EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.

⚠ *Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum).)*

PROJECT	
Participant:	Environmental and Territorial Management Institute
PIC number:	949534359
Project name and acronym:	Powering Citizens — POWERINGCITIZENS

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	[3]
Event name:	Local events on the Energy Citizenship
Type:	Energy cafe
In situ/online:	In situ
Location:	Berlin (Germany),Ancona (Italy),Kavaja (Albania),Den Haag (Netherlands),Prishtina (Kosovo),Kastoria,Heraklion and Chania (Greece).
Date(s):	14 June 2025 21 June 2025 5 July 2025 24 July 2025 26 September 2025 16 December 2025 2 December 2025 24 January 2026 25 January 2026 27 January 2026 28 January 2026
Website(s) (if any):	https://poweringcitizens.eu/news/
Participants	
Female:	155
Male:	75
Non-binary:	1
Prefer not to say	3
From country 1 (Greece)	47
From country 2 (Kosovo)	45

From country 3 (Albania)	30		
From country 4 (Germany)	32		
From country 5 (The Netherlands)	22		
From country 6 (Italy)	19		
From country 7 (Montenegro)	11		
From country 8 (Bosnia and Herzegovina)	6		
From country 9 (Ukraine)	5		
From country 10 (Croatia)	4		
From country 11 (France)	4		
From country 12 (Portugall)	3		
From country 13 (Poland)	2		
From country 14 (Spain)	2		
From country 15 (Bulgaria)	1		
From country 16 (Hungary)	1		
Total number of participants:	234	From total number of countries:	16

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

The Energy Cafés were organized by the project partners in their respective countries as small, community-based gatherings aimed at engaging individuals sharing experiences and concerns about energy poverty.

CRN organized 3 Energy Cafés, on the 14th of June (MANCHMAL PALTZ Action Day on Manga-Bell-Platz) , on the 21th June – Fête de la Musique at Centre Français de Berlin and on the 5th July – 15th Intercultural Football Tournament & BAOBAB Diversity Fair. The sessions were implemented as informal engagement activities integrated into larger community events to create an accessible and relaxed environment. Participants could voluntarily join discussions, interact with informational materials and games, and share experiences related to energy bills, access to advice, and support mechanisms. The facilitation focused on open dialogue and listening to participants' perspectives.

UNIVPM organized 2 Energy Cafés on the 24th of July 2025 and the 26th of September 2025 at the University Campus and Piazza Roma, allowing engagement with both university participants and local citizens. Participants were encouraged to share their perspectives and experiences related to energy poverty, renewable energy solutions, and the potential of renewable energy communities to address energy affordability challenges. The sessions followed an open and participatory format, including informational materials, informal discussions, and interactive activities.

ETMI organized one Energy Café on the 16th of December at "Charles Telford Erikson" Professional School. This event engaged students and teachers in a participatory discussion on energy-related challenges. Participants shared experiences related to energy affordability, housing conditions, and household energy consumption, while also discussing practical solutions to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs

ECREC conducted one Energy Café on 24th of January 2026 in The Hague, bringing together residents struggling with high energy prices driven by geopolitical tensions and gas field closures.

Participants reflected on themes such as energy poverty, renewable energy solutions, housing energy efficiency, and the role of local support mechanisms such as municipal energy coaches. The session strengthened motivation to seek support and highlighted the role of community-based guidance in navigating energy challenges

BGF organized one Energy Café on the 2nd of December 2025 in Prishtina, with participation also involving citizens from other municipalities such as Istog, Peja, Mitrovica, and Ferizaj. The sessions engaged youth, students, civil society representatives, local residents, and energy activists. The event combined open discussions, guided storytelling, and participatory reflections on everyday energy practices. Participants shared experiences related to energy affordability, coping strategies, and expectations regarding a fair energy transition, while qualitative documentation and interviews captured their perspectives.

