



D5.6 Report on Policy Work in Slovenia

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1 Overview of policy work plan

The purpose of the Policy work plan (D5.1) was to prepare a detailed plan of activities that would help us to establish energy poverty as a political issue in Slovenia. Energy poverty is a multi-sectoral problem, therefore it is necessary to ensure a broad dialogue, in which policy decision makers must recognize the topic as politically relevant, and to initiate systemic action. First activity of the work plan was to prepare an overview of the context of energy poverty in Slovenia, together with analysis of political situation and key stakeholders. Other activities encompassed organizing a national conference on energy poverty; advocacy work; work with media, evaluation of success and efficiency of implemented activities in the scope of accomplishing our goals.

A review of the regulatory and strategic framework was performed, together with analysis of measures already implemented in the field of energy poverty. Key problems were identified: problem of energy poverty in Slovenia is becoming more severe; there is no definition of energy poverty; main social actors and stakeholders on national level are not showing enough interest for the problem; strategies on housing and energy refurbishment of buildings do not recognize energy poverty as a priority problem.

Identification of key stakeholders: Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Eco Fund (Ekosklad), GI ZRMK, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Health, Centres for Social Work, Municipalities, humanitarian organizations.

Objectives of the activities on structural level: preparation and presentation of recommendations for decision makers on how to address energy poverty; offer possible definitions of energy poverty and open discussion about possible proposals; including stakeholders from social and health sector in the debate; encouraging at least 30 decision makers to get involved in addressing energy poverty through structural measures.

Document Key policy recommendations (D5.3) was prepared as part of the activities set in Policy Work Plan. It included proposals for a definition of energy poverty. The definition is needed for setting targets for energy poverty reduction and to expand existing programs to suitable target groups. For setting the definition, a professional discussion and cooperation between different relevant stakeholders is necessary.

Recommendations for structural measures for alleviating energy poverty refer to including the concept of energy poverty into action programs of competent and relevant institutions at national and local level. Cooperation between key institutions and stakeholders is crucial. For that reason establishment of cross-sectoral working group, that incorporates energy, social, environmental and

health sectors, to address the problem of energy poverty, was proposed. On the local level, it is necessary to include the issue into the Local Energy Concepts.

Measures include improving energy efficiency of homes. It has been shown that the most effective actions for alleviating energy poverty have been those that address the reduction of energy consumption (energy refurbishment of buildings, replacement of inefficient heating systems and expensive energy sources for heating). It is necessary to address the problem of high investment costs of these measures and to amend existing ways of financing energy efficiency measures.

Energy poor households require up to 100 % of (co)financing for investments in energy efficiency measures, since they are not able to cover it by themselves. Funding for measures can be obtained from the EU Cohesion Fund, national Climate Fund, Eco Fund, and from other sources as the Obligations scheme for energy suppliers to provide energy savings.

It is necessary to improve existing programs that address energy poverty. That includes support for administrative application procedures, adapting the communication for specific target group, and providing assistance in completing the application forms for energy poor households. The key for successful programs is to work with stakeholders who have good access to targeted households and are able to act as intermediaries for information about programs and schemes. Programs and measures must be set as long term, to ensure its continuity. During and after the implementation of the programs it is necessary to evaluate their efficiency and effectiveness.

Energy poor households should have free access to knowledge on energy efficiency. This can be upgraded with energy advising service, training and awareness raising of energy poor households.

2 Activities

Various policy related activities were implemented in the time frame of the project:

- Meetings with relevant decision makers and representatives from Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ekosklad, GI ZRMK, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Centres for Social Work. Topics of meetings: presentation of possible structural and practical solutions in the field of energy poverty; agreement about establishing the national program of free energy advising in energy poor households (AERO program), based on projects ACHIEVE and REACH; assistance and guidance in establishing the AERO program; transfer of knowledge and methodology for the AERO program; training of energy

advisers of the national network ENSVET; discussions on selecting an appropriate program on energy poverty, financed from Cohesion fund; evaluation of the AERO program; counselling to Eco Fund about their programs and how to improve them; presenting recommendations for various measures; cooperation with EU project BUILD2EC on recommendations for decision-makers; discussions on definition of energy poverty; discussions about how to better integrate social stakeholders.

