case of children, there was an additional 3,000 rubles for each child under the age of 18¹⁰; for 2021, the maximum amount of unemployment benefits is 12,130 rubles for the first three months of the unemployment period; 5,000 rubles is for the next three months of the unemployment period¹¹; b) wages, in fact, social benefits, to employees of budget organizations who were officially transferred to the self-isolation mode and did not perform their work duties during this period; c) for children aged 3 to 16 years who have Russian citizenship (in the amount of 10,000 rubles); etc. These programs, which go beyond those used before the pandemic, can be legitimately characterized as transitional forms of universal basic income.

The experience of social assistance to the population in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to solving complex issues related to the UBI concept. The implementation of additional social support measures has shown that: 1) the advantages of the universal principle of

¹⁰ Social support. Measures of the Russian Government to combat coronavirus infection and support the economy. Available at: http://government.ru/support_measures/category/social/ (accessed: June 07, 2021).

¹¹ On the minimum and maximum amounts of unemployment benefits for 2021: Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation, dated December 31, 2020, no. 2393. Available at: <http://static.government.ru/media/files/HLZaVt6wSQ0yXJiQIJ6dfwKfwlMJA8Y1.pdf> (accessed: June 07, 2021).

social support outweigh the advantages of targeted support; 2) universal payments do not lead to an inevitable increase in inflation; 3) universal transfers in crisis situations can be introduced without testing.

The article has dispelled the existing concerns about the significant demotivating effect of social transfers in relation to the individual labor supply. The growing unemployment was forced, so the expansion of the social support scale turned out to be quite justified.

Not only in Russia, but also in many other countries, the spread of COVID-19 encourages the decisive implementation of those progressive socio-economic measures, the adoption of which can be postponed under more favorable financial and economic conditions, allows the use of transitional UBI forms on a wider scale within the framework of state social policy. At the same time, the goal of stimulating aggregate demand is additionally pursued as a Keynesian recipe for combating the economic crisis. Such a secondary effect is another confirmation of the positive potential of transitional forms of the UBI.

Conclusion

The hypothesis of the study, which was in the fact that the formation of the UBI theory and the experience of practical implementation of its principles, have reached a level where a real prospect of active use of transitional forms of the UBI opens up, has been confirmed.

The idea of the universal basic income, which has received wide recognition abroad and arouses considerable interest in Russia, has developed into

a theoretical system. The latter includes a description of its principles, which is briefly reflected in the UBI definition. In the development of the UBI theory, the authors consider its introduction as a natural qualitative “leap” (transition) in the historical context of the transformation of the social support system. In the conditions of the impossibility of a one-time transition to universal basic income in its developed form (with all the criteria inherent in it), we consider the UBI introduction in transitional forms, including “experimental” ones implemented through the pilot projects, to be a logical and expedient stage of its realization.

The pandemic situation has contributed to an unprecedented scale of social support for population which is increasingly beginning to comply with the principles of universality and unconditionality inherent in the UBI. This gives reason to consider the use of transitional forms of universal basic income as a real prospect.

In the applied aspect, the authors have generalized and systematized the results of a survey of Russian experts and proposed options for implementing transitional forms of the universal basic income in Russia for the most vulnerable categories of population. Further progress in the study of the UBI problem in Russia is associated with a detailed analysis of the experience of developing social support in the pandemic, with an increase in the number and scale of pilot projects to test the UBI principles, with modeling the possible effects and costs of its introduction.

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