# GOOD PRACTICES AIMING TO END ENERGY POVERTY


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2016 Brussels



The case studies were collected by
Anna Bajomi (trainee, office of Tamás Meszerics MEP)
and Viola Shanini (trainee, EAPN).



The Greens | EFA
in the European Parliament

EAPN
EUROPEAN ANTI POVERTY NETWORK

This handbook was initiated and edited by the office of Tamás Meszerics (Member of the European Parliament) via The Greens/EFA group of the European Parliament.

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# Contents

# Introduction



Dear Reader,

We would like to offer you a selection of case studies presenting various good practices aiming to end energy poverty in Europe. We hope that by leading you through the presented projects, you will gain inspiration, useful, practical knowledge and information to have a stable start in launching your own projects and actions in your field.

As a policy maker, by reading through the diversity of the projects, when introducing new polices, you may reach a better understanding of how to approach the complex issue of energy poverty. As a practitioner at a ministerial or municipal department you may have a greater choice when starting new interventions to provide warmer homes for locals. While working for an NGO willing to develop new activities to improve energy-poor households by involving them actively, you may also find this useful as the first step in planning your project. University teachers and students can also expand their knowledge when teaching and learning about energy poverty throughout social work, social policy or public health and any household energy related studies.

The booklet presents projects **delivering large scale physical interventions, offering energy advice, smart metering or financial support for energy poor households** and finally bottom-up projects which actively involve the concerned households. Each case study provides an overview of the projects (and contacts with the leader-organisation), presents the results and discusses lessons learnt through the projects. Success factors and elements of sustainability are also reviewed.

Though the present case studies will hopefully offer inspiration and very useful information, we highly recommend to plan wisely: develop

policy changes or projects based on well-measured needs, then search for stable funding sources and good partners. Involvement of the energy-poor households from the planning phases could make your project even more successful. Stable knowledge on energy poverty is also crucial.

This booklet was created as a side project of the Energy Poverty Handbook, initiated and edited by the office of Tamás Meszerics (Member of the European Parliament), via the Greens/EFA group of the European Parliament. The Handbook offers a range of articles from practitioners and academics to present the complex issue of energy poverty, from its definitions, social and health effects through to the state of the European building stock and the landscape of energy poverty across Europe and its different regulatory aspects, along with European funding available for interventions and fields of actions.

The booklet contains all the case studies which were collected by Anna Bajomi (author of the article 'How to tackle energy poverty – Good practices at a local level') and Viola Shaini (trainee at the European Antipoverty Network)[1] in the summer of 2016.

We wish you pleasant reading,

***Anna Bajomi and Ákos Gosztonyi***

**1** Csiba, K. (2016) (ed.) *Energy Poverty Handbook*. Brussels: European Parliament. 167-179.

# *Large-scale interventions – retrofitting*



## HEEPS: Area Based Schemes (ABS)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | United Kingdom, Scotland |
| **Website/contact:** | Home Energy Scotland (HES) /Greener Scotland *http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/home-energy-scotland* |
| **Duration:** | 2013-2023 |
| **Project-leader and partners:** | The cluster of programmes is funded by the Scottish Government |

### Stakeholders involved

Local Municipalities
Homeowners
Private Landlords/ tenants
Vulnerable Households living in energy poverty

### Brief summary of the project

Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland – also known as HEEPS - is a cluster of programmes funded by the Scottish Government. It consists of

- ***Area Based Schemes*** for tackling fuel poverty in the most deprived areas;
- a ***loan scheme*** to finance energy efficient renovations of owners and private landlords,
- and the ***Warmer Homes Scotland to*** give vulnerable households living in fuel poverty access to measures to make their homes energy efficient and reduce their fuel bills.

## Situation what called for action

In line with the recommendations in the Fuel Poverty Forum's 2012 interim report on its review of fuel poverty strategy, the **Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland (HEEPS)** (initially named the National Retrofit Programme) was launched in April 2013. It offers a package of support to help those who are struggling to pay their energy bills and keep their homes warm.

## Overall objectives

***The schemes were designed to* enable** funding to be levered in from the Green Deal and Uk Government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO). HEEPS was designed to deliver a step-change in energy efficient homes through retrofitting existing stock. It recognised that our focus must be on measures necessary to meet both Fuel Poverty and climate change targets, which deliver more in terms of carbon savings and enable long-term reduction in fuel bills than the measures supported under previous schemes. This approach was set out in our Sustainable Housing Strategy in June 2013 and supported by stakeholders because of its effectiveness and because it delivered measures not being undertaken sufficiently by other schemes that often tend to focus on smaller measures.[1]

## Activities

### Area Based Schemes (ABS)

The ABS follows an area-based approach with initial focus on the most deprived areas. Schemes draw on a range of data including indices of multiple deprivation, child poverty, the Scottish House Condition Survey and heat mapping. ABS is intended to cover all homes in Scotland in 10 years from 2013.

Responsibility for programme delivery for ABS falls to local authorities, who are considered best placed through their Local Housing Strategies to understand the nature of housing provision and to co-ordinate a local supply-chain.

Measures available are dependent on the schemes developed by each local authority and will be free to the householder and open to all tenures.

## Loan Scheme

The Scottish Government makes available interest free, unsecured loans of up to £15,000 to householders for installing a variety of measures such as solid wall insulation, double glazing or a new boiler.

The HEEPS Loan scheme is open to owner occupiers and registered private sector landlords in Scotland. The repayment period varies based on the intended amount to borrow but those taking out higher value loans will be able to pay back over 10 years.

£24 million for HEEPS loans was announced in the Scottish Budget 2016-17, giving homeowners interest-free loans of up to £10,000 for energy efficiency measures.



## Warmer Homes Scotland

The scheme works alongside the other Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland to give vulnerable households living in fuel poverty access to even more measures to make their homes energy efficient. The scheme is open to homeowners or tenants of private sector landlords, who have lived in their home for at least 6 months, and have a low income. There are conditions that need to be met and specific benefits received in order to qualify for this funding. Potential measures include wall insulation, loft insulation, draught-proofing, central heating and renewables

## Home Energy Scotland

We recognise that alongside funding for physical measures, we also need to ensure householders are guided through the choices available to them. Through our HEEPS programmes we also fund Home Energy Scotland to provide free and impartial advice to all householders in Scotland and ensure they can be referred through the most appropriate scheme tailored to their personal circumstances. Through this service, consumers can be assured that they do not need to be knowledgeable on the various funding streams or schemes available, making for a simpler customer journey. Home Energy Scotland also ensure that the service they provide includes offering every caller a free benefits check to maximise their income as well as advice on behaviour change, which can make a significant difference to consumers – saving energy and money.

## Innovative elements

- Fitting funding to fuel poor households needs
- A wide range of measures suitable for both on and off gas properties funded through the different delivery mechanisms
- Delivers additional community benefits
- Supplemented with advice and other services via HES
- Help for the private rental sector which is generally receiving less benefits from energy efficient programs than home-owners or social housing tenants.

## Funding

| Year | Funding £m |
|---|---|
| 2013/14 | 74 |
| 2014/15 | 94 |
| 2015/16 | 119 |
| 2016/17 | 113 |
| 2017/18 (planned) | 114 |

### Results, outcomes

Since it was launched in 2013, until the completion of the 2014/15 programme in Autumn 2015, over 60,000 households in Scotland have received over 66,000 energy efficiency measures through HEEPS. Scottish households will save an estimated £421m in fuel bills over the lifetime of the measures installed and almost 1.8m tonnes of CO2 will be saved as a result.

The 15/16 and 16/17 Programmes currently underway are expected to deliver a further 40000 measures to households.

### Lessons learned

Important to build delivery capacity amongst partners and to have a good information base on which to base decisions. Loan funding needs time to become accepted and customers often need support to ensure quality of work is acceptable.

Success factors Consistency of funding

Independent advice and support

Commitment to high quality standards

Regular engagement with delivery partners

Frequent reviews to ensure delivery is progressing and no unforeseen consequences.



# Energy Agency Area Based Schemes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country** | **Scotland, United Kingdom** |
| **Duration** | April 2015 – May 2016 |
| **Project-leader, partners** | Energy Agency in partnership with South Ayrshire Council, East Ayrshire Council & Dumfries and Galloway Council<br>*http://www.energyagency.org.uk/* |

### Stakeholders

Scottish Government & Local Authorities

### Brief summary of the project

The Energy Agency Area Based Schemes aim to improve the energy efficiency of older, hard-to-treat properties in communities in Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway. The schemes are developed to target the most fuel poor areas first and offer insulation solutions that have previously been difficult and expensive to install.

### Situation what called for action

Efficiency Programmes over the last 10 years have focused primarily on 'easy to install' measures such as loft insulation and cavity wall insulation. These programmes insulated thousands of properties but left behind the 'difficult to treat' properties with solid walls. Many of these solid wall properties are 'system built' houses of the post-war housing boom era and are found clustered in streets in our communities. Often these streets are in areas of high deprivation with households in fuel poverty.

There was a need for this project because although councils could afford to improve their stock by installing these expensive measures, the large number of privately owned houses within these fuel-poor communities could not. This problem was exacerbated in mixed-tenure blocks where council works could not proceed because private owners could not afford their contribution, therefore neither council tenant nor private homeowner could benefit from these improvements.

### Overall objectives

For this project we worked closely with each Council partner to target the communities in greatest need of help which were identified in their Local Housing Strategy. These areas are a combination of vulnerability

to fuel poverty and the potential for well needed energy efficiency measures in hard-to-treat houses.

The project targeted fuel-poor areas in a street-by-street process to insulate every household with external wall insulation (EWI) and loft insulation if required. Where EWI was not possible, internal wall insulation (IWI) was considered.

Each area began with a very detailed and robust project plan that included strategy, targets, costs and marketing which were broken down into very specific numbers and streets.

## Activities

Once the initial project had been developed and established the main activity of the project was dealing with householders and contractors to ensure efficient and effective installation of all measures took place.

## Innovative elements

Generally projects are managed from office and reliance is placed on contractor to effectively install works. With this scheme, Project Co-ordinators were regularly on site to ensure efficient and clean installations took place and to check the householder was happy at every stage. This creative use of project staff ensured any issues between contractor and householders were resolved in a timely manner and kept to a minimum.

Delivery of regular on site meetings rather than those held in the traditional office setting, resulted in close monitoring of installations to ensure a high technical standard and excellent levels of customer satisfaction.

## Funding

Scottish Government provided £9M for the three local authority Area Based Schemes. We were also able to use funds from the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) for each measure and each local authority used their own funding to pay for their own stock.

Using a combination of Scottish Government funding and ECO funding along with a competitive tendering process we were able to offer External Wall Insulation systems for solid brick and 'no fines' properties at no cost to the householder.



## Results, outcomes

| Council Area: | Total Systems Installed | Lifetime $CO_2$ savings (tonnes) | Lifetime Fuel Bill Savings (£) |
|---|---|---|---|
| South Ayrshire: | 343 | 13,583 | £3M |
| East Ayrshire: | 603 | 23,879 | £5.6M |
| Dumfries &Galloway: | 320 | 12,672 | £2.9M |
| Total: | 1,266 | 50,134 | £11.5M |

- We made changes to the insulation levels and building fabric of homes in our vulnerable communities. These changes result in lower carbon emissions.
- We improved the living conditions in some of the most vulnerable, fuel poor households of our area.
- We increased the disposable income of these households by reducing their fuel bills whilst removing them from fuel poverty.
- We transformed the appearance of entire streets of housing so the areas now look fresh and vibrant instead of run-down.
- We extended the lifetime of these properties by at least 40 years thereby removing the expense and resources required to demolish and re-build large areas of housing.
- We supported the local economy and contributed to sustainable local economic development by using local trades and businesses such as telecoms engineers, heating engineers, surveyors and external render companies. Local guest houses, hotels and B&Bs also benefited from increased bookings of employees working for the contractors. Local shops in the areas experienced increased trade whilst the work was being carried out. In the wider, long term context, once measures are installed there are savings in the annual household fuel bills resulting in increased disposable income for the householders. Previous community energy project studies have shown that this increase in spend is more likely to be used locally to the benefit of the local economy.
- We have recruited a Research Officer in partnership with Ayrshire and Arran NHS, to examine the impacts of these changes to the households and the potential benefits to the householder's health and well-being. An Interim Report has recently been published.

### Sustainability

The strong robust project plan, highly effective communications and very well trained staff, combined with the training and education of house-holders mean that energy saving behaviours will continue following the main installation of measures. Due to the available funding the most deprived homes and occupiers are being targeted – these people and properties also benefit most from the training and education which takes place when the measures are installed. This is essential for the long term sustainability of this work.

### Lessons learned

Taking a 'whole street' approach enabled us to focus on and improve specific areas that face a high risk of fuel poverty. Uptake to the scheme was high as people saw their neighbour's properties being improved and this encouraged them to do the same.

