



EmpowerMed

Proceedings
from Policy dialogue in
the European Parliament
Energy poverty, gender
and health in the
Mediterranean

Deliverable
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“



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Introduction

Debate on challenges of energy poverty in Mediterranean member states was organized in the European Parliament (room SPINELLI 5E2), on 29 March 2023, and lasted from 13-15 h. During the event, findings on practical measures and policy solutions were presented and discussed. A policy dialogue explored the nexus of energy poverty, gender, and health in the Mediterranean. Summertime energy poverty is an often side of energy poverty, with demonstrated negative impacts on human health, especially as we face more frequent and more severe heat waves due to climate change. Partners of EmpowerMed, an EU-funded project aimed at empowering women to take action against energy poverty in the Mediterranean, presented key policy recommendations on how to tackle summertime energy poverty along with gender and health issues.

The policy dialogue event in the European Parliament was hosted by Spanish MEP Lina Gálvez Muñoz. The event was jointly organized by EmpowerMed, Energy Poverty Advisory Hub, Right to Energy coalition, European Environmental Bureau, and project Powerpoor.

Program

A policy dialogue on *Energy poverty, gender, and health in the Mediterranean* was held on 29 March 2023, from 13.00 – 15.00, in the European Parliament, room SPINELLI 5E2.

13.00 – 13.05 Welcome to the event

13.05 – 13.20 Opening address - Lina Gálvez Muñoz, MEP

13.20 - 13.25 Video on women, affected by energy poverty

13.25 – 13.40 Going beyond the 'triad' of energy poverty causes - Lidija Živčič, Focus, Slovenia

13.40 - 13.50 Summertime energy poverty – Miljenka Kuhar, DOOR, Croatia

13.50 – 14.00 Energy poverty and gender – Valbona Mazreku, Milieukontakt Albania

14.00 – 14.10 Energy poverty and health – Sergio Tirado Herrero, Autonomous University of Madrid

14.10 – 15.00 Panel discussion and Q&A

Panelists:

- Veronique Marx, DG ENER
- Dora Biondani, Energy Poverty Advisory Hub / Climate Alliance (TBC)
- Katharina Wiese, European Environmental Bureau
- Laia Segura, Friends of the Earth Europe / Right to Energy coalition
- Haris Doukas, National Technical University of Athens / Powerpoor

Panel facilitator: Katharina Habersbrunner, Women Engage for a Common Future



EmpowerMed

SAVE THE DATE

Join us for a policy dialogue with EU decision makers on the nexus of energy poverty, gender, and health in the Mediterranean.

29 March 2023,
from 13.00 – 15.00,
European Parliament



Register by
20 March 2023



POWERPOOR
Empowering Energy Poor Citizens through Joint Energy Initiatives



EEB
European
Environmental
Bureau



Right to Energy
Coalition



EU
Energy Poverty
Advisory Hub

ENERGY POVERTY, GENDER, AND HEALTH IN THE MEDITERRANEAN



Policy dialogue in the European Parliament

29 March 2023, from 13.00 – 15.00, European Parliament

Registration for event is open by 20.3.2023.

In the coastal areas of Mediterranean countries, the challenge of energy poverty comes with several specific features. The most notable is that during the summer season, energy poverty appears because of poor access to adequately cooled dwellings.

Women and women-led households are disproportionately affected by energy poverty. Yet, women are a crucial actor in tackling energy poverty, hence their engagement in acting against energy poverty is of utmost importance.

Research shows that energy poverty has significant impacts on people's health. Health effects associated with energy poverty include anxiety, stress and depression but also increased physical problems and greater mortality rate.

To address these challenges, H2020 project EmpowerMed - Empowering women to take action against energy poverty in the Mediterranean - tackles energy poverty and helps improve health of people in the coastal areas of Mediterranean countries, with a particular focus on women. After empowering over 4000 households affected by energy poverty from Spain, France, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia and Albania to manage their energy consumption and improve their access to appropriate energy resources, the project is now opening a policy dialogue on how to align policies and measures to tackle energy poverty, improve health of people and provide a stronger support for women.



