



# BEST PRACTICES IN STEP PROJECT COUNTRIES REPORT

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty (STEP) is a project to develop a simple, innovative and replicable model of measures to address energy poverty.

The project covers some of the **countries** with the **highest rates of energy poverty in Europe**. These are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.



There are three specific objectives:

- To get consumer groups and frontline organizations, who advise people on a range of issues such as financial or health-related ones, to partner and deliver **advice** to energy poor consumers.
- To help energy poor consumers across the 9 countries save energy and improve their living standard. We will **advise consumers on more efficient energy consumption** and how this can help them save money and improve their health and well-being. We will carry out information campaigns, provide tips on **how to save energy**, demonstrate cost savings and help put in place low-cost energy efficiency measures.
- To disseminate **best practices and policy choices** that can alleviate energy poverty and promote their replication in other EU countries.

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## INTRODUCTION

This Report is part of STEP project activities. The aim of this report is to gather best practices within the scope of energy poverty, implemented within projects, support mechanisms or other related activities.

In the EU and at national level, many relevant energy projects have been implemented in recent years. This report presents the results of the research findings and conclusions drawn from these projects and national policies. The research was developed by the project partners based on their national realities but also on other countries from the European Union.

This report will allow STEP's activities to be implemented considering all available best practices and avoiding the obstacles already identified in other relevant projects.

The Report is divided into three different types of best practices, considering their final purpose such as:

- **How to raise awareness for energy poverty?** In this section we list practices which intend to raise awareness of energy poverty amongst individuals, governmental bodies, media, and other stakeholders. These practices can be replicated in STEP project, especially in what concerns communication and advocacy activities.
- **How to reach energy poor consumers?** In this chapter we present practices that contribute to a more effective identification of consumers in energy poverty. The establishment of referral procedures is also an important tool to reach energy poor consumers, therefore this chapter includes examples of best practices in this area.
- **How to tackle energy poverty?** Finally, in this section we list best practices concerning measures or solutions to tackle energy poverty. The following practices can either be the result of a project or a governmental policy and can be used in STEP either for advocacy or when delivering solutions to consumers.

Overall, a total of 23 best practices are listed in this report. STEP will promote and replicate the most relevant ones within the development of its activities.

## I – BEST PRACTICES: How to raise awareness of energy poverty?

In this section we list practices which intend to raise awareness of energy poverty amongst individuals, governmental bodies, media and other stakeholders. These practices can be replicated in STEP project, especially in what concerns communication and advocacy activities.

### 1. Social Innovation to Tackle Energy Poverty

**Description:** The Schneider Electric Foundation, under the aegis of the Foundation de France, and Ashoka, have a commitment to help improve the living conditions of millions of people facing energy poverty in Europe. To improve the impact of the project, Enel Romania has joined the efforts as local partner. This programme offers support for the most innovative social entrepreneurs in Europe and by doing this it helps entire communities to tackle energy poverty and move towards energy sustainability.

**Who?** Schneider Electric Foundation and Ashoka

**Where?** Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria

**When?** February 21st, 2019 to April 12th, 2019

#### **What is the best practice?**

This program is fully funded, selected finalists benefit from the following:

- 2 days of intensive workshops to kick start the mentoring period and acquire knowledge and tools regarding systems change, social financing, social impact reporting, communications;
- 5 months of mentoring support to help craft and improve the strategy to accelerate the social impact of the project;
- additional support for Schneider Electric employees on technical or non-technical topics;
- Inspiring meetings and networking events within the European network of fellow social innovators, experts, and organizations working in this field;
- Increased visibility through social media campaign and at the final event in Bucharest, where winners will be announced;
- Access to potential additional grants from Schneider Electric;
- Being part of the community of innovators in the field alongside the previous winners and finalists (opportunity for peer – to – peer learning);
- Even more, the winner receives a 3.500-euro prize money.

#### **More information available at:**

<https://tackleenergypoverty.ashoka.org/en/program/social-innovation-tackle-energy-poverty>

## 2. Innovative Direction in Energy Advising (iDEA)

**Description:** Innovative Direction in Energy Advising (IDEA) is a project that aims to decrease energy poverty by implementing an educational platform for energy awareness.

**Who?** University of Cyprus, DOOR (Society for Sustainable Development Design), Energy Agency of Plovdiv (EAP) and Focus Association for Sustainable Development, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

**Where?** European Union

**When?** Since 2017, online available platform

### What is the best practice?

The project developed the following tools:

- Overview of existing materials and training needs assessment
- Educational program and best practice exchange
- Energy poverty educational tools
- Educational dissemination tools

**More information available at:** <http://www.project-idea.eu/>

## 3. End Fuel Poverty Coalition

**Description:** The End Fuel Poverty Coalition is a broad coalition of anti-poverty, environmental, health, trade union and consumer organisations working to eradicate fuel poverty. We believe that everybody has the right to a warm, dry home that they can afford to heat and power. The End Fuel Poverty Coalition campaigns to influence government and other bodies to take action to end fuel poverty and thereby improve people's health and quality of life as well as seeking to reduce the cost of living, create jobs and negate carbon emissions in the process.

**Who?** Members of the Coalition include: 1010, ACRE, ACE Research, Advice 4 Renters, AgeUK, Association of Local Energy Officers, Association for Decentralised Energy, BLF, Camden Federation of Private Tenants, Church Poverty Action, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, Citizens Advice, CPAG, CSE Research, Disability Rights, E3G, EBICO, Energy Saving Trust, Friends of the Earth, Fuel Poverty Action, Generation Rent, Greenpeace, Hackney Foodbank, Lambeth Pensioners Action Group, London Borough of Camden, LB Lewisham, Macmillan, Mayor of London, National Pensioners Convention, National Union of Students, NCB, NEA, NfWI, Oxford City Council, Redcar & Cleveland Council, Sheffield Council, UNISON. The co-ordination for the Coalition is provided by social enterprise Campaign Collective.

