



EmpowerMed

Report on gender aspects of existing financial schemes for energy poverty measures





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Executive summary

A number of links between energy, poverty and gender are obvious: Low-income and poor households spend a substantial share of their income on utility services such as electricity and heating. And women are still more likely than men to live in poverty. This is certainly

“Gender inequality is a risk factor that increases the likelihood of energy poverty.”

the case in relative terms but also often in absolute terms. Those living in poverty cannot afford the initial investment in energy efficiency appliances and efficient devices. The options for poor people are, in fact, very limited. This affects almost one in four people in the European Union, who live at risk of poverty or social exclusion (EIGE, 2016). It is possible to draw initial conclusions about gendered energy poverty associated with individual health, income and economic activities, but it is also very important to address

the gendered aspects of energy vulnerability related to infrastructure and the energy market. Certainly, gender inequality is a risk factor that increases the likelihood of energy poverty.

“Energy poverty can translate into severe health issues and social isolation.”

There is no common definition for energy poverty in the European Union (EU), but many EU member states acknowledge the scale of energy poverty and its negative impacts which can translate into severe health issues and social isolation. Many financial support programmes on local, national and EU-level aim to reduce energy poverty. However, this report finds that there is no consideration of gender dimensions within the evaluated financial energy support programs in Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Germany and Albania. While the significance of gender inequality in energy poverty has been partially recognised (e.g. Großmann, 2017; Umweltbundesamt, 2020), it is underrepresented in the financial budgets of the support programs.

This report introduces requirements to plan and implement new energy support programs in a gender-just way and to add gender-transformative tools and mechanisms into existing programs, such as gender needs assessments, women’s empowerment and target group-specific communication. To a certain extent existing gender tools can be applied to the energy sector to reveal hidden aspects of the gender-energy-poverty nexus, but there is a clear need to develop tools specifically targeted at the energy sector to ensure that all aspects are analysed and taken into consideration. These gender and energy tools need

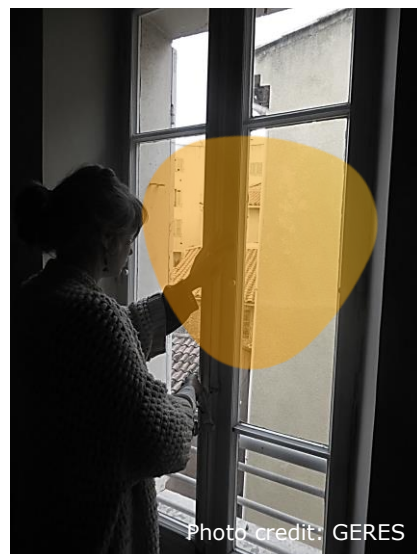



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to be 'user friendly' to help social planners and further stakeholders to incorporate energy dimensions into their work, and to enable energy planners to detect gender and poverty aspects. It shows the need for a better understanding of the relationship between gender inequality and energy poverty and subsequently, gender-responsive analytical approaches.



There is an urgent need to collect sex-disaggregated data across Europe using methods that reflect gender roles and other inequalities in society.

In part, the lack of awareness is linked to the lack of data. Good data is the basis of policymaking and offers the possibility to benchmark and track progress. There is an urgent need to collect sex-disaggregated data across Europe using methods that reflect gender roles and other inequalities in society. The data should be presented in an intersectional way to represent a typology of energy users at the household level.

1 Introduction


Energy poverty is widely recognized as a socio-economic problem affecting millions of households within the European Union (EU). It affects households in all EU countries, and the number of households affected is predicted to rise (Howes, 2018). Thus, more households and families will be suffering from energy poverty with adverse consequences for their economic, physical and (mental) health. However, it is important to note that the situation in EU member states varies greatly, and any attempt of generalization ignores the complexity of the problem.



The causes of energy poverty are often considered to be a combination of high energy prices, low income, and energy-inefficient homes (in particular influenced by age, condition and materials of buildings, and the energy efficiency of appliances such as heating/cooling systems) (Tews, 2014). However, many socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects and therein gender as a cross-cutting intersectional factor are often ignored despite the relation to a person's residential status (owner/tenant), resources and rights to invest in refurbishment, and to the energy and comfort situation in homes (Großmann, 2017).

Empirical data suggests that women are more likely to be adversely affected by the impacts of energy poverty. Yet, there is very little data on the connection between gender and energy poverty in the EU. There are some quantitative studies from France (ONPE, 2016) and Spain (Tirado et al., 2016) showing that living in energy poverty is more likely to affect single-parent families and people living alone – the types of households that have significantly increased in number in both countries since 2001 (UN, 2019). In the EU, women make up nearly 85% of all single parents (EIGE, 2016). Publications from Spain (Gonzalez Pijuan, 2018) and England (Robinson, 2019) give further insight into the inequalities of energy poverty and the way they are

“Women are more likely to be adversely affected by the impacts of energy poverty.”



shaped through gender relations.

There are various existing financial interventions dealing with energy poverty in EU member states (Pye et al., 2015). In order to improve gender-inclusive access to renewable and affordable energy, it is important to understand the gender implications of existing financial schemes. This report therefore reviews existing financial schemes from a gender perspective by analysing survey results from organisations that work on energy poverty and are based in Spain, France, Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Germany, and Albania, supplemented by secondary research. Three main types of financial instruments to cope with energy poverty have been identified, analysed and described: direct financial support schemes; support and investments for energy efficiency measures; and information provision and guidance schemes. The report also identifies good practices in incorporating gender-related considerations and parameters in energy financial interventions.



The report elaborates on the necessary mechanisms that could make support schemes more gender-responsive.

In this report, women are recognised in all their diversity, without assigning them the role of passive victims of energy poverty. This is because many women are active agents of change, who may purchase and operate energy-saving technologies and may be innovators of energy-efficient solutions themselves. Women have a lot of experience regarding the need for energy in a household, so they could – and should – play a major role in the decision-making and management of energy resources in households. They also need to be more present in the energy sector (e.g. GWNET, 2019). This report does not provide technical solutions to a complex social problem, which would make power inequalities invisible, nor does it examine the underlying power relations between men, women, and other non-binary groups. It critically assesses whether existing financial energy support schemes take a gender perspective into account. Furthermore, the report elaborates on the necessary mechanisms that could make support schemes more gender-responsive.

As shown in Figure 1, the report starts by looking into current definitions and measures of

“The purpose of this report is to enhance the understanding of the interlinkages between gender inequalities and energy poverty and the potential to overcome both in existing financial support measures.”

energy poverty provided by the EU and implemented by EU member states. The discussions will be taken into the next sections, in which actions against energy poverty are analysed from a gender perspective by focusing on financial support schemes put in place to combat energy poverty. Data on financial support schemes were collected via qualitative interviews with energy poverty experts in the Mediterranean, who are also part of the European ‘EmpowerMed’ Project, as well as by secondary research. The purpose of this report is to enhance the understanding

of the interlinkages between gender inequalities and energy poverty and the potential to overcome both in existing financial support measures.

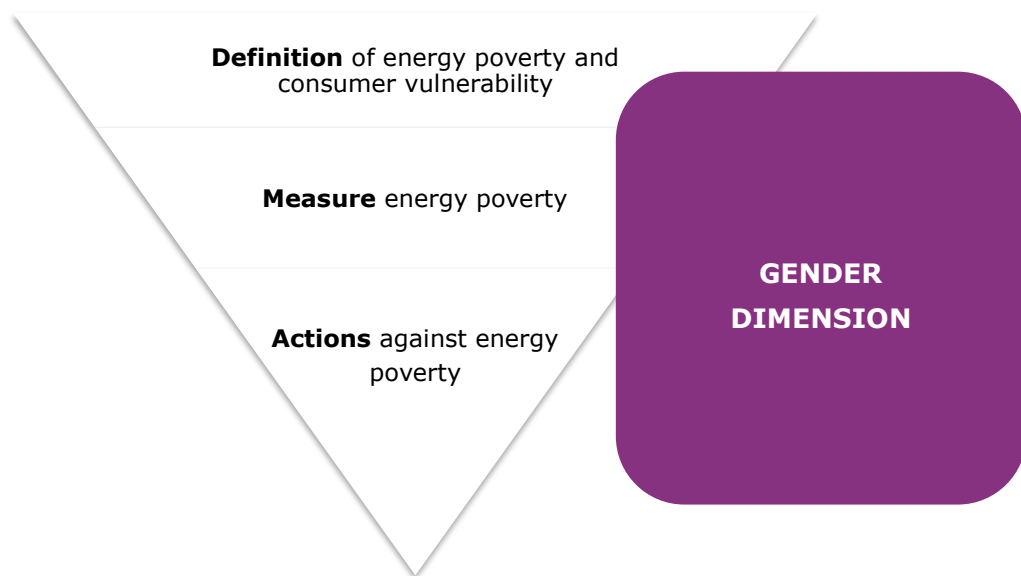


Figure 1: Integrating a gender dimension in the process of taking actions against energy poverty. Source: WECF.

2 The concept of energy poverty in a nutshell

Two key directives of the Third Energy Package of 2009 concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas (2009/73/EC) and electricity (2009/72/EC) provided the first framework for identifying 'vulnerable consumers' of energy. Further provisions on energy consumers' rights are contained in the European Commission's 'Clean Energy for All Europeans' package, increasing the active role and rights of electricity consumers. The most recent EU legislation on energy poverty is [Directive 2019/944](#). While member states are obliged to provide a definition of vulnerable consumers based on their own context-specific situation, they are only asked to consider appropriate measures to address energy poverty, as well as a definition of the concept of energy poverty. Regarding [Regulation 1999/2018](#), member states will have to collect data on energy poverty and implement measures for its alleviation. So far, only seven member states have officially defined energy poverty: Belgium, Cyprus, Spain, France, Great Britain, Ireland and Romania (ACER/CEER, 2019). Definitions of energy poverty by France and Spain are listed below:

Table 1: Definition of energy poverty

Country	Definition of energy poverty
France	A person who encounters in his/her accommodation particular difficulties with the energy supply necessary to satisfy his/her elementary needs due to inadequate resources or housing conditions (ONPE, 2014).
Spain	A situation in which a household cannot meet basic needs of energy supply, as a result of an insufficient level of income, which may be aggravated by living in energy-inefficient housing (Miteco, 2019).

