



Webinar 3: Tackling energy poverty with energy efficiency: Who should be involved? How to scale up?

Guest Speakers and Panelists

Andriana Stavrakaki
(ICCS, coordinator of
SocialWatt)

Daniele Bergesio
(Eviso, Italy)

Claire Valente (SEAI,
Ireland)

Maria-Elisabeth Bruckl
(Caritas, Austria)

João Pedro Gouveia
(Energy Poverty
Advisory Hub / NOVA
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Eleni Kanellou
(Research Associate,
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The SocialWatt project organized one more webinar to discuss how energy efficiency schemes can tackle energy poverty, especially in the context of Article 7 of the EU Energy Efficiency Directive (EED).

This third webinar provided an overview of the lessons learnt from the SocialWatt schemes and more on what can be done by Member States to scale up energy efficiency measures tackling energy poverty, in light of experiences from energy utilities, public authorities and NGOs.



What has SocialWatt achieved? // Andriana Stavrakaki (ICCS, coordinator of SocialWatt)

SocialWatt, a project funded by Horizon 2020, aims to enable energy companies, utilities and obligated parties under Article 7 of the Energy Efficiency Directive across Europe to develop, implement and replicate innovative schemes to alleviate energy poverty. More information on the website: <https://socialwatt.eu/>

What is SocialWatt Plan?

SocialWatt has enabled energy suppliers and utilities build their capacity in energy poverty alleviation, whilst it has also enabled the development of appropriate tools to help them identify energy poor households within their clients, as well as design and monitor the implementation of schemes that aim to alleviate energy poverty. Most importantly, SocialWatt has supported utilities and energy companies develop Energy Poverty Action Plans, that incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy schemes for the energy poor. As such, within the framework of the project more than 20 schemes have been designed, launched and are being implemented across seven European countries

Lessons Learnt :

The absence of a national energy poverty definition does not have to be a barrier

There is no perfect indicator of energy poverty that is suitable for all countries and contexts

Utilities and energy companies can have a unique role in addressing energy poverty due to pre-established contacts and access to granular data on energy consumption

Need to raise general awareness on the importance of energy efficiency measures and the issue of energy poverty

Need to establish strong partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholders to effectively engage with energy poor households

Schemes should be offered at no cost for energy poor customers

Policy Recommendations

Support the development of comprehensive renovation packages

More stability in national legislation (for more efficient and sustainable schemes)

Prioritise energy poverty schemes in national legislation

Utilities/energy companies can be well placed to advise government

A firm obligation should be introduced if utilities/energy companies are to have a key role in energy poverty alleviation

Experience from an energy utility: Daniele Bergesio (Eviso, Italy)

eVISO is a company that uses artificial intelligence to create value for commodity users. eVISO is a partner in the H2020 EU funded project SocialWatt and focuses on the design and implementation of innovative schemes to help alleviate energy poverty in Italy.

Observations and challenges:

- A national plan to tackle energy poverty is not adopted yet (and remains under development), we need a plan specifically dedicated to energy poverty.
- Need for more data and national studies on a more frequent basis to enable the update of tools so that figures on energy poverty become more precise and are in line with the current context.
- An integrated approach is crucial to help households out of energy poverty and enable policies to integrate social support. Furthermore, providing visuals and pictures is essential to help stakeholders communicate on energy poverty.
- eVISO's bottom-up approach was to get direct support from social institutions and to build a partnership to tackle energy poverty. The partnership enabled more dialogue and awareness on topics of energy savings and energy management, something social institutions do not always have. eVISO engineers assessed data on how to lower consumption and energy bills, the knowledge was then shared with social institutions to build a strong structure to target the most vulnerable households.
- One difficulty when working with social workers is that they have a low availability (they are already overloaded).
- Winning the trust from households is not easy. It is therefore essential to include partners that are already trusted by households.
- In Italy, it is not possible, for the moment, to link actions for vulnerable households with the white certificates scheme. One of the alternatives for funding energy efficiency schemes to alleviate energy poverty is to work with charity organisations to help vulnerable households to replace their appliances.