INZEB organized 3 Energy Cafés on the 25th of January in Kastoria (Northern Greece), on the 27th of January Herakleion (Crete), and on the 28th of January Chania (Crete) to capture perspectives from different climatic and socio-economic contexts. The sessions were conducted as participatory engagements using structured questionnaires as discussion tools rather than formal surveys. The facilitation encouraged open dialogue and reflection on everyday energy practices, housing conditions, climate impacts, and perceptions of energy justice. This approach enabled participants to share lived experiences and identify policy-relevant insights related to energy poverty and the energy transition.

Across all partner countries Energy Cafés effectively engaged diverse communities in open dialogue on energy poverty and the energy transition. They created accessible spaces for sharing experiences and highlighted common concerns about energy affordability, while emphasizing the importance of local support and community-based solutions.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	03/3/2026	Initial version (new MFF).

POWERING CITIZENS

Empowering energy citizenship among energy-poor people through joint actions

POLICY MEMO

PROJECT CODE: **101147083-POWERINGCITIZENS-CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV**
DURATION: **01/06/2024 to 30/05/2026**
AUTHORS: Dr. Kamila Franz and Maxine Salmon–Cottreau, Edona Lekaj Meivis Struga, Liri Kuci, Dr. Mosè Rossi, Jim Boelhouwer, Alice Corovessi

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1. Introduction

This Policy Memo examines the extent to which national energy and climate policies address the growing challenge of energy poverty across project partner countries: Germany, Italy, Albania, the Netherlands, Kosovo, and Greece and proposes potential recommendations. It focuses on the alignment between National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and the real-life conditions experienced by households, particularly vulnerable groups affected by rising energy costs, inefficient housing, and socio-economic inequalities.

Energy poverty has emerged as a critical issue within the broader energy transition, especially in the context of recent energy price shocks and increasing climate ambitions at the European level. While NECPs provide the main strategic framework for achieving decarbonization, energy efficiency, and energy security targets for the period 2021–2030, their capacity to integrate social dimensions, such as affordability and equitable access to energy, varies significantly across countries.

The scope of this policy memo is to deliver a comprehensive assessment of how energy poverty is addressed within national frameworks, by analyzing NECP-related policy commitments and examining current trends across countries. It seeks to identify key gaps between policy intentions and real-life conditions, while highlighting both shared challenges and country-specific structural differences. The analysis is further enriched by insights from community-level engagement activities, such as Energy Cafés, ensuring that policy findings are grounded in the lived experiences of affected households.

The analysis highlights a set of consistent findings across countries. Despite growing recognition of energy poverty in policy frameworks, significant gaps remain in translating commitments into effective and targeted action. In particular, challenges persist in reaching the most vulnerable households, ensuring adequate and sustained financial support, and addressing structural drivers such as inefficient housing. Moreover, weak integration between energy, social, and housing policies continues to limit the overall effectiveness of interventions. By combining policy review with empirical observations and stakeholder perspectives, this policy memo aims to contribute to a better understanding of how energy transition policies can be made more socially inclusive and effective in addressing energy poverty. The policy memo address several recommendations such as **Strengthening policy frameworks** by defining clear energy poverty targets, improving definitions, and aligning NECPs with social, economic, and environmental strategies, **improve monitoring systems** by establishing integrated data platforms and energy poverty observatories, and adopting multidimensional assessment approaches, **promoting inclusive renovation programs** focused on vulnerable households, **enhancing financial mechanisms** by shifting from short-term subsidies to long-term investments (e.g., grants, soft loans, energy efficiency funds) and Increasing the awareness through targeted campaigns and stakeholder engagement to inform citizens about energy poverty and available support.

2. Methodology of the policy memo

The methodology of this policy memo is based on a qualitative and comparative research approach, combining desk research, participatory data collection and policy analysis.

Desk-based research was conducted to analyze the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and relevant national legislation, policy documents, and reports. This included the identification of key requirements, targets, and measures related to energy poverty, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and consumer protection. The analysis also drew on secondary data sources such as EU statistics (e.g., EU-SILC), national statistical offices, and reports from research institutions and international organizations.