While the definitions of energy poverty are not consistent across countries, all of them consider income or affordability. While some of them focus specifically on energy for heating, others follow a broader approach that includes all household energy services. **However, none of the definitions mentions gender explicitly.** Energy poverty does not fully overlap with income poverty as there are many other factors contributing to energy poverty, such as high energy prices, low levels of residential energy efficiency and patterns of energy consumption within a person's home, depending on various socio-economic and socio-cultural factors (Großmann, 2017). **To be more gender-aware when addressing energy poverty, a policy or definition needs**

To be more gender aware when addressing energy poverty, a policy or definition needs to consider the distinct gender differences in the causes of energy poverty.

to consider the distinct gender differences in the causes of energy poverty. As defining a phenomenon is key for measuring it, member states should develop their own national definitions with guidance from the European level, **taking gender into account**.



The European Commission has defined energy poverty *as a set of conditions where ‘individuals or households are not able to adequately heat or provide other required energy services in their homes at affordable cost’* (Pye et al., 2015).

In order to fulfil the requirements of the Third Energy Package, most countries have adopted definitions for vulnerable consumers, with **“vulnerable consumer” always used as a gender-neutral term**, missing the complexity of people’s lives and interventions which are not gender-neutral in their outcomes. In 21 member states, the main criterion for identifying vulnerable consumers is the income level. Other definitions focus on inequality axes, such as age or health status, or nationally specific eligibility criteria for social services and benefits, often neglecting that a **“vulnerable consumer” is**

not a homogenous entity; rather, it is highly gendered. Depending on the competence applied for ‘consumer vulnerability’, actions are either led by ‘social’ or ‘energy’ policy. While approaches led by social policy mainly function through the provision of social security, approaches led by energy policy work through specific technical measures, such as energy efficiency instruments (Thomson & Bouzarovski, 2018).

Based on definitions of vulnerable consumers and energy poverty, different indicators and metrics have been established to monitor the phenomenon of energy poverty within the EU. The EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and Household Budget Surveys (HBS) data have been used in many studies (e.g. Pijuan, 2018, Großmann, 2017). Yet, there is a noticeable **lack of sex-disaggregated data** related to energy use and specifically energy poverty. Yet, data is crucial to raise awareness about the interlinkages between gender inequality and energy poverty. Although existing survey-based data regarding living-conditions, income and equality already provide *some* sex-disaggregated data, to our knowledge,



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most analysis regarding energy poverty based on this data have been gender-blind so far. Most studies on energy poverty (e.g. Clancy et al., 2017; Pye et al., 2015; Rademaekers et al., 2106; Thomson & Bouzarovski, 2018) state that around 50 million European citizens (10.8%) were not able to keep their home adequately warm in 2012. They also show that single households are more affected (12.3%), in particular women (13.2%) compared to men (11.1%) living on their own. Yet, the surveys only provide sex-disaggregated data for single households and not for other types of households, highlighting the need to collect sex-disaggregated data.

“Single households are more affected by energy poverty (12.3%), in particular women (13.2%) compared to men (11.1%) living on their own.”

It has been acknowledged a single indicator cannot capture the extent of energy poverty. More dimensions must be taken into account, such as the issue of cooling, which is especially challenging for coastal areas in Mediterranean countries due to their climatic conditions. As energy poverty is a multidimensional concept, different indicators have been suggested to capture different aspects of the phenomenon. To evaluate if gender inequalities are directly or indirectly measured in those concepts, this study examines the indicators from the [EU Energy Poverty Observatory](#) (EPOV) (Thomson & Bouzarovski, 2018) and the newly developed [European Domestic Energy Poverty Index \(EDEPI\)](#) (OpenExp, 2019).

The EPOV mainly follows recommendations from Rademaekers et al. (2016) and differentiates between four primary and multiple secondary indicators. The primary

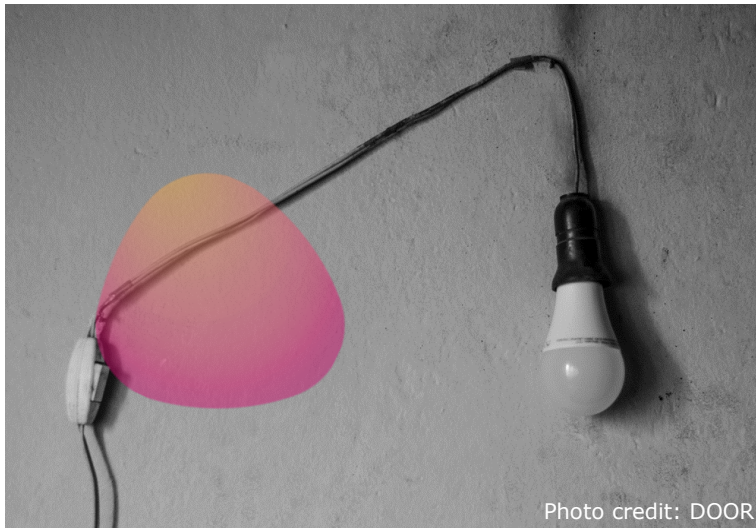


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indicators are those that capture various aspects of energy poverty while the secondary ones are not direct indicators for energy poverty itself but still relevant for the context. Two of those primary indicators are based on self-reported experiences of limited access to energy services based on EU-SILC data (see Figure 2) while the other ones are calculated using household

income and/or energy expenditure data based on HBS data. The indicators are not based on sex-disaggregated data and therefore **only reflect gender inequalities indirectly** (and insufficiently), for example, by considering income distributions within the indicators. Further shortcomings within the suggested set of indicators and data collection are two of the primary indicators, which are based on data from 2010 as well as the secondary

indicator “Equipped with air conditioning” which has only been collected once (in 2007). According to the EPOV **there are currently no plans whether and when data for summertime cooling will be collected**, but it seems that there will be no further EU-level data relating to summertime energy poverty issues (Thomson & Bouzarovski, 2018). This is alarming for further research and projects, for instance to those focusing on challenges of coastal areas in Mediterranean countries which will have higher cooling demands due to the impact of climate change. Amongst other key aspects of energy poverty which are currently missing or underexplored within national surveys, cooling and summertime issues, as well as impacts on health and wellbeing should be included in the research since the need for cooling will increase considering the expected consequences of climate change, particularly in the long-run.

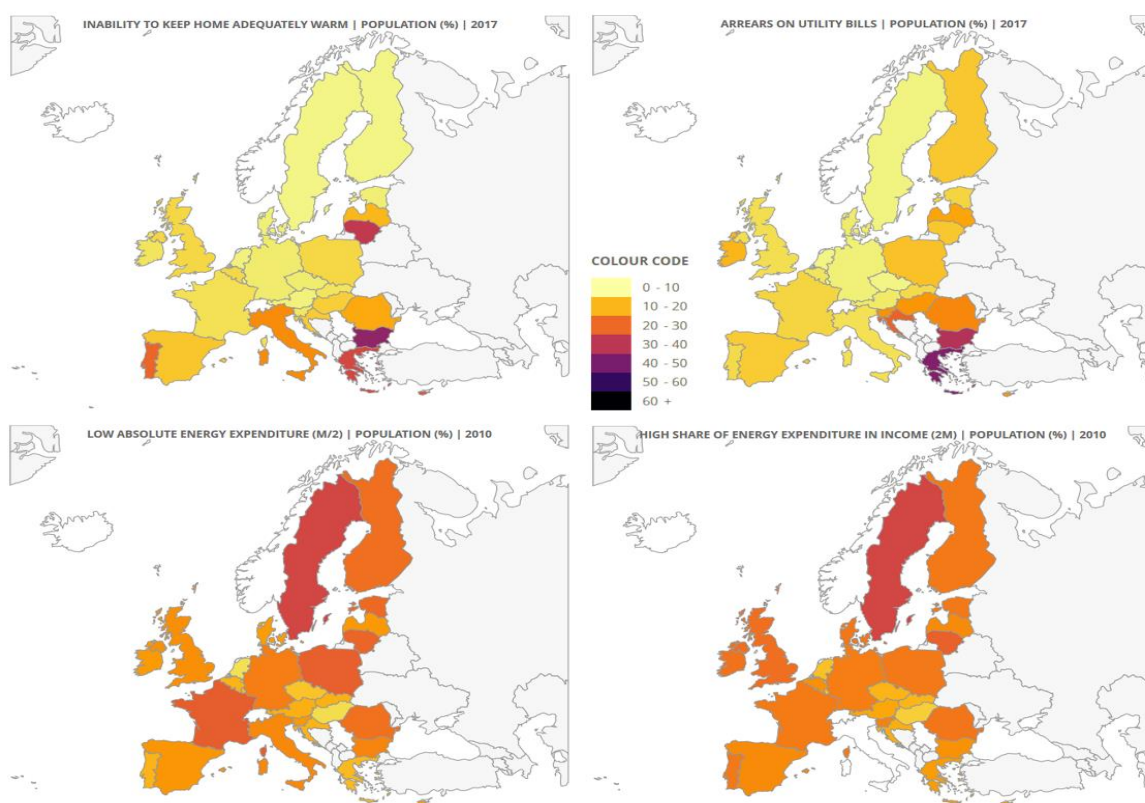


Figure 2: Map of the four primary indicators suggested by the EPOV. Source: Eurostat (2017).

Compared to the indicators suggested by the EPOV, the European Domestic Energy Poverty Index pays more attention to summer and winter discomfort and has been developed as a composite index using three indicators from EU-SILC and one indicator from HBS data to score and rank the progress member states have made in alleviating domestic energy poverty (see Figure 3). It considers energy expenditures, winter and summer discomfort and the quality of dwellings to calculate the index. This combination of indicators faces similar challenges capturing energy poverty and its underlying causes, like the ones used by the EPOV: **the indicators are not based on sex-disaggregated data** (except the

indicator “Share of the population, with income below 60% of median equivalised income, living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rotten window frames or floor”). One indicator has only been collected once (2012) and the ones regarding summer and winter discomfort will not continue to be collected after 2020.