PROGRAM

- 13.00 – 13.20 Opening address - Lina Gálvez Muñoz and Romana Jerković, MEPs
- 13.20 – 13.25 Video on women, affected by energy poverty
- 13.25 – 13.40 Going beyond the 'triad' of energy poverty causes - Lidija Živčič, Focus, Slovenia
- 13.40 - 13.50 Summertime energy poverty – Miljenka Kuhar, DOOR, Croatia
- 13.50 – 14.00 Energy poverty and gender – Valbona Mazreku, Milieukontakt Albania
- 14.00 – 14.10 Energy poverty and health – Sergio Tirado Herrero, Autonomous University of Madrid
- 14.10 – 15.00 Panel discussion and Q&A

Panel facilitator: Katharina Habersbrunner, Women Engage for a Common Future

REGISTER FOR THE EVENT BY 20.3.
[HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/ISUJPQS5THZ9V9TF7](https://forms.gle/ISUJPQS5THZ9V9TF7)

Meeting minutes

1) Input by L. Gálvez Munoz

- One of the issues we need to advance here is, when tackling energy poverty, realize the different impact it has on women and men
- Use a multidimensional approach.
 - o Often energy poverty is related to income, but there are other variables that are also important, such as:
 - Time poverty
 - Female poverty
 - There are more women than men in lowest-income groups
 - Lower participation of women in the labour market
 - Vulnerabilities of women regarding (political) changes is higher
 - Psychological aspects
- Energy poverty is often heavier in the Mediterranean societies.
- Women poverty was highlighted in the EP a couple of years ago
 - o Highlighted that female poverty has direct impact on lives
 - o Single-parent households mostly led by women were mentioned
- We measure poverty often by family unit, not individually as one-person-unit
- We need to look at specificities in a very serious way.
- For the first time, Gender Equality Index by Institute of Gender Equality has increased
 - o First time since the index was created (2010?)
 - o Covid-19 pandemic has made gender inequalities visible, specifically in terms of care work and reproductive work
- In the EP, there are a lot of talks about energy issues
- Couple of months ago, we had our first debate on gender inequalities in the energy sector
 - o Room was almost empty, mainly females attending
- Part of the money of the funds shall be brought to families in vulnerable situations
 - o Ensure that they have access to the funds, and have the information about it, how to access it
- Promote female employment
 - o Employment we create – in the future
- Social Climate Fund as an important achievement, focus on tackling energy poverty

2) Panel discussion

Veronique Marx

- **Question to Veronique in terms of supporting EmpowerMed policy recommendations.**
- Ban of disconnections by Commission. Ban of disconnections was gone through. But reference to the ban was not explicit. It's important to better protect vulnerable customers.
- Electricity Directive. In the Commission, there are regular meetings bringing colleagues together from different groups, various groups from various policy areas, regular discussion with them.
 - o DG ENER fully subscribes to issues related to data collection, mentioned in the recommendations.
 - Guidance on indicators that can be used to identify energy poverty

- DG ENER works together with DG Employment, possibility to work together on definition; data collection and indicators can be improved on MS level, hear about coordination group

Haris Doukas

- Agrees with most of the comments and recommendations, also POWERPOOR has a similar understanding, sister project
 - Focus on groups living in vulnerable situations
 - Gender is key issue, EmpowerMed has highlighted it well
- Some of the aspects had been highlighted in POWERPOOR, too
 - HH -> Worked a lot with supporters and mentors (the mentors were the heroes of HH of project)
 - Such bottom(-up)-approaches are very labour-intensive, but also very close to people in vulnerable situations and good on implementing level
 - It´s important to focus on community level, build joint initiative

Laia Segura

- We are in 2023, the context of energy poverty has been changed a lot during the past years (due to crises, but also due to public awareness)
- Important to manifest and mainstream following aspects:
 - Failure of our energy system
 - Cost of living prices as the most pressing concern
 - Currently facing: energy system has failed people and climate
- If this crisis has done sth for public awareness, then it was:
 - It has highlighted for everyone that energy poverty is caused by systemic and structural issues
 - Key moment to receive all the recommendations, use the momentum and change the system: What is an energy system that serves all the people?