Working in partnership with local authorities allowed the funding streams for EWI to take a mixed tenure approach completing whole streets that would have previously seen council or private 'blockers'.
Projects are historically managed from the office and reliance is placed on the contractor to effectively install works. We took a more creative approach and sent Project Co-ordinators on site to ensure efficient and clean installations took place and to check householders were happy at every stage. This creative use of staff ensured any issues between contractor and householders were resolved in a timely manner and kept to a minimum.

Delivery of on-site meetings rather than those held in the traditional office setting, resulted in close monitoring of installations to ensure a high technical standard and excellent levels of customer satisfaction.
Properties requiring EWI and IWI require building warrants and can be a timely process. We created a direct link between contractor and council building control to speed up the process. This resulted in a more efficient method of receiving building warrant approvals.

There is a huge potential for the replication of this project in the EU. The most challenging task may be acquiring funding for expensive measures such as solid wall insulation.
The impressive results show that the geographical concentration of a project has many advantages including operational, financial and marketing.

### Success factors

The success of the project is due to many factors- effective partnership working, a very detailed and robust project plan, efficient management, staff and contractors, innovative approaches and interaction with householders.

The project has not just improved the energy efficiency of housing; it has improved the look and feel of entire communities.



## Warm Up North

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | United Kingdom |
| **Website:** | *www.warmupnorth.com* |
| **Duration:** | August 2012 – July 2017 |
| **Project leader:** | Newcastle City Council |

### Project-leader organisation and partners

Warm up North is a public / private partnership of 9 local authorities in the North East of England (UK) and British Gas; the procured delivery partner. The Lead Partner is Newcastle City Council who provides the Project Director. The project governance and decision making framework comprised of Partner Steering Group made up of senior representatives from the regional local authorities, Liaison Committee (which comprises PSG members and the Delivery Partner; British Gas representatives) and Regional operation Team meetings (dealing with delivery and operational matters).

### Brief summary of the project

The 'Warm Up North' project began as a pioneering initiative to successfully implement a large scale housing retrofit programme of energy efficiency and renewable measures taking advantage of the UK Government's Green Deal and ECO proposals under The Energy Act 2011. The scheme being delivered across the North East of England encompassing all tenures of domestic property and publicly owned non domestic properties and is being delivered over a contract period of 5 years.

### Situation what called for action

North East of England have had 'easy to install' energy efficiency meas-ures installed – mainly loft installation and cavity wall insulation through government grants to residents or through fuel poverty targets placed on major utility providers; requiring them to offer free or subsidised solutions direct to residents. But many properties are harder to treat

– stone walls in rural properties, unusual constructions and single cavity walls which leave many homes without an affordable solution. The only way to address these is through expensive interventions such as solid wall insulation either on the inside or outside of the property. These are unaffordable for most. Rising energy prices, doubts about energy security, increasing numbers of residents being forced into fuel poverty, tough winters, residents presenting themselves to the health service with symptoms of living in cold homes and unacceptable numbers of 'winter deaths' was presenting local government authorities with a huge challenge. At the same time, Newcastle City Council and other North East local authorities had committed themselves to securing tangible and significant levels of change by reducing carbon emissions and increasing renewable energy sources. These were big problems that needed a big solution.

## Overall objectives

The target investment and financing model was based on a minimum range of 10,000 to 15,000 domestic properties across all tenures to be retrofitted with a mix of measures appropriate to the household property. The domestic scheme value was originally estimated at approx. £75m – £155m of which up to approx. £19.5m was to be delivered during the first 18 months of the delivery phase with an anticipated reduction of 8,900 tonnes of carbon. A key outcome of the project was the development of a "blueprint" for similar size UK local authorities wishing to deliver housing energy efficiency and renewable measures at a large scale and in line with the emerging UK Green Deal legislation.

## Activities

Although the scheme includes the scope to address publicly owned non domestic assets: the core priority was domestic energy efficiency and renewable energy and therefore the mechanisms agreed during the procurement ensured these were prioritised.

## Innovative elements

The UK Government introduced a new idea called the 'Green Deal'. This had the potential of no upfront cost with the repayments recouped through a charge in instalments on the electricity bill, with the Green Deal repayments being collected by UK energy companies and returned to the 'Green Deal Provider'. This meant that with a viable source of funding, a large scale retrofit programme could be self-financing – repaid through savings on energy bills. This would be subject to "The Golden Rule" – in the energy savings had to be the same or higher than the cost of the measures; therefore the resident could be no worse off financially for taking up the scheme.



## Funding

IEE technical assistance funding was used to establish a financial model and procure a delivery partner for the scheme.

Funding generally for the works came from Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and/or Local Authority own funds or Residents own funds.

ECO creates a legal obligation on the largest energy suppliers to improve the energy efficiency of households through the establishment of distinct targets. Primarily new boilers to low income and vulnerable households to affordably heat their home was provided through this route

## Results, outcomes

The 'Warm Up North' project began as a pioneering initiative to implement a large scale housing retrofit programme taking advantage of the UK Government's Green Deal and ECO proposals under The Energy Act 2011. Since project launch however, the take up by citizens in the Green Deal 'pay as you save' model has been very weak and UK subsidy levels have been substantially reduced by government. In July 2015, The Government announced that in light of low take-up and to protect taxpayers from further losses there would be no further funding to the Green Deal Finance Company. The Government's flagship Green Deal scheme to insulate homes was effectively axed and closed with immediate effect.

Despite the changing public policy position in the UK, the project has achieved considerable success. By mid July 2015, more than 4000 homes with fuel poor residents have had new boiler systems installed and homes have been improved, 25,000 tonnes of CO2 is being saved annually and 21m Euros has been invested. Going forward there was also a pipeline of schemes adding up to a further 35m Euros. The flexibility built into the contract enabled WUN to operate across the domestic sector and in the public building sector. This non-domestic work has been important in maintaining the volumes of activity necessary to keep the high level of commitment of the contractor, British Gas, when the domestic policy environment was changing so drastically. It has had the effect of solidifying the 'Warm Up North' project.

The value of independent support may be a key learning point for other partnerships. From initial mobilisation, the partnership has developed a track record of delivery which has been rewarded by support from

DECC when WUN has bid for competitive funding for various pathfinder domestic energy subsidies. The presence of a strong partnership with a procured delivery partner has been a major advantage to the region and is likely to continue to be as the Warm Up North project is in Contract with British Gas for at least a further 3 years until June 2018 with the facility to extend beyond to June 2021. For example, WUN, in July 2015, were successful with a competitive bid to DECC for their 'Central Heating Fund' designed to deliver first time central heating systems to fuel poor households.

The bid secured £6.5m (over 25% of that available nationally) from DECC and with matched funding of over £4m will be combined to incentivise the installation of first time central heating systems to around 2000 fuel poor households who do not use mains gas as their primary heating fuel. The original aims, objectives and aspirations of the Project have not been achieved. The more expensive solutions to resolve the UK's major problem of energy inefficient housing were unable to be delivered under the Government models. A major issue that WUN faced was the slow take up of the Green Deal in the UK. Green Deal has not delivered in sufficient volume either locally or nationally due to massive customer resistance and was scrapped. The Project was however flexible enough to adapt and deliver outcomes to benefit citizens if at a reduced level to the original aspirations

### Sustainability

The solid partnership in place between the local authorities, the wide scope of the procurement notice and the flexibility of the delivery partner (British Gas) has allowed alternative avenues of delivering substantial energy efficiency measures outside of the Green Deal mechanism. Looking ahead, as further policies are developed to tackle reduction of carbon emissions and to lower citizens' energy bills so the WUN Partnership is mobilised and well placed in its flexibility to respond to any future opportunities.

### Lessons learned

- Regional partnership approach vital to create scale of delivery
- Lead partner approach avoids duplication of effort
- Careful wording within tender documents to allow flexibility to change direction of delivery
- The Governments Green Deal policy proved not to be popular with citizens but the project was flexible to deliver energy efficiency measures at large scale through other avenues
- Changes of Government policy may require the partnership to change aims – be pragmatic
- No finance given to Delivery Partner – so be conscious that if you contract with a private enterprise, understandably, commercial business drivers will be a priority of the company
- You may not be able to achieve all of the original objectives – be flexible to respond to external factors and get the best possible from the contract



## Guichet Primes – Supporting Energy Efficiency in the commune of Saint-Josse-ten-Noode, Brussels

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Belgium |
| **Website:** | *www.stjosse.irisnet.be*<br>*primes@stjosse.irisnet.be* |
| **Duration:** | Minimum three years (2015-2017) |
| **Project-leader:** | Municipality of Saint-Josse in partnership with the Region of Bruxelles-Capitale (Neighbourhood Contract: Axe Louvain) |

### Stakeholders involved

Inhabitants, different municipal and regional services, regional providers of public aids for building retrofit and two full-time employees of the Guichet Primes project

### Brief summary of the project

The Guichet Primes project promotes the renovation of private buildings (predominantly apartments) through subsidies or loans with low rates (using regional and municipal public aids) in order to allow low income families to improve their comfort and the energy performance of their homes.

### Situation which called for action

- Deteriorated condition of private buildings in Saint-Josse.
- Funds hardly accessible for low income people due the complex application procedures for public aids

### Objectives

Renovation of as many apartments as possible, without a determined objective.

### Activities

- Motivating locals to renovate their property:
- Informing local citizens about public aids available for building renovations.
- Assisting the candidates, for no fee and in a personal and friendly manner, throughout the renovation process, from project conception until the payments of the subsidies.

### Innovative elements

- Establishment of a municipal service of personal support (Guichet Primes) in the field of building renovations.
- Introduction of very attractive municipal subsidies (complementing the already existing regional-ones).
- Introduction of prepayment of subsidies at the municipal level.

### Funding

The project's budget for three years (2015-2017) is €800,000 to which regional subsidies given to the citizens need to be added. Contribution of the region of Bruxelles-Capitale: €400,000.

### Results and outcomes

- Guichet Primes was consulted 460 times throughout the 15 months, with an average of 4.3 interventions per property (2,000 interventions).
- 332 regional and municipal subsidies were given at €395,000 (of which €17,000 were municipal subsidies). A total of 84 properties were affected.

### Sustainability

- Generally higher living-standards in Saint-Josse.
- Higher housing comfort level of inhabitants, reduction of housing costs and energy bills of households.
- Smaller ecologic footprint of the housing stock.
- Citizens becoming more attached to their neighbourhood.
- Project secured until 2017.

### Success factors

- Personal support for low- and medium-income persons, who consist of 90% of the those consulting with the Guichet Primes.
- Attractive new municipal subsidies: 100% reimbursement of the costs of work in certain cases. Possibility offered to citizens to undertake work unfeasible in other circumstances.



- Payment of subsidies before work commences gives opportunity to those who would otherwise not have the necessary resources to manage the works.

## REELIH – Residential Energy Efficiency for Low-Income Households

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Pilot projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Armenia; regional activities throughout Eastern Europe |
| **Website:** | *Getwarmhomes.org* |
| **Duration:** | 2012 - |
| **Projectleader:** | Habitat for Humanity (HFHI) and USAID |

### Stakeholders involved

Homeowners, homeowner associations, governments, and financial institutions

### Brief summary of the project

REELIH seeks to demonstrate how communities can work with the private and public sectors to leverage resources for energy efficiency retrofits, thereby reducing poverty, improving living conditions, reducing CO2 emissions, and contributing to energy reform– first in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Armenia, and ultimately across Europe and CIS.

### Situation what called for action

In the former Soviet states, apartment buildings were constructed cheaply and without regard to energy efficiency – the state paid for gas. Apartments were built without proper insulation in the walls, windows or roofs. Today, more than 50% of Armenians and 20% of Bosnians live in apartments, and around 75-80% of these buildings were constructed between 1951 and 1991. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, so did the maintenance and management of these apartment complexes. Apartment flats were sold for next to nothing, and today, around 90% of apartments in Eastern Europe are privately owned. Some buildings have formed homeowner associations with varying levels of capacity and authority, but both trust and maintenance dues run low. High rates of unemployment (43% in Bosnia and 20% in Armenia) make exorbitant energy bills especially burdensome, and home improvement investments unlikely.

Apartment complexes in former Soviet states were never properly insulated. REELIH targets families who cannot afford commercial loans. A full REELIH intervention encompasses replacing the roof, refurbishing the "building envelope" of façades, replacing all the windows and doors, repairing staircases, and changing the flooring. By addressing housing quality, REELIH also addresses affordability and health. Low-income families are vulnerable to exorbitant energy bills. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and Armenia, families spend 30-40% of their disposable incomes on heating during the winter! Energy efficiency retrofits can reduce energy consumption by 40-50%, and lead to direct savings and housing affordability. Furthermore, these retrofits allow low-income families to properly heat their homes, preventing the adverse health effects caused by the cold, dampness, and air pollution.