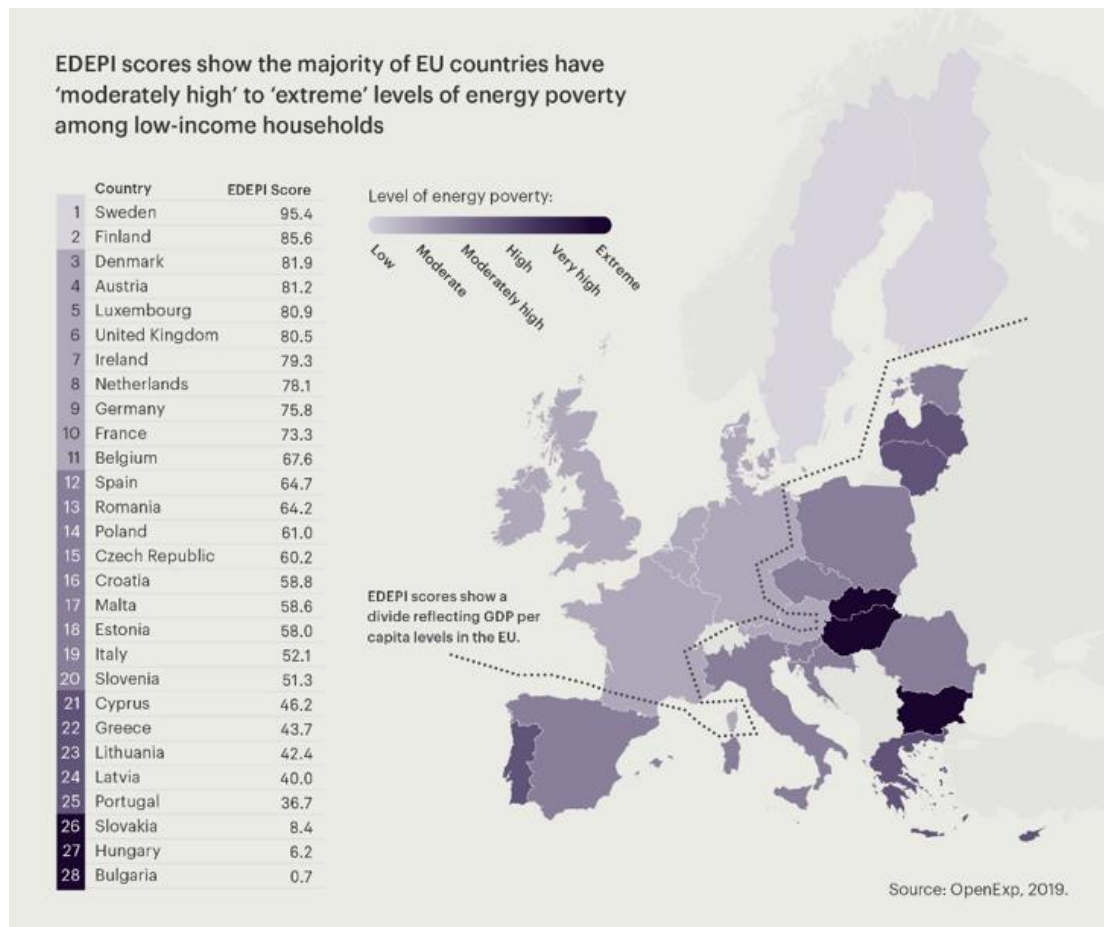


Figure 3: European Domestic Energy Poverty Index (EDEPI) Ranking 2018. Source: OpenExp (2019).

“Energy poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon; it can only be adequately evaluated through a set of indicators that capture economic, social and technical aspects of the condition.”

Currently, measuring energy poverty is not consistent and harmonized. The EPOV indicators are based on EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU SILC) which are collected annually through a methodologically consistent framework prescribed by Eurostat and implemented by national statistical offices. They are consistent across countries and years. However, the main issue is that they provide mostly a narrow understanding of energy poverty through the lens of thermal comfort and energy expenditures/bills. Energy poverty is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon; it can only be adequately evaluated through a **set of indicators** that capture economic, social and technical aspects



of the condition. The data needs to be **sex-disaggregated and collected annually** in order to detect and measure gender inequalities in energy poverty. More indicators focusing on **cooling and summertime issues**, as well as on impacts on health and wellbeing should be included. It is crucial to recognise that **households are not holistic entities** but dynamic systems with diverse energy needs and preferences.

3 Gender dimensions of energy poverty

To understand the importance of addressing energy poverty in a gender-sensitive way, this section describes the gender dimensions of living in energy poverty. The concept was originally developed by Rademaekers et al. (2016) and describes the dimensions of drivers, factors and outcomes of energy and energy poverty. Clancy (2017) included and highlighted the gender impact in this multidimensional concept (see Figure 4).

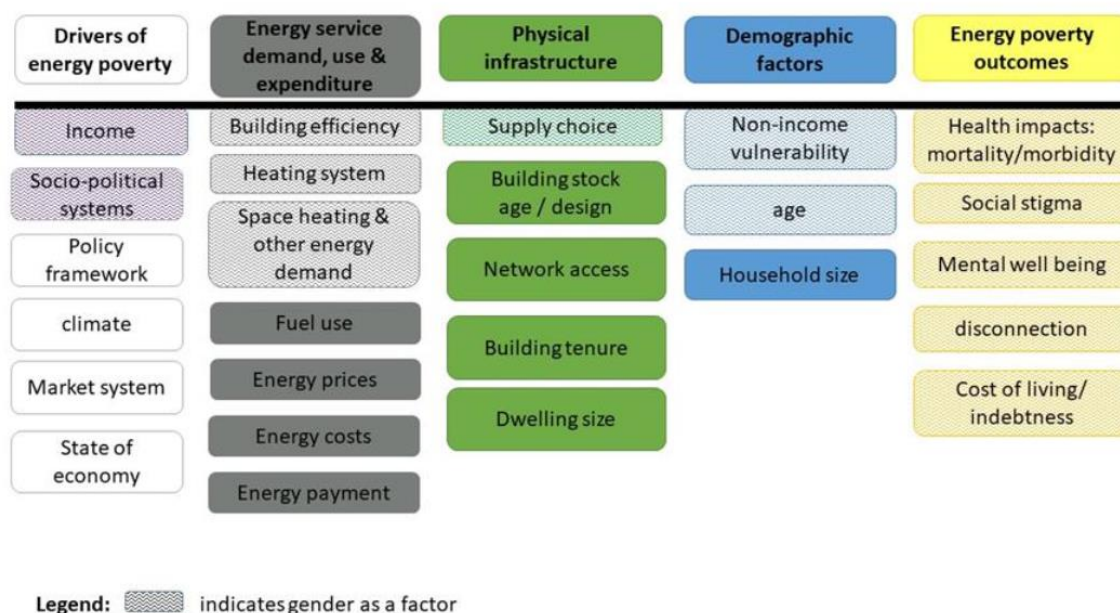


Figure 4: Gender gaps existing in the drivers, causes and effects of energy poverty. Source: Clancy et al., 2017: Gender perspective on access to energy in the EU. (Adapted from Rademaekers et al., 2016).

As mentioned, the causes of energy poverty are often considered to be a combination of energy prices, low income and energy-inefficient homes. People with low income often live in housing with poor insulation and frequently use older equipment with poorer energy efficiency. Figure 4 shows further that the inability to pay for energy costs results from a complex state of deprivation, in which a variety of characteristics of a household and of its members intersect and further interact with external conditions. It is important to include other social characteristics of households, the overlap of these characteristics with policies and institutional practices and how they lead to a constellation of energy poverty. The drivers, factors and outcomes show the intersectional impact for gender. Also policy framework and the market system are drivers for gender inequality.

The **household energy system** consists of energy service demand, energy use and expenditure. A range of variables can influence these dimensions. The expenditure level a household can afford on energy and the resultant energy services reflects affordability.

Income is a significant factor influencing expenditure, although there are other factors such as expenditure priorities.

Drivers that influence the affordability of household energy services and can lead to energy poverty are both direct and indirect. The political and economic systems influence energy market development, institutional structures, heating and cooling infrastructure, housing stock and tenure and energy supply. The type of energy market (extent of liberalization) and level of competition influence the range of energy service tariffs available. Climate influences energy demand, particularly for heating and cooling. The economy has a direct effect on income which in turn affects the type of house, both in terms of tenure and physical structure, an individual or family can afford to live in. The policy framework determines whether energy poverty is recognized officially and whether it is a political priority and hence whether support will be put in place to address this issue.


Hence, **key factors** influencing or causing energy poverty, specifically relate to

- Physical infrastructure (particularly the building stock)
- Energy policy overall and policies that determine the types of measures to support households in energy poverty
- Socio-economic & demographic factors (such as the elderly, disabilities, rural communities, single-parent households, etc.).

The **outcomes** of energy poverty can be health impacts, isolation and problems with indebtedness (Rademaekers et al., 2016).

Gender inequality and energy poverty can be analyzed from economic, physiological and socio-cultural perspectives (Clancy et al., 2017):

- **Economic:** e.g. women with low income, who are often heads of households, are either single parents or pensioners, due to their greater life expectancy than men. In 2018 the average gender pay gap in the EU-28 was 16.2%, highlighting the remaining differences in wages between men and women (EC 2019).
- **Biological/physiological:** e.g. age is a significant factor in dealing with heat and cold stress, with young children and older people being particularly vulnerable. Since life expectancy is higher for women than for men, the share of women among the elderly is higher. Women are also considered to be more sensitive to ambient temperatures than men.
- **Socio-cultural:** women's energy needs and consumption patterns differ compared to men. Yet, since women are not a homogenous group themselves, energy consumption patterns also vary between women, depending on their age, marital and employment status, cultural background, etc.



The intersection of gender with age, marital status, employment, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, etc. gives rise to diverse and contradictory geographies of gendered vulnerability to energy poverty. While it is possible to draw initial conclusions about the scope of gendered energy poverty associated with individual health, income and economic activity, energy poverty also needs the perspective including gendered aspects of energy vulnerability related to infrastructure and the energy market. This strengthens the fundamental need to raise awareness about energy poverty and the issues related to gender and all intersectional dimensions, as well as on individual and infrastructural level.



There is an urgent need to collect sex-disaggregated data across Europe on the gender dimensions of energy poverty.

To increase the visibility of gender issues, it is important to recognize that households are not a holistic entity, but complex fluid systems with diverse energy needs differentiated not only by income and number of household members. In part, the lack of awareness is linked to the lack of data. Quality data is the basis of policy making and allows us to benchmark and track progress. There is an urgent need to collect sex-disaggregated data across Europe on the gender dimensions of energy poverty. The data should be presented in an intersectional way to represent a typology of energy users at the household level.