Katharina Wiese

- EEB created publication together with WECF – feminist perspective on European Green Deal
- What is Katy Wiese´s vision of a just energy system within the green transition ?
 - Summer time energy poverty very important, governments are not protecting enough society from heat waves
- It´s mentioned that energy poverty needs coherent policies, still not yet a common approach, combine e.g. social, care, health, energy policies
- Important to take gender into account when talking about energy poverty
 - In terms of the Pension Gap, Pay Gap, Care work
 - Combat inequalities
 - Recognize unpaid work and care work
 - This work is important for maintaining the economy
 - One focus should be on improving care infrastructure
 - Better access to caring services
 - Social and communal support
 - Decent housing
- Complete systemic change, measures to tackle patriarchy is necessary
- We need to increase the access of women to renewable jobs, green jobs
 - Not only related to energy, agriculture
 - Put ILO labour standards to jobs

- Take into account the perspective of older people, jobs are often targeted to younger people
 - Not only focus on technical skills (when it comes to renewables), but on sufficient measures
- Q./C.
 - Bigger companies which are in charge of energy supply and gathering data
 - It's a difficult time in Spain, also to get access to these data, e.g. how many disconnections are there, what are the disconnections, data is in the hands of utility companies
 - We (civil society organizations, communities) should have the data, also renovations data
 - Gives an example of how the modus of management is
 - It is a difference on how we guarantee human rights
 - We saw the three women on the video, their testimony, all received harassment of the privacy utilities
 - So, it's important to go against big private companies
- A
 - It's important to ask how citizens can be more active in energy market and become prosumers, and be less dependent on huge energy companies
 - Make sure that people are empowered
 - Focus on collective self-consumption

Dora Biondani

Concept of energy communities was named as an example. Question now: How can we face to have targeted support in short-term and mid-term measures, concepts, to make it more targeted to people who really need it?

- Working with technical assistances
 - Invest as much as possible what are the local interests, specificities
 - When we found ourselves support across different geographical areas
 - What we are trying to do:
 - We start from a specific analysis, what is going on in the local context
 - And get data to know what is available
 - Then focus on which action would be more suitable and addressing the problems
 - Examples from Greece were named
 - Solar power -> prominent technology
 - Northern Countries
 - In our approach it's like – let's analyse local situations
 - Starting with the information, keep in mind different options, starting and advising situations
 - Renovations on houses, improving energy efficiency
 - Able to settle more specific measures

Q & A.

Q. Diverse perspectives were shown and shall be included when tackling energy poverty. In your point of view (of the panelists), are there any gaps, knowledge gaps? Which type of actions are missing? What would be something that is promising, what the EU funding could support in the future?

A.

- The focus should be on efficiency

- EU pays a lot for overconsumption of energy, generally we must reduce the overall production and consumption
 - o Overproduction also has negative impacts, be aware of these impacts, e.g. on indigenous populations such as the Sami in Sweden.
- It is also a question of privilege who can access renewables, who is able to finance solar panels on the roof for example
- Support community energy
- What EEB is missing is the support in terms of sufficiency

A.

- Come up with a fair energy pricing system
- Minimum basis amount for energy

Comment

- REC
 - o What kind of support can be given to energy communities
 - o National authorities should prioritize applications of REC
 - o REC should be enabled to sell energy for example
 - o Consumers had been mobilized, there is high potential
 - o Energy communities are important for providing information, creating awareness
- Make all important actors active for the energy transition pact

Comment

- Important aspects in terms of support of REC are mentioned in the RED
 - o They need to be transposed to MS level
 - o There are ideas, transpose in a very active way
 - o Many energy communities produce it and sell it in Germany, but often there are barriers, for example in terms of energy sharing

Comment

- Some important gaps were identified.
- It is necessary to focus on targeted financing
 - o It is really important to strengthen the understanding of groups in needs, the different needs these group have, in terms of age, gender, also migratory background
 - o To really see the intersections
- There is a lack of expertise, knowledge, coherence within those different departments working on these issues -> find a liase, and interact there