Contextual analysis was carried out for each country (Germany, Italy, Albania, the Netherlands, Kosovo, and Greece), focusing on: national energy systems and transition pathways, policy frameworks addressing energy poverty, current trends and situation to every country related to the energy poverty, socio-economic and housing-related drivers of vulnerability.

Gap analysis was performed to assess the alignment between NECP commitments and the actual situation of energy poverty. This involved comparing policy objectives with observed outcomes, identifying discrepancies in areas such as definitions, monitoring systems, targeting of vulnerable groups, financing mechanisms, and implementation capacity. The policy memo incorporates insights from Energy Cafés, participatory engagement activities conducted in each country. These sessions provided first-hand perspectives from citizens, including vulnerable groups, on energy affordability, housing conditions, access to support measures, and perceptions of the energy transition. Each of the partner organizations has conducted Energy Cafes with local communities to fully understand their needs and expectations towards the level of energy poverty. The Policy Memo incorporates qualitative findings from energy poverty surveys conducted from each partner country, which gathers quantitative evidence from households across partner countries. The survey complements the qualitative insights by providing comparable data on energy expenditure, housing conditions, and the financial impact of energy costs, as well as on behavioural responses to energy-related pressures. This mixed-method approach enables a comprehensive assessment of both policy frameworks and real-world impacts, supporting evidence-based recommendations for more inclusive and effective energy policies.

3. The context analysis

3.1. Germany

3.1.1. National Policy Framework and Obligations for Addressing Energy Poverty in Germany

The current situation in Germany is characterized by a rapid expansion of renewable energy, persistent challenges in energy efficiency, continued reliance on fossil fuels in some sectors, and heightened attention to energy affordability and security following the energy price crisis of 2021–2023 (European Commission, 2023; Clean Energy Wire, 2024). Within this context, the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) plays a central strategic role as Germany's main planning and reporting instrument under EU energy and climate governance.[1]

In terms of electricity generation, renewable energy sources now account for a very substantial share of total production, with wind and solar playing a dominant role. Germany has accelerated permitting procedures and grid expansion to support this growth, and recent years have seen record additions of photovoltaic capacity[2]. At the same time, the phase-out of nuclear energy has been completed, and coal use is being progressively reduced, although it still plays a role in security-of-supply considerations during periods of high demand[3]. Despite progress in the power sector, overall energy consumption remains strongly influenced by the building and transport sectors, where fossil fuels continue to dominate. Space heating is still largely based on natural gas and oil, making households vulnerable to price fluctuations and contributing to both climate and social challenges[4]. The pace of deep renovation of existing buildings remains below what would be required to meet 2030 climate and energy efficiency targets [5]. Energy prices and affordability have become a central political and social issue since the recent energy crisis. Although wholesale prices have stabilized compared to their 2022 peak, household energy bills remain high by historical standards. The German government has implemented a series of temporary relief measures,

[1] European Parliament and Council (2018). Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action. Official Journal of the European Union.

[2] BMWK – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (2024). Energiewende in Germany: Renewable Energy Expansion and Policy Updates. Berlin.

[3] Clean Energy Wire (CLEW) (2024). Germany's greenhouse gas emissions and climate targets. Berlin.

[4] European Environment Agency (2023). Energy poverty in Europe: Indicators, impacts and policy responses. EEA Report. Copenhagen.

[5] European Commission (2023). 2023 Country Report – Germany. European Semester. Brussels.