4 Analysis of surveys

In this section, the financial schemes mentioned in the surveys conducted by partners of the EmpowerMed project are analysed, under consideration of some additional secondary data. Table 1 presents the organisations that provided valuable input to this study. Partners of the EmpowerMed project interviewed both colleagues from their own organisation as well as external energy poverty experts.

Table 2: Overview conducted interviews

Organiz. /Country	Organisation(s) of interviewed person (s)
DOOR – Croatia	DOOR and representatives of local authorities, Croatia
SOGESCA – Italy	SOGESCA, Italy
FOCUS – Slovenia	Focus, Slovenia
	Ecofund, Slovenia
IREC – Spain	IREC, Spain
	Agència Local Energia de Barcelona, Spain
ESF – Spain	Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation - Barcelona Housing Council, Spain
	Mundó, Ecoserveis - Energy Advisory Points Barcelona (Punts d'Assessorament Energètic, PAE), Spain
	Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona UAB
WECF – Germany	WECF, Germany
	Stromspar-Check, Germany
	Energy Agency of Plovdiv, Bulgaria
	Environmental Association "Za Zemiata" / Friends of the Earth Bulgaria, Bulgaria
WECF – France	SOLIHA, France
Milieukontakt –	Eden Center, Albania

Albania	Albania Energy Market, Albania
	Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure, Department of Renewable Energy, Albania

4.1 Description of reported financial support programs

Three main types of financial instruments are analysed in this section: Direct financial support schemes; support and investments for energy efficiency measures; information provision and guidance schemes.

Direct financial support schemes

According to the surveys, most of the partner's countries offer some financial intervention for those who are most vulnerable. Such support is often coupled with the social welfare system in order to identify vulnerability and mechanisms by which to provide support. Financial support is then either provided through social welfare payments or directly to specific groups, such as the elderly. Figure 1 shows that, in EU member states (of which 40% have stated or implemented financial interventions), the social welfare system represents the main channel for support and provider of parameters and indicators to identify recipients as seen in Figure 5. This approach reflects a social policy led orientation.

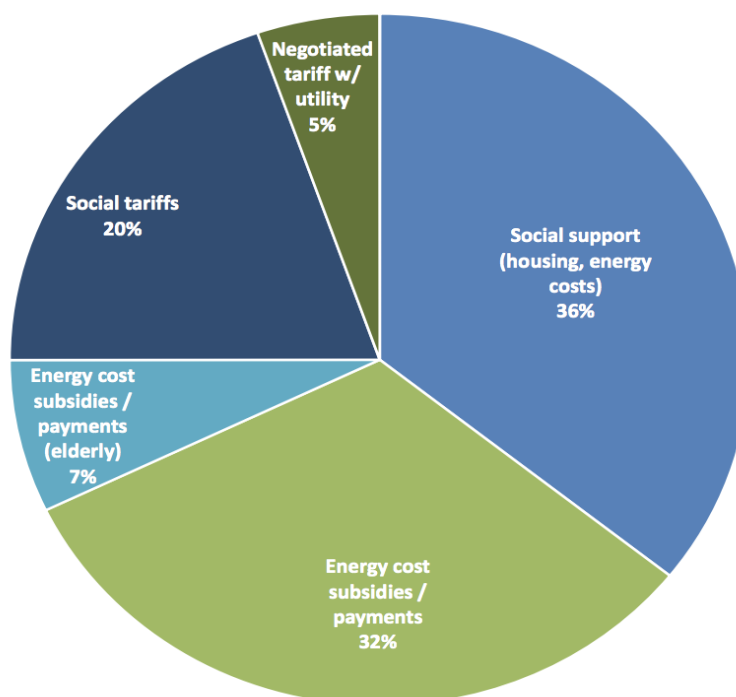


Figure 5: Share of financial interventions. Source: Pye et al. (2015).

With measures like the 'energy cheque' in France, the Heating Aid program in Bulgaria and "Bono social térmico" in Spain, poor households experience financial relief in the payment

of energy bills. In Albania, vulnerable households can receive up to 210 kilowatts/month covered by the state budget, which is converted into 2,000 L (approx. 16.40€). As reported from partners from Slovenia, organisations like Caritas or Red Cross also provide monetary support and material assistance to households. This can range from paying for basic bills to supporting the purchase of heating fuels or household appliances. Financial support is sometimes also provided by certain NGOs, such as Chain of Good People Slovenia. Several countries, particularly Spain, Croatia and Albania, offer social tariffs and try to ensure that vulnerable consumers have access



Photo credit: FOCUS

to energy at fair prices. But a certain percentage of affected people do not receive it, also because the process of applying is very complex and implies lots of bureaucracy. The way in which financial assistance is provided is important in terms of take-up and access. While some measures require consumers to be proactive (e.g. support from Caritas/Red Cross or the Spanish social tariff for electricity), others are paid directly as part of a social welfare package (e.g. the energy cheque).

One major criticism is that the financial measures focus on short-term relief and address mainly the cost of energy rather than the structural causes of energy poverty. The support is often insufficient and does not help the affected people to leave the situation of energy poverty, as it is not targeting the underlying causes of the problem (such as inefficient building and inefficient heating). Burning solid fuels like coal or wood, maintains the problem of indoor (and outdoor) air pollution and keeps the users dependent on fossil fuels and state support. And only focusing on inefficient building or inefficient heating does not target the structural and underlying causes of the problem, which is very related to energy prices and how the energy system and payments to energy companies are transferred to the bills.

None of the programs mentioned in the surveys has a particular focus on gender or includes elements that would particularly emphasize any support for or empowerment of women. The main criterion is the vulnerability status, which is linked to the national definitions of vulnerability (see chapter 2).

Support and investments for energy efficiency measures

Energy efficiency measures include grants, subsidies and other forms of financial support to undertake efficiency measures and thereby help to combat underlying causes of energy poverty by increasing the energy standard of housing or the efficiency of equipment. By

reducing the energy consumption of households, these measures also contribute to other environmental goals such as reducing CO₂ emissions.

According to the Insight report (Pye et al., 2015) approx. 42% of the measures are non-targeted grants, loans or tax incentives; 21% are targeted retrofit grants, loans and tax incentives; 8% are non-targeted appliances grants; 4% are targeted appliances grants; 8% are social housing efficiency improvements, and 6% are energy efficiency advices. A minor portion however consists of direct efficiency improvements in the private rental sector.

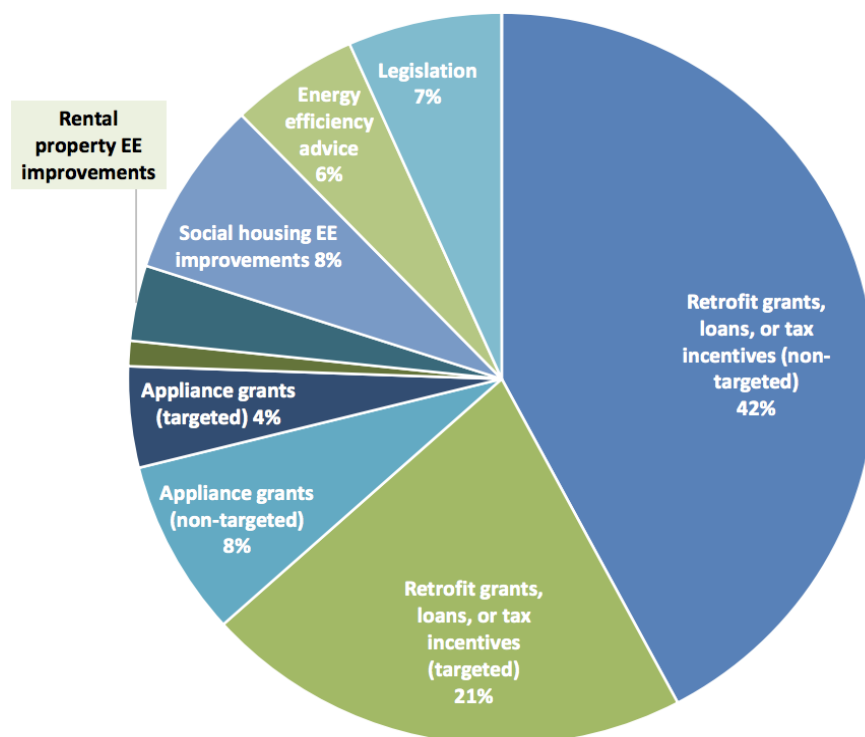


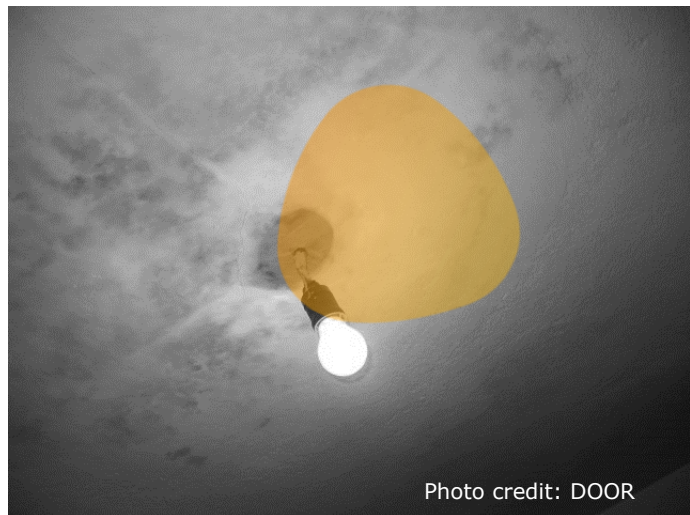
Figure 6: Share of different energy efficiency measures. Source: Pye et al., 2015.

According to the surveys, many energy efficiency support schemes are large-scale governmental policies that are not specifically targeted at households identified to be living in energy poverty. This is the case for the energy renovation of family households and residential buildings in Croatia, which is offered by the Ministry of Construction and Physical Planning and the Fund for environment protection and energy efficiency. This measure covers between 40% and 80% of costs of renovation and can be used for the costs of exterior joinery replacement; thermal insulation of the heated space (exterior wall, roof, ceiling, buried parts and floor); installation of condensing gas boilers and the installation of systems for the use of renewable energy sources like solar panels or biomass boilers. Similar measures were mentioned for Slovenia, Spain, Bulgaria and France. It is worth mentioning that for some programs which are open for all citizens, the amount of reimbursement is dependent on the economic status.