Presentations:



EmpowerMed

Policy recommendations

*European Parliament
Brussels, 29 March 2023*



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Going beyond the ,triad'

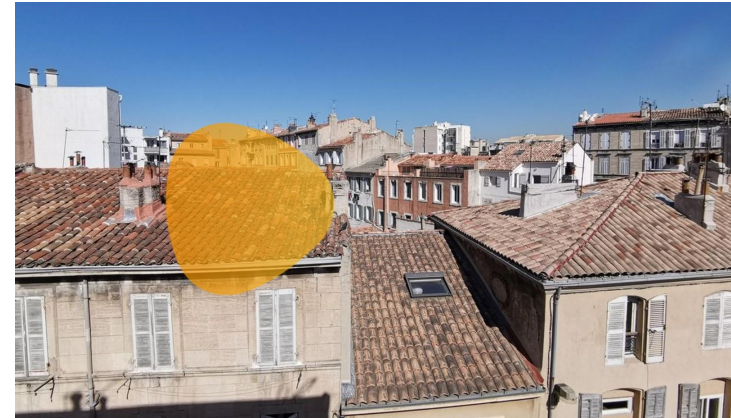
*Dr. Lidija Živčič
Focus, Slovenia
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EmpowerMed

Specificities of the energy poverty in the Mediterranean

- Challenge to keep homes comfortable during summer
- Lack of warming and cooling systems and lack of insulation in buildings
- Warming and cooling systems running on electricity, which results in higher costs
- High rates of arrears, indebtedness and the risk of disconnection from basic utility services
- 'Hotspots' of tourism and economy-related low quality and precarious jobs
- Difficult access to housing due to tensions in real-estate markets between the locals and tourist demand



EmpowerMed objectives



Overall objective of EmpowerMed is to contribute to energy poverty alleviation and health improvement of people affected by energy poverty in Mediterranean countries, with a particular focus on women, through:

- implementing practical solutions to empower over 10,000 people affected by energy poverty in the Mediterranean
- assessing the impacts of those measures to formulate local, national and EU policy recommendations
- promoting policy solutions for tackling energy poverty at local, national and EU level among 220 decision-makers, 560 social actors, 100 utilities, 180 health experts and 100 energy poverty experts.



EmpowerMed activities

Mobilisation
of key local
actors

Capacity
building of
key actors
and partners

Household
energy
visits

Collective
assemblies

Analysis and
design of
recommendations
for tackling energy
poverty

Advocacy of
gender-just
energy poverty
policy solutions

«Do It
Yourself»
workshops

Health
workshops



Recommendations

- Tackling energy poverty through integrated policies
- Better, fairer jobs through the energy transition
- Legally binding ban on disconnections
- Financial support for vulnerable citizens
- Support for accessible housing
- Protecting women from rising costs and pay gaps
- Action to empower citizens to act
- Revision of NECPs as an opportunity
- Change in criteria for financing EU projects





EmpowerMed

*Summertime energy
poverty*

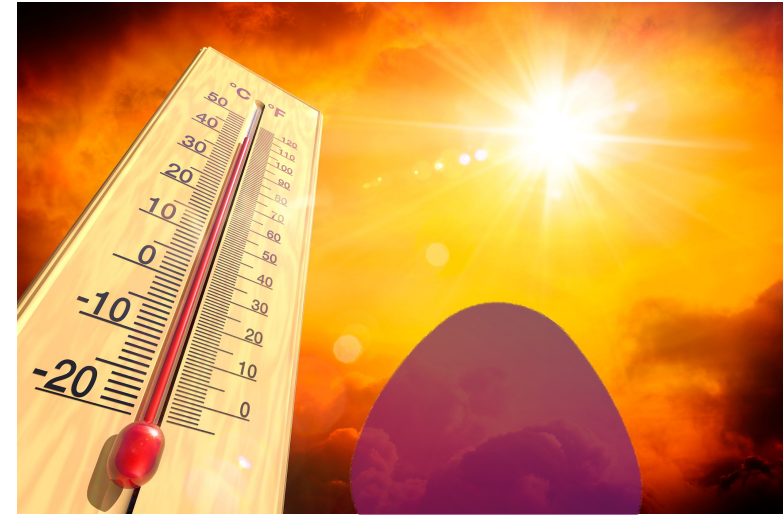
*Miljenka Kuhar
DOOR, Croatia
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EmpowerMed