**Where?** United Kingdom

**When?** Since 2018, online available platform

### What is the best practice?

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition developed a Manifesto for the UK elections, calling on the major political parties to commit to acting to end fuel poverty.

The Coalition asked the prospective Parliamentary Candidates to pledge to:

- Declare energy efficiency and the elimination of fuel poverty as national infrastructure priorities;
- Take immediate action to improve the standards of rented homes;
- Reform the domestic energy supply market;
- End the benefits freeze and address the chronic scale of unclaimed benefits.

As well as providing detailed recommendations to policy makers, the Coalition Manifesto sets out the benefits to ending fuel poverty. The Manifesto is available online: <http://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/End-Fuel-Poverty-Manifesto-2019-vFINAL.pdf>

**More information available at:** <http://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk>

## 4. Alliance Against Energy Poverty

**Description:** The *Aliança contra la Pobresa Energètica*, APE (Alliance Against Energy Poverty) was founded by neighbourhood associations, workers' assemblies, water and housing advocacy groups, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) concerned with the overall impact of the national energy model and existing inequalities. The APE aims to guarantee universal access to basic services (water, electricity and gas), to avoid indiscriminate service cuts and to defend human rights. Creating a 'social outcry' is an important objective for the APE. The project aims to make the problem of energy poverty more visible on a societal level, by interacting with and mobilising those experiencing energy poverty. The mobilisation was achieved via collective advisory as assemblies, advocacy campaigns, and demonstrations.

**Who?** NGO

**Where?** Catalonia, Spain

**When?** Since 2014, online available platform

### What is the best practice?

The success of the organisation is based on uniting former and current street-based movements with organisations working on social justice, in order to create a social, ecological and political bridge. This ultimately creates social outcry and leads to solutions at grassroots and institutional levels.

**More information available at:** <https://pobresaenergetica.es/index.php/ca/>

## 5. Fuel Poverty Awareness Day and National House Warming event

**Description:** National Energy Action (NEA), the main fuel poverty charity in the UK runs an annual fuel poverty awareness day. This year's day took place on 29<sup>th</sup> November. Local organisations are encouraged to produce publicity, host events and contact their MPs to raise awareness of fuel poverty and the solutions for tackling it. NEA provides an extensive resource pack to support local activities.

NEA also runs an annual national housewarming event at which local organisations are encouraged to raise awareness, hold events and run charitable activities to help tackle fuel poverty. NEA provides a range of resources to support this. The next event will take place on 5 February 2020.

**Who?** NEA is an NGO

**Where?** Local activities throughout UK

**When?** Every year

**What is the best practice?**

Coordinated local activities and backing resources to raise awareness of fuel poverty among media and politicians.

**More information at:** <https://www.nea.org.uk/campaigns-policy/fpad2019/> and <https://www.nea.org.uk/the-difference-you-can-make/housewarming/>

## 6. Big Energy Saving Week

**Description:** Citizens Advice, with support from the Energy Saving Trust, run an annual Big Energy Saving Week. Local organisations are provided with resources and publicity materials to raise public awareness of the simple changes people can make to save money on their energy bills, such as switching energy supplier or tariff, accessing discounts or grants and making their homes more energy efficiency. Many organisations use the week to highlight fuel poverty issues and the support available to tackle the problem.

The next Big Energy Saving Week will take place on the week beginning 20 January 2020.

**Who?** Citizens Advice and Energy Saving Trust (both are NGOs), with support from the Government's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department (BEIS).

**Where?** Local activities throughout the UK

**When?** Every year

**What is the best practice?**

Coordinated local activities and backing resources to raise awareness among energy consumers about the simple steps they can take to save money on their energy bills.

**More information at:** <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/our-campaigns/all-our-current-campaigns/besw/>



## II – BEST PRACTICES: How to reach energy poor consumers?

When addressing energy poor consumers, it is crucial to be able to diagnose consumers in this situation. In this chapter we present practices that contribute to a more effective diagnosis of energy poverty. In addition, the establishment of referral procedures is also an important tool to reach energy poor consumers, therefore we also include examples of best practices that reflect this.

### 1. Big Energy Saving Network (BESN)

**Description:** BESN is delivered by a network of 170 energy champions based in local organisations and charities (half are local Citizens Advice offices). Energy Champions offer advice on energy savings in the home, switching energy suppliers, and guidance on schemes that help vulnerable households stay warm and lower energy bills. They use their local networks to deliver energy advice to existing community groups, and on a 1:1 basis with the consumers they engage via their existing services, drop-in events and through their partnerships.

**Who?** Citizens Advice - funded by BEIS

**Where?** England & Wales

**When?** Funding is provided from October to March each year

#### **What is the best practice?**

Strong emphasis on outreach and use of existing community networks to provide energy advice. Advice focuses on switching but includes some simple behavioural energy efficiency advice.

**More information available at:** <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/how-we-provide-advice/our-prevention-work/BESN/>

### 2. SHINE (Seasonal Health Intervention Network)

**Description:** One-stop referral system for NHS and third sector to help them provide affordable warmth and seasonal health interventions to residents. Interventions include advice on saving energy, grants for heating and insulation, energy debt advice, Energy Doctor in the Home: home visiting service, benefit checks, falls assessments, fire safety checks, air quality alerts for people with respiratory diseases and handyperson service.