For instance, loans for energy efficiency investments, are provided by the Green Economy Financing Program in Albania, helping households to invest in high-performing technologies by providing financing through local participating financial institutions. This measure is not targeted at vulnerable consumers. In fact, it instead adds a barrier to receiving energy efficiency investment as the loans are only granted to people below a certain level of income or a business that meets the eligibility criteria.

There are also several measures *directly* targeted at vulnerable groups, such as the grant for retrofitting the interior of homes in Spain, which covers 100% of the costs without the need of making the investment in advance. These conditions might be key aspects to encourage vulnerable groups to apply. According to FOCUS in Slovenia, vulnerable consumers are often reluctant to apply for grants, as the application procedure is rather complex, and people might fear the complexity of the process. Also, people can be stigmatised when their neighbours or the building manager know they are receiving a full subsidy.

Another concept that is applied in several countries is the combination of energy audits with small interventions to boost energy efficiency in households. Good examples are 'Stromsparcheck' (Energy Saving Check) in Germany, the "Energy Poverty Reduction Activity" (ZERO) in Slovenia and the implementation of low-cost measures in Spain. Their common feature is that households receive a package of easy-to-use appliances for reducing the consumption of energy and water (e.g. through energy-saving lamps, power extensions with switches to turn the electricity for all devices plugged into the power extension either on or off, energy-saving taps and showerheads, window seals, etc.). By using those devices, the annual costs for energy and water consumption can be reduced by up to 100€. Those small interventions are always combined with a consultation on energy issues (see 'information provision and guidance schemes') and allow energy-poor households to improve their energy situation on a long-term perspective. This has been shown to work very well, with the only difficulty of target groups being reluctant to apply for home visits, either because they do not know about the possibility, or because they do not want advisors to enter their flats. Some of these programs also include the replacement of large household appliances. For instance, 'Stromsparcheck' in Germany subsidises the replacement of energy-inefficient refrigerators with 100€.



The analysis of the surveys highlighted that none of the existing energy efficiency measures applies a gender perspective.

Information provision and guidance schemes

As mentioned above, programs such as 'Stromsparcheck', Germany, or 'Energy Poverty Reduction Activity' (ZERO), Slovenia, offer consultation for low-income households with household-visits to provide information and explanation about energy consumption and possibilities to save money. Personal consultation (peer to peer) has been understood as a successful tool. In Barcelona, eleven energy advisory points are distributed throughout the city. While they are open to all citizens, vulnerable consumers can receive additional support for switching contracts, changing the terms of existing contracts or receiving support in order to prevent disconnection. Information on energy poverty is also often provided by foundations/entities working on social issues or housing, by consumer organisations or national/regional online platforms.



According to EmpowerMed partners and secondary research, none of those information and guidance schemes has a particular focus on women or includes elements that would particularly emphasise the support for the empowerment of women.

Despite criticism, it has been noticed that the energy poverty problem is characterised by a certain level of urgency – as such, even non-structural short-term measures can make a substantial difference for many vulnerable consumers.

4.2 Requirements for gender-responsive support programs

In order to improve existing support programs to become more gender-responsive, this section introduces some key instruments to be applied throughout a program's cycle (see Figure 5). While this is a selection of gender-responsive tools that are particularly applicable when designing new programs, existing programs may still be modified, depending on current capacities and budgets. The planning and implementation of gender-responsive mechanisms initially require **a more thorough gender assessment** in order to identify the gender-specific need for the programme at first and then fill potential gaps when designing programs that aim to target most vulnerable consumers. There is a fundamental need to recognize that households are not a holistic entity and that this lack of awareness is linked to a lack of data. Hence, as mentioned by interviewees, sex-disaggregated data on energy access, management and use by women and men, their

There is a fundamental need to recognize that households are not a holistic entity and that this lack of awareness is linked to a lack of data.

needs and priorities as well as their resources and opportunity to access and use support programs need to be collected. Besides a needs assessment, it is important to conduct gender and social impact assessments on running programs in order to determine whether grants/discounts are reaching women and men equally. This may be achieved through a survey and feedback processes which are important both for the planning process of programs as well as for the continuous monitoring and evaluation of programs. Additionally, since more funding is often key to a program's implementation, a gender budget assessment, i.e. analysing current or planned budgets from a gender perspective, needs to be conducted to assess whether men and women benefit equally from the programme. This relates to the budget that is spent on awareness-raising and accessibility of a program as well as on the implementation of a program and the outcomes for both men and women when participating.

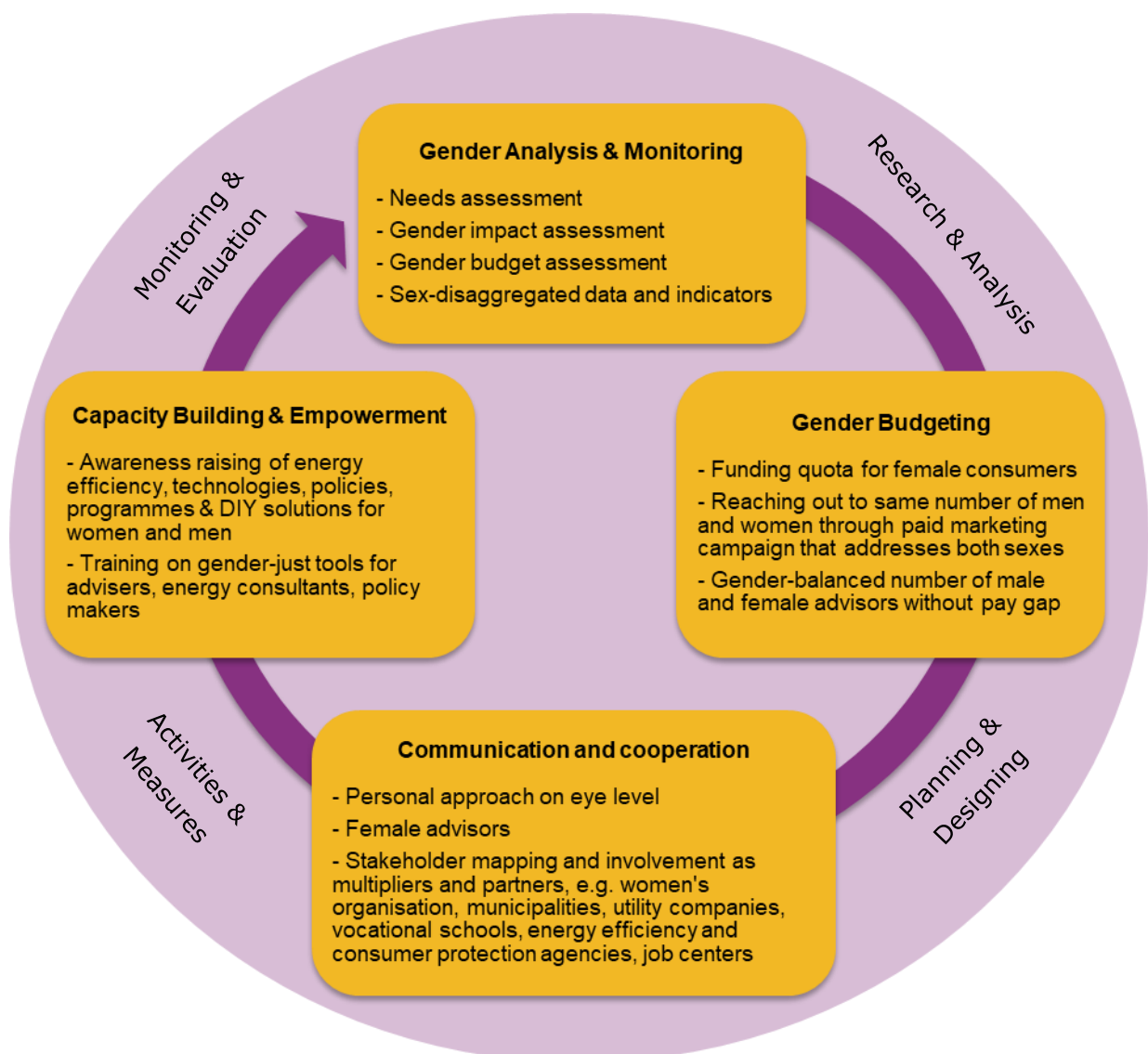


Figure 7: Selection of tools to design gender-responsive funding programs. Source: WECF.

Based on the assessments, all potential gender-based differences in perception, values, needs, response capacity, decision-making and impacts of existing programs, must be taken into account when **planning and designing** energy support programs. Since

Funds may be allocated to hire more female advisors, create a marketing campaign that addresses both sexes or to conduct trainings on gender-responsive tools in order to ensure that at least 50% of the program recipients are women.

gender-responsive activities may be limited by available funds, it is important to apply gender budgeting in which funds are planned or re-allocated in a way that ensures equity in the distribution of resources between men and women. For instance, funds may be allocated to hire more female advisors, create a marketing campaign that addresses both sexes or to conduct trainings on gender-responsive tools in order to ensure that at least 50% of the program recipients are women and that there is an affirmative action of vulnerable groups, as recommended by all interviewees. Another example suggested is the financial allocation towards grants that work without the need of making the investment in advance. While gender budgeting may not always target direct discrimination - it very often unveils indirect discrimination - it raises awareness of the effects that

financial schemes have on all genders. When designing a program, all stakeholders should be considered that may communicate energy-saving programs or offer solutions to energy efficiency themselves. A context-specific and gender-just planning process would consider equal consideration and would avoid wasting any efforts on 'average solutions' for 'average energy consumers'.

It is crucial to improve the gender balance in staff, not only within the network of energy advisors and auditors, or the consultation points but also at the level of the political decision-making process.

Activities and measures that are recommended by interviewees focus mainly on new cooperation between organisations fighting to combat energy poverty and social organisations that are more aware of socio-economic and socio-cultural factors that might have an impact on energy poverty, as well as on gender-responsive communication and training. Training on energy aspects for women would increase their knowledge on this topic and change the image of energy being a "man's business", which in turn would empower women to take action in decision-making. According to the experience of WECF, energy consultation events are more frequented by men, while women seem to be reluctant to join. This could be overcome by events that target women explicitly and are organised by women. The information about those events, but also about energy consultation and energy issues in general, can be spread via women's or social organisations. To increase the communication, specific information channels need to be set

up. It is crucial to improve the gender balance in staff, not only within the network of energy advisors and auditors, or the consultation points but also at the level of the political decision-making process. As the energy sector is seen as being dominated by men aged 50 and above, with economists and engineers being the dominant professions (Clancy, 2001), women's voices, opinions and experiences must be included in the political process.