## Overall objectives

REELIH's first objective is to foster an enabling environment for residential energy efficiency investments, through knowledge sharing, awareness raising, and evidence-based advocacy efforts. New online knowledge platforms will provide practical advice to homeowner associations, and tips for practitioners who want to develop similar programs. Regional level advocacy activities are aimed at improving the environment for residential energy efficiency investment in the region, by engaging national and international policymakers, like-minded NGO actors, and industry actors to devise new policies and practices.

The second objective is to develop replicable financial models, and implement pilot projects to retrofit apartment buildings in Armenia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this way, REELIH serves households by reducing their energy consumption by as much as 50%, and builds an evidence base to catalyze further projects. By directly upgrading apartment buildings, and shaping policies and markets such that residential energy efficiency investments can be made at scale, REELIH serves low-income households in Eastern Europe who are burdened by exorbitant heating bills.

The project aspires to create social, economic, and environmental impacts. The desired outcomes include market models that fund costly interventions, the reduction of total energy consumption in the residential sector, reduction of $CO_2$ emissions, sustainable economic development as jobs are created through construction, and poverty reduction, as people have greater disposable incomes.



## Activities

REELIH's Market Development Approach involves People, Public, Private Partnerships. Teams meet with homeowner associations (HOAs) to share the importance of residential energy efficiency, and the possibility of financing retrofits. REELIH works with HOAs through their decision making processes, and assists them in interpreting energy audit results, and obtaining and managing loans. REELIH builds the capacity of HOAs, and establishes their reputation as trustworthy borrowers.

REELIH works with the public sector to create supportive institutional environments. Government subsidies are essential for scaling up these retrofits, so REELIH works with local and national governments to determine subsidy levels, and assist with participatory procurement, and budget planning. For example, REELIH's policy recommendations are being adapted into a five-year Cantonal Energy Efficiency Plan for the Tuzla Canton in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the first of its kind.

Finally, REELIH involves the private sector, and works to shift the lending behavior of banks in favor of homeowner associations. Historically, banks have been reluctant to issue loans to homeowners in low-income apartment buildings, but REELIH is negotiating products for homeowner associations who can manage the property well. REELIH also partners with maintenance and construction companies to implement a range of retrofits, including refurbishing the "building envelope" of façades, replacing all the windows and doors, repairing staircases, and changing the flooring.

With a light touch, REELIH facilitates decision making processes in home owner associations; designs subsidy schemes with local governments; develops loan products with banks; convenes stakeholders to discuss which regulatory changes may be needed for scale; and oversees housing retrofits.

## Innovative elements

To begin with, REELIH is the only energy efficiency project in the region that works with households and homeowner associations. Although 90% of apartments in Eastern Europe are owned by individuals, banks have shied from the complexity of providing loans to numerous households with low incomes. It seems unprofitable, and there is a lack of precedence for doing so. REELIH is changing this attitude, and demonstrating the benefits of working with homeowner associations and governments.

Secondly, REELIH is innovative in that it brings an impressive range of stakeholders together – homeowners, entrepren€s, economists, bankers, and policymakers. This project is characterized by its reliance on People, Public, Private Partnerships, as savings, loans, and subsidies are combined for residential energy efficiency investments. REELIH is building trust and facilitating cooperation between communities and the private and public sectors, thereby unlocking greater potential, and leveraging resources and expertise for the poor.

## Funding

HFHI funded the preparatory work for the development of REELIH from its own undesignated funding sources. HFHI hired a consultant familiar with the Residential Energy Efficiency project in Macedonia, and drew upon internal finance, program and HR capacities. During the project inception phase (October 2012 – January 2013), HFHI conducted a rapid assessment of four countries (Serbia, Bosnia, Ukraine, Armenia) to choose two demonstration countries, based on a set of selection criteria. The total cost of the preparatory and inception phase was around $50,000, a shared cost between HFHI and USAID. Over the course of 5 years, -Habitat has been working with $1.5 million from USAID. Habitat is shouldering a cost share of over $500,000 and has already leveraged around $100,000 of private and public capital from private financial institutions and governments

## Results, outcomes

The project is still ongoing. To date, REELIH has completed retrofits in four buildings in Bosnia, and eight in Armenia, directly benefiting over 2,300 people with up to 50% in energy savings. Results from these pilot projects fuel advocacy activities to influence public policy and the energy efficiency sector.

## Sustainability

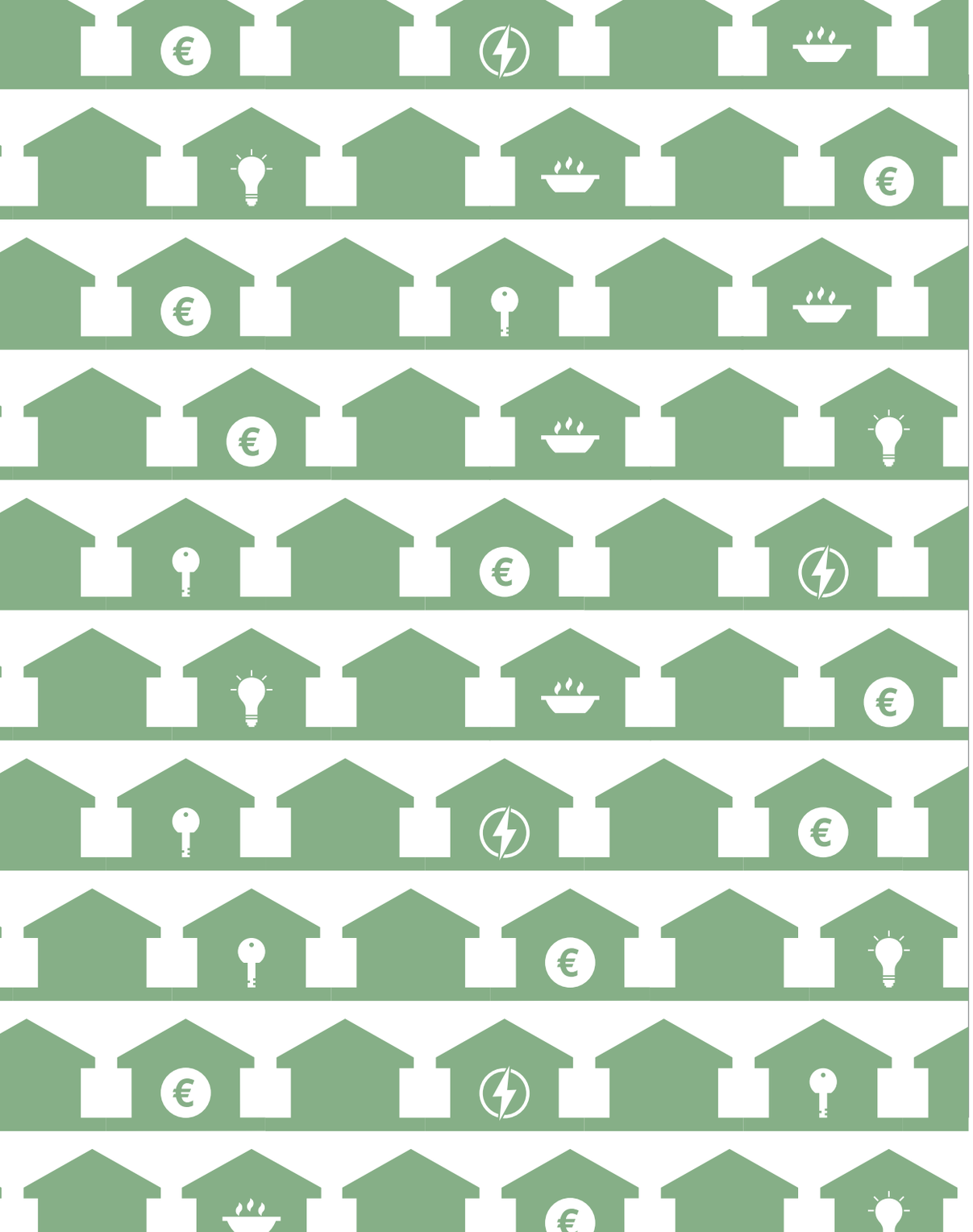
The REELIH project believes that sharing knowledge is critical for ongoing sustainability. REELIH promotes three new online knowledge sharing platforms, and make sure that they are used by homeowner associations and practitioners in the energy efficiency field. REELIH will also organize a regional event to present policy recommendations and research findings, and continue to initiate dialogues about energy efficiency in Eastern Europe.

To continue market development, REELIH negotiates with cantons and national governments to set up state guarantee funds.  If loans are insured, banks will be more likely to work with homeowners, and provide lower interest rates. REELIH also hopes to begin some supply-side interventions, by encouraging energy service companies to retrofit apartments as a business investment, and take on the risks themselves. It is important to measure the social and economic impacts of residential energy efficiency improvements on families. This research would inform the design of future policies and programs around the world.



## Success factors

REEELIH is developing a market that did not previously exist in Eastern Europe, by empowering low-income apartment residents, and building trust between people, public and private actors such that they can tailor their own residential energy efficiency solutions, and reap the economic, social, health, and environmental benefits.



# *Energy advice*



## ACHIEVE

Actions in low income Households to Improve energy efficiency through Visits and Energy diagnosis

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | France, United-Kingdom, Slovenia, Germany, Bulgaria |
| **Website** | *https://ec.€opa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/en/projects/achieve* |
| **Contact:** | Marie MOISAN / CLER / *marie.moisan@cler.org* |
| **Duration:** | 36 months (April 2011 – April 2014) |

### Project-leader organisation and partners

ACHIEVE gathers seven non-profit organisations:

- In France: CLER (coordinator), Croix-Rouge Insertion-IDEMU, GERES;
- In UK: Severn Wye Energy Agency;
- In Slovenia: Focus, Association for Sustainable Development;
- In Germany: CARITAS Frankfurt;
- In Bulgaria: Energy Agency of Plovdiv.

### Stakeholders involved

Low-income households that might have difficulties with their energy bills and consumptions are the key target group of the project. This implies to work with any other local actor that might be:

- able to identify the targeted households : municipalities and local authorities distributing aids to low-income households, job centres, people working in the health, social, energy sector; social landlords; and any other people likely to be in touch with these families (janitors, postman or councillors in rural areas, elderly, foreigners, handicapped people networks...), etc.
- relevant to propose longer-term and durable solutions to the house-

holds, after an initial home visit: municipalities and other local authorities, organisations specialised in energy advising, consumers associations, organisations willing to offer mediation services to the households (with the energy suppliers, with the landlord...), structures providing support to owners in case energy refurbishment works are possible, etc.

## Brief summary of the project

ACHIEVE methodology can be described as the "first step" to help households facing energy poverty to find solutions to improve their situations. Key words are: identification of households, qualification and assessment of their situation, orientation after a home visit, and facilitation of potential local stakeholders responses.

## Situation what called for action

Fuel poverty is not a term that households will apply spontaneously to themselves. The first challenge when setting up local action plans to tackle fuel poverty is to identify those households that are facing problems to afford their energy needs.

ACHIEVE starts from the observation that private households do often not take up or know the solutions they can mobilise to decrease their energy consumptions and bills. The information available often does not fit their specific situation and this target group anyway lacks the financial resources to make energy efficiency investments in their homes. A proper understanding of their situation, through a socio-technical diagnosis during a home visit, is the very first step to be able to help them further and orientate them towards existing solutions and support.

## Overall objectives

The aim of ACHIEVE was to contribute to practical and structural solutions for reduction of fuel poverty in Europe by:

- Better identifying households facing energy poverty situations,
- Linking dispersed local actors into a EU wide concerted effort to eliminate fuel poverty, through common understanding, communication and networking,
- Developping a methodological and economical concept for addressing energy poverty at the European level



## Activities

In ACHIEVE, long-term unemployed people, volunteers or students were mobilized and trained to develop local energy advice services towards low-income households facing difficulties with their energy bills. The service was based on home visits, which main purposes are:

- to understand vulnerable consumers' energy consumption, bills and habits, and to check their appliances with a set of reporting/analysing tools (an Excel calculation tool has been developped to automatically assess the savings generated thanks to the visit at each household's);
- to distribute and install a set of free energy and water saving devices (light bulbs, thermometers and thermostats, weather stripping for windows and doors, transparent insulation foil for simple-glazing, tap aerators, dual-flow flush mechanism, shower timers…), and give advice to the households on how to implement further practical measures for saving energy;
- to analyse which longer-term solutions can be brought to improve the households' situation, by linking local actors into a concerted local action plan.
- Each household was visited twice: first visit focused on the socio-diagnosis of the situation of the household and it housing (social, financial, technical checks) and second visit brought tailor-made advice, energy/water saving devices, and further orientation towards local stakeholders.

