



D5.6 Report on Policy Work at EU and international level

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1 Introduction

Empowering energy poor households to reduce energy use is an important step in energy poverty abatement, but it needs to be accompanied by wider measures on policy level. To trigger systemic change, the decision-makers must recognize energy poverty as a politically relevant topic. This is why within project REACH the partners worked towards the increase of the visibility of the energy poverty among decision-makers, especially in terms of bringing the specifics of the South-East Europe (SEE) region to the EU level and international discussions. This has been done on all levels from creating media visibility to direct work with top-level decision makers and organisation of high level debates. The purpose of this document is to provide a short report on the policy and advocacy activities done in the framework of project REACH at the EU or international level.

2 Overview of policy work plan

The specific objective of the advocacy work within REACH was to engage 40 decision-makers at EU level in tackling energy poverty as an issue that demands structural tailor-made solutions, provide them with recommendations on how to address the problem and create a platform for concerted formulation of structural solutions at national and EU level. To this end it was planned that recommendations on tackling energy poverty will be composed and disseminated among EU level decision-makers, be it through direct mailing, events or meetings, an event in the European Parliament will be organised, and different advocacy activities will run at EU and international level. The planned indicators for achieving the objectives were:

- EU recommendations sent to at least 20 decision-makers at EU level
- at least 40 EU decision-makers and other relevant actors debate energy poverty solutions
- at least 4 meetings with EU level decision-makers and at least 8 meetings with members of the EP, total of 12 directly addressed EU level decision-makers
- policy recommendations presented in at least 3 EU level debates or events
- at least 200 people become familiar with policy recommendations in EU level events
- implemented evaluation of policy work at EU level

The following activities were planned:

- placing energy poverty at EU level decision-makers mind maps
- organisation of debate in the European Parliament
- meetings with EU level decision-makers
- participating in ongoing EU debates / events
- fuel poverty in Energy community's agenda
- media work

All of the planned activities have been successfully completed and all indicators have been met. The biggest success on EU level has been achieved through conference on energy poverty and specificities of SEE which has been organised in the European parliament.

Sixty participants from institutions and organizations dealing with energy and social issues (members of the EU Parliament, scientists, energy poverty experts and representatives of civil society) gathered together for the conference. The introductory speeches brought the specificities of SEE energy poverty to attention. MEP Davor Škrlec emphasized: “Energy poverty is an important topic in all EU member states. The European Parliament has adopted two resolutions through which member states and the European Commission were called to agree upon the definition of energy poverty and to start solving the issue of energy poverty via amendments of the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Renewable Energy Directive, and through implementation of the Energy Union Action Plan in a sustainable manner.”

The panel debate was focused on presenting, commenting on and gathering different opinions about proposed policy recommendations. Stefan Bouzarovski, Ph.D. of the University of Manchester indicated that “Solving the energy poverty problem in Southeast Europe requires, first and foremost, comprehensive reconstruction of residential buildings and improvements in the field of energy efficiency. “

It was concluded that, in order to effectively deal with the issue of energy poverty, the cooperation of all key stakeholders is essential. The conference was hosted by MEP Davor Škrlec and REACH project partners.

Similar events were organised across all partner countries and they have all contributed to putting energy poverty on everyday political agenda.

3 Activities

The following activities were implemented during the advocacy work at EU and international level:

3.1 Placing energy poverty at EU level decision-makers mind maps

To highlight the specificities of the SEE region, a document was composed with listing the specificities of the SEE region and with policy recommendations for addressing those at the EU and national level. The initial set of recommendations was discussed with decision-makers and experts to be upgraded to the final document. The final set of recommendations was sent to over 200 relevant EU decision-makers: officials in selected DGs, members of the European Parliament, permanent representatives in Brussels, members of the ECOSOC etc., appealing to highlight aspects of energy poverty, which are specific for SEE region.

3.2 Organisation of debate in the European Parliament

On 1st June 2016 a debate on energy poverty in SEE was organised in the European Parliament. It was organised with the support of the Croatian MEP Davor Škrlec and his team. As aforementioned, the debate gathered over 60 participants, ranging from decision-makers to experts in the field of energy

poverty. The challenges of energy poverty in SEE were discussed, with a special focus on the recommendations by the project. After the event a press release was circulated, highlighting the key conclusions of the event. More information and photos can be found here: <http://reach-energy.eu/blog/2016/06/energy-poverty-in-south-east-europe-conference-in-eu-parliament-finished-614>

3.3 Meetings with EU level decision-makers

Partners have made contact with representatives of EU parliament in their countries and one of MEPs (Croatian Davor Škrlec) and his team have even supported REACH efforts by hosting an event at the European parliament. REACH was also presented to and discussed with regional level top decision makers through participation at the Parliamentary Plenum of Energy Community in October 2016 in Sarajevo.