To implement these suggestions and enhance gender mainstreaming in the energy sector, strong cooperation between women's, social and energy partners is necessary, complemented by the expertise of governmental institutions and NGOs who work on gender equality and energy poverty. Ideally, low-income households,



vulnerable groups and particularly women should be addressed by a personal approach, either through social work centres, health institutions, women's organisations (like women choirs, women sports clubs, etc.), counselling services, energy advisors or institutions like energy cafes. Another way to reach these groups are information brochures and material, which could be advertised through (social) media channels, television or via email. While it is difficult to target vulnerable groups specifically, it is still a necessity, as there is a huge lack of public awareness about gender and energy poverty beyond vulnerable groups and beyond only women. Making these issues more visible can help to combat the stigmatization towards gender-just energy programs. We suggest that information material should as well be distributed by energy suppliers (e.g. together with payment reminders).

4.3 Energy and social policies in countries of the EmpowerMed project

This section gives an overview of existing energy and social policies in countries of the EmpowerMed project.

Table 3: Responses to questionnaire

Country	Does your country apply gender-responsive regional and national energy policies and strategies?	Does your country apply gender-responsive regional and national social policies and strategies?	Does your country apply gender-responsive regional and national health policies and strategies?	Does your country have binding national targets on reducing energy poverty? Are there any gender-oriented elements in the targets?
Spain	No specific gender initiatives exist regarding the topic.	There are references of different social policies and health policies including gender-oriented measures (though the organisation is not experienced on these subjects). As a preliminary example, the project SOPHIE , that analyses the impact on the health of public policies on renovation and energy efficiency of dwellings.		The National Strategy against energy poverty (2019–2024) indicates that, by 2025, the energy poverty cases should be reduced by at least 25%, aiming for 50%. It does not include any gender-oriented measure . Only the social bonus (electricity discount) has recently added single-parent families as a collective in the access criteria (and in Spain the majority of them are led by single mothers), and that will indirectly benefit some women. - In terms of law obligations, big utilities have to spend 1.5% of their benefits on a State fund for energy efficiency, but it is later spent mostly on the industry infrastructure
Croatia	No specific gender initiatives exist regarding the topic.	On the national level: Strategy on poverty and Social exclusions in the Republic Croatia for 2014 - 2020 - several strategies recognized that <u>women</u> are especially endangered by	Strategic plan of Ministry of Health for 2020–2022: special emphasis will be put on children, young, <u>women</u> and elderly. - attention will also be steered	- One goal of The fourth national energy efficiency action (2017–2019) is the alleviation of energy poverty (program has not yet been implemented?!) through the

		<p>poverty (especially in respect to family abuse, maternity leaves and parent rights)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - especially women living in single households and older women. The highest poverty rate defined by household type is one for single women members 42.7%. According to the Croatian Bureau of Statistics data over 77.5% of single households are occupied by women older than 65 years □ there are no special measures targeting women living in single households, under poverty threshold or endangered by energy poverty. - Measures targeting just women: paid maternity leave for 45 days prior to delivery and 28 days post-delivery; right to subsidies for new-born - In several local level strategies (for, cities, municipalities or counties) one can find a general measure about the improvement of quality of life and of environment and a means of integration of disadvantaged people to labour market with the aim of strengthening general tolerance, solidarity and reciprocity for individual differences and needs, reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. The expected outcome is to stimulate the employment of unemployed persons, especially people with disabilities, <u>women</u>, young people, people with 	<p>toward mental health by introducing mobile health teams as well as developing systems services for pregnant women, older women and women with disabilities.</p>	<p>implementation of measures of energy efficiency. A list of available measures and rates co-financing individual measures should have been established. One of the prerequisites for this program was the acquisition of the status of endangered energy buyer in accordance with legal regulations in force at the time of implementation of an individual measure. The program was supposed to determine the criteria by which the list of priorities for implementation would be determined, and the measures should have included the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Replacement of home appliances according to the "old for new" system - Replacing windows - Improve or replace the heating system - Enhancement of thermal envelope protection - Simple energy efficiency measures. <p>The program was also supposed to establish a system for monitoring socio-demographic and energy indicators describing energy poverty at the national level, through the already existing system of collecting consumption data and household habits (Central Bureau of Statistics).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of existing measures to reduce energy poverty is in the jurisdiction either of social welfare centre or in jurisdiction of local governments.
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		the status of long-term unemployment, etc.		
Slo-venia	No specific gender initiatives exist regarding the topic. In energy operative programs, there is a cross-cutting issue of gender equality, but no specific targets or indicators are mentioned to this end.	Women oriented social policies or programs: maternity leave, maternity homes (to help mothers with under-age children up to 14 years of age, pregnant women, obstetricians and single women who are in current or long-term distress and have no alternative accommodation) or safe houses (offer women and children who experience any form of violence (psychic, physical or sexual) the possibility of withdrawal and accommodation. They provide a safe space to take refuge in and, with the support of counsellors, re-arrange life) - Support programs in cases of violence against women, such as helplines or psychological support. Many such programs are state-run, but some are also implemented by NGOs.	Women oriented health policies or programs: DORA: Slovenian Breast Cancer Screening Program, providing screening mammography every two years for women aged 50–69 years ZORA: national screening program for detecting precancerous and early cancerous changes in the cervix, every woman between the ages of 20 and 64 is invited to take part in the examination every three years.	Ministry for Infrastructure is including energy poverty in their work. They are responsible for preparation of the National Climate and Energy Plan by 2021, that will set steps for new measures on the topic of energy poverty (prepare the definition of energy poverty, set targets, goals and measures, prepare action plan). The Plan is not likely to include gender-specific objectives.
Italy	No specific gender initiatives exist regarding the topic.	Two types of measures were mainly promoted to improve female employment: incentives for nursery assistance and incentives for employers who hire women.	Limited to the field of gynaecology and reproduction .	According to their knowledge, none at the moment.
Ger-many	There is no gender-responsive energy policy at any level.	The ministry of social and family affairs has implemented targets to increase gender equality: - Women and workforce - Protect women from violence	Gender Just Health Policy (implemented in the national health policy): - support of gender-specific approaches in prevention and health promotion	Energy poverty is rather new in Germany, so there are no binding or non-binding targets.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender Care Gap - Gender Pay Gap - Equality and participation <p>The approach is broad but not linked to any energy issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - promotion of resource-oriented approaches aimed at strengthening competencies - Inclusion of women practitioners from women's health counselling and therapy - Consideration of specific risks and resources of the sexes - Creation of non-violent environments for women and children 	
Albania	Enhanced women's access to sustainable time- and labour-saving infrastructure (e.g. access to clean water and energy) and climate-smart agricultural technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoted poor women's access to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures - Broadened access to land, housing, finance, technology and/or agricultural extension services - Supported women's entrepreneurship and business development activities - Introduced or strengthened social protection programs for women and girls (e.g. cash transfers for women with children, public works/employment guarantee schemes for women of working-age, pensions for older women) - Introduced/strengthened low-cost legal services for women living in poverty 	<p>Albanian Government in the last 5 years has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoted women's access to health services through the expansion of universal health coverage or public health services - Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services - Undertaken gender-specific public awareness/health promotion campaigns - Provided gender-responsiveness training for health service providers - Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programs - Provided refugee women and girls, as well as women and girls in humanitarian settings with access to sexual and reproductive health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Energy poverty in Albania is not clearly defined either monitored - So far, vulnerability is addressed through different energy and social policies. A vulnerable customer (Law on the Power Sector 43/2015 Article 3) is a household consumer who due to social reasons, is entitled to certain special rights regarding the supply of electricity. - Albanian Government is working on drafting secondary legislation to provide the status of energy poverty to specific groups (as according to the law) and establish a financial mechanism to protect this vulnerable group. - strategic document "Health system to adapt to climate change 2011–2021", developed by the Ministry of Health with the support of the World Health organisation; includes strategic directions and action plan for the period 2011–2021. This strategy aims: - Strengthening of health services and cross-sectorial systems to adequately improve their response to climate change impacts

				<p>- Encourage healthy behaviour and energy efficiency in all areas and to provide information and access to the mitigation and adaptation interventions, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups through public awareness campaigns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability—although a full cost recovery tariff for energy is not yet applied, Government of Albania has established a support scheme for poor households through subsidizing increased electricity price. • Reliability—it is useful to highlight the improved situation with regard to power cuts from the baseline to the current situation. • Sustainability—Albania faces substantial challenges in the security of energy supply. Hydropower generation, accounting for 99 percent of domestic electricity production, is vulnerable to seasonal precipitation and climate change.
Bulgaria	No	Not explicitly.	Not explicitly.	<p>No, in the draft National Climate and Energy Plan till 2030 no energy poverty target is mentioned, just that they will continue distributing the current energy benefits.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Full liberalization of the electricity market is expected by 2025, as for the vulnerable consumers a social tariff, valid for up to 5 years, is envisaged. Ministry of Energy says that together with Ministry of Labour and Social Policy they are working on the definition</p>

				of what a vulnerable energy consumer is, they are also developing an ordinance with specific measures, financial and non-financial measures
France	<p>No, most energy support schemes address low income and poorest households, not specifically women. They didn't analyze the distribution of women and men in financial support programs. (To note: in Soliha, they have female energy auditors.)</p>	-	<p>Stratégie Nationale de Santé – 2018–2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health policies focus on addiction during pregnancy and cancer screening. - It also focuses on reducing unworthy home and indoor pollution, and health care access <i>without</i> a specific gender plan. 	<p>In France, actions which aim to reduce energy poverty are based in 3 national plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - le Grenelle de l'Environnement - la Transition énergétique pour la Croissance Verte - Le Plan Climat <p>They plan to achieve carbon neutrality in 2050 and eradicate energy poverty within 10 years by 2 ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - help poorest households to reduce their energy bill - encourage energy renovation for all with the "Plan Rénovation énergétique"; since 2018: renovation of 500,000 houses/ year, 50% of which are occupied by poor households.

