



EmpowerMed

Action plan for
EmpowerMed pilot site
*Metropolitan Area of
Barcelona*





Work package: 1 Mobilizing local actors

Work package leader: UAB

Responsible partner: ESF

Deliverable 1.6: Action plan for EmpowerMed pilot site Metropolitan Area of Barcelona

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the action plan

The purpose of this action plan is to fine-tune the plan for activities in pilot sites. Initially, activities in pilot sites were planned in the drafting phase of EmpowerMed project proposal, in September 2018. However, situations in pilot sites change, stakeholders (dis)appear, vulnerable groups change, etc. This is why it is the best if the practical actions in the pilot site are adjusted to the circumstances of the moment and it is the purpose of this document to align the previously planned actions with the current situation in the pilot site.

Based on EmpowerMed's activities for analysis of the situation in the pilot site ([see D1.1](#)), as well as on meetings with the local stakeholders, which were implemented from September 2019 – May 2020, this action plan will answer questions, such as

- which are the households that most need support,
- what forms of support need to be provided,
- which local actors will be engaged and how,
- what methods for reaching the households should be used, and
- what messages can best reach the households.


1.2 Energy poverty in the pilot site

- The Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB) has a surface of 636 km², 36 municipalities (including the city of Barcelona) and more than **3.2 million inhabitants**.¹
- Energy supply **grids are in a poor condition** in some of the areas of the AMB, which leads to **massive cut-offs in vulnerable neighbourhoods** such as La Mina². Also the state of residential buildings requires retrofitting in many occasions. Data from the latest available joint survey of the Public Health Agency of Barcelona, the Platform of Affected by Mortgages and the Alliance against Energy Poverty show that **65% of households interviewed (a majority of them affected by energy poverty) live in dwellings built before 1979 without following any required energy performance guidelines**.
- **24.7% of the metropolitan population were at risk of poverty** or social exclusion and 5.3% suffered severe material deprivation in 2016-2017. Data from the city of Barcelona indicate that poverty affects women disproportionately as

¹<http://www.amb.cat/en/web/area-metropolitana/coneixer-l-area-metropolitana/poblacio>

²

http://territori.scot.cat/cat/notices/abastament_d_energia_a_barcelona_2007_180.php




they have lower salaries and pensions, more precarious jobs and lower levels of self-perceived health. Regarding gender inequality, **55% of the total population at risk of poverty and material deprivation in the city of Barcelona are women** and the percentage of women who do not receive any income (21%) is significantly higher than percentage of men in the same conditions (16%).

- In the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB), **93,500 households spent more than 10% of their income on domestic energy; and 47,300 spent more than 3% of their income on domestic water.**
- In the municipality of Barcelona alone, 170,000 people (around **10% of the city's total population**) **were unable to keep their homes at an adequate temperature or were in arrears on utility bills as of 2016.**
- Related to the context, the measures currently available in the region to tackle energy poverty are the following:
 - **Law 24/2015 of the Parliament of Catalonia**, forbidding disconnections of drinking water, natural gas and electricity for households 'at risk of housing-related exclusion' according to social services. This Law also provides a tool for administrations and utility companies to identify the families at risk of suffering from energy poverty that never visited their social worker before, through the utility companies lists of consumers with unpaid bills. The 'precaution principle' assumes these families do not pay because they cannot, and not because they do not want to. This precaution protects them and at the same time allows the administration to better reach affected people and offer the required accompaniment. The law has been implemented during almost 5 years now and prevented more than 40.000 disconnections. The question regarding who assumes the accumulated debt of unpaid bills remains under negotiation between the utility companies and the administrations³.
 - **Social bonus of electricity**⁴ (discount from 25 to 40% on the bill) and **thermal social bonus** (one-off payment of a maximum 124 € per year for non-electricity energy expenses), at Spanish level, though the measures are not automatized and do not cover everybody fulfilling the criteria. At the same time the amounts of discount from the social bonus of electricity represent a very small amount of the total bill, since the

³ Campuzano, M (2017) "La Llei 24/2015: un instrument imprescindible que cal concretar". *Pobresa energètica a Catalunya: Reptes i dilemes*: 72-76. Barcelona, Primer Congrés Català de Pobresa Energètica. https://issuu.com/congrespe/docs/1r_congres_pobresa_energetica_v8_w

⁴ Law 24/2013, 26th of December, of the Electric Sector, Royal Decree 897/2017, 6th of October, and finally Royal Decree Law 15/2018, 5th October



discount is only from the consumption section, which represents less than 50% of the final cost for the household.