**Who?** Islington Council

**Where?** Islington (one of the London boroughs)

**When?** Long term annual funding



### **What is the best practice?**

Good quality energy advice. Simple referral service. Referrals from front line workers from health and other sectors.

**More information available at:** <https://www.islington.gov.uk/energy-and-pollution/energy/shine>

## **3. WHAM (Warmer Homes, Advice & Money)**

**Description:** Local partner organisations working together to support householders who may be living in fuel poverty. The projects caseworkers working within each partner organisation, coordinating activity on behalf of the beneficiaries. Three different funders: BCC, Bristol Energy and warm Home Fund, support this partnership project. The partners are: CSE, Citizens Advice (Bristol & North Somerset), Talking Money, WE Care Home Improvements, North Somerset Council who are offering a handyperson service and Bristol Energy Network. Each partner supports clients referred to WHAM with their specialist service i.e. Talking Money offering debt advice. Four full time caseworkers are employed to co-ordinate activity offered by the partners for the clients and not closing a case until all of the work is complete.

**Who?** CSE – Center for Sustainable Energy

**Where?** Bristol and North Somerset

**When?** Funding is until June 2021

### **What is the best practice?**

Having caseworkers who co-ordinate the activity of all of the partner organisations, ensuring that the best outcomes for clients are gained and that nobody slips through the net. The beneficiaries only have to contact one person instead of many different people and organisations. One of the caseworkers rotates between the main hospitals identifying and supporting people who are prevented from going home because of lack of heating or having a damp home.

**More information available at:** <https://www.cse.org.uk/projects/view/1337>

## **4. Energy Poverty Toolkit**

**Description:** An energy poverty toolkit was prepared as part of a study into effective interventions to tackle energy poverty. A range of tools including project design (tips for designing a project), tools/materials including manuals for energy advisors/coaches, workshop outlines, and case studies for both frontline workers and participant households.

**Who?** ECN, together with Alliander, Eneco, EnergieFlex, !WOON, the Municipality of Utrecht and Tertium

**Where?** Netherlands

**When?** 2015

### **What is the best practice?**

The Energy Poverty Report shows how important it is that cooperation in a project runs smoothly. The exchange of information is essential for this. The report provides a number of suggestions.

- Inform collaboration partners regularly. Feedback to district support centres or the corporation if there are complaints about the house or other matters. This helps households.
- It is important that all stakeholders are in regular contact with each other to ensure that the logistics organization runs smoothly and does not overload a household.
- It is advisable to make several home visits per household to create the best result. The chance that agreements will be honoured and behavioural changes will be greater. In addition, households' appreciation for services is increasing.

**More information available at:** <http://energiearmoede.nl/>

## **5. TRIME**

**Description:** TRIME was launched in September 2014 and completed in autumn 2017. It was developed by seven social housing organisations, a university, behavioural research company and technology company all based in the EU.

TRIME was a project set up to improve energy saving actions amongst social housing tenants who often have limited financial resources. The project designed an energy saving advice model based on creating a network of tenants that volunteered to be Energy Ambassadors who then support their neighbours to save energy.

**Who?** Clarion Housing Group, ZonnigeKempen Social Housing, Havensteder, Intent Technologies, Delft University of Technology, Vilogia Groupe, Polylogis Group, Eigen Haard, U-sentric and Sestao Berri. Co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the European Union.

**Where?** In 5 countries: UK, France, Spain, the Netherlands and Belgium

**When?** 2014-2017

### **What is the best practice?**

The project found the main benefits of delivering an energy saving advice model are:

- Increased social interaction between tenants and neighbouring households
- Carbon reduction
- Tenants get to save some money
- Supports the environmental goals of social housing organisations

The project is now completed, and its website offers the research, the Energy Challenge and materials developed during the pilot. These are available for other social housing organisations to adapt if needed.

**More information available at:** <http://www.trime-eu.org/>

## 6. LIGAR

**Description:** This project proposed to implement an inclusive strategy to combat energy poverty, to improve energy efficiency of underprivileged installations and to reduce info-exclusion. Its main objectives were to raise awareness and to change the behaviour of consumers economically more vulnerable to the issue of energy efficiency and equip them with the necessary means to reduce their energy bills.

**Who?** ADENE (Portuguese Energy Agency), CDI (Center for Digital Inclusion), CENSE – Centre for Environmental and Sustainability Research Energy and Climate DCEA-FCT/ NOVA University and Sair da Casca. Co-funded by ERSE (Portuguese Energy NRA).

**Where?** Portugal

**When?** 2017-2018

### **What is the best practice?**

The project included an important exercise for mapping and characterization of the most vulnerable populations to energy poverty. It also focused on creating a communication strategy that would present most effectively energy efficiency matters for these consumers. Training courses were delivered to support local agents and prepare them to face-to-face advice and to give practical support to the implementation of energy efficiency solutions in the target audience.

**More information available at:** <https://innovation.adene.pt/project/ligar/>

### III – BEST PRACTICES: How to tackle energy poverty?

Finally, in this section we list best practices concerning measures or solutions to tackle energy poverty. The following practices could result from a project or from governmental policy and can be used in STEP either for advocacy or for delivering to consumers.

#### 1. Protection against disconnection

**Description:** This measure is part of national policies and guarantees a level of protection against the disconnection of the energy supply, usually regarding electricity but in some cases also gas and water. The listed examples below were gathered from the Energy Poverty Observatory: [www.energypoveity.eu](http://www.energypoveity.eu)

**Who?** This measure is usually within the responsibility of the government of each country. The target groups mainly include consumers with severe health problems, indebted households, low income households and vulnerable consumers/ households.

**Where?** It is currently applied in different ways in twelve countries of the European Union: Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and UK.