## Innovative elements

Starting from the assumption that no one can precisely analyse the situation and needs of a household facing problems with energy at home without going in their home, ACHIEVE principle was to systematise home visits.

- Energy poverty and long-term unemployment are often linked with social marginalisation. ACHIEVE's important social innovation is that it contributes to social reintegration, both by empowering households to fight fuel poverty by improving understanding of their energy use, and by engaging people who have been long-term unemployed to raise awareness on fuel poverty.
- Formalise already existing local partnerships at local levels between energy and housing actors, and building new partnerships (growing interest from social workers to energy considerations in their everyday activities)

## Funding

Total costs : €1 467 611

**Main elements of costs :**

- 50% of the total project costs were for the staff of the project partners team, the rest was for various tasks subcontracted (evaluation activities and organization of events, translation of some documents, etc.), for the purchase of free devices given to the households, and for travels (when going on visits).
- About 50 % of the staff costs were dedicated to the implementation and coordination of home visits activities,
- Evaluation activities counted for more than 10% of total staff costs, and external consultant where also subcontracted to assist the project team on this task (for 35 000 €).

**Contributions:**

- The EU Commission (within the frame of the Energy Intelligent Europe programme), for 67% of the total project costs;
- In France: Fondation Abbé Pierre, Fondation MACIF, Solinergy, EDF (in kind through the giving of saving devices);
- In the UK: Wiltshire Council, EON and Wessex Water;
- In Germany: City of Frankfurt, job centres, Federal Stromspar-Check project;
- In Slovenia: Public work fund, Eco fund Slovenia, Municipality of Ljubljana;
- In Bulgaria: Philips Bulgaria.

## Results, outcomes

- A total of 142 people have been trained though ACHIEVE. Among them, 89 where students, and 49 where volunteers/unemployed people. The duration of the training for energy advisors is 50 hours in average (plus the time dedicated to their supervision all along the project).
- 1920 households were visited. In each visited household, an average of €44 of various free energy and water saving devices have been distributed
- ACHIEVE visits generated a saving of €150 and 320 kg of $CO_2$ per year and per household. Most of the visits last in average 60-90 minutes (twice, as there are systematically 2 visits).
- Most of the energy advisers training who were long-term unemployed visits found a job by the end of their participation to ACHIEVE, or went back on a training course.



- ACHIEVE demonstrated that different organizations could work together on a multifaceted issue which full scope is often out of the range of any of the individual organizations. In this sense, the project was a catalyst for cooperation in the social, environmental, educational, and practical areas. It was beneficial to make the initial contact with all the local organizations at the beginning of the project so that an implementation plan could be devised at the very start of the project. On the other hand, the problem of fuel poverty is not a well-defined one. Thus, there is no particular department in the municipality that deals specifically with energy poverty which was a barrier for the more active involvement of the municipality.

## Sustainability

- ACHIEVE gave birth to a little sister project in the Balkans, still on-going: the REACH project[1]
- In France, the General Directorate for Energy and Climate of the Ministry for environment made eligible to white certificate a program proposed by CLER, based on ACHIEVE methodology: the SLIME program (Local intervention services for energy savings). Any local authority implementing a home visit service for low-income household facing fuel poverty can now collect white certificates (allowing the local authority to recover a minimum of 44% of their local scheme budget). The national program is open every 6 months to new candidates. In 2016, around 20 local authorities, representing territories of very heterogeneous scales, have entered this national program.[2]
- In Germany, the Cariteam-Energiesparservice and Stromspar-check projects, which was used as a basis for ACHIEVE methodology, is still running, growing, and helping thousands of households every year.

**1** *http://reach-energy.eu/*

**2** more info: *www.lesslime.org*

## Lessons learned

**1. Local networks**

- **Local networks are the core to implement a project** (if no partners/supporters/stakeholders: no project). Creating and maintaining these networks (with social/health services mainly) is time consuming and it must be done regularly. A possible solution is to engage them in some visits.
- If energy checks are done on large scale (e.g. country wide), it is important that structural / legal solutions are found about being able **to share and use the contact data (e.g. address lists) of the target group, in respect of the privacy regulation.** These structural/

legal solutions are a necessary condition to fully use and benefit from the efforts that are made on the local level to build out strong local networks.

**2. Free saving devices:**

- **Devices must fit to the household's situation:** some devices may be systematically distributed (thermometers, CFLs…), but some devices will be installed only when relevant (e.g. transparent thermo cover insulation foil for window only where single glazing is currently available). It is thus important to have a large range of devices at disposal, as not all of them can be installed in a house.
- **The combination of energy saving tips for changing behaviour and free devices** which save directly energy in one home visit is a good combination and an **attractive** offer for clients.

**3. Lessons for training modules:**

- **Knowledge about social issues must be emphasised,** so that the advisers are able to identify social problems (involve social workers in the training sessions so that advisers know how to identify social issues too, not only technical). It is also important to train about communication requirements.
- Although much training info is the same between countries, also a lot of information is country dependant.
- **Complex topics must be taught in an easy-to-understand way.** Advisors must learn to communicate about these complex topics in an understandable language.
- The **limits of the missions of the energy advisers must be clearly defined** during the training to avoid or limit frustrations for advisors and households (in practice it often happens that the household expects more than advisor is able to give, as well as that advisors attempt to provide support for which they are not qualified to provide). In relation to this, it is important to better inform the advisers about possible solutions they can propose to households at the end of the visit (orientate them towards the proper structures).

**4. Energy advisers:**

- **Selection and training of the energy advisors:** when recruiting energy advisers to be trained, a particular focus should be put on their social and communication skills. It is also suggested that visits are performed by advisers working in pairs: one with technical skills, and the other with social skills.
- **Plan regular new training sessions to train newcomers** to the program that replace the leaving advisers: when working with long-term unemployed people or volunteers, it is very likely that those who are trained to perform the visits will leave the program when another job opportunity comes to them. Time dedicated to training activities should not be underestimated. Training activities and general supervision of the visits are thus highly time consuming for project managers willing to implement a home visits service.



**5. Visits:**

- When dealing with households, it is of utmost importance to pay attention to their circumstances. Fuel poverty closely coincides with general poverty, which means that some of the **households are very sensitive to their situation and are reserved in asking for support.** It is advisable to have an advising team of one man and one woman, as it seems more acceptable for the households (in some cases it will even only be women who are accepted by the households). Working with long term unemployed advisors is good: these advisors often share a similar history, which closes the gap between the advisor and the household.
- Visits are a good occasion to get in touch with households that sometimes have not received any visits since a long time from "external" parties. As a consequence, the time needed for one visit can be much higher than expected, as people might have a lot to say to advisers (not necessarily strictly linked to the core purpose of the visit – this calls for social skills, as mentioned above). Also a lot of critical situations linked to unsanitary / inadequate housing, lack of larger energy-saving investments (roof insulation, glazing...) in a rented house or extreme poverty situations call for the need to organise, from the very beginning of the project, **appropriate responses and procedures**. This means systematically linking with tenant/landlords mediation structures, sanitary services of the municipality, consumer advice centres, etc.
- It might be useful to organise in **future follow up home visits.** This can have different forms and purposes: it could be planned a year later (after the winter) to follow up and evaluate the change of behaviour and achieve e-saving results, repeat the tips…

**Success factors**

- ACHIEVE has been successful in linking together, in a common action, local stakeholders that were originally dispersed on the territory. That is the basis for action. Key success factor might be to involve them at an early stage in the project and find how the project outcomes could serve their professional activities (not the opposite), so as to

build the tools they were asked to use WITH them (especially true for social workers).
- Evaluation survey amongst households who received a visit showed a very high level of satisfaction as regards the service.
- The most important achievement is to have effectively brought savings, in Euros, to people in difficult financial situations, and to have linked most of them to "after-visit" solutions.

## Csekkcsökkentő (Hungarian participation in the European EC-LINC project)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Hungary |
| **Website** | *www.csekkcsokkento.hu* |
| **Duration:** | Three years |
| **Contact:** | *http://www.ec-linc.info/hu/* |

### Project-leader organisation and partners

Energiaklub Climate Policy Institute and Applied Communications: project leader in Hungary
Berliner Energieagentur: the leader of the EC-LINC European project consortia

### Stakeholders involved

- Red Cross Hungary, Pest County
- Habitat for Humanity Hungary
- District III. Budapest, Social Department

### Brief summary of the project

The Csekkcsökkentő project, as the Hungarian participant of the European EC-LINC project, aimed to help low-income households to save energy and decrease the burden of high energy bills.

Social workers from the organisations involved with the project were trained and prepared for providing on-site consultancy and energy-saving advice for their clients and also delivered free 'energy saving packages' (e.g. CFL[3], insulation strips for windows, a thermometer etc.). With this information and the packages, the households were motivated and empowered to achieve significant savings in electricity and heat consumption.

**3** compact flourescent lamp



### Situation which called for action

- In an average household the energy costs take up 10-12% of the total income. This rate could be as much as 20-50% in low income families, which significantly impacts the household budget. Although the low-income households use a significant part of governmental or municipal social subsidies for energy costs, defaulted energy bills and cutting off the electricity or gas supply are common.
- Energy efficiency investments or low cost measures are often unattainable for these households; however, it would be essential to avoid serious debts.
- The conventional social welfares and subsidies won't be able to solve the situation in the long-term.

### Overall objectives

The strategic objective of the project was to build up and test in practice a methodology of home energy consultation service tailored for low-income households.

The long-term target was to achieve significant savings in the energy bills of the low-income households.

Building up inter-sectoral cooperation and knowledge exchange between energy efficiency and social experts was also a main objective of the project.

### Activities

**Training for social workers**

Training material and the methodology of consultancy was developed in strong cooperation of energy, social and communication experts. After a five-day-long training, the participants were enabled to provide on-site energy consultation for their clients.

**On-site energy consultations in low-income households**

The trained partners reached 265 Hungarian low-income households and provided energy-saving advice and energy-saving tool packages (such as CFL, insulation strips for windows, radiator-foil, a thermometer, tap-aerator, insulation brush and switch-off plugin).

**Follow up**

After one year of consultations, the households were contacted via phone and were asked about their experiences, satisfaction, lessons and savings.

## Innovative elements

- The project was one of the first initiatives of cooperation between the social and energy efficiency sectors.
- The elaborated methodology of energy consultation in homes of low-energy households was an innovative and multipliable tool.
- Reaching and giving tailored advice for the specific low-income target group.
- Providing free energy saving package for the households as a motivation for further savings was also a successful element of the project.

## Funding

- Total costs: €82,800
- Main elements of costs: staff, expert fees for trainings, sub-contracting the social workers, energy-saving packages for households.
- Contributions: 73% EU (Intelligent Energy for Europe), 27% own contribution of Energiaklub

## Results and outcomes

- 265 households were visited.
- 5 energy advisers were trained.
- The real savings are ca. €35/year/household (3% of the consumption before the visit) but they vary between zero and €100. Average energy savings: 755 kWh final energy/year/household.

The feedbacks show a positive picture of the service: most of the households are satisfied and they listed several implemented energy-saving measures (behavioural tips as well as small gadgets) as a result of the home energy check. More than half of the asked households (68%) are open to a new energy check.

The feedbacks show a positive picture of the service: most of the households are satisfied and they listed several implemented energy saving measures (behaviour tips as well as small gadgets) as a result of the home energy check. More than half of the asked households (68 %) are open for a new energy check.

The site visits were able to act as strong motivation for the households searching for further information on energy saving (59% carried out some research) and disseminated the information that 44% have talked about the topic with friends and neighbours, and 41% with their families.



## Sustainability

With the training and the independent site visits, a strong capacity was built up for follow-up projects in the involved social organisations.

The training methodology and material are offering a sustainable basis, so that the activity can be easily spread-out to further organisations, especially to municipalities.

## Lessons learned

### Methodology

In a project like this, social benefits have the same, or higher, priority than CO2- and cost-savings.

One home visit is not sufficient in some cases, as time is short and clients get too much information at once. Two visits are more efficient and necessary to provide tailored advice and tailored saving packages for the households.

### Target group

- The methodology of home energy check developed in this project helps substantially with families/households with low but acceptable living standards, but it is not suitable for households in deep poverty with special living standards. The latter group needs specific support and specific information.
- As the involved social partners are often working with families in deep poverty, the selection of the right households was challenging. In some very poor households the home energy check was not really effective.
- It is essential the benefits and limits of the home energy check are made clear before the visits.
- Another interesting outcome in Hungary was the experience with older people. Due to historical reasons they are well educated in sparing use of energy, but the saving tool package provided lot of new possibilities for them.
- Every household is different. A tailored advice and service is necessary. Sometimes the savings will be rather low, and in other cases the adviser can make a big difference for the low-income household.

