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Part B2

Section a. State-of-the-art and objectives

Scientific challenge

In light of growing societal debates on the radical idea of basic income, usually defined as "*a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement*", there has been a huge growth in scientific research on the topic in recent years. While basic income used to be studied mainly by philosophers to assess its ethical vices and virtues[1,2], it is now attracting attention from a much broader range of scholars, coming from different disciplines[3] and active across the globe.[4] On the one hand, scholars (mainly economists and sociologists) began to analyse the *technical* aspects of introducing a basic income, by investigating its potential impact on health, income inequality, poverty, labour market supply, fiscal policy, and so on.[5,6,7] On the other hand, there has been a rapid expansion of studies (mainly from sociology and political science) that scrutinize **the *politics* of basic income**. This emerging research field, which the BI-RESPONS project aims to invigorate, can be split into two major camps, which typically refer to each other in passing but have otherwise lived rather separate lives. The first camp focuses on the political feasibility of basic income, by mapping the (strategic) positions of different political actors, like elected officials, political parties and trade unions.[8,9,10] The second camp studies public opinion about basic income among the general population and different subgroups within that population.[11,12,13] Both camps assume that there is a relationship between public opinion and political feasibility in the sense that the former influences the latter through its impact on political actors' positions. To justify this assumption, reference is usually made to the long-established political science literature on **policy responsiveness**, which argues that policymakers tend to take public preferences into account because they want to be re-elected or because they see it as their moral duty to do so.[14,15,16] Important to note though is that the assumption in the basic income literature is mostly about how policymakers modify their *positions* in response to public opinion rather than how they change actual *policies*. It is this type of responsiveness, which has been called "**rhetorical responsiveness**" in the literature[17], that is the main focus of analysis in the BI-RESPONS project.

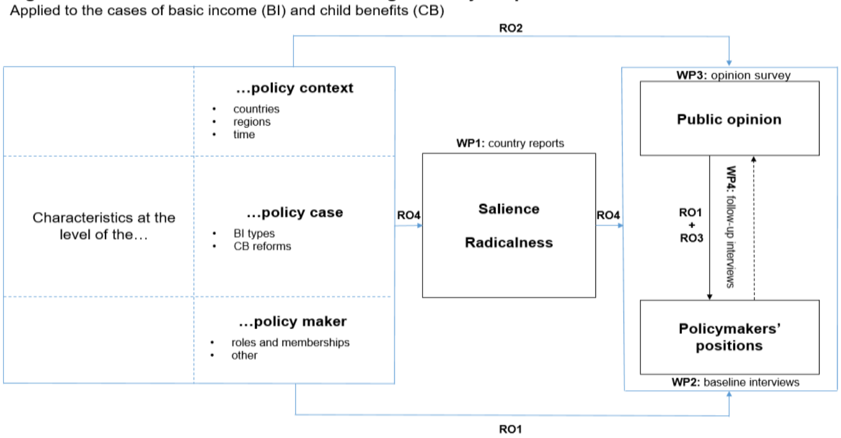
I argue, however, that **basic income is in fact a scientifically challenging case** with regard to rhetorical policy responsiveness because it confronts us with **a theoretical puzzle that has hitherto not been addressed empirically** –as no study has ever investigated whether policymakers' positions towards a basic income are indeed influenced by public opinion. On the one hand, it can be argued that basic income is –just like many other social policies– hugely important to people (and policymakers) because it would directly affect the lives of almost everyone living in the society in which it is implemented. This creates great incentives for policymakers to (at least rhetorically) respond to public opinion, making basic income a likely candidate for responsiveness to occur. From this perspective, the case of basic income would simply add to the mounting empirical evidence showing that policymakers are indeed to some extent responsive to public opinion[18,19,20], also in the social policy domain.[21,22,23] On the other hand, it can be argued that basic income is a rather unlikely case for responsiveness to occur compared to most other social policies, because it performs worse on two of the main contingency factors that political scientists have recognized to explain why responsiveness is more likely for some policy cases than for others. [14,15,19,24] I summarize these factors here under the headings of: (1) "**issue salience**" and (2) "**policy radicalness**". With regard to the first, it can be argued that basic income is less salient, visible and proximate than most other, existing social policies because people generally lack direct experience with a basic income, which does not exist anywhere yet. Accordingly, it also seems likely that public opinion about basic income is less coherent compared to public opinion about existing social policies.[12,25] This is again because people have no real, "on-the-ground" experience with a basic income, which they do have with existing policies (for example as benefit recipients or taxpayers). With regard to radicalness, basic income is to some extent fighting an uphill battle because many politicians appear to have a strong status quo bias[26] and much policymaking is a path dependent endeavour[27], making it less likely that public opinion will be followed when there is a radical overhaul of the existing system at stake, as would be the case with a basic income. Indeed, if implemented, a basic income would in most European countries radically transform "welfare as we know it", because it departs from the dominant view of making social benefits conditional on work requirements and/or selectively targeted at low-income groups through means testing. This radicalness of basic income might make it a less likely candidate for policy responsiveness compared with existing social policies, which can be reformed more incrementally.

To solve this theoretical puzzle, the BI-RESPONS project compares policymakers' responsiveness to public opinion about basic income to their responsiveness to public opinion about **child benefits**. This comparison case is selected because it is broadly considered as *the* social benefit that is most similar to basic income, as also child benefits are often (but certainly not always) universal and unconditional cash payments.[29] The crucial difference though is that child benefits constitute an existing, well-established policy with relatively higher salience and lower radicalness compared to basic income. Accordingly, it seems likely that responsiveness is more common for child benefits than for basic income. I also argue, however, that **salience and radicalness not only vary *between* policy cases**, as is often assumed in prior research on policy responsiveness. Instead, these contingency factors **also** vary ***within* policy cases** as well as **across context and policymakers**. With regard to the variation within policy cases, it can be said that some basic income (or child benefit reform) proposals are more salient and/or less radical than others, depending on specific policy design features like their benefit amount, financing and integration within the existing welfare system. Furthermore, I argue that the variation in salience and radicalness is also present at the level of the policy context and the level of the policy maker. Regarding the first, it is to be expected that the salience and radicalness of basic income (and child benefits) will vary across countries, between regions and over time, thereby making responsiveness more likely in some contexts than in others. Regarding the second, the argument is that individual policymakers will presumably also differ in the *perceived* salience and radicalness of (different types of) basic income and child benefit reforms. Importantly, such subjective perceptions need not align well with the more objectively observable salience and radicalness of a policy reform proposal.

An important implication of these theoretical arguments is that the BI-RESPONS project aims to go much further than the simple yes-or-no-question whether rhetorical policy responsiveness occurs or not for the two social policy cases under consideration (basic income vs child benefits). Instead, the broader objective is to uncover *under which conditions* –who, when, where, why, and how– such responsiveness is more/less likely to occur. To navigate this ambitious undertaking, I have developed **a new theoretical framework**, which I call the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness. In the following, I will apply the framework to the specific –but scientifically challenging and societally relevant– cases of basic income and child benefits. However, the framework as such has a much wider relevance going beyond the particular cases at hand, as it can be applied to investigate policymakers' responsiveness to public opinion about many other policy cases.