5 Good practice examples – how to integrate a broader social perspective

In this section, three financial instruments as good practices from Spain, France and Germany are described. Each refers to the three main types of financial instruments that were introduced in the previous section: information provision and guidance schemes, direct financial support schemes, as well as support and investments for energy efficiency measures.

5.1. Energy Advisory Points Barcelona (Punts d'Assessorament Energètic, PAE)

Eleven energy advisory points cover the city of Barcelona today (see Figure 7). They serve as information centres for energy poverty and energy efficiency. They also answer questions regarding energy bills and any other energy-related topic.

Citizens are taught about their rights as consumers and how they can reduce or adequate their energy consumption in general and in particular their energy and water bills, while increasing their home comfort. They learn about the low-cost measures for energy efficiency for their homes, the installation of those and about available grants for housing rehabilitation. The role of the energy advisory points is not restricted to providing information, they also accompany the process of applying for funds (advising, filling in the forms, etc.), choosing (switching to) the best tariff and assisting in situations of supply cuts. The staff from the energy advisory points are in close contact to social services, the Housing Department and the Energy Agency of Barcelona City Council and identify potential abuses and violations of the Catalan Law “Urgent measures to tackle the emergency on housing and energy poverty” (Law 24/2015 of the Catalan



Parliament). They also provide the necessary help for obtaining the certificate of being affected by energy poverty (which is needed to avoid supply cuts due to payment delays, etc.) and for claiming the social economic bonus for vulnerable households. The aim is to identify energy poverty situations that do not reach social services or charities. Apart from vulnerable households, there is a second target group benefitting from this project: long-

term unemployed people who are trained to become energy advisors, either as advisors stationed at the energy points or as agents that visit energy-poor households. This concept has been shown to work very well as these agents showed empathy towards people in energy poverty situations, having themselves experienced energy deprivation. Other smaller municipal councils in Catalonia have adopted the same practice of training long-term unemployed people as energy advisors.

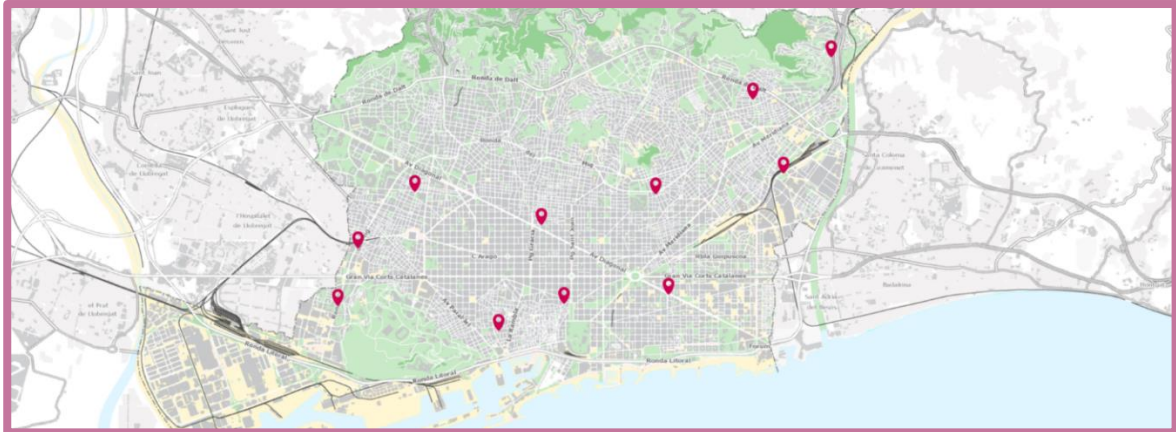


Figure 8: Location of Energy Advisory Points in Barcelona, Source: <https://habitatge.barcelona/ca/serveis-ajuts/drets-energetics>.

In order to make this project more gender-responsive, the following points are suggested:

- Gender impact assessment of the existing program
- Collect sex-disaggregated data in the advisory points as well as within the staff of the trained advisors and agents
- Train and empower more women to become energy advisors and agents
- Cooperation with various stakeholders in order to cover other social determinants intersecting with gender equality
- Training specifically for women, even if not long-term unemployed
- Organise information events, particularly from and for women (addressing special needs, accommodate the timing of events)
- Enhance information material to make it more attractive for women
- Increase awareness about gender and energy issues
- Initiate a pilot project in one of the energy points with specific women's days to see if the outreach to women can be increased
- Spread information about energy advisory points through (social) media, in social housings, in women's organisations and through the energy supplier's payment reminders (via mail)
- Use the Energy Advisory Points to distribute information about women's collectives and energy cooperatives to empower women's networks

5.2. Energy Cheque, France

It can be used to pay for electricity, natural gas, or other energy sources, like fuel oil or wood from an energy supplier, or to finance energy renovation work for the household.

Energy cheques were introduced in France on a regional level by the government organisation ASP (Service and Payments Agency) in 2016 and replaced the social energy tariffs on 1 January 2018. Depending on unique fiscal criteria (based on the reference taxable income – RFR – of the household declared each year) the amount of the cheque varies between 48€ and 277€ per year, with an average amount of 150€. It can be used to pay for electricity, natural gas, or other energy sources, like fuel oil or wood from an energy supplier, or to finance energy

renovation work for the household. Although the cheques are cumulative over 3 years, the amount is quite low for refurbishment works. That might be the main reason that during the experimental phase in 2016, only 63 cheques (over a total of 135,000 used cheques) were used to pay building renovation works, as determined by the official evaluation. Overall, 79% of the cheques were used, and 90% of those were used to pay for electricity bills, whereas 10% were used to pay gas bills. Notably, the cheques can be used in addition to financial aid and existing tax credits. Eligible people automatically receive the energy cheque by mail and can use the energy voucher to pay for electricity or natural gas expenses directly online for certain suppliers. In 2019, 5,8 million households were reached by this measure which represents approx. 19.5% of the total number of 29,8 million households in France (Statista, 2020).

In 2019, 5,8 million households were reached by this measure which represents approx. 19.5% of the total number of 29,8 million households in France (Statista, 2020).

ENERGY CHECK SCALES IN 2019				
Number of CPUs	Reference tax income level (RFR) / Consumption unit (UC)			
	RFR / UC <5600 €	€ 5,600 ≤ RFR / UC <€ 6,700	€ 6,700 ≤ RFR / UC <€ 7,700	€ 7,700 ≤ RFR / UC <€ 10,700
1 CU	194 €	€ 146	98 €	€ 48
1 <CPU <2	240 €	€ 176	113 €	€ 63
2 CU or more	€ 277	€ 202	€ 126	€ 76

Figure 9: Energy Cheque scales in 2019 (translated). Source: <https://www.chequeenergie.gouv.fr/beneficiaire/faq>.

This program has the benefit of eliminating the need for individuals to apply for and seek financial support themselves, and hence potentially reaching energy consumers who are most vulnerable. As direct financial support, it offers short-term and uncomplicated relief for the households reached. Nevertheless, we do see several shortcomings regarding this measure. It does not contribute to combating the causes of energy poverty in the long term since it does not improve household energy efficiency, energy savings or bring about behavioural changes when needed. It does not solve the targeting issue of vulnerable consumers, as additional criteria based on dwelling type is not taken into account. It is necessary to combine this financial support program with information and advisory services and adequate (financial) support for investments in energy efficiency improvements.

As everybody is receiving the financial support directly via mail and the only criteria to be eligible for that measure is the reference tax income, this program can be classified as **gender blind**. A lot of information regarding the situation of the affected household is missing: Who is the “head” of the household? To whom is the *cheque* addressed? Who takes the decision on how the *cheque* is to be spent? Due to a lack of data, it is probably indirectly discriminating against women.

According to the official website, the *cheque* is sent to the person who signed the contract with the energy supplier. In our experience, this is often the man of a mixed-gender household. By this, women might be excluded from the decision-making process if and how to use the *cheque* (pay for energy or use it to finance energy renovation work), which in turn would reinforce traditional role models of energy being a “man’s business”. Therefore, we recommend the *cheque* being written on all adult household members, which would simultaneously prompt households to include all names on the energy contract with the energy supplier.



5.3. Stromsparcheck (Energy Saving Check), Germany

The ‘Stromsparcheck’ is planned and organised by the social welfare organisation Deutscher Caritasverband e.V. and the umbrella organisation of the German energy agencies. They manage the program and provide information material and training to

qualify the energy-saving consultants. Local organisations implement the program in their region while tenant associations and trade unions also support the 'Stromsparcheck'. It is widely spread in Germany (see Figure 6). Qualified energy consultants visit the households and provide explanations and information about energy and water consumption and possibilities to save energy and money. It focuses on avoiding any waste of energy or the reduction of energy consumption, such as through energy efficient devices, and therefore does not reduce the living comfort.

It focuses on avoiding any waste of energy or the reduction of energy consumption, such as through energy efficient devices, and therefore does not reduce the living comfort.

During the **first visit**, the energy-saving team comes to the household and checks the electricity consumption. They give first advice on electricity through which money in the household could be saved. During the **second visit**, the team applies more concrete measures. The households receive free immediate assistance, such as energy-saving and LED lamps, switchable socket strips, TV standby switches, timers and showerheads, which can be installed immediately if required. Additionally, the households will get an individual energy-saving timetable and qualified advice on how to reduce electricity consumption with simple measures.



Figure 10: Stromsparcheck Map. Source: <https://www.stromspar-check.de/standorte/standorte-karte.html>.




It remains a challenge to gain the interest of low-income households and to be invited as an energy-saving team due to mistrust and lack of awareness.

The energy-saving consultants are fully qualified to provide advice on efficient energy consumption. After having faced long-term unemployment themselves, the consultants are qualified by receiving more than eight weeks of training, which has been followed by daily work practice. As long-term unemployed, they are aware of some of the daily struggles of low-income households from their own experiences. It remains a challenge to gain the interest of low-income households and to be invited as an energy-saving team due to mistrust and lack of awareness. However, personal contacts, information days (at churches, job centres, social organisations) and the work of multipliers (e.g. social workers) have been proven as successful approaches. Whereas flyers and further anonymous advertising do not show many reactions of the affected people.

Even though the energy check is free of charge, there is still big mistrust and worries about consultants aiming to sell their products for profit. Pensioners in particular seem to be difficult to address and to be convinced to receive an energy check. They might be ashamed, which is why they may not want to ask for support and do not want to accept any kind of support. Besides, they might be sceptical about letting anyone into their homes. Also, many low-income households (income limit less than 1,200€) are not reached with information events in social institutions, because they do not receive social benefits. It remains challenging to address and reach the majority of the target groups. Women are not explicitly addressed in the program.