**When?** In some countries it only applies during winter seasons, but in the vast majority it is year-round.

#### What is the best practice?

Protection against disconnection in winter to households that rely on electricity or natural gas to heat their homes, and all year to vulnerable consumers with serious medical conditions. In this list are also included examples of measures that aim the continuity of electricity supply, but with a limited capacity, instead of proceeding with disconnection.

Title	GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE	SHORT SUMMARY	TIME FRAME	LINK
<b>Disconnecti on prohibition in winter</b>	<b>Finland</b>	Households that rely on electricity or natural gas to heat their homes cannot be disconnected during winter months.	October 1 - April 30	<a href="https://www.energypoveity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-prohibition-winter">https://www.energypoveity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-prohibition-winter</a>
<b>Disconnecti on protection Catalonia</b>	<b>Spain - Catalonia</b>	This measure prohibits the disconnection of electricity, gas and water supply for vulnerable households as certified by local social services. It also applies a precautionary principle according to which utility companies are obliged to check first with local services whether the consumer with arrears is vulnerable or not.		<a href="https://www.energypoveity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-catalonia">https://www.energypoveity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-catalonia</a>
<b>Prohibition of disconnecti on For medical reasons</b>	<b>Spain</b>	Protection against disconnection for consumers that require electricity powered life support equipment.		<a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S037877881832334X">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S037877881832334X</a>
<b>Disconnecti on</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	The supplier of last resort will take over electricity and gas supply to a	October 1 - March 31	<a href="https://www.energypoveity.eu/measure-">https://www.energypoveity.eu/measure-</a>

<b>protection during winter</b>		customer during the winter period to avoid disconnection.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-during-winter">policy/disconnection-protection-during-winter</a>
<b>Disconnection protection for vulnerable consumers in critical periods</b>	<b>Cyprus</b>	The energy regulator CERA decided to prohibit disconnection of vulnerable consumers with serious medical conditions.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-vulnerable-consumers-critical-periods">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-vulnerable-consumers-critical-periods</a>
<b>Disconnection protection households</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>	This measure gives additional safeguards against disconnection for vulnerable households, and prohibits disconnection of all households during the winter, where disconnection of electricity or gas would result in very serious health risks to the consumer or a member of the same household.	October 1 - April 1	<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-households">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-households</a>
<b>Disconnection protection vulnerable consumers</b>	<b>Romania</b>	It is prohibited to disconnect vulnerable consumers from the electricity network.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-vulnerable-consumers">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-vulnerable-consumers</a>
<b>Disconnection protection vulnerable households</b>	<b>Slovenia</b>	It is prohibited to disconnect vulnerable households from electricity supply in those circumstances where disconnection could be life endangering or have serious health consequences.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-vulnerable-households">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-protection-vulnerable-households</a>
<b>Disconnection safeguards</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	Disconnection is prohibited if it would result in personal injuries.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-safeguards">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/disconnection-safeguards</a>
<b>Energy UK Safety Net</b>	<b>UK</b>	All companies are not allowed to disconnect pensioner households during winter as a condition of their licence. In addition, the Safety Net is a pledge by the larger six suppliers to never knowingly disconnect a vulnerable customer at any time of the year. A customer is considered vulnerable if for reasons of age, health, disability or severe financial insecurity, they are unable to safeguard their personal welfare or the personal welfare of other members of the household.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/energy-uk-safety-net">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/energy-uk-safety-net</a>
<b>Protection for vulnerable consumers</b>	<b>Hungary</b>	Disabled consumers cannot be disconnected from supply in case of late payment or non-payment. They also receive additional assistance by allowing the measurement and payment of the bill to happen at the place of use, as well as the possibility to receive additional information on the bill.		<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/protection-vulnerable-consumers">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/protection-vulnerable-consumers</a> <a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/protection-disabled-consumers">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/protection-disabled-consumers</a>
<b>Winter truce</b>	<b>France</b>	Energy suppliers are not allowed to disconnect households during the winter period from electricity or natural gas provision. However, reductions in delivered power are allowed to a certain limit.	November - March	<a href="https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/winter-truce">https://www.energypoverity.eu/measure-policy/winter-truce</a>

<b>Electricity disconnect on protection</b>	<b>Lithuania</b>	Protection of vulnerable Consumers from electricity disconnection in critical times.	<a href="https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S037877881832334X">https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S037877881832334X</a>
<b>Power limiters instead of disconnection in Cologne</b>	<b>Germany</b>	This measure provides households with smart meters that allowed the power supply to be reduced to 1000W in case of non-payment, instead of disconnection.	<a href="https://www.energypoverty.eu/measure-policy/power-limiters-instead-disconnection-cologne">https://www.energypoverty.eu/measure-policy/power-limiters-instead-disconnection-cologne</a>
<b>Power limiters for electricity</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	Brussels Capital has implemented power limiters for electricity, a capacity limiter always ensures a minimum continuous power supply. It is fitted at the request of the energy supplier if a customer has difficulty paying his electricity bill. This system does not exist for gas meters.	<a href="https://www.energypoverty.eu/measure-policy/power-limiters-electricity">https://www.energypoverty.eu/measure-policy/power-limiters-electricity</a>
<b>Reduction of available power</b>	<b>Italy</b>	With certain smart meters, it is possible to lower the amount of power which can be used instead of disconnecting the household completely.	<a href="https://www.energypoverty.eu/measure-policy/reduction-available-power">https://www.energypoverty.eu/measure-policy/reduction-available-power</a>

## 2. Social tariff

**Description:** This measure gives a discount, tax reduction, allowances or financial support on the electricity bill (and sometimes natural gas, depending on countries). This measure is usually funded by the public budget of each country or by energy agents (electricity producers, suppliers, DSO and TSO).