Theoretical perspective: the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness

Figure 1. The Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness
Applied to the cases of basic income (BI) and child benefits (CB)



The BI-RESPONS project investigates dynamics of rhetorical responsiveness in a systematic way, using the **Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness** depicted in Figure 1 as its guiding blueprint. The framework starts from the assumption that public opinion –either from the general public or specific constituencies within the public (like party supporters, the elderly or trade union members)– has some impact on policymakers' positions towards specific policy proposals. However, in line with prior research, I argue that such policy responsiveness is contingent on two important factors: issue salience and policy radicalness. These contingency factors are known to vary across policy cases, with the assumption here being that because basic income is expected to be less salient and more radical than child benefits, there is a lower likelihood that policymakers respond to public opinion about the former compared to the latter. However, the main novelty of the framework is that it develops the argument that salience and radicalness do not only differ between policy cases, but also (a) *within* these cases, (b) across policy contexts, and (c) between policy makers. With regard to the first, the expectation is that responsiveness is more likely for those basic income (or child benefit reform) proposals that are more salient and/or less radical (which depends on their policy design features). For example, a so-called "partial" basic income that is relatively low in terms of its amount and does not replace any existing social benefits is arguably less radical than a "full" basic income that does replace all other benefits. In view of that, one would expect greater responsiveness for a partial than a full basic income. Similarly, I expect that policy responsiveness increases in contexts where the salience and the radicalness of basic income is higher and lower, respectively. In some specific contexts –for example in places where there have been previous policy experiments[28]–, the idea of basic income might indeed be more salient than in others. Likewise, in some contexts –for example in countries that already have many universal welfare provisions that somewhat resemble a basic income, like in Scandinavia[29]–, the policy idea might be less radical than in others. Finally, the framework also states that salience and radicalness vary at the level of the policy maker. More specifically, the argument is that policymakers will undoubtedly have different *perceptions* of the salience and radicalness of basic income, depending –among other things– on their institutional roles, political affiliations and personal views on the matter. Accordingly, I anticipate that responsiveness to public opinion is more likely for policymakers who perceive basic income as more salient and/or less radical.

Before I explain in greater detail how the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness will be put into practice in the project –through the research objectives (RO), the methodology and the work packages (WP)–, there are two important points to be made here. First, I fully acknowledge that there might well be other factors than salience and radicalness affecting policy responsiveness. There are indeed plenty of studies suggesting that policymakers' responsiveness to public opinion is influenced by their individual characteristics (like career aspirations[30] or party loyalty[14]) and by characteristics of the broader context in which they operate (such as the nature of political institutions[31,32] or the degree of electoral competition[33,34]). Although these other characteristics are not the main focus of the BI-RESPONS project, which is particularly designed to study the role of salience and radicalness at different levels, they will be given due consideration in the empirical analyses. Second, I also recognize that policymakers' positions towards BI (and child benefits) and their framing thereof in political and media discourse are likely to influence public opinion. Again, while the focus of the project lies on *policy* responsiveness, I will to some extent also take stock of such *public* responsiveness (cf. the dotted arrow in Figure 1) by exploring –in the in-depth interviews (see p. 6-7)– if and how policymakers try to influence public opinion about the policy cases under consideration.

Research objectives

The **overall objective** of the BI-RESPONS project is to uncover under which conditions policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion about basic income. With "conditions", I refer to three aspects: (1) who, (2) when and where, and (3) why and how. I now first discuss these aspects and their associated objectives in turn. The comparison with the policy case of child benefits is discussed under a separate objective.

With regard to the **"who"** aspect, the goal is to find out whether certain policymakers are more/less responsive to public opinion about basic income than others. More specifically, we will compare three **different types of policymakers**, which each play a crucial part in social policymaking in most modern welfare states: (1) politicians, (2) trade union representatives and (3) employers' representatives. I will return to the significance of, and some expectations regarding, this comparison further below (on p. 6 and 8). For now, it suffices to say that also within these rather broad categories, there is heterogeneity in the sense that these policymakers take on different roles (for example politicians active in the legislative versus executive branch) and belong to different parties/organizations which each have their own internal structure (for example representatives of nationally versus regionally organized trade unions). These roles and memberships are likely to have an influence on policymakers' responsiveness to public opinion.[35,36] As argued above, different policymakers are also expected to have different perceptions of the salience and radicalness of basic income. Importantly, however, the "who" aspect not only deals with the type of policymaker, but also refers to who –that is, which people– policymakers respond to: **the general public, or specific constituencies**? There are indeed studies which suggest that policymakers mainly listen to the rank-and-file members of their own party/organization[37], or in the case of politicians, to the voters they already have, the voters they wish to attract or voters in general (also known as the "median voter").[38,39,40] Alternatively, scholars have long argued that policymakers mainly respond to large, electorally important groups (such as the elderly, i.e. "age politics"[41] or the middle class, i.e. "class politics"[42]), to those groups with the greatest informational or monetary resources (such as the politically active[43,44], the highly educated[45,46] or high-income earners[47,48])[49], or in some electoral systems, to a targeted geographical constituency.[14] This is usually referred to as "unequal responsiveness" in the literature, because it implies that not everyone has equal influence on democratic decision-making. However, I prefer to use the more neutral term of "group-specific responsiveness", and contrast this with the notion of "general responsiveness" –which occurs when policymakers are responsive to public opinion in general rather than to the opinions of specific groups/constituencies. In sum, the first objective is to:

RO1: uncover which types of policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion about basic income, and to whose opinions they are (un)responsive: the general public or specific constituencies.

The **"when and where"** aspect of the general objective relates to the broader **context** in which policymakers operate, denoting both place and time. In terms of place, the project will examine policymakers' responsiveness to public opinion about basic income in **eight different countries** that are selected because they differ in terms of the salience of basic income and the radicalness of basic income vis-à-vis the existing welfare system. With "salience", I refer to four different types of salience: (a) media salience (i.e. the coverage basic income has received in mass media and on social media), (b) political salience (i.e. the level of attention basic income has gotten in political debates), (c) policy salience (i.e. the impact basic income has had on actual policies, mostly in the form of policy experiments), and (d) public salience (i.e. the importance of basic income for the general public). “Radicalness”, in turn, is determined by the extent to which the existing welfare system deviates from the five core characteristics of a basic income: (a) universality, (b) unconditionality, (c) individuality, (d) cash payments, and (e) periodicity.[50] From this perspective, basic income is labelled as more radical in contexts where the existing system is selective rather than universal (because it has a greater share of means-tested social assistance or contributory social insurance schemes), conditional on work-related requirements rather than unconditional, targeted at households or families rather than individuals, and oriented towards the provision of in-kind services rather than the payment of regular cash benefits. Based on these two criteria –salience and radicalness–, the following countries were selected: Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Finland, Sweden, Croatia and Slovenia. I will explain the underlying rationale for this country selection in greater detail below, in the methodology section (see p. 6-7). Here, I want to point out two other important issues related to context. The first is that the salience and perhaps also the radicalness of basic income can vary across time, as we have seen for example with the introduction of new policy experiments[51] or during the Covid-19 pandemic.[52] Although such **over-time developments** in the broader context are beyond the immediate control of the research team, we aim to analyse how these developments –if they occur– influence policymakers’ responsiveness to public opinion about basic income. In a similar vein, the salience and radicalness of basic income can also vary across **regions within countries**. In Spain and the Netherlands, for example, past experiments with basic income type of policies were limited to particular regions, i.e. a couple of municipalities[53] and a specific area in Barcelona[54], respectively. This makes it probable that in these contexts basic income is seen as more salient and less radical, and responsiveness is more likely to occur. The second issue worth pointing out is that –as mentioned above, on p. 3– there are plenty of context characteristics other than salience and radicalness that could influence the extent and nature of policymakers’ responsiveness to public opinion. Although these characteristics are not the main focus of the BI-RESPONS project, they will be taken into consideration in the analyses. In sum, the second objective is to:

RO2: uncover when and where, that is, in which temporal and spatial contexts, policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion about basic income.