### Partners, energy advisors

- In order to reach fuel-poor/low-income households it is essential to have a strong local network and partnerships with the social organisations that are in direct contact with the target group.

- Detailed definitions of the tasks and competences of the energy advisers are necessary from the beginning of the project.
- It is also a key issue to make clear the limits of the home energy checks for the advisers and the clients.
- There is a need for cooperation with partners that can help to deal with a range of issues, not just energy related difficulties (i.e. social advice, family consultation, etc.).

### Success factors

- Strong partnership and knowledge exchange between the people from different sectors (social and energy efficiency).
- Providing free energy-saving package for the households is a strong motivation for taking part in the consultation and achieving real energy savings at home.
- Clear definition of the aims, benefits and limits of home energy checks helps to avoid misunderstandings of the activities and leads to satisfied clients.
- High experience of social workers in communication and working with specific target groups (low-income households, older people, less-educated people) is a key element of the successful project.

## REACH - Reduce Energy use And Change Habits

**Country:** Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Macedonia
**Website:** *http://reach-energy.eu/*
**Duration:** 1 March 2014 – 28 February 2017

### Partners

- Focus - Association for Sustainable Development, Slovenia
- DOOR - Society for Sustainable Development Design, Croatia
- EAP - Energy agency of Plovdiv, Bulgaria
- MACEF - Macedonian Centre for Energy Efficiency, Macedonia

### Stakeholders involved

- Energy poor households
- Local actors that can help address energy poverty, such as social care/support services, local authorities, social advisors, schools, local energy providers, building managers…
- Local, national and EU level decision makers



### Brief summary of the project

South-East Europe 30 % or even more households are struggling with energy poverty. Hence the aim of REACH is to contribute to energy poverty abatement at practical and structural level. With this project we want to empower fuel poor households to take actions to save energy and change their habits, and to establish energy poverty as an issue that demands structural solutions at local, national and EU level.

### Situation what called for action

Even though EU is one of the most developed areas in the world, between 50 and 125 million of EU's citizens (about 10 – 25%) are estimated to be fuel poor. The situation is even more severe in the South-East Europe. EU is working to address fuel poverty, but some important elements are still missing. Defining fuel poverty is still causing numerous debates, although it would be a crucial step for tackling the problem. There is no common EU definition of what constitutes a fuel poor household. It is also important to evaluate and monitor the problem (data, indicators), which is largely missing in the countries, covered by REACH. There is also no clear fuel poverty policy at EU level, even less at the national level. Fuel poverty mostly affects low-income households – retired people, unemployed or poorly paid, dependent on social benefits. Their economic disadvantage is often matched with poor energy efficiency of their homes (poor insulation, old heating systems, expensive or polluting fuel) and linked to poor health (elderly or disabled). It is often the case that fuel poor households are socially isolated and lack support from others.

### Overall objectives

The aim of REACH is to contribute to fuel poverty abatement at practical and structural level. This aim translates into twofold overall objective of the action, which is to

**a)** empower fuel poor households to take actions to save energy and change their habits, and

**b)** to establish fuel poverty as an issue that demands structural solutions (tailor-made policies and measures) at local, national and EU level.

The overall objective of the action is supported by the following specific objectives:

- to compile data and analyze fuel poverty situation in 4 countries, covered by REACH, in order to form definition(s) of fuel poverty and policy recommendations

- to engage and empower local actors to tackle fuel poverty in 5 pilot areas (5 informed and engaged local actors, 4 trained teachers and 50 trained energy advisors in each pilot area),
- to empower 1600 households to reduce their energy and water use and provide at least 400 of them with further support for tackling their problems, hence reducing their energy use by averagely 10% and cutting their $CO_2$ emissions by 200 kg/year on average,
- to engage 160 decision-makers in tackling fuel poverty as an issue that demands structural tailor-made solutions, provide them with recommendations for addressing the problem and create a platform for concerted formulation of structural solutions at national and EU level,
- to communicate the action to about 500.000 people across EU, mainly to representatives of target groups, key actors and general or interested public.

## Activities

Mapping of the local and national situation
- Sharing of EU know-how and experiences
- Mapping of the national and local situation
- Ensuring commitment of the schools, social actors and other stakeholders
- Ensuring sustainability of the pilot actions

Transferring know-how for household visits
- Training of partners and teachers
- Training of energy advisers
- Shaping a training module for use among other vocational schools

Empowering households to save energy and water
- Promotion campaign for households
- Organisation and implementation of visits
- Monitoring of and support for the visits
- Providing post-visit support to the households

Establishing fuel poverty as a policy issue
- Shaping of recommendations for decision-makers
- National level policy work
- EU / international level policy work

Evaluation of household visits and policy process
- Evaluation of visits
- Evaluation of policy process

Communication



## Innovative elements

- Working with vocational schools and students, providing them with practical experience
- Focusing on local actors and building networks between them
- Showing households how they can change their habits and providing them with tailor-made advice for action
- Bringing energy poverty to the attention of the decision-makers, stimulating them to develop and implement structural solutions to energy poverty in the national context

## Funding

Total costs: € 568.489
Main elements of costs: staff, sub-contracting, travel costs and allowances, other costs
Contributions (EU, national, local, donation): Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the European Union

## Results

The project is ongoing, so not all the results are available yet, but here are some preliminary results:

| Expected results | Results so far |
|---|---|
| • overview of energy poverty for 4 countries | ✓ |
| • 5 workshops for local actors<br>• networks established between at least 5 local actors in each pilot area | ✓<br>over 40 local actors engaged |
| • 5 training events for teachers and 10 training events for energy advisors,<br>• 20 trained teachers and 250 trained energy advisors | ✓<br>42 teachers, 200+ trained energy advisors |
| • 1600 visits of energy poor households<br>• savings of about 1280 t $CO_2$, 768 toe of energy and € 512.000 | together 1025 visits<br>? |
| • 4 national and EU level policy recommendations<br>• 160 decision-makers engaged in tackling en. poverty | ✓<br>? |
| • action presented to about 500.000 people across EU | 38 events, 90+ media appearances; outreach of 150.000+ people |

Savings in households so far:

| | | Slovenia | Bulgaria | Croatia | Macedonia |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Electricity:** | kWh | 251 | 332.5 | 68 | 531 |
| | € | 40.2 | 29.3 | 8.5 | 45.8 |
| | % | 6.8 | 8 | 1.5 | NA |
| **Water:** | m3 | 12.5 | 9.75 | 19.7 | 18.5 |
| | € | 22.6 | 8.7 | 31.25 | 9 |
| | % | 11.9 | 9.8 | 11.7 | NA |
| **Heat energy:** | kWh | 669.2 | 226 | 600 | 111.6 |
| | € | 21.3 | 12.2 | 15 | 60.4 |
| | % | 4.3 | 4.8 | 2.3 | NA |
| **Total:** | € | 84.1 | 50.3 | 54.75 | 115.2 |
| | Kg $CO_2$ | 158.2 | 340 | 60 | 18.6 |

## Sustainability

REACH works towards several layers of sustainability:

- targeting vocational school students, which is estimated to have a sustainability element because students are provided with hands-on experience, which is often lacking in their curriculum,
- teachers are trained to transfer the know-how to many generations of students,
- some students are likely to implement the energy saving measures they were taught about in their own present and future homes,
- energy saving measures that are implemented in households will affect the long-term habits of the members of the household, reducing the energy use,
- post-visit support to the households can direct them to support for larger measures, such as façade insulation or change of heating system,
- REACH promotes implementation of policies for energy poverty at national and EU level, which will have long-term effects
- REACH tries to establish a platform for intersectoral approach, liking the different actors that need to act together



## Lessons learned

As the project is ongoing, there are three preliminary lessons learned:

Some households are reluctant for a participation in the project. In Macedonia people are reluctant to accept the visit, although they received the information from Red Cross, Retired People Organization and Organization of handicapped people. This is because the people are insecure and vulnerable and think that everything is politically motivated. Cooperation with the organizations that have access to households is a must and has to be well planned and also different dissemination methods have to be employed.

It is imperative to integrate activity of field visits into some official program. In Croatia it was originally planned to become part of curriculum in vocational schools, but due to changes in national legislation, this was not possible. Basing the work on volunteering schemes complicates and prolongs implementation period and increases efforts from project team as each new person needs to be additionally educated on how to implement field visits, collect and report data, and how to interact with vulnerable groups.

The project demands good studying of the legislation in all possible aspects of the activities. Issues emerged during the implementation with the issue of security and safety during the visits; the fact that the students of vocational schools are minors is also problematic to some extent; there is an issue of taxation of gifts and donations (the free devices given to households fall into category of gifts). Because of this it is very important to talk to the variety of actors that are involved in the implementation and listen to them as they are the ones that can highlight such regulatory problems. One lesson learned on the positive side is that the students are very satisfied with the action and their taking part in it. They give feedback that they find it interesting and that they learn a lot of practical aspects.

## Success factors

- working with schools and students brings a lot of enthusiasm, which affects the local community
- issue of energy poverty is appealing for decision-makers and hence there is relatively good response to the activities so far

## StromSparCheck

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Germany |
| **Website:** | *www.stromspar-check.de* |
| **Duration:** | Since 2009 |
| **Project-leader:** | Deutscher Caritasverband, Bundesverband der Energie- und Klimaschutzagenturen (eaD) |

### Stakeholders and partners

Energy providers, municipalities, job centres

### Brief summary of the project

In addition to the inquiry of saving potentials and the installation of emergency relief, the counselling of the households on eye level is of great importance to sharpen the senses regarding the handling of power.

Goals of the StromSparCheck:

- Financial relief for low-income households.
- Promotion of climate protection by reducing $CO_2$ emissions.
- Relief for the municipal households by reducing living costs (heating and water).
- Integration of the long-term unemployed.

### Situation which called for action

For a few years the voluntary welfare has been confronted with the issue of people having no money for energy as well as being disconnected from their power supply. Especially after the changes of the social legislation in January 2005, more and more people asked for help at the advice centres concerning the letters they had received that included threats of possibly being disconnected from the power supply.

In 2014, the Federal Network Agency and the Federal Cartell Office stated in a monitoring report looking at the energy market that deliberate power cuts took place nearly 352,000 times.

### Overall objectives:

- Labour: unemployed people can qualify to become 'energy assistants'.
- Social impact: low income households are advised to save energy.
- Environment: energy savings and $CO_2$ reductions.
- State: investment into climate protection is worth it.



### Activities

The project helps people with low incomes to reduce their energy consumption and to save money through advisory services and installing free energy and water saving devices. These happen through free of charge counselling and households visits. Long-term unemployed people can qualify to become 'energy assistants' to improve their reintegration into the labour market. The rate of reintegration is between 20% and 25%.

### Innovative elements

Face to face counselling on site (at home), emergency relief at the poorest households (energy-efficient devices) and innovative exchange of cooling devices. This is necessary because the households have no money to buy high effective fridges (A+++) and to reduce $CO_2$.

### Funding

**Budget:** €10 million per year (ca. 180 local projects)
**Cost:** Emergency relief, personal costs, additional personal costs for the long-term unemployed people provided by the job centres.
**Funding:** programme of the National Climate Initiative of the German Federal Ministry of Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, job centres, EU projects, local energy provider and local governance.

### Results and outcomes

- Until now about 500,000 people have received counselling.
- Savings per household and year: 12,350 balloons of $CO_2$.
- Savings for municipality/state: € 247 per check.
- 2011-2014 assignment of important elements of the project to two different EU projects (ACHIEVE, EC Link).

### Sustainability

Ongoing project (has been extended a few times)

### Lessons learned

Obstacle: project needs to be extended every three years, lack of consistency; contracts for long-term unemployed people are short-term only and there is no possibility to change that issue due to current policy. Sustainable funding is needed as well as a wide municipal and stakeholder support.

## Energy Advocacy Renfrewshire

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Scotland/UK |
| **Website:** | *http://www.renfrewshire.gov.uk/article/2545Energy-advice* |
| **Duration:** | Since 2012 |
| **Project-leader:** | Renfrewshire Council |

### Partners

Home Energy Scotland, Renfrewshire Association for Mental Health, Linnstone Housing Association.

### Stakeholders involved

Trussell Trust foodbanks, Head Injuries Clinic, Tackling Poverty (a Renfrewshire Council programme), Citizens Advice, local credit unions, Families First (early intervention for families with children under 12 year old).

### Brief summary of the project

The team offers face to face, expert energy advocacy to resolve complex debt, supply and domestic energy issues. The team has visited in the past 12 months 998 households, saving those households £ 52,654, (361,333 kg$CO_2$) for an expenditure on staff of £124,800. The team has supported some of the most vulnerable, socially excluded individuals and offered energy issue resolution as a gateway to wider support services.