- The City Council of Barcelona is running 10 **Energy Advisory Points** (*Punts d'Assessorament Energètic*, or PAEs) located across all districts of the municipality since 2017. They provide information and support to secure the energy rights of citizens and to ensure that vulnerable consumers protected by law 24/2015 do not have their domestic and energy and water supply disconnected. These points also accompany vulnerable and non-vulnerable population to have their energy consumption and expenditure adapted to their needs and situation. Since they were born, Energy Advisory Points have given advice to more than 80.000 people (67% women)⁵.
- **Financial schemes for buildings' retrofitting** at AMB and municipal level, though the majority of funds or schemes do not normally target vulnerable groups. In 2019 (and during 5 years) the AMB with European Investment Bank funds will retrofit 10.000 buildings, specifically from vulnerable areas of the AMB.⁶
- **Energy efficiency programs and audits** at different levels. The Provincial Deputation of Barcelona offers support in the form of [home household visits, energy audits, installation of low-cost efficiency measures and tailored energy advice](#) to affected households through local and county councils and associations of municipalities in the province of Barcelona⁷. In the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, similar assistance is provided by the Fuel Poverty Group and the [project *Energia Justa*](#) both run by NGOs *Associació Benestar i Desenvolupament* (ABD) and Ecoserveis.

⁵ https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/santmarti/ca/noticia/els-punts-dassessorament-energetic-una-de-les-millors-accions-contra-lemergencia-climatica_859514

⁶ <https://www.sostenible.cat/noticia/el-banc-europeu-dinversions-i-lamb-milloraran-leficiencia-energetica-de-10000-habitatges>

⁷ <https://www.diba.cat/es/web/benestar/auditories#Objectius>



2 Key activities and target groups in the pilot site

Key activities or forms of support that need to be provided, have been identified as follows:

2.1 Collective advisory assemblies

Collective advisory assemblies and accompaniment: they consist in meetings of around 25 people affected by energy poverty that share their case with the rest of the assembly. Between the participants it is expected to have 2-3 long term activists/affected people and 1-2 assembly facilitators, that guide the collective discussion and advice that is given to the people affected who share their case and experience. The aim is not to have a bilateral or one-on-one expert/affected approach but rather a safe, welcoming space where everyone's experience adds to the collective knowledge.

Plan B in case of further Covid19 related quarantines

Because of **COVID situation**, the possibility of virtual (online) Collective Assemblies is considered, as well as a deeper study of extra measures of protection that affected people can benefit from.

2.2 Support on financial schemes


Support on financial schemes and subsidies: it will be given through "information capsules" in the collective assemblies or alternatively in specific training sessions with affected people. The aim is to inform about the different financial schemes available for those in a situation of vulnerability, specifically the collectives specified.

Plan B in case of further Covid19 related quarantines

Because of **COVID situation**, the possibility of virtual Collective Assemblies will require digital materials to explain these information capsules.

2.3 Health workshops

Health workshops: they will be centered on tackling the psychological and emotional impacts of energy poverty, specifically on the collectives specified. The aim is to implement strategies, through mutual support and empowerment, to better face the situations of energy poverty, and effectively visibilising physical health impacts but specifically tackling mental health impacts and illnesses, such as anxiety, depression, etc.



Another activity related to health workshops will be the monitoring and tracking of temperature and air quality through wireless sensors that will be given to volunteer households during collective assemblies. These volunteers will leave the sensors somewhere (with oriented recommendations) in the house during 2 weeks and return it in the following collective assembly, when trained personnel will discharge the data and prepare a report to share with the volunteers. This will be repeated through different seasons (winter/summer) trying to do pre and post interventions (for those cases when the volunteer is already active 6 months later) and an overall workshop is thought to be done to share the common issues encountered to build knowledge.