The **“how and why”** aspect of the general objective refers to the **mechanisms** behind policymakers’ (un)responsiveness to public opinion about basic income. Policy responsiveness theory has distinguished two fundamental **reasons** why policymakers (rather than policies per se) are responsive to public opinion.[14,15,16] The first and most obvious one is (re-)election: because most policymakers seek votes or office, they tend to follow the opinions of the general population or of specific constituencies (depending on what is most electorally beneficial for them). The second reason has to do with feelings of moral duty: democratically elected policymakers are responsive because they might feel like they owe it to the public to obey its wishes. While these reasons have mainly been raised in relation to politicians, they apply to some extent to representatives of employees’ and employers’ organizations as well, as they are often elected into their position and might also be motivated by moral duty. However, such representatives tend to have an additional reason to be responsive. In order to have the power to influence policy (i.e. the “logic of influence”), their organizations need a sufficiently high number of members (i.e. the “logic of membership”), which is why they are likely to respond to the opinions of current members and/or those they wish to recruit.[37] Overall, however, we still do not know which of these reasons actually drives policymakers, in which circumstances, and why. As I will explain in greater detail below (on p. 6), this is primarily because most prior research relies on ‘the-bigger-the-better’ quantitative analyses of policy responsiveness, which are rarely suited to uncover the underlying micro-mechanisms. Relatedly, it has proven rather difficult to verify whether and why (or why not) the theoretically distinguished factors at the level of the policymaker and the context –such as the (perceived) salience and radicalness of a policy– actually influence policymakers’ responsiveness. The BI-RESPONS project instead adopts a more **fine-grained qualitative approach**, conducting in-depth interviews with a diverse array of policymakers in different countries. This will not only allow us to identify more accurately the reasons *why* policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion about basic income, but also to reveal *how* they respond. Most importantly, we will investigate how policymakers gather and process information about public opinion – both in general and about basic income in particular. In sum, the third objective is to:

RO3: uncover how and why, that is, through which mechanisms, policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion about basic income.

Finally, as shown in the project’s theoretical framework (see Figure 1), the case of basic income will be put into broader perspective by comparing it to an established welfare policy that is both more salient and less radical: **child benefits**. These benefits are more salient, proximate and visible to the public than basic income because they are currently being paid to relatively large shares of the population in most European countries and are generally discussed more regularly in the media and in politics. This makes it more likely that public opinion is more coherent and decisive in this policy domain. Child benefits are also less radical than basic income exactly because they already exist, which allows policymakers to implement more-incremental reforms (like changing the benefit amount or benefit access rules). This is more difficult for basic income, which would in most cases require a radical overhaul of the entire system in every European welfare state (albeit more radical in some than in others). Important to note here is that although child benefits and basic income share some traits –in the sense that both are mostly unconditional cash payments–, there are also some important differences between them: while basic income is paid to every individual without means-test, child benefits are limited to families with children and often have greater selectivity in their policy design (because they for example pay higher amounts to low-income families).[55] Nevertheless, child benefits are seen by many observers as the social policy that is closest to a basic income, which is why it is sometimes labelled as a "basic income for children" (at least in countries where the system is fully universal).[50] This makes that child benefits are a highly relevant comparison case that can serve as a point of reference to interpret the findings from the project's main case, i.e. basic income. However, uncovering under which conditions policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion about child benefits is also relevant in and of its own, given the crucial role played by these benefits in the reduction of (child) poverty.[56] Additionally, it is equally relevant to look *within* the policy cases, by investigating policymakers' responsiveness to different types of basic income and child benefit reforms that vary in terms of their (perceived) salience and radicalness. In sum, the fourth objective is to:

RO4: uncover if, how and why policymakers' (un)responsiveness to public opinion differs between as well as within the policy cases of basic income and child benefits.

Scientific innovations

Through the achievement of its objectives, the BI-RESPONS project contributes to, and opens up new avenues for, at least three adjacent fields of research.

The first is the ever-faster growing literature on **basic income** itself, which is highly multi-disciplinary, attracting interest from a wide range of disciplines in the humanities and social sciences –most notably economics, philosophy, political sciences and sociology.[3] As argued above (on p. 1), this literature has increasingly drawn attention to the politics of basic income, with two different camps stressing the importance of public opinion for political feasibility, without ever testing this relationship empirically nor substantiating it theoretically. **Given the key position occupied by the relationship between public opinion and political feasibility in the research on the politics of basic income[57], our hitherto limited understanding of that relationship constitutes an important knowledge gap that hinders the further development of the entire research field.** Enriching our empirical knowledge of that relationship, as the BI-RESPONS project does, is a major step forwards in the research on basic income politics. On top of that, the project offers a new theoretical framework to advance our understanding of those politics, which is much needed in this under-theorized field of research. More broadly, improving our knowledge of the politics of basic income also constitutes an important addition to the growing number of studies investigating its philosophical and technical aspects. These studies typically determine whether the introduction of a basic income within a given context would have positive policy outcomes and whether it is morally/socially desirable and administratively/financially feasible, but they generally lack the tools to establish whether introducing a basic income is also *politically* feasible.

Additionally, the project contributes to the broader literature on **welfare state attitudes** and welfare state **politics**. Also in this area, there is surprisingly little work that is focused on discovering under which conditions policymakers are (rhetorically) responsive to popular attitudes. This is surprising because many prominent theories –such as power resources theory[58] or the "new politics of the welfare state" framework[59]– assume that the opinions of the general public and/or specific constituencies are a driving force behind welfare state developments. Most of the original theories, however, did not take public preferences into account due to a general lack of survey data. This situation changed for the better with the increased availability of (cross-national) social surveys, which have led to an explosion of studies on welfare attitudes.[60] Most of these studies assume that welfare attitudes have important political consequences, but rarely test this empirically nor substantiate it theoretically.[61] There are of course important exceptions which have shown evidence of policy responsiveness to welfare attitudes.[21,22,23] However, these studies generally have a hard time uncovering the micro-mechanisms behind such "**social policy responsiveness**", mostly because their quantitative research design impedes in-depth analyses of those mechanisms. Furthermore, prior research has focused almost exclusively on *existing* welfare policies. To my knowledge, there are no studies that investigate **how policymakers perceive and respond to opinions about radical welfare reform** such as basic income. This project is the first to do so, and thereby pioneers a whole new research path in the field of welfare state politics.