Summertime energy poverty

- Energy poverty does not only mean suffering from the cold, but also enduring the heat
- Summertime energy poverty hits disproportionately the most vulnerable
- Health implications of summertime energy poverty should not be ignored
- Summertime energy poverty to rise in the future



Recommendations

- Summertime energy poverty needs to be emphasized in the debate on energy poverty
- Climate adaptation plans to embrace summer energy poverty
- Spatial and urban interventions should address the pressing issue of summer energy poverty
- More green areas in cities
- Employing accessible low-tech solutions and passive cooling
- Engaging renewable energy sources to tackle summer energy poverty





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Energy poverty and gender

*Valbona Mazreku
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EmpowerMed

Women are disproportionately affected by energy poverty

- Physiological dimension: women are more heat and cold sensitive than men
- Economic dimension: gender pay gap, gender pension gap, less career advancement opportunities
- Health dimension: women are more vulnerable to winter mortality and mental stress
- Social/cultural dimension: disproportionate share of care work, for which women spend more time at home; often responsible for household energy consumption, but do not have an equal voice in decisions about energy



Women are strong actors

- 'Gender myths' portray women in energy poverty as vulnerable, helpless or oppressed; yet they are strong autonomous agents of their lives and of change, especially in acting against energy poverty
- Women's engagement in EmpowerMed: gender-just communication, respecting women's schedules, gender-disaggregated data, respecting gender equality principles when providing policy advice



Recommendations

- Energy poverty definition that takes gender and intersectional aspects into account
- Raising awareness about gender and intersectional aspects of energy poverty
- Collecting sex-disaggregated data with and intersectional perspective
- Engendering energy poverty indicators
- Prioritising women in training and jobs related to renovation and renewables





EmpowerMed

Energy poverty and health

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EmpowerMed

Energy poverty and health

- Physical and mental health impacts of energy poverty: respiratory and cardiovascular diseases; increased anxiety and depression.
- EmpowerMed data indicate that energy poverty increases the likelihood of suffering from a long-term illness or chronic health issue
- Emotional burden and psycho-social health: decreased sense of wellbeing and comfort; hindered work and study life; social relations negatively affected; risk of stigmatization.
- EmpowerMed joins forces with WELLBASED and other Urban Health Cluster projects supported by the EU H2020 programme.



Recommendations

- More research and improved recognition of the links across energy poverty and health
- Recognising and acting on the mental health dimensions of energy poverty
- Better indoor air quality in households
- Increased involvement of frontline healthcare workers and enhanced capabilities to support energy poor households





EmpowerMed

www.empowermed.eu



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Summertime energy poverty: the often-ignored face of energy poverty in Europe

Embargo: 29 March 2023 at 15:00 CET

Brussels, 29 March 2023 - A policy dialogue held in the European Parliament today explored the nexus of energy poverty, gender and health in the Mediterranean. Summertime energy poverty is an often overlooked side of energy poverty, with demonstrated negative impacts on human health, especially as we face more frequent and more severe heat waves due to climate change. Partners of EmpowerMed, an EU-funded project aimed at empowering women to take action against energy poverty in the Mediterranean, presented key policy recommendations on how to tackle summertime energy poverty along with gender and health issues.

In the coastal areas of Mediterranean countries, the challenge of energy poverty is linked to heatwaves, unsuitable dwellings, precarious jobs and clash with tourist demand for housing. Therefore a strongly cross-sectoral approach to tackling energy poverty is needed, recognising that drivers of energy poverty are deeply structural - they span far beyond the triad of “low income – poor energy efficiency - high expenditure”, which is traditionally considered to set the context to addressing energy poverty.

