



**Conference in the European Parliament
"Energy Poverty in South East Europe"
Brussels, 01 June 2016 (13:00-15:00)**

Welcome speeches:

Davor Škrlec (MEP)

- Hope to send an important message of this topic to SEE governments
- Governments are not fighting EP in a sustainable manner
- Hope the recommendations will be sent to our governments
- "I am very happy that young people are running this project successfully."

Maja Božičević Vrhovčak (Executive Director, DOOR)

- Project enabled us to do research on Energy Poverty
- How to make the proposal applicable to wider region (not just SEE)
- Highlights experience of organizations (REACH partners) in the topic of energy poverty in the region

Energy poverty in South East Europe: the specificities of the region

Project REACH: Results, findings and recommendations:

Lidija Živčič (Focus, Slovenia, REACH Project Manager)

- Project ACHIEVE (2011-2014) is a predecessor of project REACH
- Highlights the problem of definition of energy poverty (same definition cannot be applied in UK and in Macedonia, because then in Macedonia majority of households would be classified as energy poor)
- Notes that majority of respondents in the region pays about 25 % of their monthly income for basic energy services
- Another problem is that we don't have enough information about the depth of the problem in the region
- Many households decided to turn off heating to save funds for food or education – such doubts should not exist
- 80-96 % of people live in their own flats or houses (owned by them), but many of them don't have enough funds for renovation
- Project REACH is implemented in 4 countries: Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia
- Households are visited twice by an energy advisor: first visit is for gathering information and data on their energy and water consumption; second visit to propose specific measures for energy efficiency and to provide household with a set of energy and water saving equipment
- In the course of the project large number of high school teachers and students were trained and educated in all 4 countries
- Project has more than 90 media appearances and are showing a lot of interest in project activities
- With measures implemented in the project (visits, advices and energy and water saving equipment) it is possible to save 5-10 % of energy and water
- Long-term approach is needed, which involves local communities, but also the social, energy and environmental sectors of national governments
- Energy policies should be combined with other policies, e.g. housing and health policies

- In Slovenia REACH type of energy advising in households was expanded on the national level with national program for energy poor household visits

Panel debate: Reflections of different stakeholders on the proposed policy recommendations:

Slavica Robić (DOOR)

- In the media, meaning of the definition of energy poverty is often incorrectly assumed: it is assumed that households are spending certain amount to cover their basic energy needs. But the problem is that households give up some of the basic energy needs and thus spend less of their income for energy. This problem has to be reflected in the definition as well.
- Meaningful definition of energy poverty is necessary to enable comparisons across space and time

Oscar Guinea (DG Energy)

- Positives of having a definition
 - Increasing understanding of energy poverty
 - Linking across different areas
 - Access to sufficient energy for basic energy services
- Study of energy poverty indicators – from a large array of indicators, main indicators are put together
- Vulnerable consumer: each country has a definition that can reflect the specifics of the country (mostly vulnerable consumers are individuals who receive social benefits or have some kind of medical problems)

Stefan Bouzarovski (University of Manchester)

- Energy poverty is not an issue of spending, but a development issue
- Not affordability, also access to energy is a problem, especially in SEE
- Lack of infrastructure – access to grid
- Structural challenge of access to energy
- By Improving the housing or living conditions we can address energy poverty
- This issues do not have to be in domain of social or energy field, but in domain of housing policy
- Housing policy is underdeveloped in the SEE region
- Definition is politically contingent – right now we have social definition of energy poverty (how much they spend)
- Focus should be on needed services, not on what is there
- Definition must allow for the political visibility of the problem, but wide enough to cover a wide set of households – narrow definition might lead to narrow political solution, which can be problematic, because it does not address other groups that also might live in severe conditions
- Other specificities of the region: households that are low income and in energy poverty, there are also working poor (inadequate housing or blocked by heating arrangement); extremely poor households
- Problems in the summer in SEE region: households not being able to afford cooling

Katalin Csiba (Social Policy advisor – European Parliament)

- Report on antipoverty target
- "I want to congratulate you for this project"
- Increasing awareness of the issue in European Parliament, there is no legislation
- Parliament is very much welcoming the progress on the definition
- Different view of energy poverty in the heads of representatives from different parts of Europe (WE: awareness, education, saving energy...; CEE/SEE: deprivation of energy, not just awareness problem – they started awareness raising on the issue)

- CEE/SEE: People are disconnected from energy in winter – companies are not reconnecting the households once they have been disconnected – they are forced to steal
- Report calls for enforcing moratorium on heat disconnection
- European Parliament has a role in sending messages to the more progressive governments