### Situation which called for action

There is a large element of the fuel-poor households who are difficult to engage with. Living under chronic stress from debt issues, the majority are suffering some level of poor mental health and many are now suffering extreme mental health. In addition to this we recognised the need to intervene and support those families who are just coping and who have primary school children as this can have a life-long positive impact.

### Overall objectives

To offer face to face support to resolve any domestic energy issues which cannot be addressed through generic advice services to any residents in Renfrewshire without prejudice.



### Activities

The team of advocates receive referrals through a group email address. Partner service providers such as the foodbank and head injuries clinic make referrals to this email. This email address is also publically advertised and households can self-refer. All clients are contacted to ascertain the issues they wish to resolve. If these issues cannot be resolved through referring to generic advice services, such as Home Energy Scotland, then a home visit is arranged.

### Innovative elements

It is a challenge in the UK to work with and sustain referral paths with health providers. However, by dedicating individual advocates to particular service providers and demonstrating to the staff the advantages the service brings, sustainable referral paths have been established. The Head Injuries Clinic has been very successful and the dedicated advocate had learned the issues that these clients most often face. A cross referral mechanism has been developed with the mental health services which are also very successful. Other effective referral paths are with the Foodbank and with social services for children in care as they reach 18 years of age and take on their first tenancy.

### Funding

Budget: £124,800
Costs: Staff (four advocates, one manager) and transport.
The project is wholly funded by Renfrewshire Council.

### Results and outcomes

- Four advocates + one manager
- 361,333 kg$CO_2$ saved, £127,757 of annual/ongoing savings for householders and £124,897 of capital savings through energy debt being written off and capital investments in energy improvements.
- The advocates are engaging with the most vulnerable, supporting children through better childhoods to better futures and mitigating stressors for those with poor mental health. The value of this support is down to the individual level and can only be effectively described through the use of case studies. We would be happy to share these with you.

### Sustainability

The project has been sustained for a number of years and the team is exploring options on more funding.

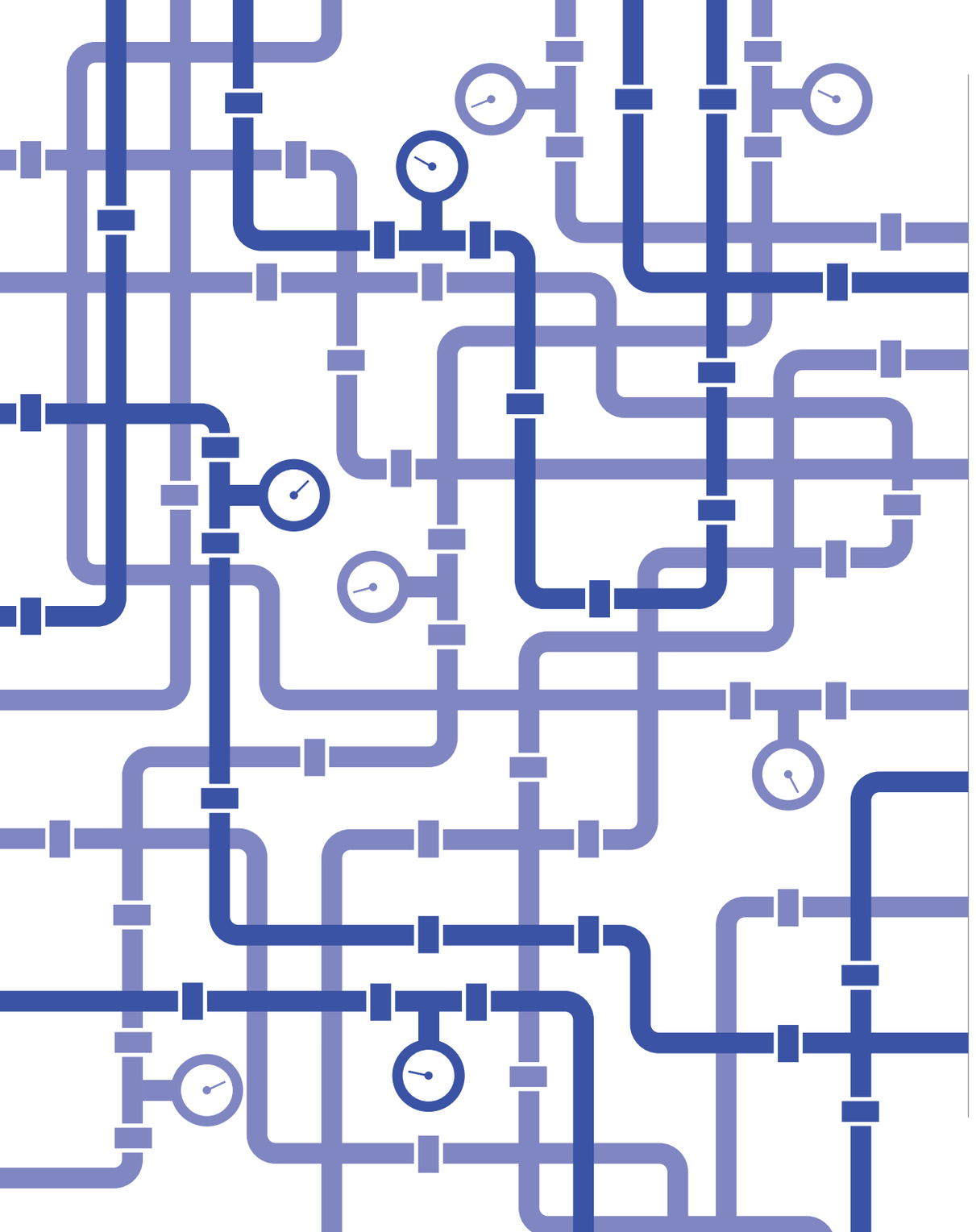
### Lessons learned

Funding is the biggest challenge and remains ongoing. The group has successfully secured the funding required and hopes that this will continue to be the case.

Integration into national and local service provision is important but has to be designed at a local level to most ably fit the local issues.

### Success factors

The advocate team has visited almost 1,000 vulnerable households and through its interventions, has improved the lives of these people.





## Energia su misura

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Italy |
| **Website/contact:** | *simone.maggiore@rse-web.it* |
| **Duration:** | Three years |
| **Project-leader:** | R.S.E. (Ricerca sul Sistema Energetico, rse.web.it) |

### Stakeholders involved

**Municipality of Milan, MM SpA.**

*http://www.metropolitanamilanese.it/pub/page/MM*

MM SpA is an engineering company founded in 1955, which has designed and supervised the construction of all the Milan Metro lines. Over the years, Metropolitana Milanese has extended its field of activity to the road works, parking areas, public buildings, as well as hydraulic engineering, urban renewal and district transport plans and public housing in the City of Milan.

### Brief summary of the project

The Energia su misura analyses the effect of consumption reduction prompted by appropriate feedback tools in social housing contexts.

### Situation what called for action

Test fields in social housing contexts allow the identification of the most effective solutions to help reduce the cost of the energy bill, with particular attention to the most vulnerable end users.

### Overall objectives

The «Energia su misura» project aims to foster end user's virtuos behaviour in order to stimulate energy efficiency inside their homes.

### Activities

- Monitoring of domestic consumption through smart plugs.
- Elaboration of consumption data in order to provide adequate measures to families.
- Order to improve energy efficiency inside their homes.
- Analysis of families' reaction to the measure provided to them.

### Innovative elements

Energy awareness can be a way to involve families: the monetary saving can be the first step to involve families, but their increased awareness about energy themes can make them participate in a more active way in the social life of the community.

### Funding

The project was funded with the Research Fund for Italian Electric System under the Contract Agreement between RSE and the Italian Ministry of Economic Development – General Directorate for Nuclear, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency – stipulated on 29 July 2009 in compliance with the Decree n.19 of 19 March 2009.

### Results and outcomes

About 50 families have been involved in the first phase of consumption monitoring.

The first results have shown that the energy consumed by the families is very low, thus the amount of energy that can be saved through behavioural measures during the day seems to be almost negligible. Nevertheless, appropriate measures will be developed to fulfil the aim of improving energy efficiency inside their homes, in a way that such measures can be used by institutions (such as the municipality of Milan) and replicated in similar contexts.

### Sustainability

The project is still ongoing.

### Lessons learned

An initial distrust by the families can be an obstacle, which has been overcome thanks to the involvement in the project of local officials from the municipality of Milan, in whom families had trust.

### Success factors

The involvement of local officials from the municipality of Milan, in whom families had trust.



## SMART-UP

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | France, Italy, Malta, Spain, UK |
| **Website:** | *http://smartup-project.eu/* |
| **Duration:** | 3 years – (March 2015 – February 2018) |
| **Project-leader:** | Alpheeis SAS |

### Partners

- National Energy Action (UK)
- Asociacion Ecoserveis (Spain)
- Projects in Motion Limited (Malta)
- AISFOR SRL (Italy)

### Stakeholders involved

Various, including: Delivery partners – local agents who are delivering SMART-UP advice interventions on behalf of the consortium partners in each country. This varies depending on the situation in each country, but for example includes social housing workers

Strategic stakeholders – those at municipal and national level with an interest in energy poverty and associated issues.

### Brief summary of the project

The SMART-UP project is an EU project funded under Horizon 2020 which aims to enable vulnerable consumers to make significant energy savings, reduce their fuel bills and seize further opportunities that may be offered by demand-response services.

In each country, partners are training stakeholders to enable them to be able to advise their customers, clients or tenants on how to get the most out of their smart meter and change the way they use energy in their homes. This is accompanied by a research piece which will monitor the impact of the advice and produce data and analysis which can help inform future energy poverty policy, action and research.

### Situation which called for action

The European Union aims to replace at least 80% of electricity meters with smart meters by 2020 wherever it is cost-effective to do so. This process is virtually complete in some EU countries, with others yet to begin the process. It is predicted that the smart metering and smart grids rollout can reduce emissions in the EU by up to 9% and annual household energy consumption by similar amounts. However, scientific

studies have shown that energy savings are not automatic (Fischer, 2008: Wallenborn, 2011; Hargreaves, 2010 and 2012), that the absence of an in-home display (IHD)can impair performance (Fischer, 2008; Empower Demand 1, VaasaETT, 2011) and that only end-users who clearly opt for their use and who are motivated can achieve savings.

In addition, in order to realise the energy saving potential brought about by smart meters, in terms of behaviour change, a real service needs to be provided to the households that is more than simply providing the equipment (Empower Demand 1, VaasaETT, 2011, Empower Demand II, VaasaETT 2012).

### Overall objectives

This project aims to explore how providing tailored advice and support to vulnerable energy consumers can increase interaction with smart meters, improve energy literacy, and change energy behaviour to reduce energy costs in the home (where appropriate).

- To increase the active and effective use of smart meters and in-home displays (where fitted) by vulnerable consumers
- To encourage vulnerable consumers to change their energy-related behaviours in response to improved feedback information
- To enable vulnerable consumers to make significant energy savings, reduce their fuel bills and size further opportunities that may be offered by demand-response services (time-varying tariffs, direct load control).

### Activities

Each partner will train 30 – 60 social workers to enable them to provide advice on using the smart meter and being more energy efficient. Social workers in this sense can mean anyone who has responsibility for providing advice to vulnerable energy consumers, either as part of their usual role and/or through direct recruitment to this project.

The information contained in the training differs according to the needs of each stakeholder and the situation in each country. For example in the UK, the majority of those trained are already advising vulnerable clients on energy behaviour and so have a good knowledge of energy issues, however they need more information on the smart meters and how to use the In Home Displays to monitor energy usage. In other countries however those trained have more limited knowledge of energy efficiency, and so the training focuses more on improving energy literacy and advice skills. There is also no general need to provide training on IHDs as these are not provided as a standard outside of the UK (although some households in Spain and Italy will receive these as part of a small pilot study within the main SMART-UP project and operatives will be trained to install and advise on these accordingly).



Once the social workers have been trained, they are then responsible for recruiting households to the project, gaining their consent, completing a baseline questionnaire (which includes collection of the past year's electricity billing data), and then providing smart meter and energy advice. The target is to reach 1000 vulnerable consumers in each country.

To support the activity, householders are provided with tailored literature including an energy diary which they can use to monitor their own energy use, guidance on the project, and additional energy-saving information. To encourage participation, each country is also providing incentives either on an individual basis or in the form of a prize draw; and a SMART-UP photography competition encourages ongoing participation by persuading beneficiaries to take photos of their most memorable SMART-UP moment.

6-12 months following the initial intervention, each partner will then write to participants to encourage them to complete another questionnaire which will monitor the impact of the intervention.