including price brakes and direct transfers, to cushion the social impact, but these instruments are by design short-term and do not replace structural solutions based on efficiency and system change [6] [7]. Germany's National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) is a ten-year strategic framework (2021–2030) mandated for all EU Member States under the Governance Regulation of the Energy Union (European Parliament and Council, 2018; European Commission, 2020). It outlines how Germany intends to meet national and EU climate and energy targets and to contribute to the Union's climate neutrality objectives under the European Green Deal and the Fit for 55 package [8] [9]. At its core, the NECP integrates policy across the five dimensions of the EU Energy Union: decarbonization, energy efficiency, energy security, internal energy market development, and research, innovation and competitiveness to guide national policy choices (European Commission, 2020). It provides quantified targets, policy measures and monitoring frameworks that aim to align national actions with collective EU objectives for 2030. In the decarbonization dimension, the NECP builds on the Federal Climate Action Act and defines sectoral pathways across energy, industry, transport, buildings and agriculture [10] . With regard to renewable energy, it confirms the strategic priority of massively expanding wind and solar power and of increasing the share of renewables in electricity consumption to very high levels by 2030, supported by reforms in planning law, auction systems and grid infrastructure [11]. Energy efficiency constitutes another central pillar of the NECP. Cross-sectoral targets and measures are defined, with a strong emphasis on the building sector. However, current trends indicate that additional efforts will be needed to meet the 2030 targets, especially with regard to renovation rates and implementation capacity [12] [13]. In the dimension of energy security, the NECP reflects a strategic shift away from dependence on single external suppliers and towards a more diversified, resilient and increasingly renewable-based energy system. Short-term measures such as LNG infrastructure and emergency preparedness have increased resilience, while the long-term strategy focuses on reducing overall fossil fuel demand [14] [15]. From a social perspective, the NECP acknowledges the importance of consumer protection and affordability, mainly through regulatory safeguards, basic supply obligations and links to social policy instruments. However, energy poverty is not yet fully integrated as a distinct, measurable policy objective within the NECP and is instead treated indirectly through broader social protection mechanisms[16].

3.1.2. Current Status and Trends of Energy Poverty in Germany

Germany prioritizes affordable energy as a core pillar of its energy transition, recognizing it as essential for social stability and economic well-being. **The government does not treat energy poverty as an isolated**

[6] BMWK – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (2023). Germany's updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021–2030. Berlin.

[7] European Commission (2023). 2023 Country Report – Germany. European Semester. Brussels.

[8] European Commission (2019). The European Green Deal. COM(2019) 640 final. Brussels.

[9] European Commission (2021). 'Fit for 55': Delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality. COM(2021) 550 final. Brussels.

[10] BMWK – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (2023). Germany's updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021–2030. Berlin.

[11] BMWK – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (2024). Energiewende in Germany: Renewable Energy Expansion and Policy Updates. Berlin.

[12] European Commission (2023). 2023 Country Report – Germany. European Semester. Brussels.

[13] Clean Energy Wire (CLEW) (2024). Germany's greenhouse gas emissions and climate targets. Berlin.

[14] European Commission (2020). Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of Germany for the period 2021–2030. Brussels.

[15] European Commission (2023). 2023 Country Report – Germany. European Semester. Brussels.

[16] Table.Media (2024). Germany's updated NECP and the social dimension of the energy transition. Brussels/Berlin.

issue but integrates it into a broader social welfare framework. Under Germany's constitution, all individuals have a right to a minimum standard of living, which includes access to energy as part of basic welfare[17]. Germany lacks a singular definition of energy poverty. The most common method considers households spending more than 10% of their income on energy. A more nuanced measure includes both energy expenses and relative income levels to avoid misclassifying high-income households with high usage[18]. Despite support programs, energy poverty has intensified, particularly since the 2022 energy crisis. According to the 2024 European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) survey, 6.2% of German households couldn't sufficiently heat their homes, and 4.7% fell behind on payments. A study by the Öko-Institut for the German Environment Agency (UBA) found that 10% of households were highly vulnerable to energy price shocks.[19] The report "Gefahr der Energiearmut wächst" ("The Risk of Energy Poverty is Growing") details how rising prices disproportionately burden low-income groups. Between March 2022 and June 2023, median household energy costs rose by €52/month. For low-income households, energy costs rose from 12% to 16% of income, while higher-income groups remained around 4%. Energy poverty increased from 14.5% in 2021 to 25.2% in May 2022, excluding relief measures[20]. Vulnerable groups include the unemployed, retirees, single parents, and those in poorly insulated homes. Even middle-income households (earning 60–80% of the median) were increasingly affected, with 40% experiencing energy poverty in 2022, double the rate of prior years. Among households below the poverty line, the rate rose from 49% to 65% [21]. Structural factors, including poorly insulated buildings, limited tenant control over efficiency upgrades, reliance on fossil-fuel heating, and regional disparities, exacerbate vulnerability. Urban rental markets, single-parent households, pensioners, and unemployed individuals are most at risk. Moreover, according to the study from the Energy Poverty Hub for Germany, around 16% of the population have leaks and rot in their dwellings comparing with 15.6% of the EU target value. Additionally, around 21% of the total population is at risk of social exclusion and risk of poverty (21% is the EU target).