Davor Škrlec (MEP)

- Project by EC is energy union, focusing on the regional cooperation; goal affordable energy for citizens and companies; need to change energy system in favour of RES, need some time; better cooperation and coordination of energy policies
- Member states should coordinate the definition of energy poverty (and harmonize it between themselves) and programs for addressing energy poverty
- In EPBD and EED (2 EU Directives) they orient towards citizens
- need to help the people

Oscar Guinea (DG Energy)

- Energy efficiency is key
- Why energy poverty is not the same as poverty, because low income is not the only indicator for energy poverty (there are also living conditions – energy efficiency of the household flats or houses)
- EE investments are encouraged to be done in social manner
- EE investments have multiple effects (lower spending on energy, lower health spendings), this is why it is important to focus on it

Katalin Csiba (Social Policy advisor – European Parliament)

- There are several funds, money is available, there is money to tackle energy poverty – we need to define whom to target;
- In CEE rural areas are a problem, so rural development fund could be a good one to use for targeting these people (also European social fund)
- Support projects for communities
- FEAD – fund for European aged? deprived – now they get fund for clothing, food, this could be expanded to energy; this could be linked to off-grid PV mini systems
- Better channelling of funds can make a difference
- A huge difference between regions in EU: the social housing is developed in the WE, while CEE/SEE there is hardly any social housing

Slavica Robić (DOOR)

- Definition of vulnerability is linked to socially marginalised parts of population
- There is not enough harmonization with policies between sectors
- Case of CRO funding for electricity bills
- Indication that it is possible to make structural solutions, but it takes time
- The low-hanging fruit case
- EU member states: opportunity for suppliers (EED suppliers scheme) to implement EE measures in energy poor households
- Important to start acting now and not wait for top down definitions from EU because years and years will pass and people are living in difficult situation now
- People do not live in social housing and sometimes the housing is so poor that it is not economically feasible to retrofit
- Looking for immediate action and long-term action
- Vouchers should be the last resort

Stefan Bouzarovski (University of Manchester)

- Wider context: social policy already includes energy poverty, but talking to social policy-makers they don't link those two issues – they see it as another form of poverty; this needs to be changes



- It is necessary to connect the problem with social policies, but also environmental policies
- Many households would not identify themselves as energy poor, even if energy poverty measures are available, they might not use it
- Consequence of energy poverty in SEE are massive for the economy: health burden, air pollution – air pollution is an especially big problem, lots of it connected to burning heating fuel, cutting of forests
- It's a structural problem going beyond economic definition of what poverty or energy poverty is

Katalin Csiba (Social Policy advisor – European Parliament)

- Energy poverty has a large contribution to transmission of poverty between generations

Mr Radoš (MEP)

- Works on rural development areas and would support initiative to link with energy poverty policies
- Does not think that the political relevance of the energy poverty is low, there are just different aspects
- In rural (mountainous) regions there is many times lack of adequate infrastructure, because the terrain is unsuitable for it. It is necessary to give attention to these characteristics
- This year two directives (EED and EPBD) are being revised and this is a good prospect to involve energy poverty into these directives - question to Oscar if this is feasible

Oscar Guinea (DG Energy)

- They are working hard to have the definition and all that can be done to be included

Vlatka Matković (HEAL)

- Health is connected to energy poverty, also to poorer housing conditions – this should be more emphasised
- We should hear more about reducing energy use, not only energy efficiency
- Many households use too much energy (not the ones that don't have access to energy infrastructure)
- District heating – energy union is treating it very highly, but at the same time coal TPP are built to be used for district heating
- How to deal with coal in SEE, when we need less energy use and RES

Slavica Robić (DOOR)

- Health and energy savings: findings show that health and energy poverty are related, energy poverty does affect health due to the mould, humidity, cold...- important to stress that EE represents solution to energy poverty and health issues
- Real energy savings are hard to achieve as we would need to do deeper measures, which we cannot do; if we change the heating, they might use even more because they would actually heat the whole house, not just one room
- Use of energy in households that we visit is normally higher than in average households due to really old appliances and poor state of housing

Stefan Bouzarovski (University of Manchester)

- Check results of EVALUATE project: households will be energy poor if there is mould detected in the house – that is a very clear indicator.

Katalin Csiba (Social Policy advisor – European Parliament)

- Interlinking policies is important: educating doctors to alert suitable institution when they detect energy poverty situation
- We live in a time when energy is not a luxury, it is a basic need – this should be promoted – we live in an energy dependent society



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