**Who?** National Governments.

**Where?** It is currently applied in different ways in several countries of the European Union: Belgium, Cyprus, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, UK, Spain and Portugal.

**When?** All year around.

### What is the best practice?

Despite the fact that many countries across the EU have a social tariff or equivalent measure, in some cases this isn't an effective measure for tackling energy poverty, especially if they are the sole measures for tackling it. In this section we provide examples on how social tariffs can be implemented more effectively, the best practice for each example is highlighted in the table below.

Title	GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE	TARGET GROUP	BEST PRACTICE	LINK
<b>Social tariff for electricity and gas</b>	<b>Portugal</b>	Receive from Social Security one of the following supports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solidarity supplement for the elderly;</li> <li>• Social income of insertion;</li> <li>• Social unemployment benefit;</li> <li>• Family allowance;</li> <li>• Social invalidity pension;</li> <li>• Old-age social pension.</li> </ul>	Discount on the network tariff for access to low voltage electricity and / or low-pressure natural gas networks, which makes up the final price billed to the customer for electricity and / or natural gas. The best practice in the process is related with the automatization of the granting process. Consumers don't need to apply for the social tariff, the discount is automatically processed in the bill, after a consultation on social grants received and household income.	<a href="https://www.tarifasocial.dqeg.gov.pt/">https://www.tarifasocial.dqeg.gov.pt/</a>
<b>Social Tariff for natural gas and electricity</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	Indebted households	The social tariff for natural gas and/or electricity, also referred to in the legislation as the social maximum price, ensures that individuals or families that belong to certain categories benefit from a more advantageous price than the commercial tariff. The best practice is that this tariff is granted automatically. It is set twice a year by the federal energy regulatory, the CREG. It is the same for all suppliers or distribution system operators, who are obliged to apply it to those who are eligible.	<a href="https://www.energy-poverty.eu/measure-policy/social-tariff-natural-gas-and-electricity">https://www.energy-poverty.eu/measure-policy/social-tariff-natural-gas-and-electricity</a>
<b>Household Benefits Package</b>	<b>Ireland</b>		The Household Benefits Package is a package of allowances which help with the costs of running the household. The package is available to everyone aged over 70 and to people under age 70 in certain circumstances. This package includes an electricity and natural gas allowance.	<a href="https://www.citizeninformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/extra-social-welfare-benefits/household-benefits-package.html">https://www.citizeninformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/extra-social-welfare-benefits/household-benefits-package.html</a>
<b>Fuel Allowance</b>	<b>Ireland</b>		A Fuel Allowance is a payment under the National Fuel Scheme to help with the cost of heating the home during the winter months. It is paid to people who are dependent on long-term social welfare payments and who are unable to provide for their own heating needs. Only one Fuel Allowance is paid to a household. The best practice relates with being a specific support mechanism for winter seasons in order to tackle the difficulties of heating the home.	<a href="https://www.citizeninformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/extra-social-welfare-benefits/fuel-allowance.html">https://www.citizeninformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/extra-social-welfare-benefits/fuel-allowance.html</a>



<b>EnergyBank</b>	<b>Netherlands</b>		<p>This measure aims to assist households by providing short-term financial support for energy bills as well as energy advice through a voluntary advisor. Also, some small materials to improve energy efficiency are provided.</p> <p>The best practice is the creation of an involved assistance, which isn't only financial, but also energy advice and delivering materials.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.energiebanknederland.nl/">https://www.energiebanknederland.nl/</a></p>
<b>Social bonus for electricity</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<p>Disabled Low income households Pensioners Unemployed Vulnerable households. Disabled Low income households Pensioners Unemployed Vulnerable households</p>	<p>25% discount on the electricity bill for vulnerable households and 40% discount for severe vulnerable households from disconnection. It also includes a protection against disconnection for vulnerable consumers under certain circumstances. The inclusion of a special category for severe vulnerable households consubstantiates an additional financial support for these consumers, and it can be considered a best practice.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.bonosocial.gob.es/#beneficios">https://www.bonosocial.gob.es/#beneficios</a></p>
<b>Warm Home Discount</b>	<b>UK</b>	<p>A 'core' group of pensioners in receipt of certain benefits and a 'broader' group of other households, generally those eligible for Cold Weather Payments</p>	<p>The 'core' group receives an annual £140 rebate automatically on their electricity bill through a data matching process between suppliers and the DWP. 'Broader' group households have to apply for the discount and can miss out if they don't apply in time. Only larger suppliers (&gt;150,000 consumers) are required to pay the discount.</p>	<p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme">https://www.gov.uk/the-warm-home-discount-scheme</a></p>

### 3. Energy Advice Programme (formerly known as Energy Best Deal extra)

**Description:** EAP is delivered by 120 local Citizens Advice offices across England & Wales. It provides advice to fuel poor and vulnerable consumers who are struggling to pay their bills, require better deals on energy, need guidance on the most appropriate payment methods or information on how to access help from energy suppliers and the Government.

**Who?** Citizens Advice - funded by fuel suppliers through Warm Home Discount Industry Initiatives programme

**Where?** England & Wales

**When?** Funding is provided from October to March each year.



### **What is the best practice?**

Good quality advice provided on a wide range of energy issues. Clients are often referred for advice on other issues, e.g. debt, benefits. Plan to improve energy efficiency advice in future.

### **More information available at:**

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/Public/BESN%2018-19/Booklet%2018-19.pdf>

## **4. HEEPS (Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland)**

**Description:** A range of financial support: Warmer Homes Scotland (measures installed for homeowners on qualified benefit); area based scheme (measures installed in homes in targeted low income areas); Home Energy Scotland advice (see below); Zero interest loans for able to pay households up to £38,500, depending on measure; Equity Release (see below); Energy Efficiency Scotland Pilot Programmes (tests of new approaches).