There is still a large number of not reported energy poverty cases. Overall, the 'Stromsparcheck' has been very successful due to the low threshold offer and the practical approach of the program. The communication between the advisers and the advised persons is at eye level, and people are more familiar with the non-profit welfare organisations than with pure energy efficiency experts. Sex-aggregated data are not collected, yet, the age of affected people is reported as well as the type of households, such as single households. This video gives a brief overview of the program: <https://www.stromspar-check.de/stromspar-check/im-ueberblick.html>



In order to make this programme more gender-responsive, the following points are suggested:

- Gender impact assessment of the existing program
- Clear definition of women as target groups, considering various other social determinants, such as ethnicity, social status, age
- Cooperation with gender experts, local women's organisations, health centres, etc.
- Gender balanced and diverse number of energy advisers
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data
- Development of gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation tools
- Communication:
 - Target group-specific communication developed in cooperation with women's organisations, job centres
 - Ongoing communication training for the energy-saving consultants
 - Gender-responsive communication, e.g. never use photos where men are active and women are passive, diversity matters (the video shows two male protagonists), use inclusive language

6 Policy recommendations

From these findings, some broad policy recommendations can be made. The following recommendations set out additional actions for the European Commission, the EU and its member states concerning how to address gender equality in the context of energy poverty.




EU level

1. Use a definition of energy poverty that includes gender dimensions, e.g. a definition including gender dimension: **Energy poverty** occurs when individuals or households cannot achieve the minimum level of domestic energy consumption at affordable costs required for satisfying basic needs and for an effective participation in society. Factors such as income, gender, race, ability and geographical location may influence the persons' vulnerability to energy poverty and should therefore be considered when applying solutions.
2. Set binding targets within energy policies and directives and regulations to reduce energy poverty
3. Collect gender statistics on energy poverty by the European Statistical Office
4. Develop comprehensive and holistic strategies beyond the typical domain of 'energy policy', thus, seeking cooperation on all levels and across EU departments
 - Political commitment to reduce energy poverty for all relevant target groups
 - Political mandate to work across Directorate-General from different sectors, e.g. social, energy and housing policy

Member state level

1. Explicitly define energy poverty including gender dimensions
2. Set binding targets within energy policies and legislation to reduce energy poverty

- 
3. Collect sex-disaggregated data on energy poverty by the respective national statistical office
 4. Develop comprehensive and holistic strategies beyond the typical domain of 'energy policy', thus, seeking cooperation on all levels and across departments
 - Political commitment to reduce energy poverty for the relevant target groups
 - Political mandate to work across ministries from different sectors, e.g. social, energy and housing policy and across all levels (national, regional, local)
 - Include gender and energy poverty in the national poverty reports as an intersectional topic.
 5. Participation and Communication:
 - A good communication strategy on all levels to engage the target audience as well as the general public
 - The space for participation and dialogue with feminist movements and organisations providing expertise on gender and energy poverty to ensure that policies are drawn up with proposals that are close to citizens' needs
 6. Gender budgeting to track how the budget of the existing financial schemes responds to gender equality and vulnerable consumers in the energy sector. This entails investing in and making available mechanisms, guidelines and indicators that enable gender equality advocates to track progress, benefits for target groups, and the way in which supposedly gender-neutral budgets for energy affect women and men differently
 7. Using institutional exchange between existing frameworks: interfaces between gender equality and energy, sustainability and climate architectures are limited to isolated spots and are not yet a result of a concerted effort:
 - The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relate to gender equality, energy, poverty and inequality - these goals are to be reinforced. There should be gender equality in all energy services to reduce poverty and inequality. These goals also apply to the EU and its member states
 - Increasing recognition in the UNFCCC process of the gender dimensions of climate change. The issues of health and heat stress are global issues, and they have gendered impacts on the national level. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) proposes concrete measures
 8. The fight against energy poverty involves much more than taking corrective action. A **paradigm shift** towards a democratic energy system is needed in which energy citizens can play a vital role through storing and selling self-generated energy and peer-to-peer trading which allows all citizens to participate actively in a just and more democratic energy supply. It needs an appropriate legal framework on Member State level and capacity building for energy citizens having the knowledge, access and self-effectiveness for democratic energy sharing concepts. Energy sharing is still specific in certain areas in Western EU countries. It has potential for

a just energy system but needs to be implemented in a socially fair way, including the most vulnerable groups, also women.

EmpowerMed specific recommendations

1

Identify gender gaps in existing or forthcoming vulnerable household support mechanisms (e.g., Barcelona Advisory Points) relevant for EmpowerMed or which the project is leveraging to carry out its own activities. This knowledge can then be used to produce gender-just/gender-responsive policy recommendations.

2

Need to collect sex-disaggregated data within EmpowerMed as well, e.g., Barcelona's collective assemblies' spreadsheet. Gender analysis and monitoring of project activities for sex-disaggregated data.

3

From a knowledge generation perspective: EmpowerMed can identify issues or patterns at the gender-energy poverty nexus that haven't been described previously or have been disregarded.

4

Need to pay special attention to the health impacts at the gender-energy poverty nexus, i.e., sensitivity to differential health impacts between men and women, especially for mental health.

5

EmpowerMed project partners need to be aware of stereotypical perceptions of women (simply) as passive victims of energy poverty but rather emphasize their role as “active agents of change, who purchase and operate energy-saving technologies and may be innovators of energy-efficient solutions themselves”. This notion needs to be embedded in project implementation through e.g., actively recruiting women-led households through gender-sensitive strategies; for energy advisors: “household are not holistic entities” during household visits, advisors will inquire about women in the household, be aware of gender roles related to the domestic use of energy and engage with women of the household to the extent that is possible.

6

Consider gender from an intersectional perspective across all activities of the project: place of birth, age, income, etc., in order to understand in its full complexity when designing and implementing project activities.

7

All EmpowerMed materials targeting people need to be created with a gender perspective to avoid making the same mistake as existing support mechanisms.

8

Prioritize the gender perspective when creating alliances for project implementation, specifically when selecting training topics or trainers, when recruiting and interacting with households, when devising data collection mechanisms and when drafting policy recommendations.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Glossary

Please refer also to European Institute for Gender Equality and its online glossary: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/concepts-and-definitions>.

- **Discrimination (indirect and direct)** — is, according to CEDAW, "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex [...] in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."¹ **Direct discrimination** refers to acts that specifically discriminate certain groups in society, e.g. if in a job advertisement it would be specified that only men could apply. **Indirect discrimination** occurs when neutral laws and rules fail to address the unequal starting point of individuals to whom the law applies. E.g. if a law states that everyone has the equal right to access a building, but the building has not been facilitated with a ramp and as such people in wheelchairs cannot access.²
- **Disaggregated data (sex)** - they measure the differences between women and men on various social and economic grounds and are needed in order to compile gender statistics. Gender statistics rely on these sex-disaggregated data and reflect the realities of the lives of women and men and policy issues relating to gender³.
- **Empowerment** — implies an expansion in an individual's "ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them." CEDAW requires "that women be given an equal start and that they be empowered by an enabling environment to achieve equality of results."⁴
- **Equality (gender)** — "refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a 'women's issue', but should concern and fully engage men as well as women."⁵

¹ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Adopted 18 December 1979, entered into force 3 September 1981. UN Treaty Series vol. 1249, art. 1.

² Christodoulou, p. 5.

³ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/sex-disaggregated-data>.

⁴ CEDAW Committee. 2004. General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, on temporary special measures, para 8.

⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

- **Equality (transformative)** — refers to the idea that due to the individual's intersectionality - not everyone has the same starting point for accessing his/her human rights. As such they might need some extra "help" in actualising their rights; and policies, programmes and projects need to address and transform these unequal starting positions.⁶
- **Gender Analysis** - is a tool that helps understanding not only gender dimensions of an action or a phenomenon, but the socio-economic, cultural, and structural equality issues embedded in the impacts of interventions⁷.
- **Gender mainstreaming** — "mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality".⁸
- **Gender-responsive** — "identifying, understanding, and implementing interventions to address gender gaps and overcome historical gender biases in policies and interventions. Gender-responsiveness in application contributes, pro-actively and intentionally, to the advancement of gender equality. More than 'doing no harm', a gender-responsive policy, programme, plan or project aims to 'do better'".⁹
- **Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)** — "is a tool that aims at integrating gender perspectives in the budgeting process. It should be viewed as an influential element of managerial activities related to development of budgets of different levels, which provides important information to specialists making decisions about allocation of budget funds"¹⁰.
See short film here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mquOclPJYPs>
- **Gender roles** — "Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in the responsibilities they are expected to take up, the activities that are considered normal or acceptable, access to and control over resources, and participation in decision-making."¹¹

⁶ Aguilar et al., p. 28.



⁷ Aguilar et al., p. 136.

⁸ ECOSOC. 1997. Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997. UN Doc A/52/3, Chapter IV, section I (A), see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/GMS.PDF>.

⁹ Aguilar et al., p. 28.

¹⁰ UN Women/Sida GRB Project/Friedrich Ebert Foundation. 2016. Gender-Responsive Budgeting: Analysis of Budget Programmes from Gender Perspective, p. 5 et seqq.

¹¹ UNDP. 2015. Gender Responsive National Communications Toolkit.

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- **Gender-sensitivity** — helps generating respect for individuals, regardless of their sex. “Gender sensitivity is not about [putting] women against men. On the contrary, education that is gender sensitive benefits members of both sexes. It helps them determine which assumptions in matters of gender are valid and which are stereotyped generalizations. Gender awareness requires not only intellectual effort but also sensitivity and open-mindedness. It opens up the widest possible range of life options for both women and men”¹²
 - **Intersectionality** — is the understanding that there are multiple interconnected factors of discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, classism, speciesism) affecting individuals. These factors make up individuals’ experience of the world and cannot be looked at separately from another. Intersectionality as a tool is used for analysis, advocacy and policy development.¹³ An **intersection gender approach** means that gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and other social differences are simultaneously analyzed.
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¹² UNESCO. 2004. Gender-sensitivity: a training manual for sensitizing education managers, curriculum and material developers and media professionals to gender concerns, p. vii.

¹³ Christodoulou, pp. 19–20.

Annex 2: Further information on gender and energy

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