Plan B in case of further Covid19 related quarantines

Because of **COVID situation**, the possibility of virtual health workshops is considered, though the format seems less adaptable than with collective assemblies, for the importance of nearness when talking about feelings and uncomfortable situations and suffering. They might be held in person depending on the phase of de-confinement, fulfilling all sanitary measures required, because there are less participants than in collective assemblies.

2.4 DIY

DIY low-cost measures and smart meter monitoring: Volunteer households taking part in the collective assemblies that are willing to know more about their consumption or uses of energy will allow trained personnel to access their smart meter data from the distribution company. Discharge and analysis of the data collected through the smart meter of volunteer households will also be provided. A manual for doing this on their own will be shared. As in the case of thermal comfort in health workshops, a final group session is expected to be done to share the common situations.

Plan B in case of further Covid19 related quarantines

Because of **COVID situation**, the possibility of virtual Collective Assemblies will not facilitate this intervention, but telephone or digital communication for those who are willing to take part in DIY is being considered.



Target groups

Through previous diagnosis during WP1, the identified target groups and profiles that most need support are the following:

- households without access to domestic energy and/or water supply or at risk of disconnection, with focus on women;
- single-parent households with underage children (mostly headed by women);
- persons with poor mental health;
- households depending on electricity-based modes of domestic heat provision;
- persons born outside Spain;
- and households living in rented accommodation.


These profiles need support and advice to face situations of inequality, precariousness and deprivation, in which **different axis of vulnerability are present and often overlap (intersectionality): gender, age, country of origin, presence of disabilities, illness, or dependent family members** (children, elderly, etc.), **type of dwelling, regime of tenancy**, etc.

Answering the needs

The situations vary from one to another, but most common needs are the following:

- households with supply cuts or those irregularly connected to the grid;
- households with accumulated debt to suppliers;
- in need of changing their supply contracts;
- in need for accessing social tariffs and other forms of targeted assistance;
- with limited capabilities to engage with suppliers and competent authorities;
- with limited capabilities for the use of smart meters.

Collective Assemblies and related forms of provided support (i.e., DIY low-cost measures, smart metering tool and health workshops) arise from the need of support that goes beyond individual assessment and that enables the continued engagement of affected people as an alternative to more traditional one-off advice and support approaches. With a horizontal participatory and communication methodology, Collective Assemblies will provide affected people with continued information and tools to improve their comfort at home, lower their energy bills, and at the same time empower them in exercising their rights.



Finally, also legal and/or administrative processes need to start consequently to ensure implementation of practical measures fulfill the deadline. Access to data from smart meters will require to enter the personal space from volunteers to extract data. To comply with current legislation, they will have to be requested and processed after acknowledgement, since this data is not public. Once data is collected, it will be encrypted so no link is possible to reach the individual.

3 Key local actors in the pilot site and their engagement

- Define the key local actors for the actions:
 - **Barcelona City Council's Energy Advisory Points**⁸ (and equivalent offices or social services in other municipalities of the metropolitan area). These actors are part of bilateral conversations and interviews with partners of Barcelona pilot site EmpowerMed partners.
 - **Electricity and natural gas suppliers** with a dominant position in the local domestic energy retail market (Endesa and Naturgy). These utility companies have been part of the discussion and diagnosis through the **Working Group on Energy Poverty, inside the Housing Council of the municipality.**⁹
 - **Barcelona Rehabilitation Institute**¹⁰, who is in charge for financial schemes provided in terms of energy efficiency.
 - Health actors such as the **Catalan Health Institute**¹¹ and the **Health Agency of Barcelona.**¹²
 - **Women's organisations**; in the case of Barcelona, being the migrated women's organisations those better representing intersectional perspective and targeted needs.
- Define how they will be engaged (how will the local actors be engaged?)
 - There will be regular communication and derivation of cases (phone and e-mail) with **Barcelona City Council's Energy Advisory Points**, through some of the cases being discussed in the collective assemblies.
 - There will be regular communication and derivation of cases through their offices and specific communication channels (such as vulnerability lines or officers). Also there will be meetings where to exchange views with utility companies in the **Working Group on Energy Poverty, inside the Housing Council of the municipality.**
 - There will be separated sectorial meetings with **Barcelona Rehabilitation Institute, the Catalan Health Institute and Women's organisations**, in order to periodically identify possible needs and targeted strategies for specific collectives and vulnerable groups. Derivation needs are not identified at the moment but will be put in place if needed.