Finally, the project contributes in several ways to the larger literature on **policy responsiveness, political representation and democratic theory**. Theoretically, it is the first to combine the two widely recognized contingency factors of issue salience and policy radicalness in an integrated framework and to consider their combined impact on three different analytical levels: the policy case, the policy context and the policy maker. While prior research in this field has mostly focused on the variation in salience and radicalness between policy cases, it has not given much consideration to possible variation *within* these cases, across different contexts and between policymakers. Especially the latter, emphasizing the importance of policymakers' *perceptions* of salience and radicalness for their responsiveness offers a whole new perspective. Methodologically, the bulk of policy responsiveness research has used statistical techniques to examine how policies, governments and parties respond to either shifts in broad left-right ideology[38,39,40,43,44] (often called "public mood")[62] or to a usually very wide range of specific policy cases –which are often pooled together in broader categories, such as "welfare", "defence" or "foreign affairs".[15,32,33,34,45] The credo usually seems to be: the bigger (the analysis), the better (the results). Indeed, most studies link large-scale public opinion data to large-scale policy data in as many countries and/or on as many different policy issues as possible. At the same time, scholars continue to call out the **need for more fine-grained, in-depth analysis of particular cases in order to enrich our understanding of policy responsiveness and its underlying mechanisms**.[17,19,24,33,34,45,49] This type of in-depth understanding is exactly what the BI-RESPONS project promises to deliver: for basic income as its main case and child benefits as its comparison case. To fully uncover the complex conditions under which (un)responsiveness occurs, the project relies on qualitative in-depth interviews with different types of policymakers in eight countries. This approach is unique in the field, in two main respects. First, because we focus on the micro-level by investigating how (un)responsive *individual* policymakers are to public opinion. While this has recently received somewhat greater attention in the literature[35,46,63,64], most responsiveness studies take a macro-perspective and reveal what *governments or parties* do with public opinion, rather than individual policymakers.[15,20,21,22,23,31,32,33,34,38,39,40,43,44,45,47,62] This shift from the macro to the micro level is badly needed in order to improve our understanding of the mechanisms and dynamics behind policy responsiveness. Second, while most prior research has focused on how governments, parties (and sometimes individual politicians) react to the opinions of the general public or specific constituencies, the BI-RESPONS project also investigates **how representatives from trade unions and employers' organizations respond** to these opinions. Although it could be argued that such representatives lack direct democratic election incentives and mainly operate from a "logic of influence", they also adhere to a "logic of membership".[37] This means that they risk losing members, and thus power and influence, if their policy stances are not in line with those of their constituency. Such responsiveness from representatives has thus far received relatively little attention in empirical research, but is –theoretically speaking– usually seen as an intermediary factor between public opinion and public policy that either weakens or reinforces the impact of public opinion.[18,19] By including representatives in the in-depth interviews, the BI-RESPONS project will make an important contribution to the hitherto largely theoretical debate on interest group organizations' responsiveness to public opinion.

In addition to the contributions the BI-RESPONS project makes to these different fields of research, it also gives rise to a number of **methodological innovations**. In short, these are: (1) the making of a fully open-access cross-national qualitative dataset containing a large number of in-depth interviews with policymakers regarding their positions towards a basic income/child benefits and their responsiveness to public opinion, (2) the making of a fully open-access cross-national quantitative dataset on public opinion about basic income and child benefits, which includes a new type of questions to measure support for basic income, and (3) the use of the qualitative case study method to uncover the micro-mechanisms behind (social) policy responsiveness. These methodological innovations are discussed in greater detail in the next section.

Section b. Methodology

Scientific approach and methodology

To realize the research objectives and scientific innovations, the BI-RESPONS project adopts a **mixed methods** design of three sequential (yet partly overlapping) stages of primary data gathering and analysis, consisting of (1) a round of baseline in-depth interviews with policymakers, (2) a quantitative public opinion survey among the general population and specific constituencies within that population, and (3) a round of follow-up in-depth interviews with the same sample of policymakers. These are all conducted in **eight different European countries** (i.e. Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Croatia and Slovenia), which are selected for both substantive and practical reasons.

Substantively, the **country selection** is –as introduced above, on p. 3-4– based on the fact that these countries differ in terms of (1) the media, political and policy salience of basic income, and (2) the radicalness of basic income vis-à-vis the existing welfare system. With regard to **salience**, there are some countries –like Finland[6], the Netherlands[53], Spain[54] and to some extent also Slovenia[65]– where basic income is somewhat more salient because it has received greater media attention, emerged more often in political debates or was tested with the help of policy experiments. In other countries –like Belgium, Portugal, Sweden and Croatia– basic income generally ranks much lower on the public and political agenda. With regard to **radicalness**, it can be argued that basic income is closer to the current system in the social-democratic welfare regimes of Finland and Sweden, where many social benefits have traditionally been *universally* accessible for all *individuals*.[66] This to some extent also applies to the Netherlands, which is typically characterized as a hybrid regime sharing traits of the social-democratic and the corporatist-conservative regime, but where a number of universal benefits exist as well –most notably a universal people's pension that is paid to all residents regardless of their work history or financial means.[67] Nevertheless, it has to be noted that also the Dutch, Finnish and Swedish welfare states are still far removed from a basic income in the sense that they all place great emphasis on work conditionality[68], and, especially in the case of the Scandinavian countries, are known for providing a lot of in-kind services (like public childcare) rather than only cash benefits.[66] All other countries in the sample (i.e. Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Croatia and Slovenia) are probably removed even further from a basic income. Belgium, to begin with, is a typical corporatist-conservative regime dominated by contribution-based social insurance schemes that are complemented with means-tested social assistance schemes. Although there are some elements of universality and unconditionality in the Belgian welfare state (for example the universal child benefits and the in principle unlimited duration of unemployment benefits), it remains a strongly family- and work-oriented system. A similar story applies to Spain and Portugal –which both belong to the familialistic and fragmented Southern European welfare model[69]–, as well as to Croatia and Slovenia, which were both transformed –each in its own unique way– to post-socialist welfare states that consist of a mix of social insurance and social assistance.[70]

Important to note though is that this short discussion provides a *first* impression of the *current* salience and radicalness of basic income in the different countries. As stated above (on p. 2-3), however, both salience and radicalness can change over time and vary across regions within countries. In Belgium, for example, basic income has very recently gotten somewhat more salient after it was discussed by the rivalling presidents of the two largest parties in the French-speaking part (Wallonia).[71] By contrast, for the time being basic income is not being talked about at all in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium (Flanders). For this reason, we will conduct a more in-depth and systematic analysis of the salience and radicalness of basic income, which will be documented in **country reports** during the first months of the BI-RESPONS project and updated continuously throughout its implementation (see WP1).

Practically, the countries are selected so that we can form **country couples** that are geographically and linguistically close to each other, which will make it easier to recruit and train personnel to conduct in-depth interviews in (max. 2) different countries. Belgium and the Netherlands, the so-called Low Countries, are neighbouring countries in which Dutch is spoken. Although Belgium also has a large French-speaking population, it will be relatively easy to recruit bilingual staff that can do interviews in both French and Dutch. Spain and Portugal are neighbouring countries that share very similar Romance languages, which makes that their respective native speakers can more easily learn the other language. A similar story applies to neighbours Croatia and Slovenia, whose languages both belong to the same South-Slavic family. Finland and Sweden are an exception in this regard, as they have completely different languages from separate language groups: while Finnish is a Finno-Ugric language, Swedish is a North Germanic one. Nevertheless, since Swedish is the second official language in Finland and is a mandatory subject in the Finnish educational system, I expect to find (mostly Finnish) staff that is able to speak both languages. To cover potential gaps in the qualitative interviewing schedule (for example caused by language barriers), I have foreseen additional budget to contract professional interviewers, who will use the interview guide and topic list developed by the project members.

In the following, I will discuss the three different data-gathering stages of the BI-RESPONS project in turn.

(1) Baseline in-depth interviews with policymakers

In the baseline in-depth interviews with policymakers, we will mainly assess their **initial positions towards a basic income** and their **perceptions of public attitudes** towards the policy idea. In other words: how do policymakers feel about basic income themselves, and what do they think the general public and/or their constituents feel about it? On top of that, we will also ask more general questions about the role of public opinion in policymaking. How important is public opinion for policymakers, and why do they consider it (un)important? Whose opinions do policymakers value most/least? How do policymakers obtain information about public opinion, how do they process this information, and how does it affect their opinions and behaviours? We will also ask what kind of information they would need or want with regard to public opinion about basic income –which they might currently lack. Policymakers' answers to this will be used as input to design the survey that is conducted in the second stage of the project. Finally, we will also ask policymakers if and how they try to manipulate public opinion (about basic income) in order to take stock of the possibility that these opinions might be influenced by elite framing of the issue (as suggested by the dotted arrow in the theoretical framework in Figure 1). All questions that are specific to the project's main case, i.e. basic income, will be repeated for the project's comparison case, i.e. child benefits. In preparation of the interviews, the project team will put together a semi-structured interview guide and topic list.