**Who?** Scottish Government

**Where?** Scotland

**When?** The main components of the programme will continue. From 2020 they will be integrated with the enhanced, larger scale "Energy Efficient Scotland" infrastructure investment programme.

### **What is the best practice?**

Integrated nature of the financial support. Single point of access to the support through Home Energy Scotland (see below).

### **More information available at:**

<https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/EST%20Programmes%20In%20Scotland%20FINAL.pdf>

## **5. Home Energy Scotland (HES)**

**Description:** In Scotland, householders (owner occupiers, tenants) and smaller private landlords can access free, independent, personalised and impartial advice from Home Energy Scotland, provided on behalf of the Scottish Government by EST. There are three types of advice:

- Personalised advice over the phone by trained advisors working from regional advice centres across Scotland; focuses on energy efficiency support - both advice and referrals into grant support programmes for energy efficiency and referrals to energy tariffs and income support;
- Free, in-home expert advice for households identified as needing in-depth advice and support: very vulnerable households, people installing more complex home energy measures and some private landlords;
- Online advice consisting of both static webpages and online tools, managed and provided centrally by EST.

**Who?** Scottish Government/Energy Saving Trust (EST)

**Where?** Scotland

**When?** Ongoing. The programme has evolved from a programme established by Scottish Government at devolution in 1997.

**What is the best practice?** By providing a single point of contact for access to all HEEPS support programmes, Home Energy Scotland ensures that fuel poor households access all the relevant support that is available to them.

**More information available at:**

<https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/EST%20Programmes%20In%20Scotland%20FINAL.pdf>

## 6. Cold Weather Plan

**Description:** The Cold Weather Plan for England is a framework intended to protect the population from harm to health from cold weather. It aims to prevent the major avoidable effects on health during periods of cold weather in England by alerting people to the negative health effects of cold weather and enabling them to prepare and respond appropriately. It recommends a series of steps to reduce the risks to health from cold weather for:

- the NHS, local authorities, social care, and other public agencies
- professionals working with people at risk
- individuals, local communities and voluntary groups

The Plan describes the cold weather alert service which comprises of 5 levels (Levels 0-4), from year-round planning for cold weather, through winter and severe cold weather action, to a major national emergency. Each alert level aims to trigger a series of appropriate actions, described in the plan.

**Who?** Public Health England and NHS England

**Where?** England

**When?** Annual plan, active since 2011

**What is the good practice?** The plan is a good practice guide for its target audience and includes key public health messages to protect health in cold weather.

**More information available at:**

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/748492/the\\_cold\\_weather\\_plan\\_for\\_england\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748492/the_cold_weather_plan_for_england_2018.pdf)

## 7. NICE guidance on excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes

**Description:** The guideline sets out guidance to health and social care practitioners, housing officers, energy suppliers and associated front line workers on how to reduce the health risks (including preventable deaths) associated with living in a cold home. It aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people vulnerable to the cold. It focuses in particular on local strategies and 'single point of contact' housing and health referral services to improve home energy efficiency standards and reduce energy bills.

The guideline includes recommendations on:

- Developing a strategy for people living in cold homes
- Identifying people at risk from cold homes (with specific reference to the fuel poor)
- Training practitioners to help people with cold homes
- Raising awareness of how to keep warm at home
- Making sure buildings meet required standards

Public Health England has recently produced an e-learning module for front-line health workers to help them identify people at risk of poor health from cold homes.

**Who?** National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

**When?** Published in 2015 and checked in 2019

**Where?** England

### **What is the best practice?**

Encourages local initiatives to develop strategies and establish 'single point of contact housing and health' referral services to provide tailored solutions for people referred. However, while some local authorities and health services have adopted the guideline, many have not. Fuel poverty campaigners advocate the guideline is made obligatory for all local areas.

**More information is available at:** <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

## **8. Warm Homes Oldham**

### **Description:**

Home visits to assess consumer's situation and offer:

- Advice on how to reduce energy use around the home and use heating controls effectively;
- Help with switching energy supplier or tariff and claiming the Warm Homes Discount
- Small energy saving measures (like draught-proofing, LED light bulbs and reflective radiator foils);
- Oil filled radiators in an emergency no heat situation.

With permission, it is also possible to refer to:

- Age UK Oldham for furniture, minor adaptations and repairs;
- Auriga Services for emergency credit vouchers for electricity or gas and support with maximizing income, claiming benefit entitlements, getting out of energy or water debt and making trust fund applications;
- BBC Children in Need Emergency Essentials for furniture and white goods;
- Citizens Advice Oldham for free, confidential advice;
- Emergency Central Heating Offer (ECHO) for free broken boiler repairs (subject to eligibility and survey);
- E. ON Energy Solutions for free faulty or inefficient boiler replacements and cavity wall or loft insulation (subject to eligibility and survey);
- Food Bank Oldham for food parcels;
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service for a fire safety check and smoke alarms;
- Local Welfare Provision Oldham for help to meet short term emergency / immediate support needs or establish / maintain a home in the community;
- Social Prescribing Oldham for health and wellbeing services;
- Warm Homes Fund Greater Manchester for a free first-time gas central heating system (subject to eligibility and survey).

**Who?** Oldham Local Authority, NHS Oldham CCG, Oldham Home Improvement Agency

**Where?** Oldham

**When?** Ongoing

**What is the best practice?**

Innovative One Stop advice for consumers in Oldham - award winning.