⁸<https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/ca/innovacio-social/pae-punts-dassessorament-energètic>

⁹ <http://www.bcn.cat/consorcihabitatge/es/consell-habitatge.html>

¹⁰ <https://habitatge.barcelona.ca/qui-som/institut-municipal-habitatge-rehabilitacio>

¹¹ <http://ics.gencat.cat/ca/inici>

¹² <https://www.aspb.cat>



4 Reaching out to the households

- Define how you will reach the households:
 - **Joint work and derivation protocols** with other organisations and entities receiving possible affected people and vulnerable households.
 - Households will be also directly reached through **leaflets and social media dissemination**.
 - Because of COVID situation, physical leaflets will be suppressed, and only virtual communication would be recommended if a new curfew scenario arises.
- Define key messages for the households:
 - **Messages in first person**, so that possible affected people can relate to those testimonies. When possible, affected people will volunteer to share their own pictures, videos or messages. That will allow others to connect more personally.
 - **Simple and straight forward messages:**
 - Have you been recently disconnected?
 - Do you struggle to pay your bills?
 - Are you being harassed by utility companies?
 - Do you have an accumulated debt from unpaid bills and are unable to cope with it?
 - Are you also cold at home? You are not alone. Being comfortable at your place is a right, not a privilege!

5 Summary of the action and communication plans

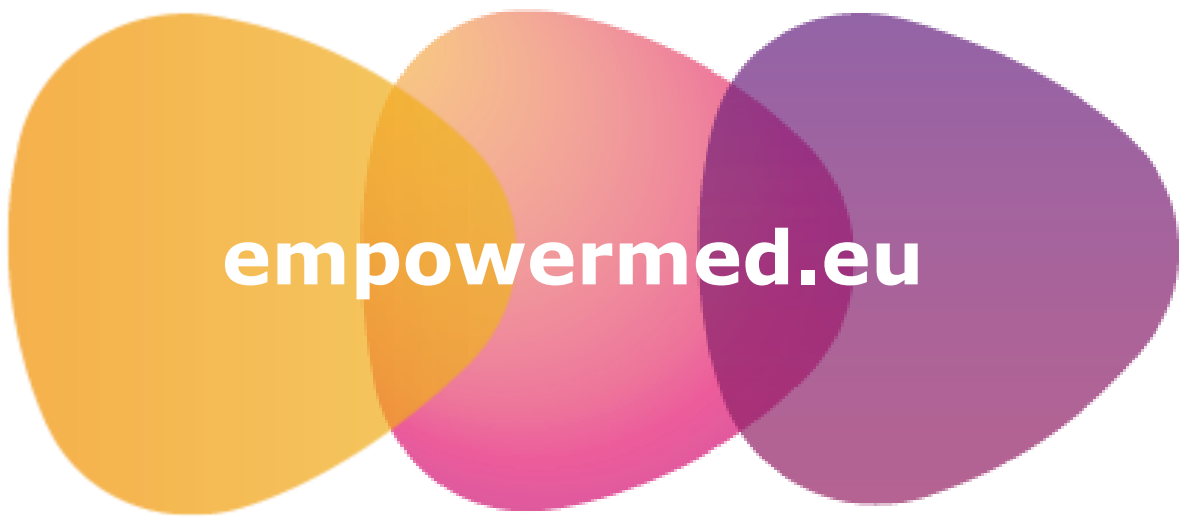
Summary of the action plan

Actions <i>What Will Be Done?</i>	Key Tasks	Objectives	Responsibility <i>Who Will Do It?</i>	Timeline <i>By When?</i>	Resources <i>A. Available B. Needed</i>
Community approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote collective assemblies - Implement collective assemblies - Accompany people if necessary 	Collective assemblies consist in meetings of around 25 people affected by energy poverty that share their case with the rest of the assembly . The aim is not to have a bilateral or expert/affected approach but rather a space where everyone's experience adds to the collective knowledge . Also there will be accompaniments to utility companies when needed.	ESF, UAB	Intervention is already being implemented and will continue until March 2022	ESF/UAB staff, venue, collective assembly materials, volunteers for accompaniment
Do-it-yourself solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIY low cost measures • DIY smart meter 	Volunteer households taking part in the collective assemblies that are willing to know more about their consumption or uses of energy will allow trained personnel to access their smart meter data from the distribution company . Discharge and analysis of the data collected through the smart meter of volunteer households will also be provided. A final group session is expected to be done to share the common situations .	IREC, ESF	October 2020 to June 2021	IREC and ESF staff, manual on DIY smart metering
Support for small investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information about financial schemes • Accompany people if necessary 	The support to financial schemes will be given through information capsules in the collective assemblies or alternatively in specific training sessions with affected people. The aim is to inform about the different financial schemes available for those in a situation of vulnerability, specifically the collectives specified.	ESF, UAB	October 2020 to March 2022	ESF and UAB staff
Health workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote workshops • Implement workshops • Health-thermal monitoring 	The health workshops will be centered on tackling the psychological impacts of energy poverty, specifically on the collectives specified . The aim is to implement strategies, through mutual support and empowerment, to better face the situations of energy poverty, and effectively visibilising physic health impacts but specifically tackling psycho-emotional health impacts and illnesses, such as anxiety, depression, etc. Health-thermal comfort will also be monitored for those who volunteer.	ESF, IREC	October 2020 to June 2021	ESF and IREC staff, venue, workshop materials, wireless sensors