The interviews will be held with a diverse array of policymakers that take on different roles and have different characteristics but share some affinity with and expertise in the domain of social policy. On the one hand, these are incumbent **politicians** belonging to the executive or the legislative branch –like members of parliament, ministers and their cabinets, or local mayors and aldermen–, and leading figures within political parties –like the party president or the head of the research department. On the other hand, we will also conduct interviews with **representatives** of the most important **trade unions and employers' organizations**. With regard to the latter, we will focus specifically on organizations that represent the self-employed, who are often under-protected in current welfare systems[72] and could therefore stand to benefit from the introduction of a universal basic income.[9] The interviewees will be selected through purposeful sampling[73] in order to obtain a heterogeneous mix of policymakers from different parties/organizations, with different roles and different characteristics (in terms of age, gender and political ideology for example).

In practical terms, we will compile a list of all relevant policymakers and their details in each country under consideration. These lists will be put together in close collaboration with researchers from the PI's professional network who are working at prominent research institutes within the respective countries and are –through their position– well connected to policymakers in these countries. These researchers will also act as brokers by helping to recruit policymakers in the initial stages of the project. This indirect strategy is preferred over direct recruitment by the PI and other team members, who might not have the necessary informal or formal connections (yet) to convince policymakers to participate in the study. I will reveal the names of the network partners in the section where I describe the advisory board (see Figure 3). For now, it suffices to say that the use of these partners is intended to maximize study participation. On top of this, we will –if needed– rely on the technique of snowball sampling, in which additional policymakers are recruited on the back of policymakers that were already interviewed.[78] In terms of sample size, the data collection will go on until the so-called "point of saturation" is reached, that is, when no new information is gathered that contributes to the achievement of the research objectives. This point of saturation could well differ across countries (depending for example on the complexity of government) and different types of policymakers (depending for example on their internal heterogeneity). However, as a rough estimation, I expect to conduct at least 20 baseline interviews per country, leading to a minimum of 160 interviews in total (divided approximately as 2/3th politicians and 1/3th representatives of employees'/employers' organizations).

The interviews will be conducted by the PI and the team members that are recruited via the project (see p. 14 for more details). These members preferably have a background in qualitative research (which will be assessed during the recruitment and selection procedure), but will receive additional training in (elite) interviewing in the beginning of the project. The interviews will be anonymized (to the extent possible) and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts are subsequently translated to English and put into specialized qualitative data analysis software (most likely Nvivo). The files will be made publicly available at an online data repository after an initial embargo period. I will return to the coding and analysis of the data in the section that outlines the follow-up interviews (see p. 9-10). Here, I would like to stress that this fully open access **qualitative dataset** is truly unique and will be of great help to map policymakers' positions towards basic income in different countries –which we currently know very little of, despite their huge importance for the political feasibility of basic income.[57]

(2) Public opinion survey

The public opinion survey will include 7 different modules tapping into people's (1) prior knowledge of and experience with basic income, (2) perceptions of the salience and radicalness of basic income, (3) opinions about different types of basic income, (4) perceptions of policymakers' positions on basic income, (5) perceptions of policymakers' attitudes towards public opinion more generally, (6) memberships and affiliations to political parties, trade unions and employers' organizations, and (7) sociodemographic characteristics (such as age, gender and income). Important to point out is that support for basic income –which is part of module 3– will be measured very differently than it has been measured in past research. The standard approach in survey research is to ask respondents to what extent they support or oppose the introduction of a particular basic income scheme in their country.[74] The **BI-RESPONS survey**, by contrast, develops **items that measure intended political behaviour**, as they are often used in research on political participation (using data from the European Social Survey for example)[75]. Most notably, we will ask respondents whether they are likely to vote for (or against) a party or politician that proposes (or opposes) basic income. Additionally, we will ask whether respondents would sign a petition or take part in a public protest in favour of basic income, contact a policymaker directly to argue for basic income, to vote for a basic income in a referendum (were one to be organized), become or remain a member of a trade union or employers' organization if it would propose (or oppose) a basic income, and so on. Similar questions will be asked about the project's comparison case, child benefits. The questionnaire structure and wording will be decided by the PI, in consultation with the advisory board. The questionnaire will initially be developed in English and translated to the main languages spoken by citizens in the different countries.

The survey will be gathered among large, representative samples of the **general population** in the different countries (of at least 2500 respondents per country, leading to a minimum total of 20.000 respondents). Respondents will be recruited online through polling agencies. Such agencies typically apply quota sampling techniques in order to obtain a sample that resembles the population with regard to a number of important sociodemographic characteristics (like age, gender and education). This should allow us to gauge how the general population feels about basic income, and, consequently, how responsive policymakers are to that population ("general responsiveness"). At the same time, it also provides an accurate picture of the opinions of large and **electorally important subpopulations** (such as the elderly or the middle class), which will allow us to test how responsive policymakers are to specific groups in society ("group-specific responsiveness"). To this end, we will (if necessary and possible) also over-sample four groups within the general population: (1) voters of different political parties, (2) members of different political parties, (3) members of different trade unions, and (4) members of different employers' organizations; mostly self-employed people. These groups are deliberately over-sampled because their sample size would otherwise be too small to obtain statistically reliable estimates. Before going to a wider population, the survey will be extensively piloted among a student population. Important to note here is that although the survey does not –due to budgetary constraints– adhere to the golden standard of probability-based sampling, I will pay due attention to the development of necessary procedures to limit and correct for potential problems that are typical to opt-in panels, such as non-response and self-selection bias (for example, quota for elderly participants and initial recruitment without topic description).

After the survey has been fielded, the project team will draw up **country-specific reports targeted at policymakers**. These reports include easy-to-understand illustrations and explanations of the opinions on basic income (and child benefits) of both the general population and specific constituencies within that population. The reports will be used as input during the third stage of the project, in which we will conduct follow-up in-depth interviews with the same policymakers as in stage 1. After an initial embargo period, both the reports and the survey will be made publicly available at an online repository. This fully open access data source is highly innovative in at least two ways. First, it will be the only basic income survey that taps into people's intended political behaviour rather than their stated preferences. **Asking about citizens' intended political behaviour will arguably offer a whole new perspective on public opinion about basic income and policymakers' responsiveness**. Second, it will be the first (cross-national) survey that over-samples important constituencies within the general population that have hitherto remained somewhat invisible in survey research on basic income (like party members, trade union members and self-employed people). **Mapping the opinions of specific constituencies rather than the general population will vastly improve our understanding of public opinion about –and more broadly, the politics of– basic income.**

(3) Follow-up interviews with policymakers

In the third stage, we will interview the same policymakers as in the baseline interview, which are now recruited directly by members of the project team given that contact will already be established. Before the interview takes place, the policymakers receive the country-specific report that outlines the results from the public opinion survey on basic income (and child benefits) so that they can prepare themselves for the actual interview. This report, which forms the basis for the interview, will also be taken on the spot by the interviewer. During the interview, we will first ask to what extent policymakers' perceptions of public opinion about basic income are congruent with the results from the survey. The evidence-based assumption here is that policymakers will have relatively little accurate knowledge about public opinion on basic income. This assumption is based on (1) prior research which shows that most policymakers find it difficult to correctly assess public opinion on specific policy issues[64,88], and (2) the fact that there is relatively little information from public opinion polls available to policymakers for the issue of basic income.[78] The question then is: how do policymakers respond when this type of information is provided to them? **What happens to policymakers' positions towards basic income after they receive detailed, reliable and politically relevant results from a public opinion poll?** If policymakers indicate that they would change their position towards the policy idea after hearing about public opinion, under which circumstances –when and where– would they do so? How and why would they respond to public opinion about basic income? And whose opinions do they care about: the general public and/or specific constituencies? Conversely, if policymakers indicate that public opinion does not alter their position towards basic income, we will explore why this is the case: are policymakers unwilling to respond (for example because they personally dislike basic income), unable to respond (for example because their party/organization opposes basic income), or is it a combination of both factors? As with the opinion survey, **the focus will be on policymakers' behavioural intentions**, including their stated intent to vote for (or against) basic income in parliament, to advocate for (or against) it within their party or organization, to defend or discredit it in media appearances, and so on. These types of behavioural questions –which will also be asked about child benefits– will be put in a semi-structured interview guide and topic list by the project team.

