



STEP PROJECT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE GROUND

01 STEP recommendation: Define energy poverty

Energy poverty should be analysed also as an energy issue, not only as a social issue. When viewed only through a social lens, this leads to wasteful public spending. Energy poverty is created in part by energy inefficient housing. However, to tackle energy poverty, it must first be defined. Given the difference in national contexts from energy systems and energy needs to social contexts, Member States should be obligated to **define energy poverty** at the national level.

STEP SUCCESS ON THIS ISSUE

Polish project partner Federacja Konsumentow assisted the government in setting up a panel of experts to define and alleviate energy poverty. Shortly before the end of the project in 2022, Bulgarian project partner Асоциация Активни потребители was invited to a government forum for the same purpose. Having consumer organisations on these panels means the voices of vulnerable consumers and those at risk of energy poverty will be better heard when constructing national policies to alleviate energy poverty.

02 STEP recommendation: Create inclusive energy efficiency schemes

In line with the “Energy Efficiency First” principle, **energy efficiency schemes** for deep energy renovation of homes should be set up across all Member States. These schemes should also encourage the switch to renewable technologies such as heat pumps and solar panels. It’s crucial that these schemes be **inclusive of the energy poor** and low-income households by covering the **upfront costs** of the renovations for those who can’t afford to pay themselves.

STEP SUCCESS ON THIS ISSUE

Slovakian project partner Spoločnosť ochrany spotrebiteľov Poprad oversaw a major victory for energy poverty in Slovakia when the government stopped a planned €20 million in public support for gas boilers, instead announcing its first ever home energy renovation programme that would be inclusive of vulnerable consumers, by covering up to 95% of renovation costs for those who can’t afford it.

03

STEP recommendation: Ensure energy efficiency programmes are inclusive

Multi-unit buildings can be a real source of pain when it comes to energy efficiency. Not only do energy suppliers often ignore multi-units when it comes to fulfilling their obligatory energy savings, but it can also be difficult for all tenants in a building to agree on renovation works. This requires a two-pronged approach: **energy efficiency measures should be steered towards multi-units**, while **local authorities should work to update regulatory frameworks** that would facilitate acceptance of energy renovations in multi-unit buildings.

STEP SUCCESS ON THIS ISSUE

As well as collaborating with municipalities and several other EU Horizon 2020 projects, Latvian partner Latvijas Patērētāju Interesu Aizstāvības Asociācija trained ambassadors of multi-unit buildings in energy poverty, helping them to support tenants struggling with their bills in advance of the winter heating season.

04

STEP recommendation: Roll out dedicated one-stop-shops

One-stop-shops (OSS) should be set up in all Member States, dedicated to provide information and support for energy renovations. OSS should have dedicated capacities for their local needs: rural housing, multi-unit buildings, social housing and low-income areas, for example.

STEP SUCCESS ON THIS ISSUE

Portuguese partner DECO has collaborated with local authorities across the country, leading to the creation of “energy and housing desks”, similar to one-stop-shops, to advise consumers on home energy renovations. As an example, the Municipality of Évora collaborated with DECO to create a desk dedicated to multi-unit buildings and social housing.

05

STEP recommendation: Provide all important information in user-friendly energy bills

The **energy bill** is one of the most important tools companies use to communicate with their customers. Therefore, bills should include all necessary information in a user-friendly format, not only about their consumption but also about whom to contact in case of question or dispute..

STEP SUCCESS ON THIS ISSUE

Thanks to Lithuanian project partner Vartotojų Aliansas over 200,000 consumers in Lithuania now see the energy advice hotline numbers printed directly on their energy bills. This allows them to get advice immediately if they have trouble with their bills.

06

STEP recommendation: Choose the right communication channels

Consumers get their information by various means, and those in vulnerable situations are more likely to have limited access to information channels. **Varied communication approaches** from project partners have highlighted the importance of communicating with consumers in or at risk of energy poverty through various means including TV, radio and billing systems, to advise consumers on how to make their homes more energy efficient.

**STEP
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Following Cypriot partner Kypriakos Syndesmos Katanaloton's TV spots on energy poverty, calls to the energy advice line increased greatly, providing struggling consumers with key information on how to access financial supports of which they were previously unaware. The pandemic forced consumer organisations to move their communications activities online. For instance, Czech partner dTest created a dedicated chatbot for energy poverty and energy efficiency which proved very successful.

07

STEP recommendation: Run energy efficiency campaigns

Most consumers are not energy experts, and often struggle to understand the energy and monetary savings that can be made even from small energy efficiency improvements. **Raising awareness** about efficiency measures and potential savings is something all actors in the energy supply chain, as well as local authorities, should actively participate in.

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Did you know that just 30cm of insulation in your attic could stop up to 25% of the heat loss from your home? Under the STEP project, UK project partner Citizens Advice created 11 energy savings tips videos, which are now available on [YouTube](#) in five languages. These proving particularly useful during the energy crisis.

08

STEP recommendation: Team up with local authorities

Local authorities should play a key role in tackling energy poverty, as well as fostering a renewable energy transition. They need to be engaged to work on energy issues, combining their local knowledge with groups such as consumer organisations, who best understand the needs of consumers. One of the most efficient ways of disseminating energy advice through local communities is through training frontline workers in energy poverty. These frontline workers can in turn advise consumers on energy efficiency.

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Czech partner dTest cooperated with the local government in Prague to establish and promote a special advisory point on energy poverty for seniors and other vulnerable groups, while Slovakian partner SOS ran dedicated workshops for vulnerable consumers such as the visually impaired. In total, STEP partners ran over 150 workshops, trained over 1,000 frontline workers and provided energy advice to over 16,000 consumers across Europe.



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