- Transfer of the practise to other countries: although project REACH was implemented in Croatia by our partners DOOR, we have also worked closely with UNDP Croatia and transferred the practice through one of their projects. Through a small project called CEI REACH, the know-how and methodology of the project REACH was transferred to Bosnia & Herzegovina (CEE), Serbia (Fractal), and Montenegro (Green Home). This project included activities on structural level, with national conferences organized in these countries and inclusion of relevant decision makers.
- Cooperation with national stakeholders for establishment of national program for addressing energy poverty AERO – free energy advising in energy poor households. Program is coordinated by Eco Fund, run by ENSVET network, and initiated by Ministry of Infrastructure and Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. We were part of the team for creation of the program. Complete service is carried out according to project REACH's methodology.
- Implementation of 2 trainings for energy advisers of the ENSVET network (approximately 80 energy advisers trained). This activity was part of the above mentioned AERO program.
- Providing advices and proposals to Ministry of Infrastructure for programs and energy efficiency measures for energy poor households that can be implemented with funds from Cohesion Fund (5 million EUR until 2020).
- Communication and consultancy with Eco Fund regarding suitability of their programs for energy poor households.
- Communication with Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities about how to better integrate and involve social stakeholders (the Ministry itself and Centres for Social Work) into activities about energy poverty alleviation (especially within the AERO program).
- Organization of the national conference on energy poverty, with active participation of relevant stakeholders and national institutions.

3 Key outcomes and results of policy work

Outcomes and results from above mentioned activities of policy work:

- 21 meetings with relevant stakeholders and decision makers on national level.
- Establishment of AERO program – free energy advising in energy poor households by national energy advising network ENSVET. Whole service is based on REACH methodology. The program is included in the National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency. The process of establishing the program, its costs and generated savings for households are presented in the document [Process of bringing REACH to the national level in Slovenia](#) and in the video [Project REACH – Slovenian national program for addressing energy poverty in households](#). One of the activity was implementation of two trainings for about 80 ENSVET energy advisers about the service and methodology of energy advising in energy poor households. Trainings were carried out on 20th September 2014 and 20th January 2015. An article describing activities, methodology and energy advising service was written for the ENSVET textbook.
- [Recommendations for structural measures for addressing energy poverty in Slovenia](#) were sent to relevant decision makers and to participants of the national conference (altogether more than 30 persons). Recommendations were also the main topic discussed at many meetings with national decision makers, especially Ministry of Infrastructure, and also with Eco Fund and Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Some of the recommendations are already taken into consideration, especially those referring to Eco Fund's and AERO programs, and about bigger involvement of social stakeholders, namely Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and Centres for Social Work.
- 5 million EUR are reserved in Cohesion Fund for implementing a national program for addressing energy poverty. Plan is to implement infrastructural measures for improving energy efficiency of homes (energy refurbishment of buildings, replacement of inefficient heating systems and expensive energy sources for heating). The program is still in it's designing phase and is included in the National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency. We have been providing advices and proposals to the Ministry of Infrastructure on how to best design this program.
- Transfer of practice and know-how to organizations in other countries: UNDP Croatia (Croatia), and through project CEI REACH to CEE (Bosina & Herzegovina), Fractal (Serbia), and Green Home (Montenegro). Activities

included actions regarding structural solutions. 3 national conferences were implemented in 3 countries that were part of the project CEI REACH and policy recommendations for structural measures for addressing energy poverty were sent to relevant decision makers in all 4 countries.

- National conference **Energy Poverty – solution on practical and structural level** was carried out on 19th January 2017 in Ljubljana. There were more than 30 participants from all relevant national and government institutions: Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, Ekosklad, GI ZRMK, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Centres for Social Work. Discussion was focused on measures and programs for addressing energy poverty, definition of energy poverty, possible improvements of existing programs, necessity of inter-sectoral cooperation, and recommendations for decision makers. Result of the conference is enhanced cooperation between key stakeholders (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and Eco Fund), that was the crucial missing part until now, and identification of the significance of the energy poverty problem by less active, but important stakeholders.
- Cooperation with European project BUILD2EC. They have to prepare set of recommendations for decision makers and they will use REACH recommendations as a starting base.
- Dissemination and communication activities, which are part of the WP7, but are largely related to Policy Work and through it we were able to bring the topic of energy poverty, as well as our policy recommendations, to the general public, and bring some media pressure to the decision makers.

Lessons learned:

- It is necessary to include all relevant stakeholders from the beginning of the project and to inform them about your activities and results regularly. Because these actors are mostly focused on other aspects of the field they are covering, and not energy poverty, we had to take initiative ourselves to convene meetings and to lead the cross-sectoral working group that combined representatives from Ministry of Infrastructure, Eco Fund, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and our organization.
- It is easier to start working in the policy arena when you already have some results and some activities implemented. For that reason, it was easier for us to start with policy activities right from the beginning of the project, because we already had results from previously implemented project ACHIEVE, which was similar to REACH. If Focus would not have the

ability to work with the results of ACHIEVE, it is estimated that the results would be too late to successfully build advocacy work. More time would be needed to properly do the advocacy activities.

- As factor for success of policy related activities we can add personal meetings and personal contacts. Stakeholders got interested about the the topic of energy poverty only when it was properly presented to them at meetings, where all their questions could be answered directly.
- Besides national level, it is very important to address the local level decision makers and key stakeholders, since they have direct contact with the target group and have better knowledge of local circumstances (who to help, how to help them, what kind of programs would suit their local circumstances). Therefore it would be necessary to include local level actors in policy work activities in the future.

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