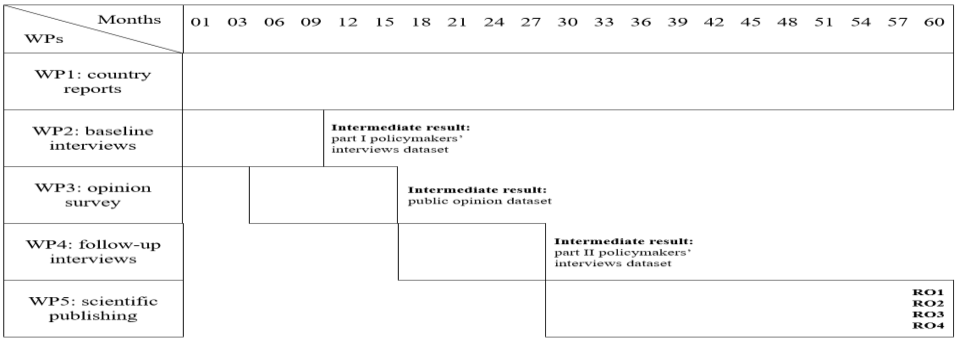
As with the baseline interviews, the follow-up interviews will be transcribed verbatim and made publicly available via an online repository (unless policymakers deliberately opt out of this in order to speak more freely; see contingency plan). This also includes the codes that are assigned to the interview text by the project team. We will start the coding process with a number of first-cycle coding methods that split the data into individually coded segments.[76] Most notably, these methods include: (1) descriptive coding –which summarizes the content of the text in a word or short phrase, and (2) attribute coding –which provides descriptive information, for example on the characteristics of the policymaker and the context in which he or she operates. After that, we will lump the initial codes from the first-cycle coding together into over-arching categories and themes through second-cycle coding methods such as axial, pattern and theoretical coding.[76] These codes will form the basis of a **qualitative content analysis** that is both deductive and inductive. The data will be analysed through a directed content analysis in which the codes and categories are pre-defined on the basis of existing theory and research.[77] More specifically, we will deduct codes, categories and themes from existing literature on (social) policy responsiveness, welfare state politics and basic income (including the newly developed Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness). In practical terms, we will compile a list of concepts that feature in these different strands of research –like "issue salience", "policy radicalness", "electoral competition", "path dependency", "age politics" and so on–, and identify instances when policymakers (explicitly or implicitly) refer to these concepts during the in-depth interviews. This top-down strategy has the advantage of gaining knowledge about a complex reality through a structured research procedure. However, to avoid that we overlook factors which have not yet been recognized by prior research, we will also allow for codes, categories and themes to emerge bottom-up from the data in a conventional content analysis.[77] Importantly, (samples of) the data will be coded by at least two different researchers within the project team to ensure that there is sufficiently high inter-coder reliability.

The gathering and analysis of these qualitative data will force an important breakthrough in different fields of research, both empirically and theoretically. With regard to the first, the unprecedentedly detailed data will provide **empirically grounded insights** into the hitherto poorly understood relationship between public opinion and political feasibility for two different policy cases: basic income and child benefits. More generally, I believe that qualitative in-depth interviews are a useful tool to uncover the motivations/reasons why policymakers are (un)responsive to public opinion –an issue that has been heavily theorized but has rarely been put to an adequate empirical test. Indeed, as argued above (on p. 6), most prior studies rely on macro-level quantitative analyses that struggle to expose the micro-level mechanisms behind policy (un)responsiveness. In light of this, I argue that **it is time for (social) policy responsiveness scholars to follow the recent shift in welfare attitudes research towards qualitative inquiry**.[61] While welfare attitudes were traditionally investigated using quantitative opinion surveys only, it is increasingly recognized that qualitative techniques –such as in-depth interviews and focus groups– are particularly well suited to study people's motivations to support or oppose welfare policies[79,80,81] (including a basic income).[82] The rise of qualitative studies in this field has vastly improved our knowledge on the micro-mechanisms behind welfare attitudes. I argue here that the BI-RESPONS project will lead the way for the (social) policy responsiveness literature to achieve the same.

In addition to generating new empirical insights, the gathering and analysis of the qualitative data will also force theoretical breakthroughs. First of all, it will allow us to **develop new theories about the politics of basic income**, which has been an under-theorized research field since its inception. With the notable exception of the conceptual framework developed by De Wispelaere and Noguera[57], most research on the politics of basic income adopts a rather exploratory approach and interprets its empirical findings on an ad hoc basis. The BI-RESPONS project, by contrast, has the explicit goal of building new theory on the relationship between public opinion about basic income and its political feasibility. The same applies to the broader fields of (social) **policy responsiveness and welfare state politics**, to which the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness will undoubtedly make an important contribution.

Scientific work plan

Figure 2. Overview of the scientific work plan



The BI-RESPONS project will be implemented through five larger work packages (WP), as laid out in the scientific work plan depicted in Figure 2. In WP1, we will draft detailed reports that **monitor the salience and radicalness of basic income** in the different countries. With regard to salience, this mainly involves tracking (1) how much media coverage basic income has received ("media salience"), (2) the impact basic income has had in terms of experiments and actual policy changes ("policy salience"), (3) how often political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations and their leaders take in a public position towards basic income ("political salience"), and (4) how important basic income is for the general public ("public salience"). Practically, the different types of salience will be mapped using existing databases of traditional news media (like Nexis Uni), social media (like Google Trends and the Twitter search engine), parliamentary debates (like ParlEE and ParlSpeech), political manifestos (like the Manifesto Project Database), policy experiments (like the Stanford Global Map of Basic Income Experiments) as well as the input from the country experts that are part of the project's advisory board and any specialized literature on the topic. Additionally, our own public opinion survey will be used as a source of information on the public salience of basic income (of which we currently know very little). Importantly, we will also evaluate the salience of different basic income proposals with different policy design features as well as the salience of child benefits and different reforms of those benefits. With regard to radicalness, we will distil information from social policy databases (like the Mutual Information System on Social Protection), the country experts in the advisory board and specialized literature to analyse how much the existing welfare system in a country deviates from the five core characteristics of basic income: (1) universality, (2) unconditionality, (3) individuality, (4) cash payments, and (5) periodicity.[50] Regarding the case of child benefits, we will describe the existing benefit system in the different countries and discuss the radicalness of several reforms to that system. For example, in a country with a fully universal system providing benefits to all children, it would be quite radical to implement a reform towards a fully means-tested child benefit. By contrast, seemingly minor policy changes (for example not indexing the amount of child benefits) could be seen as less radical. Finally, the reports include information on other context characteristics that could be relevant for policy responsiveness (such as the political system or the degree of electoral competition). The initial country reports are drafted in the first months of the project, but will be updated continuously throughout its implementation. This will provide the opportunity to link potential changes in the context –like changes in the salience of basic income– to the (un)responsiveness of policymakers. An additional advantage of this type of "after-analysis" is that we can **explore whether policymakers and their parties/organizations *publicly* alter their positions towards basic income after receiving information about public opinion in an interview setting.** That is, if policymakers say that they want to be responsive to public opinion during the interview, do they then also change their positions in official documents, social media outlets, media interviews, and so on?