In addition, each country is running a smaller pilot project for 65 households to test the impact that even greater advice and support can have on smart meter interactions and energy efficient behaviour. This includes follow-up visits, an aftercare service and, in some cases, provision of In Home Displays. The information from the main study and pilot study will be analysed and disseminated at both national and EU level.

### Key findings so far

While the project is in its early stages and it will be some months before the data is collected and analysed, what has already become clear is the benefit of working in partnership with other projects and interested stakeholders.

For example, in Malta SMART-UP has partnered with the national LEAP project which aims to combat social exclusion and poverty, namely the development of a cluster-based network system at both regional and local levels in order to help vulnerable groupings integrate within the labour market, while build capacity amongst social stakeholders. SMART-UP is collaborating with LEAP in order to reach out to Malta's vulnerable households in order to start addressing energy poverty directly. LEAP is committed to reaching out to over 4,000 families via the opportunity created by the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived

(FEAD) programme, which provides food assistance to those in need. LEAP is taking the opportunity to profile the needs of these families, including energy poverty, which provides the opportunity to SMART-UP to both collect data and provide advice at food collection points. Other agreements have also been reached with the Richmond Foundation and the Sustainable Energy and Water Conservation Unit.

In Barcelona, SMART-UP has partnered with the municipality of Barcelona through the social services institute (IMSS) and with a NGO called Associació Benestar i Desenvolupament (ABD), experts in socially excluded citizens. Together with Ecoserveis, these two entities were in charge of an empowerment plan to train 100 unemployed people to assist 5.000 households affected by fuel poverty. The project was named "Programa de lluita contra la pobresa energètica i inserció laboral". Thanks to this collaboration both projects were mutually helping each other with resources and knowledge. ABD and IMSS were providing funds, houses and unemployed people to train while SMART-UP was providing knowledge, courses and printed material.

This has been proven very effective, mainly for two reasons. First, the identification of houses affected by fuel poverty has been easier thanks to the contribution of social services and, second, there was a large group of trained energy agents working exclusively for the project.

## Innovative elements

- At European level, the project will provide training for 150-300 front-line workers, aiming to reach 5000 households directly. It is expected that the results will inform future policy-making, including making the case for additional recognition and support of vulnerable energy consumers, both within the smart meter roll out and other relevant policies. On a more practical level there will also be teaching and information materials made freely available via the SMART-UP website in English, French, Italian and Catalan.
- The project is also demonstrating a number of additional benefits at national level. For example, in Barcelona, as well as advising households it has also contributed to the provision of skills for unemployed people. In Malta, the project has provided a driver for looking at energy poverty issues at national level.

## Funding

SMART-UP budget: €791,493, financed by Horizon 2020.



## Results, outcomes

To date, 250 frontline workers have received training. By the end of the project, up to 5000 households will have received direct assistance. Many more will benefit indirectly from the resources made available by the project; the dissemination; and the communication of knowledge by those trained.

## Sustainability

This will be monitored after the project closes, however we expect the project to continue to have benefit in the following ways;

- Those trained will continue to use their new knowledge and expertise to advise customers and peers on energy use
- The resources will be freely available for others to use
- The final report and results will be disseminated on an ongoing basis
- The beneficiaries will continue to demonstrate energy efficient behaviour

## Lessons learned

Yes, data protection and informed consent issues are complex. Other major stumbling blocks include gaining the trust of vulnerable householders, as they can be suspicious of assistance, for example perceiving it as a potential threat to any benefits they might be receiving.

In the UK and France the smart meter rollout has been delayed, which may cause some difficulties in recruiting vulnerable smart meter customers.

There have been difficulties in some cases in engaging those who will receive training and provide advice, largely because of either a lack of understanding of the need for such advice and/or a lack of capacity to deliver this alongside the usual day job.

**Answers were given to the problems**

With regards to data protection, government entities simply cannot share private data of vulnerable households with 3rd parties. Consequently, the only legal and practical solution is to simply train their own social workers, who in turn can act as agents of change directly within the households they visit. Similarly, any data collated was preceded with clear informed consent that is sensitive to illiteracy and potential guardians approval a priori. Any data collated was only presented in aggregate with 3rd parties in order to ensure no private data is recognisable.

The challenge of recruiting social operatives has to some extent been overcome through perseverance, leading to integration of SMART-UP with other projects.

The issue around delay in smart meter roll out and the impact on recruitment may lead to the adoption of mitigating strategies, however at the moment the project is continuing to explore options of additional partnerships which may overcome this.

**Advices for future actors**

Ensure buy-in from public entities dealing with vulnerable households in their day to day job.

Be aware of the risk of delayed public policy actions on delivery.

**Success factors**

The project is ongoing, however the following should contribute to its success;

- Involving five European partners all from countries with very different policy landscapes provides for a rich learning experience and opportunities for data collection and analysis. The consortium partners are continually learning from each other and incorporating elements of best practice from other countries into their own delivery of SMART-UP as well as wider work on energy poverty.
- There is early evidence that the extent to which stakeholders and public bodies already accept energy poverty as an issue, and energy efficiency / energy advice as a potential solution; impacts strongly on local buy-in and the ultimate success of the project. This is most apparent in Barcelona where there is strong commitment at municipal level, backed by supportive funding. In Malta, willingness by public and private entities to collaborate with the SMART-UP project and to start tackling energy poverty meant that projects were keen to explore potential solutions to issues as they developed. In the UK too, there is strong recognition by stakeholders of the potential benefits of the project and how it can add value to existing work.
- Training social operatives, as well as wider stakeholder engagement and dissemination will ensure that the reach of the project extends far beyond what would have been possible at individual and national level.

# *Financial support to energy poor families*

## EAPN SPAIN: SUPPORT TO FAMILIES AT RISK OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION BY THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES OF LA RIOJA

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Region of La Rioja - Spain |
| **Website:** | Jesús Alcalde • *jesus@eapnlarioja.com* |
| **Duration:** | The action began in 2014 and is currently occurring |
| **Project-leader:** | EAPN La Rioja |

### Stakeholders involved

Logroño City Council

### Brief summary of the project

This is not an usual project, it is a long-term advocacy and governance process, lead by EAPN La Rioja, which got positive results in terms of getting people out of their energy poverty situations in the capital of the region.

### Situation which called for action

EAPN La Rioja has been very involved in working with the regional government in accompanying measures to tackle energy poverty. This process finally succeeded in the Regional Act 6/2014 of 30 May, for awarding grants to local non-for-profit organisations in order to avoid cutting the supply of electricity and gas to families at risk of social exclusion. The action became part of a sustained governance on these issues, with some peaks of civil society's mobilisation to get further ahead.

## Overall objectives

- To improve the standard of living of families in need due to the economic crisis.
- To reduce the impact of energy poverty, particularly the situation of 'heat or eat'.
- To establish a governance process, a frequent communication channel with the local and regional authorities to monitor this issue and to overcome new problems.
- To promote capacity building among the Third Sector organisations on poverty energy.

## Activities

1. With regards to the critical situation faced by many families, EAPN La Rioja proposed the increase of Public Social Emergency Aid, so that families can cope with the payment of supplies.
2. The City of Logroño negotiated several agreements with energy supply companies so that once they issue the notice of cut of supply to the families, the municipality can pay the bills of those who cannot afford to do so, before the supply is cut.
3. The City Council executed a European programme (FIESTA) to carry out energy audits to the households that request it, in order to promote a more efficient way of using energy and cutting down bills.
4. EAPN La Rioja launched a capacity building programme for non-governmental entities in the region, in order to educate them about the problem of energy poverty, and the possibilities for action. At the end of January 2014, EAPN La Rioja organised a training event with the Association of Environmental Sciences and the Platform for a new energy model. In this act, the Directors of Social Policies of the regional and local governments presented different proposals, and took part in the debate with the civil society representatives.
5. In May 2014, a regional Act was approved, and new subsidies to the families in need were implemented, for them to pay for the energy bills. From 2014 onwards, the municipality of Logroño (Resolution No. 941 of 2 June, 2014), granted subsidies to local organisations to avoid cutting the supply of electricity and gas to families at risk of social exclusion, as well.
6. EAPN La Rioja participated in the Bureau against Energy Poverty, presenting good practices from EAPN Catalonia (La Taula del Tercer Sector), adapted to the situation of La Rioja.
7. EAPN La Rioja has spoken with the government about the need to move further, because the problem is extended and remains very important, particularly regarding the winter.



## Innovative elements

What was new and inspiring in the project?

By means of capacity building initiatives carried out by EAPN La Rioja, local NGOs were trained on the subject, so they were empowered and capable to participate in the debate to launch a law protecting families against energy poverty.

The municipality of Logroño, after local NGOs' and EAPN La Rioja's active involvement and engagement in a governance process, developed a series of initiatives to protect from power cuts.

## Funding

Total costs: yearly budget

Municipality budget: 2016

- Aid for light-gas cutting €25,000
- Social emergency aid €1,468,000
- Charity and welfare assistance €107,000

Regional budget: data to be found.

Contributions: EAPN La Rioja has devoted human resources to follow up this process and to represent the non-for-profit organisations in the dialogue with the authorities.

## Results and outcomes

- The Law determined fund transfers to those households who still hold a contract for the supply of electricity or gas, and have an outstanding debt with request for payment, provided they are in any of the following situations:
  a. Households that only get the non-contributory pension (for those above 65 years-old without retirement, around €350 per month)
  b. Households that only receive the regional minimum Income, or any similar resource from the social security (at the state level).

Through these subsidies, families in very extreme income poverty can afford to pay back some of the debt and avoid the cuts in services:

**For gas:**

- Maximum of €100 monthly bill, and €300 per consumer, per year. With dependent children (under 18 years-old), €250 and €350 respectively.

**For electricity:**

- Maximum of €50 monthly bill, and €150 per consumer, per year. With dependent children, €100 and €200 respectively.

In 2016, the amounts were updated to the following:

**For gas:**

- Maximum of €500 per consumer, per year. With dependent children, €600.

**For electricity:**

- Between €250 and €340 per consumer, per year

In 2016, around 500 households received these transfers, from the local authorities.

Apart from these, there are public aids established by the regional government of La Rioja.

- To avoid cutting the gas supply, there is a maximum amount of €120 per month, and €400 e per consumer, per year. If there are minors in the family unit, the maximum amount is €175 and €500 respectively.
- To avoid a power cut, the maximum amount is €60 per month, and €200 per consumer, per year. If there are minors in the family, the maximum amount is €125 and €300 respectively.
- In the case of unpaid receipts corresponding to two monthly payments, 50% will be charged each month.
- Local authorities may grant aid of a higher amount from their own budgets.

## Sustainability

Effects of the project after the project-closure:

The positive: there is a local law that protects families in poverty against power cuts and a regional budget for the same purposes, which are good factors in the sustainability of the project.

However, if the families' financial and employment circumstances do not improve, the available funds will only get to some of them, and many others will get excluded, with the risk of falling into energy poverty.

There are 70,000 people at risk of poverty in La Rioja. The rate has increased up to 22.1% of the population. According to the Living Conditions Survey, the share of households who could not afford to heat their homes in winter time raised from 1.7% in 2009, to 6.1% in 2011, and to 10.2% in 2013. It is currently the 7.3%.

## Lessons learned

### Obstacles

These are piecemeal solutions, because the general problem is income-poverty, which affects a large percentage of the population.



There are coordination issues between the NGOs, the social workers, the local funding and the regional funding. The percentage of non-take-up is unknown. Red-tape could be a problem.

### Answers were given to the problems

A Minimum Income Law, to work at the regional level (Region of La Rioja) has been passed very recently. This law may bring a more appropriate and holistic approach to income poverty but the results are yet to come.

### Advices for future actors

For EAPN La Rioja, the process suggested an initial amount of advocacy activities. A second phase was characterised by the participation and engagement in the dialogue with the authorities. The current phase consists of monitoring and increasing the political pressure, as the outcomes of the law implementation are not enough to cover the needs of the families.

Stakeholders could consider that, in order to face these situations, a capacity building could be important.

