



A EUROPEAN PROJECT DELIVERING VITAL SOLUTIONS DURING A PANDEMIC AND AN ENERGY CRISIS

WHAT?

Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty – or STEP – was an EU-funded, Horizon 2020 project run by 11 consumer and research organisations across Europe. At its core, the STEP project aimed to provide energy efficiency advice to consumers in or at risk of energy poverty, with a focus on no-cost and low-cost measures. This advice was given through one-to-one meetings, phone calls, online trainings and dedicated workshops for consumers in vulnerable situations or in energy poverty, and for frontline workers.

WHERE?

STEP ran across Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and the UK.



THE THREE PILLARS OF STEP WERE:

ADVICE
To consumers in or at risk of energy poverty.

TRAINING
For frontline workers on how to educate consumers about energy poverty.

ADVOCACY
Advocacy to national governments and EU institutions on energy efficiency and energy poverty.

STEP ACHIEVEMENTS IN NUMBERS

- Energy advice was provided to over **16,000** consumers across Europe
- Over **1,000** frontline workers trained
- Over **150** workshops run
- **35** short online training modules were made available in **nine** languages
- Primary energy savings triggered by the project: **38.4 GWh**
- Cumulative investments in sustainable energy triggered by the project: **0.410 million EUR**
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions: **8,970 tCO₂e**



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THE VITAL ROLE PLAYED BY FRONTLINE WORKERS

A frontline worker is anyone whose job brings them into contact with consumers or people at risk of energy poverty. This can include for instance social workers, nurses, volunteers, energy ombudsmen and energy suppliers. They played a vital role in delivering advice to households in need during the project.

What kind of advice did they give?

Consumers were given advice on how to save energy at home, particularly through low-cost and no-cost measures to make their homes more energy efficient. They were also advised about national schemes and social tariffs they could apply for.

What did frontline workers learn?

On top of the information given to consumers, the project helped frontline workers to learn more about their national energy market, energy efficiency and the importance of viewing energy poverty not only through a social lens, but as an issue of energy policy, which impacts the kind of advice given.

Throughout the course of the project, STEP was able to make **five main policy recommendations** to tackle energy poverty:

- 1** To tackle energy poverty, it must first be defined. Given the difference in national contexts from energy systems and energy needs to social contexts, all Member States should **define energy poverty** at the national level. Consumers should be protected by a **ban on energy supply disconnection**.
- 2** Member States should introduce a comprehensive strategy to **eradicate energy poverty** in their national legislation. This should include a **measurable target** for achievement within a set timescale, **interim milestones, monitoring obligations** and a **set of programmes** designed to meet the target.
- 3** Energy suppliers and other relevant actors should **prioritise the implementation of energy efficiency measures** among consumers in energy poverty. Schemes for financing energy efficiency measures and deep energy renovation of homes should be set up across all Member States. It's crucial that these schemes be **inclusive of consumers in or at risk of energy poverty** by covering the **upfront costs** of the renovations for those who can't afford to pay themselves. Such measures must also target **multi-unit buildings**, given the high proportion of consumers in energy poverty living in in multi-units.
- 4** All parties in the energy supply chain should make use of various channels to **provide information and advice** to consumers, as people often don't know where to turn for **reliable energy advice**. This includes setting up one-stop shops, providing information on energy bills, training frontline workers, operating phone lines, advice by consumer organisations, running workshops, and communicating through traditional media, such as radio and TV.
- 5** EU and national funding schemes should **prioritise energy efficiency measures in households in or at risk of energy poverty**. Investment schemes and infrastructure projects, such as deep energy retrofits, should benefit lower income consumers and adequately incentivise the shift to renewable options for heating.

Beyond STEP

While STEP is coming to an end, energy poverty is a more pressing issue than ever. The project tools will remain available for scaling up of workshops and trainings across Europe. Meanwhile, the consumer organisations involved have become experts in energy poverty, which will have a lasting impact: energy advice will continue to flow to consumers who need it, resulting in more energy efficient homes and more savings across Europe.