WP2-4 consist of the three sequential (but partly overlapping) stages of data gathering and analysis described above in the methodology section. WP2 pertains to the **baseline in-depth interviews** with policymakers and includes the following tasks: (1) designing the semi-structured interview guide and topic list, (2) translating these documents to the respective languages (i.e. Dutch, French, Finnish, Swedish, Spanish, Portuguese, Croatian and Slovenian), (3) compiling country-specific lists of policymakers with expertise in social policy, (4) contacting and recruiting potential study participants from these lists, (5) conducting the interviews and transcribing these, and (6) coding and analysing the data. WP3 concerns the **public opinion survey** and includes the following tasks: (1) designing the structured questionnaire, (2) translating the questionnaire to the respective languages, (3) programming the survey into an online platform like Qualtrics, (4) piloting the survey among a student population, (5) fielding the survey among a broader population via a polling agency, (6) cleaning and coding the data, and (7) composing country-specific reports on public opinion about basic income (and child benefits) for stage 3. WP4 pertains to the **follow-up interviews** with the policymakers interviewed in stage 1 and includes the same tasks as WP2. The three different work packages lead to important **intermediate results**: (1) a qualitative dataset including at least 160 baseline interviews with policymakers in eight different countries (WP2), (2) a quantitative dataset including the public opinion survey gathered among at least 20.000 respondents living the same selection of countries (WP3), and (3) a cross-national qualitative dataset that also includes the follow-up interviews with policymakers (WP4). By generating these unique data and making them publicly available via an open access repository, **the BI-RESPONS project provides a key resource for researchers as well as policymakers and activists with an interest in basic income, child benefits, and social policy more broadly.** It also offers a practical source of inspiration for researchers who want to gather more fine-grained (qualitative) data on particular cases rather than "the-bigger-the-better" (quantitative) data to study policy responsiveness and political representation.

Finally, WP5 involves writing, publishing and disseminating a series of **research papers** as well as a synthesizing project book in order to realize the project's research objectives (RO). First and foremost, the project team will draft papers that analyse: (1) if, how and why policymakers' positions towards basic income respond to public opinion (RO3), (2) whose opinions policymakers are (un)responsive to: the general public or specific constituencies (RO1), (3) if, how and why the relationship between public opinion and policymakers' positions towards basic income is influenced by characteristics of the context (RO2), characteristics of policymakers (RO1) or combinations of these, and (4) how the case of basic income compares to the case of child benefits in terms of (un)responsiveness and whether there is also variation across different reform proposals within these policy cases (RO4). Taken together, these papers serve **the broader goal of investigating the basic premise of the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness, which holds that responsiveness to public opinion is contingent on the existing variation in salience and radicalness at the level of policy cases, policy contexts and policy makers.** On top of this, there is plenty of potential to write research papers that are of secondary interest to the BI-RESPONS project (because they do not speak *directly* to its objectives) yet are highly relevant for the literature on the politics of basic income. These papers can analyse –among other things– how policymakers position themselves towards basic income, how policymakers try to influence public opinion, and how the salience and radicalness of basic income compares across countries/regions and evolves over time. The research papers produced by the project team will, under supervision of the PI, be targeted at top journals in the relevant disciplines of sociology (e.g. *European Sociological Review*), political science (e.g. *European Journal of Political Research*), social policy (e.g. *Journal of European Social Policy*) and public policy (e.g. *European Journal of Public Policy*). These publication plans are ambitious but realistic, given that the PI's work has previously been published in journals such as these.[13,83,84]

Additionally, the project team will compose a **synthesizing book** that it will propose to an internationally acclaimed publisher. To some extent, this book will be a much-needed sequel to the PI's latest book "The Popularity of Basic Income: Evidence from the Polls", published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2023.[85] This book provides a state-of-the-art overview of popular support for different types of basic income and considers the implications thereof for the political feasibility of basic income. It does not, however, include an *empirical* examination of how public opinion and political feasibility are related to each other. This will be the aim of the sequel, in which we draw together all the data and results from the BI-RESPONS project to uncover under which conditions policymakers respond to public opinion about basic income. The book will furthermore **advance the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness as a new theory to improve our understanding of the politics of basic income and (social) policy reform more generally.**

Risk and contingency plan

Due to the innovative and unconventional research methodology of the BI-RESPONS project, it is exposed to a number of potential risks. The most important risks all have to do with the qualitative data gathering, which is truly unique in the research on (social) policy responsiveness and welfare state politics.

The first potential risk is that the project team might face difficulties in recruiting policymakers to participate in an in-depth interview. This is because policymakers are known to have very busy schedules and might also be wary of being the object of scientific research, especially when it is carried out at a foreign research institute. To deal with this, we will facilitate the recruitment of policymakers with the help of national network partners who –because of their institutional position and (in)formal contacts with the target group– are in most cases better placed to establish initial contact with policymakers than the project team members (see Figure 3 for the names of these "brokers"). Furthermore, we will constrain the duration of the in-depth interviews to maximum 1 hour to limit the time investment that is needed from policymakers. It is also reassuring that previous (qualitative) research in different countries seems to indicate that policymakers are generally quite willing to participate in scientific research on the topics of policy responsiveness[65] and basic income in particular.[10,86,87] For these reasons, I consider the **recruitment of policymakers** for the qualitative interviews as highly feasible.

The second risk is **drop-out** from study participants between the baseline and the follow-up interview. This might happen –among other things– when policymakers are no longer willing to participate, no longer have the time to do so, are no longer politically active, or no longer hold a position that is relevant for the project. To curb such drop-out, we will keep the time period between the baseline and the follow-up interview as short as possible (preferably only a couple of months) and keep the participants engaged by providing regular updates about the progress of the project (for example by letting them know when the survey is being fielded and when the results are in). Alternatively, should the drop-out nevertheless be unexpectedly large, we can always do new recruitments and ask these newly recruited policymakers to assess how they felt about basic income (and child benefits) before and after receiving the information about public opinion. Although this design is arguably sub-optimal, it would still allow us to reach all of the project's research objectives. In that sense, continuity between the different stages of qualitative interviewing is guaranteed.

The third risk is that there might be exogenous **shock events** between the baseline and follow-up interviews that could drastically alter both public opinion about and policymakers' positions towards basic income (or child benefits) as well as policymakers' inclination to be responsive –for example a health/economic crisis (like a pandemic) or a political scandal (like a corruption case). Such events are most problematic should they occur after the public opinion survey is fielded, as they might discredit the face validity of the survey results in the eyes of policymakers. Suppose, for example, that we provide policymakers with information from a survey that was conducted *before* a major economic crisis began. In such a scenario, it seems likely that policymakers will contest the validity of the information that is provided, as they might assume that public opinion has completely shifted *after* the event. To deal with this, we will first of all limit the time between the opinion survey and the follow-up interviews. If a shock event were nevertheless to take place during the short time frame, we should keep open the possibility of flexibly repeating (parts of) the survey to provide policymakers with the most up-to-date snapshot of public opinion. This would offer additional opportunities to investigate how changes in the temporal context, and shock events in particular, influence policymakers' responsiveness to public opinion.