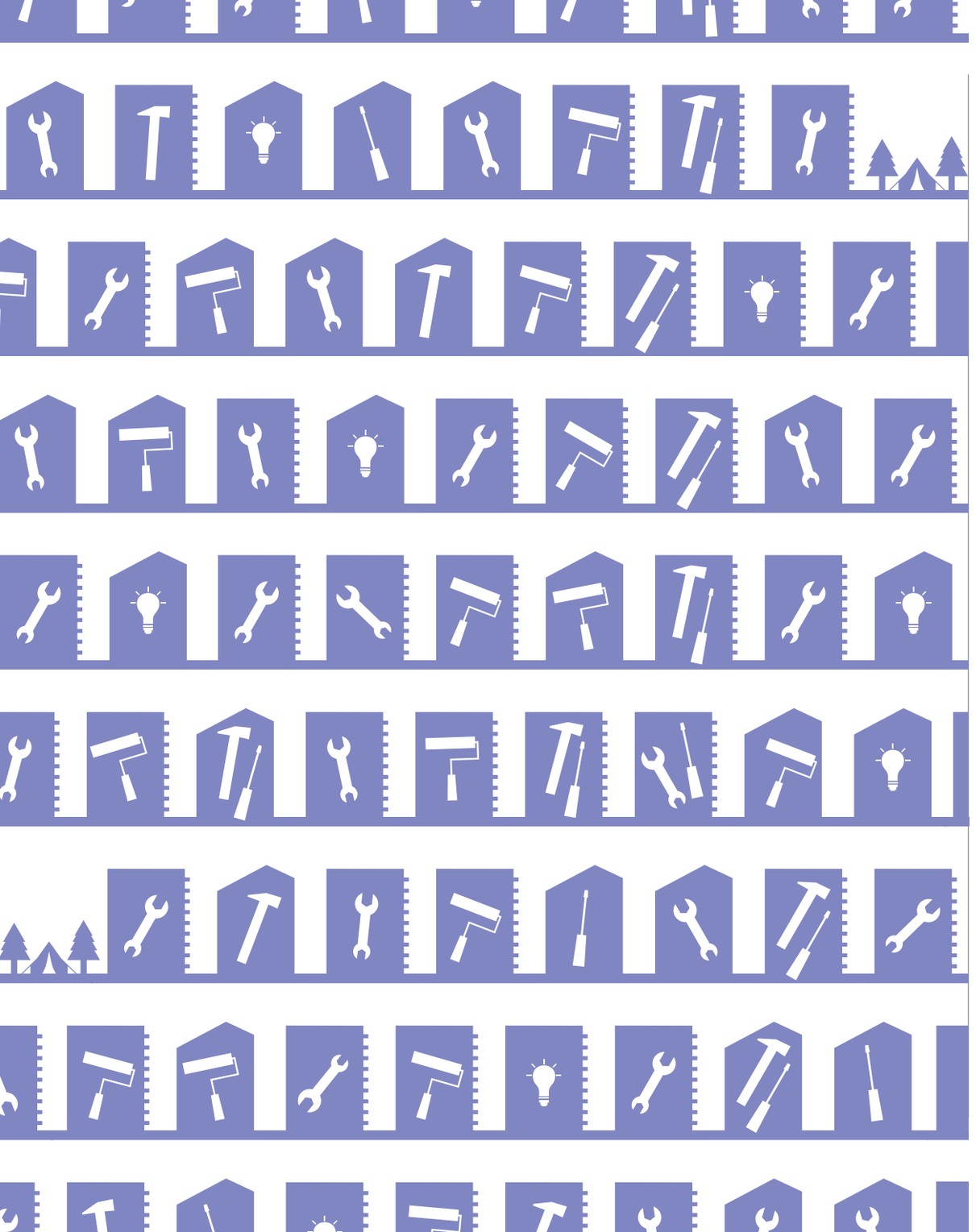
Local authorities should engage in a more demanding mode regarding the regional government, as funding should effectively reach all the families in need, and not only those with extremely low incomes.

## Success factors

1) Being a network (with joint interests and efficient coordination) added the flexibility and reaction capacity to perform in the different phases of this process (without the need to consult the governing bodies of every organisation member).

2) The first-hand knowledge of the difficulties faced by the families (i.e. the direct social and labour intervention with adults and children), allowed EAPN La Rioja to speak up for them with a legitimate voice.

3) EAPN La Rioja has become an interlocutor on this issue, which is a gain in visibility. This dialogue has been extended to other policy matters.





# Bottom-up projects

## From shacks to homes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country:** | Hungary |
| **Website:** | *www.facebook.com/utcarollakasba* |
| **Duration:** | 2012 - present |
| **Project-leader:** | Utcáról Lakásba! Egyesület – From streets to homes! Association |

### Stakeholders involved

**A Város mindenkié - City For All Homeless advocacy group, 10th district municipality, Budapest**

### Brief summary of the project

In Budapest, Hungary, homeless people are normally not entitled to rent municipality-owned social housing units. To strive for change, the 'From Streets to Homes!' Association provides the possibility for homeless families to move from self-built shacks to social rentals. These rundown rentals, which were previously empty, are renovated by volunteers and the future tenants.

### Situation what called for action

The project was evolved as a solution to a crisis: in a post-industrial reforested area called Terebes in the 10th district of Budapest, numerous homeless families built shacks. One small part of the area was going to be involved in local road-building so these shacks were to be demolished. The affected homeless people and families had lived there for between five and 15 years. The negotiations, initiated by the activists of the "The City is for the All!" group led to the formulation of an

association, and the swift renovation of the flats. The shacks in Terebes had no electricity or running water, and people used batteries and mobile wood-heating devices. In the new homes, pre-pay electric boxes are provided as well as pre-pay gas and wood-heating possibility. Buildings also got insulation, so they gained a better energy-performance.

## Overall objectives

To help people facing extreme housing poverty to stand up for their rights: the self-built home of a poor family shall not be torn down or cleared as rubbish.

After making clear to the municipalities that these people are Budapest citizens and have right to their homes, together with them the organisation fought for the improvement of their living conditions. It succeeded in most of the cases: the majority of the people who were living before in the Terebes forest, are now municipality tenants, mostly in homes that they renovated with the team's help. One family could move into an ordinary municipality rental.

## Activities

1. The City is for All! group received a call for help and engaged in activity to advocate for homeless people.
2. From Streets To Homes work group formed in The City is for All! group. It involved the Terebes people and activists helping them.
3. The work group negotiated with local municipalities in 2012.
4. The first Terebes people were relocated to municipality rentals in 2013.
5. The homes were renovated with the future tenants and dozens of volunteers organised by the work group.
6. In 2014 more Terebes people could move out from the forest and From Streets to Homes became a separate legal entity as an association.
7. By now 14 homeless families have been helped to get homes in safe rentals, and 10 homes were renovated by volunteers. The group also provides various other forms of help for homeless and housing-poverty affected people.

## Funding

**Total costs:**

An average of 750,000 HUF/flat. The implementation of works is based on voluntary labour, so costs consisted in 2012-2014 mainly of building materials. Since 2015, two part time social workers have been employed to work for the benefit of the clients, their wages are HUF 100,000 per month. The first grant, which the association has received so far, provides the salary of one social worker for 10 months from September 2016. Funding is mostly based on crowdfunding campaigns and important donations from companies and private donors. In-kind donations are also incoming as construction materials or as donations for the tenants (From Shacks to Homes).

**Contributions (EU, national, local, donation):**

Last year most of the funding came in from donations from crowdfundings (for example: *http://www.adjukossze.hu/kezdemenyezes/Otthonokat_teremtunk*).

We also had some bigger donations from companies and private donors. We did apply for grants as well and we won our first governmental grant this year.

## Results and outcomes

14 households, 33 people as tenants, and more than 100 volunteers helping in renovations, many other receiving in-kind donations and other kind of help.

**Hard/technical results:**

The savings that can be actually shown are coming from two directions:

- official homeless care system
- maintenance of municipality rentals

Each of the people who move from streets to homes is out from the homeless care system so the homeless normative shall not be spent on them. The empty flats had maintenance costs, which were paid by the municipality. Now the tenants pay less maintenance costs due to renovating, especially insulating the homes.

**Soft results:**

As a result of work during the years the team could change the general view on homelessness, especially in the 10th district. They were also on nationwide media so could reach out to thousands of viewers.

## Sustainability

The project is ongoing until 2019

## Lessons learned

- The team started the work with no stable funding but are constantly on crowdfundings and are more and more successful with them.

- They formed into an association and now have professional social workers to help in crisis situations, which do occur from time to time.

### Success factors

The group believes that its work will introduced a whole new approach in the Hungarian homeless and social care system, and demonstrated the solidarity of Budapest's citizens towards homeless people. New methods were implemented both in social and community work, as well as in the advocative work during the project.

### Innovative elements

The people affected with the problems were all-way-long included in the resolving of those.

## Social Housing Reconstruction Camp

| | |
|---|---|
| **Country** | Hungary |
| **Website** | *https://www.facebook.com/sz.epitotabor* |
| **Duration** | 2009-2012, 5 and 3 weeks of renovation |
| **Project-leader:** | Informal group of volunteer students, later Social Housing Reconstruction Camp Association |

### Stakeholders

Tenants of social housing units, volunteers

### Brief summary of the project

The social housing reconstruction camp, as a bottom-up initiation aimed to provide an opportunity to tenants living in run-down social housing, fallen into a debt spiral. Another aim was to change the policy and practice of social housing management in Hungary. The concept proposed the reconstruction of the tenements by the indebted tenants. The increase in the value of the buildings brought by the renovations was to be credited to the tenants, thus reducing their rent arrears. The project would be carried out with the cooperation of volunteers and local tenants, and financed by sources applied by the volunteers and supplemented by the local government. The renovation decreases the living costs in the long-term by the energy-efficient renovation.



### Situation what called for action

- Shortage of affordable housing.
- Poor physical state of social housing.
- High utility costs of social housing (energetically unknot efficient building stock).
- Debt circle of the most vulnerable tenants, leading to eviction.
- Underfinanced local governments have opposing interest against maintaining social housing.

### Overall objectives

- Provide an opportunity to the local tenants to become agents in changing their vulnerable situation by getting out of debt.
- Prevent evictions because of arrears.
- Cooperate with and motivate local governments to become involved in improving their social housing stock.
- Improve sustainable living.

### Activities

The first social housing reconstruction camp was realised in April 2010 in Nagykanizsa, Hungary. An extended application and negotiation phase preceded the project. In the first phase two buildings were renovated with four flats each. In August, during the second phase, the group renovated another building with four flats.

In May, 2012 the newly founded association returned to Nagykanizsa. This time, the association hired one full-time employee to organise the programme – her work was still supported by a group of volunteers (members of the association). The programme was integrated with smaller side projects: energy efficiency and household economics groups, where people could hear small tactics to reduce everyday costs. A play-day for children and several community events (e.g. campfire) were organised as well, and a more extended monitoring was included. During the construction a building with nine flats was renovated. Having carried out a successful campaign for donations (called 'Donate only a square metre of insulation!') the association was able to insulate the roof of other three buildings roof during the reconstruction camp.

### Innovative elements

- Direct involvement of the tenants and volunteers in the bottom-up project.
- The creation of mutual interests in the domain of social housing.

## Funding

The funding of the 2010 social housing reconstruction camp was mainly based on the Norway Grant (€11,000), a smaller amount of private donations and in-kind corporate donations, with additional construction works financed by the local government.

HUF 5,600 (approximately the daily wage of an unskilled worker) were written-off from the residents' rent arrears for a day's work. As a result, during the whole construction arrears were reduced by HUF 1.6 million (more than €5,000). This is relatively significant considering the €11,000 funding from the Norway Grant. (Main costs: reconstruction materials, travel costs of volunteers).

In the second social housing reconstruction camp (2012) the reduced rent arrears were 1.33 million forints (app. €4,200). The $22,000 funding came from the Open Society Institute NGO which not only financed the costs of the reconstruction, but the one-year operation of the newly funded Social Housing Reconstruction Camp Association. Private donations were collected especially to insulate additional houses (HUF 675,000 / ~ €2,100). This time the local government's management company took a higher share in the renovation costs.

## Results, outcomes

In 2010, during the four weeks of the construction work, 37 local residents and numerous volunteers participated: 70 volunteers organised by the volunteer groups, 40 involved on the part of Habitat for Humanity in cooperation. In the second phase 25 residents participated. Debts were reduced by more than €5,000.

In the 2012 camp, 31 local residents could reduce their debt, 38 volunteers were involved from all over the country. The houses of 33 people were improved energetically. Debts were reduced by approximately €4,200.

As a result of the media campaign and the involvement of many volunteers the project made the issue of social housing visible and important.

## Sustainability

The housing of the families living in the dwellings became more sustainable: their rent arrears were reduced and evictions were reduced. Also, housing costs became smaller in the long-term due to the better energy performance of the buildings, so the risk of future indebtedness became smaller.



## Lessons learned

Because of the counter-interests it is hard to involve local governments, especially with financial contribution in such projects.

The social housing reconstruction camp can only provide temporary solutions without a comprehensive, national housing strategy which can support the target of such projects. A focus is needed to reconcile the financial interests of local governments in social housing and the social aspects toward low-income groups, and to solve the issues of the housing crises from the ground-up.

## Success factors

- The concept which is based on mutual interests and the aim of cooperation.
- Bottom-up and genuine organisation of the project.
- Lot of determined volunteers and involved tenants.
- Cooperation between different NGOs and networks in the social sphere strengthened the project.