Experience from a public authority: Claire Valente (SEAI, Ireland)

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is Ireland's national sustainable energy authority. SEAI implements Ireland's Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme, as well as the national renovation programmes (e.g Home Energy Grants) that can be combined with the EEOS.

Energy Efficiency Obligations Scheme (EEOS) between 2014 and 2020 in Ireland:

11 mandatory energy saving targets for the largest energy companies in Ireland

Overall annual target of 550-700 GWh (primary energy):

- 75% non-residential
- 20% residential
- 5% energy poverty (up to 35 GWh per year)

➤➤➤ Total Energy Poverty target **exceeded by 29%** (target of 205 GWh and 265 GWh achieved)

Energy Efficiency Obligations Scheme (EEOS) between 2023 and 2030 in Ireland:

Annual target of c.660 GWh (final energy):

- 85% non-residential
- 10% residential
- 5% energy poverty (c.33 GWh per year)

Changes to Energy Poverty eligibility criteria and scoring

- A pre-works BER of D2 or worse
- A post-works BER of B2 or better

Key changes for 2020-2030:

- Focus on the worst efficient dwellings and achieving larger gains (deeper renovations)
- Important to align criteria of the various schemes in place (so that they can be combined more easily)
- Partnerships between obligated parties (that provide technical support) and local authorities (that can identify who is most in need)

Useful documents

[EEOS Guidance Document](#)

[Deep Retrofit Pilot Programme](#)

[Behavioural insights on energy efficiency in the residential sector](#)

Experience from an NGO: Maria-Elisabeth Bruckl (Caritas, Austria)

CARITAS AUSTRIA is an internationally operating non-profit organization under the mission of the Austrian Catholic church and pursues solely and directly charitable and benevolent objectives. There are more than 1,600 projects in Austria where Caritas supports people in need with their full-time employees and 57,000 volunteers.

Caritas Austria and Verbund (2009-2022) teamed up to support energy poor households to escape energy poverty regardless of their energy provider.

Solutions provided:

Immediate financial aid

Energy consultancy sessions

Free household appliances

The experience showed that the combination of the three was crucial to really help households. The multidimensional approach was important.

Basis required:

Primary assessment by social worker

Energy consultancy at client's home

Energy evaluation session after one year to fine-tune measures

Collection of data:

Monitoring effectiveness of measures

Gaining insight on energy poverty at national level

Creation of 2 annual reports shared with sponsors and partners

Useful information for decision makers

Results / Lessons learnt:

15 million euros gathered for energy counselling and new household appliances for 2023-2025

Approximately 82000MWh of energy savings

"Energueschirm": Financial aid for households struggling to pay energy bills

Word of mouth is quite important to get more households interested in the scheme

The scheme started with the energy utility and now gets funding from other ones. Caritas has been able to scale up the scheme thanks to the experience gained and Caritas' network

Experience from local authorities: João Pedro Gouveia (Energy Poverty Advisory Hub / NOVA University Lisbon)

The Energy Poverty Advisory Hub (EPAH)'s mission is to be the central platform of energy poverty expertise in Europe for local authorities and all stakeholders interested in taking action to combat energy poverty by providing direct support, online trainings, and research results and by building a collaborative network of stakeholders interested in taking action to combat energy poverty.

Main tasks:

TASK 1: Identification of local, municipal and/or regional level best practices to tackle energy poverty

TASK 2: EPAH makes regular calls for applications for technical assistance, open to local authorities

TASK 3: Project promotion, dissemination and impact maximisation

TASK 4: Energy Poverty Advisory website

Exploring Local Action and Capacity Building

Report: Tackling energy poverty through local actions

24 inspirational cases of how energy poverty can be alleviated at local level.

EPAH ATLAS

250 actions identified

Introduction to energy poverty and the EPAH - course

Practical guidebooks for local governments and practitioners to tackle energy poverty with a comprehensive and locally adapted approach.