## 9. Networking and Action to Tackle Vulnerability (2gether4vulnerability)

**Description:** ASSIST (Support Network for Household Energy Saving) is a European project funded by the European Commission under the H2020 programme. Its aim is to fight energy poverty by actively engaging consumers in the energy market, generating a positive change of behaviour in relation to energy consumption and to influence the design of energy poverty-oriented policies. Addressing both energy and social issues, ASSIST intends to contribute to tackling the main barriers of the energy market (taking into account electricity and heating) faced by a specific segment of people: vulnerable consumers with special focus on energy poor. ASSIST, started on the 1st of May 2017, foresees the development of several activities over a 3-year period in 6 European countries: Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Poland, Belgium and Finland.

**Who?** Consortium of 12 partners, Coordinator: AISFOR SRL

**Where?** European (in 6 countries)

**When?** 2017 - 2020

**What is the best practice?**

ASSIST actions are carried out in each country to test possible actions to support vulnerable consumers/energy poor to be more efficient, i.e. reduce their energy bills or better satisfy their energy needs. Vulnerable consumers are led hand-in-hand throughout an energy efficient pilot action to demonstrate that a good domestic energy efficient process is technically and economically feasible and that it leads to energy savings. The delivery of national actions helps identify effective means to tackle the energy poverty issue, facilitate their replication in other countries and favour their take-up in European/National policies.

**More information available at:** <https://www.assist2gether.eu/eu-home>

## 10. LIFE Integrated Project “Implementation of Air Quality Plan for Małopolska Region – Małopolska in a healthy atmosphere”

**Description:** The Małopolska Air Quality Plan (MAQP) determines tasks for local governments to eliminate obsolete solid fuel boilers and modernize household heating systems for those based on environmentally friendly energy sources (like natural gas, light fuel oil, renewable energy, electric heating, district heating) or modern solid fuel boilers meeting high quality standards in terms of pollutant emissions. However, the level of implementation of these corrective actions is insufficient e.g. in 2013 – 2015 the achieved reduction of particulate matter and benzo(a)pyrene emissions reached only 8% of the target for 2023. There is also significant untapped potential for emission reduction by improving the energy efficiency of buildings.

**Who?** 62 partners: 55 Municipalities from Małopolska, Malopolska Region, Silesian Region, Association Krakow Smog Alert, KAPE National Energy Conservation Agency, VITO, Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic

**Where?** Poland (regional)

**When?** 2015-2013

### What is the best practice?

Tasks of Eco-managers:

- Providing air-protection advisory and administrative services for residents;
- Supporting municipalities in obtaining funds from EU and national sources to implement air protection measures;
- Encouraging citizens to replace old boilers with environmentally friendly energy sources;
- Conducting environmental education in schools, promoting environmentally friendly behaviour among children;
- Controlling compliance with air protection regulations;
- Encouraging citizens to thermal modernization of their houses and providing professional advisory by means of thermographic measurements of buildings.

**More information available at:** <https://powietrze.malopolska.pl/>

## 11. Actions in Low Income Households to Improve Energy Efficiency through Visits and Energy Diagnosis (ACHIEVE)

**Description:** The long-term unemployed, volunteers, and students were mobilized and trained to develop a large-scale energy advisory service for low-income households facing difficulties with their energy bills. The service was based on home visits, whose main purposes were:

- To understand the energy consumption, bills, and habits of vulnerable consumers, and to check their appliances with a set of reporting/analysing tools;
- To distribute and install a set of free energy and water saving devices, and give advice to the households on how to implement further practical measures for saving energy;
- To analyse which longer-term solutions may be provided in order to improve the situation of those affected by linking local actors to a concerted local action plan.

**Who?** CLER - Comité de Liaison Energies Renouvelables (Coordinator), France; FOCUS - društvo za sonaraven razvoj, Slovenia; CARITAS - Energiesparservice Caritasverband Frankfurt e.V., Germany; GERES - Groupe Energies Renouvelables, Environnement et Solidarités France; IDEMU - Institut de l'Ecologie en Milieu Urbain, France; SWEA - Severn Wye Energy Agency, United Kingdom.

**Where?** Bulgaria, France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Slovenia

**When?** 2011-2014

**What is the best practice?**

Provided practical experiences and skills for students and long-term unemployed people, allowed them to study energy-related disciplines, therefore making them more competitive on the job market. The aim of ACHIEVE was to contribute to practical solutions (energy use and behaviour) and structural solutions (retrofitting buildings) in order to reduce energy poverty.

**More information available at:**

<https://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/en/projects/achieve>

## 12. Reduce Energy use and Change Habits (REACH)

**Description:** Project REACH had two overall objectives:

- To empower energy poor households to take actions to save energy and change their habits;
- To establish energy poverty as an issue that demands tailor-made policies and measures at local, national and EU level.

**Who?** Focus – Association for Sustainable Development, Slovenia, DOOR Society for Sustainable Development Design, Croatia, Energy agency of Plovdiv, Bulgaria and Macedonian Centre for Energy Efficiency, Macedonia. Co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the European Union

**Where?** Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia

**When?** 2014-2017

**What is the best practice?**

REACH focused on:

- Providing an overview of the situation in the field of energy poverty at the national level of partner countries and at the local level for pilot areas. It first familiarized the partners with energy poverty challenges and solutions in various EU countries to help them gain an insight into the field of energy poverty;
- Transferring knowledge and skills from experienced partners to teachers, volunteers and energy advisors, who then performed energy advising in energy poor households;
- Activities that were needed to visit energy poor households and empower them to reduce their energy and water use. This brought free advising about energy consumption and tailor-made advice to energy poor households;
- Establishing energy poverty as a policy issue that needs structural tailor-made solutions. Policy recommendations, both for national and EU level, were provided and a mix of activities to place energy poverty on the national and EU policy agenda were implemented.