‘Women are disproportionately affected by energy poverty in all forms, whether related to cold or heat, due to lesser income and to the care and household work. In order to combat it we need to advance in a multidimensional definition of poverty to acknowledge the specific implications of female poverty. Moreover, we need to include gender inequalities when designing the green transition so that the policies help eradicate energy poverty and a more gender-equal access to energy services’, stressed **Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Spanish MEP.**

‘Energy poverty does not only mean suffering from the cold but also enduring the heat. Summertime energy poverty hits disproportionately the most vulnerable and is highly likely to rise in the future, especially in areas subject to the urban heat island effect. This means we need to pay more attention to summertime energy poverty – in research, in data collection, in media and finally in the policy-making arena,’ explained **Sergio Tirado Herrero, a researcher from Autonomous University of Madrid.**

‘Women and women-led households are disproportionately affected by energy poverty. Yet, women are crucial actors in tackling energy poverty, hence their engagement in acting against energy poverty is of utmost importance. We need to raise awareness about gender and intersectional aspects of energy poverty by collecting sex-disaggregated data and engendering energy poverty indicators. We also need to prioritise women in training and jobs related to renovation and renewables,’ warns **Katharina Habersbrunner of Women Engaged for a Common Future.**

‘Energy poverty has significant impacts on people’s health. Health effects associated with energy poverty include anxiety, stress and depression but also increased physical problems and greater mortality rate. More research on the connection between energy poverty and health is needed,’ highlights **Monica Guiteras from Engineers Without Borders.**



Press release

29 March 2023



EmpowerMed

'In order to address these challenges, H2020 project EmpowerMed tackles energy poverty in the coastal areas of Mediterranean countries, with a particular focus on women. After empowering over 4000 households affected by energy poverty, the project is now opening a policy dialogue with national and European decision-makers on how to align policies and measures to tackle energy poverty, improve health of people and provide a stronger support for women,' explains **Lidija Živčič** from **Focus Association for Sustainable Development**, EmpowerMed's coordinator.

More information:

Event time and location: 29 March 2023, from 13.00 – 15.00, European Parliament, room SPINELLI 5E2

The policy dialogue event in the European Parliament was hosted by Spanish MEP Lina Gálvez Muñoz. Event was jointly organised by EmpowerMed, Energy Poverty Advisory Hub, Right to Energy coalition, European Environmental Bureau and project Powerpoor.

EmpowerMed policy recommendations are available here:

https://www.empowermed.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Policy-recommendations-Empowermed_final-version.pdf

EmpowerMed's recommendations for gender-just policies to reduce energy poverty, with focus on the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), are available here:

<https://www.empowermed.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Gender-just-policy-recommendations-EmpowerMed-FINAL.pdf>

Report on the situations of households affected by energy poverty that participated in practical actions of the EmpowerMed project in the different pilot regions in the Mediterranean, exploring the characteristics of affected households, their housing conditions and their perceived thermal comfort, their difficulty to afford energy, their health conditions and the empowerment, is available here:

<https://www.empowermed.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Empowermed-Cross-pilot-analysis-FINAL.pdf>

Here you can find more information on:

- [Summertime energy poverty](#)
- [Energy poverty and gender](#)
- [Energy poverty and health](#)

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Evaluation

Policy dialogue in the European Parliament has achieved its intended goals: promoting policy solutions among key actors for stimulating action against energy poverty at the EU level, advocating among key actors to stimulate and support policies against energy poverty, and disseminating among the target groups to ensure a wide reach out at EU level.

The event was well structured, divided into two sessions. First, there were presentations of consortium organizations - introduction of the project, especially policy recommendations. In the second part, external experts gave an overview of energy poverty from different points of view and contributed to the panel. Lina Gálvez Muñoz, MEP, was an important speaker as she presented energy poverty from the position of EU key actor. During the event, clear communication was provided. Speakers, from different levels, explained aspects of energy poverty and policy solutions for the problem. All these speakers gave a comprehensive and detailed picture of different aspects of energy poverty and possible solutions.

Photos