3.4 Participating in ongoing EU debates / events

The specifics of the South-east European region were presented in the following EU level debates and events on energy poverty:

- Energy poverty – visits to socially vulnerable households – REACH project. 3rd Regional Conference. Energy. Development. Democracy. How successful policy dialogue can ensure sustainable use of energy and climate protection in South East Europe? 29-30 September 2015. Podgorica, Montenegro.
- Energy Efficiency as a Solution to Energy Poverty. 12th International Symposium Power and Process Plants. November 2016. Rovinj, Croatia. <http://www.em.com.hr/eipp/rad/1205>
- Practical and structural measures to address energy poverty in South-Eastern Europe. 3rd Energy and Society Conference: Transforming energy for Society. September, 2016. Leipzig, Germany. http://www.ufz.de/export/data/447/122116_Schedule_Ueberblick_Book_10.9.16.pdf
- Project REACH: Practical and structural measures to address energy poverty in South-East Europe. 5th International Degrowth Conference. 30 August – 3 September 2016. Budapest, Hungary.
- NGOs and framing of the environmental challenges in South-Eastern Europe: Towards a holistic perspective? International Conference Political Ecology, Environmentalism and Greens in the Centre and East of Europe: Past, Present and Prospects. 2-3 June 2016. Brussels, Belgium.
- Energy poverty in Balkans – adjusting policy response to socio-economic drivers. RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2016. September 1st. London, UK



- Energy poverty in Croatia– defining causes and consequences. 2nd South East European Conference on Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environment Systems. Conference Proceedings. June, 2016. Piran. Slovenia.
- Energy Poverty in Croatia as an example climate justice dimension. Climate Justice – Perspectives from the Natural & Social Sciences. 1st Annual IPE Conference 13th of November 2015 Novinarski Dom, Zagreb, Croatia. Bok of Abstracts available: http://www.grupa22.hr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IPE_CJ_2015_Book_of_Abstracts_Web.pdf
- Introduction to energy poverty and energy poverty in SEE. Round table „What is energy poverty and how to fight it“. 5th of October 2016. Podgorica, Montenegro.

Apart from taking part in the listed events, the recommendations and the messages from the project were included into ongoing research in the field of energy poverty, such as the survey of the Vulnerable Consumer Working Group or the study Good practices aiming to end energy poverty (<http://meszerics.eu/pdf/energypoverty-goodpractices.pdf>).

3.5 Energy poverty in Energy community's agenda

To discuss the recommendations of REACH project, they were presented to the Community's secretariat and working bodies. They were also presented at the Energy Community Parliamentary Plenum: Energy Poverty in South East Europe: Surviving the Cold . Energy Community Parliamentary Plenum. 13th of October 2016. Sarajevo, BiH. The report can be found here: http://seechangenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Energy-Poverty-in-South-East-Europe_Surviving-the-Cold.pdf

3.6 Media work

Media work at the EU/international level focused on two opportunities. The first one was the event in the European Parliament and the second was the sending of the policy recommendations. In both cases press release was sent to EU wide and international media, be it directly or through the support of the MEP Davor Škrlec team.

The following deliverables resulted from the listed activities:

- D5.2 1 international action plan in English
- D5.4 EU policy recommendations in English
- D5.7 European Parliament debate proceedings in English
- D5.8 Report on EU/international level policy work in English

4 Key outcomes and results of policy work

Significant impacts have been achieved on national, regional and EU level through project REACH. The biggest success has been achieved through organisation of the event in the European parliament and by delivering recommendations to all key stakeholders across the EU. The strength of REACH partners and their work on energy poverty has also been recognised by being invited to be members of the Advisory Board of the newly formed European Energy Poverty Observatory and one of team members was selected to be Convenor of the Advisory Board. Furthermore, issue of energy poverty has gained increased visibility on national and regional level which can to certain extent directly be attributed to EU level policy work. The reason to that lies in the fact that by gaining EU level visibility partners have strengthened their national impact and by creating momentum of media interest political interest increases as well.

4.1 Key outcomes and results of policy work

The SEE region has some specific characteristics as compared to other parts of the EU which have through REACH been advocated and discussed on EU level:

- Energy poverty is still an issue of low or no political interest in the region, and hence the problem is less defined, monitored or tackled than in Western European countries.
- Occurrence of persons, who are not poor, yet cannot afford adequate energy services, is more often higher in SEE than in other parts of Europe. This leads to higher occurrence of actions that reduce well-being, such as self-disconnection from heating.
- The housing stock in SEE countries is in relatively poor state as compared to the rest of Europe. Inefficient dwellings, combined with the inefficient heating systems and domestic appliances, contribute to the bigger depth of energy poverty in SEE.
- In some cases, the buildings are in such deteriorated state that full retrofitting of the building is not possible, hence re-settlement programs would be needed.
- Occurrence of homes that are not attached to the electricity grid is more often in SEE than in Western Europe. In such situations it is hard to address energy poverty with measures for improving energy efficiency; programs for installing off-grid PV systems would be needed.
- Related to the aforementioned specifics, living conditions are sometimes shockingly bad: mold, cold, unheated spaces, etc., all adversely affecting the health of the inhabitants.
- In SEE countries there is very limited social or other support for energy poor households.

Through REACH direct impact has been achieved by putting SEE specificities on EU level agenda and through creating awareness that measures need to be defined based on individual circumstances of every regional and every country, and at times even area specific on local level.

4.2 Lessons learned

One of key lessons learned is that it is necessary to foresee longer time-frame and greater samples for testing pilots, although this is commonly restricted by the time-frame and budget limitations set by each call for proposals to which project like REACH can be submitted.

Policy work is a lengthy process as is increasing awareness and especially testing implementation of certain policy measures, such as was done in the REACH. To be able to precisely define energy poverty and to monitor impact of various policies and mechanisms, ideally time-frame should be no less than 5 years. Advocacy work also requires significant time efforts, especially when done simultaneously on local, national, regional and EU level.

Overall, it can be concluded that actions such as REACH are of great benefit to families in need and significant change can be achieved even on EU level by a small group of NGOs.

5 Partners



Focus - Association for Sustainable Development, Slovenia

www.focus.si



Society for Sustainable Development Design, Croatia

www.door.hr



Energy agency of Plovdiv, Bulgaria

www.eap-save.eu



Macedonian Centre for Energy Efficiency, Macedonia

www.macef.org.mk

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