**More information available at:** <http://reach-energy.eu/>

### 13. Power Up

**Description:** Advisors contact clients identified as vulnerable to provide advice and support on income maximisation, energy efficiency, and health and wellbeing issues. Most is telephone assistance although face to face and home visits are also provided where necessary.

**Who?** Citizens Advice Coventry, funded by Western Power Distribution

**Where?** West Midlands (England)

**When?** Year round, ongoing contract

**What is the best practice?**

Developing trust and relationships with clients in order that they feel confident in the ability to help and support them. Network of agencies to refer to along with clear referral pathways. Willingness to explore solutions to health and wellbeing issues as well as the main objective.

**More information available at:**  
<https://www.coventrycitizensadvice.org.uk/project/power-up/>

### 14. FIESTA PROJECT

**Description:** The project helped in tackling energy poverty in Croatia, Bulgaria, Spain, Cyprus and Italy by providing families with door to door energy audits to help them understand the energy consumption and make energy efficient decisions. FIESTA turns families into virtuous energy savers and makes their home more comfortable and easier to heat and cool - and helps them save money in the process.

**Who?** 19 partners from Croatia, Bulgaria, Spain, Cyprus and Italy. Co-funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme of the European Union.

**Where?** Croatia, Bulgaria, Spain, Cyprus and Italy

**When?** FIESTA project started in October 2014 and lasts 36 months (ending in September 2017).

**What is the best practice?**

The municipalities behind this project also set up and promoted consumer purchase groups or discount programmes with the support of consumer organisations, retailers and installers, thereby allowing families to exploit their collective buying power to secure better deals on energy efficient products and RES installations.

**More information available at:** <http://www.fiesta-audit.eu/en/>



## 15. Ecopack

**Description:** Households willing to improve the energy performance of their houses may benefit from the Ecopack, which consists of a zero-percent interest instalment loan for the realization of several energy saving works. In addition, the Ecopack grants the right to the energy subsidies as described in the corresponding section under "Primes Energie". The eligible works include the installation of certain renewable energy devices. The 0% interest loan is granted for the construction of at least one energy-saving work. The loanable amount lies between € 1,000 and € 30,000 and is repayable over up to 15 years. The credit committee determines the repayment term depending on the financial situation of the applicant. The Walloon Housing Fund for large families (FLW) and the Walloon Social Credit Corporation (SWCS) were empowered by the Walloon Government to grant the zero-per cent loans.

**Who?** Walloon Housing Fund for large families (FLW) and the Walloon Social Credit Corporation (SWCS)

**Where?** Wallonia region - Belgium

**When?** Ongoing

### **What is the best practice?**

The Wallonia region provides zero-interest loans to certain vulnerable households to fund energy efficiency improvements in the home. Results: 5,643 zero-interest loans were disbursed in 2012-2013, of which 72% to lower income households.

### **More information available at:**

<https://www.flw.be/>

The France Government has a similar measure (Eco-loan at zero interest rate):

<https://www.energy-poverty.eu/measure-policy/eco-loan-zero-interest-rate>

## 16. VERBUND Electricity Assistance Fund

**Description:** Affected persons can contact Caritas in more than 30 social counselling centres in all federal provinces. To start with, the individual situation is analysed and suitable measures are determined on. The fund can be used no matter from which energy company the affected household obtains its electricity. Each year, 400 to 500 households can be supported in this way. In addition, VERBUND finances the energy consulting which would in some instances be subject to a charge, as well as assistance costs such as transportation of replacement appliances. Other companies are invited to contribute to the 3-pillar principle of the Electricity Assistance Fund as well.

**Who?** Caritas and VERBUND

**Where?** Austria

**When?** Since 2009

### **What is the best practice?**

This fund helps energy poor consumers in 3 ways: get professional energy consulting, replacement appliances and bridge financing for electricity bills. Results: The measure supports 400 to 500 households per year.

### **More information available at:**

<https://www.verbund.com/en-de/about-verbund/responsibility/social-issues/electricity-assistance-fund>



## CONCLUSIONS

The research and collection of best practices available in this report demonstrates that many different activities and projects are already taking place across the EU on energy poverty. STEP will take into consideration these best practices and when suitable adjust and replicate them.

Regarding the best practices to raise awareness for energy poverty, the examples of creating national alliances, such as the ones available in the UK and Spain, reflect the importance of teaming up for the same purpose. Working together on energy poverty is one of the strengths that STEP Consortium will encourage at European and national level.

On the other hand, the creation of tools, platforms or other materials have a wider effect if they remain available to be used by other with the same mission.

STEP will consider these best practices when developing its communication activities to raise awareness on the topic, and also when advocating for measures to tackle energy poverty. Additionally, STEP training materials will be publicly available to be replicated in the future.

Concerning the best practices to reach energy consumers, the starting point is to respond to two important needs: establishment of referral procedures and diagnosis of energy poor consumers.

From the collected practices it's important to notice that collaboration and involvement with professionals from different sectors, such as social and health services is crucial. It's also essential to establish simple referral services, one-stop shops that ensure the best outcomes and that nobody slips through the net. Regarding effective models to reach energy poor consumers, the projects that provide mapping and characterization of the most vulnerable populations to energy poverty are also very relevant for STEP.

When establishing a network of energy advisors and training frontline workers, STEP will consider these best practices as a role model and an important starting point.

The practices related with measures to tackle energy poverty, collected in this report, have a wide scope. From policy measures: social tariff and protection against disconnection, to energy advice, home visits and simple low-cost measures to reduce energy poverty.

When addressing energy poor consumers STEP partners will rely on these best practices within the activities they implement in their countries.