Summary of the communication plan

Actions	Target groups	Objectives	Key messages	Tools/ Format	Channels	How often / many	Responsibility
Community approaches	Women (specially single mother families), elderly, youth, people with disabilities, migrants, low income households, people with several axes of vulnerability.	Several actors consulted agree with the need for human rights and empowerment perspective and initiatives, that puts the affected people in the center, as actors of change (parallel coordinated with institutions).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visibilising testimonies stuck in one or other step of existing procedures/ laws. - Visibilising the lack of guarantees/ protections on certain collectives/ situations - Need for empowerment and mutual support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testimonies - Infographics - Pictures - Useful documents related to procedures/ laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media, website, etc. - Leaflets - Internal channels (mail, telegram, etc.) - Internal channels of the local actors we work with. 	Weekly, until March 2022	ESF, UAB
Do-it-yourself solutions	Women, low income households (specially avoiding profiles that might be disturbed by presence at home)	Several actors consulted agree with the importance of having proof that commonly EP affected people have a consumption that is below average, and not adequate to real needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Confront the imaginaries of consumption patterns of non-efficiency, - Achieving an adequate consumption is possible and can be affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testimonies - Infographics - Pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media, website, etc. - Internal channels (mail, telegram, etc.) - Internal channels of the local actors we work with. 	Bi-weekly, October 2020 to June 2021	IREC, ESF
Support for small investment	Women (specially single mother families), elderly, youth, people with disabilities, migrants, low income households, people with several axes of vulnerability.	Several actors consulted agree with the need of giving support on financial schemes to tackle EP, and specially on the information available on it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understandable and reachable information on the financial schemes - Translation of the procedures to easy steps so that more EP affected people can benefit from these mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testimonies - Infographics - Pictures - Useful documents related to procedures/ laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media, website, etc. - Leaflets - Internal channels (mail, telegram, etc.) - Internal channels of the local actors we work with. 	Bi-weekly, October 2020 to March 2022	ESF, UAB

Health workshops	Women, people with several axes of vulnerability, people with disabilities, people with mental illness.	Several actors consulted agree with the need for studying and tackling the impacts of EP on health. There are few initiatives that address this and almost lack of initiatives centered in psychological aspects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visibilising the link of EP situations with mental health impacts and in psychosocial wellbeing impacts. - Visibilising the unacceptable deficiencies on thermal comfort of EP households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Testimonies - Infographics - Pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media, website, etc. - Internal channels (mail, telegram, etc.) - Internal channels of the local actors we work with. 	Bi-weekly, October 2020 to June 2021	ESF, IREC
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