Experience from involving citizens: Eleni Kanellou (Research Associate, POWERPOOR project manager, NTUA, Greece)

POWERPOOR is a H2020 funded European project which supports programmes / schemes for energy poor citizens and encourages the use of alternative financing schemes (e.g. establishing energy communities / cooperatives, crowd funding). The project facilitates experience and knowledge sharing, as well as the implementation of small-scale energy efficiency interventions and the installation of renewable energy sources, increasing the active participation of citizens.

Actions:

Pilot energy poor support programmes/schemes designed, developed, and implemented in eight countries across Europe led by a network of certified Energy Supporters and Energy Communities Mentors with the support of Stakeholder Liaison Groups.

Energy Supporters

engage citizens suffering from energy poverty, provide advice and enable them to plan, secure funding and implement energy efficiency interventions.

Energy Communities

Mentors provide support and expertise in all key areas associated with the operation and/or creation of an energy community/cooperative, comprised of citizens alleviating energy poverty

POWERPOOR's Energy Poverty Mitigation Toolkit

The toolkit aims at providing an integrated solution to users and supporting them at identifying whether they are energy vulnerable. In case they are, the tool can propose changes (behavioral or low cost energy efficiency interventions) they can take to improve their well being. Finally, the tool can propose customised solutions regarding users' involvement in innovative funding schemes such as crowdfunding or participation in energy cooperatives.

POWER TARGET
Energy Spending
Evaluation

POWER ACT
Home Energy
Consumption

POWER FUND
Online
marketplace for
Collective Energy
Initiatives

Panel Discussion moderated by Jean-Sébastien Broc, IEECP

Maria-Elisabeth
Bruckl

Existing structures play an important role in alleviating energy poverty. The real question is how many people will it require to implement these actions? We need enough support to train employees who can offer knowledge and solutions. Especially now, with the rise in energy prices, we see that even people above the poverty line struggle to pay their energy bills and are not the target audience for State bills.

There is a balance to be established as we see that energy utilities need to step up with the increase of prices, which requires a lot of management, awareness and cooperation.

João Pedro Gouveia

We are at the early stage of local authorities understanding and gaining awareness on energy poverty. Most local authorities still lack awareness. We need to de-mystify some ideas in practice, as local authorities do not have the staff or capacity to have access to that knowledge.

One-stop-shops remain a challenge as it is very difficult to effectively engage and reach out to energy poor households. Just as energy efficiency vouchers are not known among energy poor households and are often not used by the most vulnerable consumers. For example, in Portugal there are only 17 000 applications for vouchers out of 200 000 available vouchers, whilst these vouchers are also too small to allow for real renovations. Renovation should be the priority when it comes to alleviating energy poverty.

Eleni Kanellou

One-stop-shops are very difficult to implement as households will only go to a structure that they trust, therefore building trust is crucial but difficult to attain. We have seen through POWERPOOR that more local young people have volunteered to address the issue, and this showed how important it is to have local people volunteer, as there are local circumstances and networks that have already been built and that can help gain trust from vulnerable households, which institutions do not have access to.

Panel Discussion moderated by Jean-Sébastien Broc, IEECP

Daniele Bergesio

We have seen that households are very reluctant to provide data on their energy habits and energy consumption. We've also seen that many households lack the knowledge and awareness on energy consumption and how to make savings, people do not necessarily know how to consume energy effectively.

We must engage new stakeholders and collaborate more with social services who have established relationships with vulnerable households.

Claire Valente

We need a long-term view and should prioritise deep renovations for the most vulnerable households, especially for the lowest rated homes. We also need to give lower bills to energy poor households to support them in escaping energy poverty.

Maria-Elisabeth
Bruckl

We must rely on existing structures to have long-term support, especially when it comes to renovations, they are expensive and long and require funding and support. We cannot expect energy poor households to pay, they need to be given a full package to escape energy poverty.

Check out our content from our SocialWatt Webinars:

Webinar 1: "Energy efficiency to tackle energy poverty: what will the EED recast change?"

Webinar 2: "National energy poverty observatories: the more you know, the better you act!"

More information on SocialWatt

- Our website: <https://www.socialwatt.eu/>
- Contact us: contact@socialwatt.eu
- SocialWatt Tools: www.socialwatt.eu/en/socialWatt-tools

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