The fourth risk is that the participating policymakers might be inclined to give socially desirable answers in the interviews. This **social desirability** bias could, however, go in either of two directions. On the one hand, some policymakers might want to come across as being very responsive to public opinion (even if they are actually not), because they feel that this is expected from them in a democracy. On the other hand, some policymakers might make it seem as if they are highly unresponsive because they want to convey the message that they are passionate professionals who adopt own policy ideas rather than blindly following the public's preferences (even if they do take these preferences seriously into account). On the whole, these opposing social desirability tendencies could very well cancel each other out. It will nonetheless be the interviewer's job to be highly sensitive to social desirability during the interviews, so that the issue can be taken into account in the content analysis. To stimulate this sensitivity, all project team members are given extensive training in qualitative in-depth interviewing of political elites in the beginning of the project. Additionally, we will prevent socially desirable answers from the participants by ensuring as much anonymity as we possibly can and by offering them the option to opt-out of the publicly available dataset so as to speak more freely.

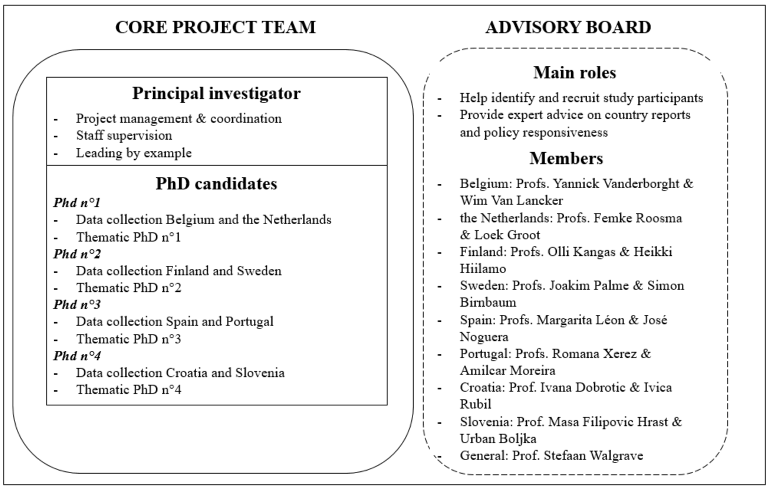
The fifth risk has to do with the **Covid-19** pandemic. Although the current situation allows to conduct face-to-face interviews with policymakers in all the countries included in the project, it could be that this will no longer be possible at some point during the implementation of the project because of national safety and health regulations. In that case, we will switch from face-to-face interviews to online interviews. The public opinion survey is not exposed to this risk because it will be gathered online in any case.

Overall, I feel confident that **the risks associated with the innovative and unconventional qualitative data gathering can be successfully mitigated by the contingency plan** I have put in place. There are, by contrast, generally few risks involved in the quantitative data gathering, which is fully in line with the PI's prior experience and expertise. I have indeed designed and implemented two other public opinion surveys on basic income in the past. More specifically, these are: (1) the 2021 Basic Income in Belgium (BABEL) Survey, which assessed support for different types of basic income among a large sample of 3000 respondents living in Belgium (with an over-sampling of trade union members)[89] and (2) the recently released module on citizens' attitudes towards Social Europe in the Cross-National Online Survey (CRONOS) panel, which includes a survey experiment that probes support for basic income in the context of intra-European migration.[90] Important to add here is that the PI is also experienced in qualitative inquiry (with in-depth interviews and focus groups in particular), as evidenced by some of his scientific publications.[81,82] Taken together, these considerations make that the BI-RESPONS project is not only ground-breaking and ambitious but also highly feasible.

The team

The BI-RESPONS project will be implemented by the core team –which consists of the PI and four PhD candidates– and supported by an advisory board consisting of country experts on the topic of basic income/social policy and one expert on policy responsiveness in particular (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Overview of the BI-RESPONS team members and their main tasks



I, the **PI**, will act as the project manager and coordinator, overseeing the different work packages and supervising the junior team members. With regard to the first, I have years of experience through my role as day-to-day coordinator of the Basic Income in Belgium (BABEL) project and through the management of my Individual Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship. With regard to the second, I already supervise a number of junior researchers. More specifically, I take on the formal supervision of 1 PhD candidate working within the BABEL project and the informal supervision of three other candidates within the project (for example by hosting peer support meetings). Additionally, I supervised two student trainees at Tilburg University, who assisted me with research tasks (e.g. data analyses) and outreach activities (e.g. writing of reports). Other than management, coordination and supervision, I will also carry out hand-on research activities, and by doing so, "lead by example". Concretely, I will: (1) help draft the country reports that track the salience and radicalness of basic income, (2) conduct in-depth interviews with policymakers, (3) take final responsibility for the design and implementation of the opinion survey, (4) help draft the country reports that describe the results from the survey, (5) help write, publish and disseminate research papers, and (6) be the lead editor of the synthesizing project book.

In first instance, the **PhDs** will work in parallel to collect data in the respective country couples. PhD 1 will draft the country reports for and conduct the in-depth interviews in Belgium and the Netherlands. PhDs 2, 3 and 4 will do the same for Finland and Sweden, Spain and Portugal, and Croatia and Slovenia, respectively. These PhDs will have a background in qualitative research and affinity with social policy research (both of which will be extensively assessed during the recruitment and selection procedure). They preferably also master the other language in the country couple, or are willing to/capable of learning the other language. To support this, all team members will take extensive methodological training in qualitative in-depth interviewing at the beginning of the project. Based on the actual needs, the PhDs will also attend courses on social policy and/or language courses. After the data has been collected, the PhDs will focus on writing, publishing and disseminating research papers and on contributing their part to the synthesizing project book. Depending on their expertise and interests, the PhDs will focus on different components and relationships of the project's theoretical framework (depicted in Figure 1). This will lead to four separate PhD trajectories with a thematically different focus.

The project team is supported by an **advisory board**, which has two main roles. The first is to act as the "brokers" that will help to identify and recruit policymakers for the baseline interviews. The second role is to provide expert feedback on the country reports that monitor the salience and radicalness of basic income or on the topic of policy responsiveness more generally. To fulfil these roles, a number of partners have been selected from the PI's professional network. These network partners have demonstrable expertise in the area of social policy/basic income or policy responsiveness and are well connected to policymakers via their positions at well-known research institutes. For each country within the project, I have selected two network partners (see Figure 3). Additionally, I can count on the advice of Prof. Stefaan Walgrave (University of Antwerp, Belgium), who is a renowned expert in mixed-methods research on political representation.[35,46,64,88] **All network partners have confirmed their participation in the advisory board in case the project receives ERC funding.**

In sum, the BI-RESPONS project will force a major breakthrough in the research on the politics of basic income, by yielding fresh empirical findings and developing new theory that will help us understand under which conditions –who, when, where, why, and how– policymakers are responsive to public opinion about basic income. More broadly, the project advances our knowledge on policy responsiveness and welfare state politics by scrutinizing a new theoretical framework –the Multi-Level Framework of Contingent Policy Responsiveness– within an innovative mixed-methods design. Meanwhile, it generates two unique datasets containing qualitative and quantitative data on policymakers' positions towards and public opinion about basic income respectively, which will undoubtedly inspire many other researchers for years to come. To achieve these ambitious and ground-breaking objectives, there is a well-thought-out work and contingency plan which guarantees that the project's implementation is also highly feasible.

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Appendix: All current grants and on-going / submitted grant applications of the PI (Funding ID)

Mandatory information (does not count towards page limits)

Current research grants:

Project Title	*Funding source*	*Amount (Euros)*	*Period*	*Role of the PI*	*Relation to current ERC proposal*
Universalism or selectivism? What citizens think about the institutional design of the future welfare state (UNI-SEL)	European Commission - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions	€ 187 572,48	01-10-2021 until 31-05-2024	Principal Investigator	None

On-going / submitted grant applications: None