3.1.3. Gap Analysis: NECP Commitments vs Actual Situation of Energy Poverty

While Germany's NECP establishes a comprehensive policy architecture for the energy transition, its treatment of energy poverty reveals several structural gaps. The plan focuses primarily on system-level transformation and assumes that social policies will address distributional impacts. As a result, structural drivers of energy poverty such as low incomes, inefficient housing and high energy costs are not systematically addressed within energy policy planning itself [22]. Germany currently lacks a single official definition and a unified monitoring framework for energy poverty[23]. This makes it difficult to set clear targets, track progress and design highly targeted measures. NECP reporting focuses on energy and climate indicators, but not on social outcome indicators such as arrears on utility bills or the inability to keep homes

[17] Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). "What is Social Assistance?" Last modified February 21, 2023.

[18] Henger, Ralph, und Maximilian Stockhausen. Gefahr der Energiearmut wächst. IW-Kurzbericht Nr. 55/2022. Köln: Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft, 3. Juli 2022.

[19] Verbraucherzentrale Bundesverband. "Mit gezielten Fördermaßnahmen zur Energieeffizienz." Pressemitteilung, 12. Mai 2025.

[20] Henger, Ralph, und Maximilian Stockhausen. Gefahr der Energiearmut wächst. IW-Kurzbericht Nr. 55/2022. Köln: Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft, 3. Juli 2022.

[21] Henger, R., & Stockhausen, M. (2022). Gefahr der Energiearmut wächst (IW-Kurzbericht 55/2022). Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft

[22] European Environment Agency (2023). Energy poverty in Europe: Indicators, impacts and policy responses. EEA Report. Copenhagen.

[23] Country profile on energy poverty

adequately warm [24] [25]. Short-term consumer protection instruments, including disconnection safeguards and temporary price relief measures, are important for preventing acute hardship, but they do not substitute for long-term structural solutions. These instruments are also not central elements of NECP progress monitoring, which weakens the link between social outcomes and energy transition governance[26]. A further structural challenge concerns housing tenure. Renters often live in inefficient buildings but have limited influence over renovation decisions, while they bear the energy costs. The NECP does not sufficiently address these split-incentive problems through targeted renovation and affordability instruments, even though they are crucial for sustainably reducing energy poverty risks [27].

3.1.4. Insights from Energy Cafés

Energy Cafés in Germany were organized in both urban and rural settings,The sessions were implemented as informal engagement activities integrated into larger community events to create an accessible and relaxed environment. Participants could voluntarily join discussions, interact with informational materials and games, and share experiences related to energy bills, access to advice, and support mechanisms. The facilitation focused on open dialogue and listening to participants' perspectives. In the energy cafes, members from the local communities were asked about the current conditions towards energy poverty and their expectations. In the table (tab. 1) are shown the topics of discussion and the findings. Most of the citizens are struggling to pay the bills on time and are wishing for lower energy prices. Moreover, they talked about the lack of enabling policies that might better support the vulnerable communities. Additionally, they mentioned that most of the decisions are not fully transparent and the citizens do not have a voice in the decision-making regarding the policies and instruments addressing energy poverty.

Table 1 Insights from Energy Cafes in Germany

Theme	Key findings	Expectations
Energy bills	Struggle to pay the bills	Lower energy bill
Policies	Feeling of unfairness	Lower energy bill
Transparency	Lack of transparency	The right to influence the decisions on energy poverty

Summary of information:

- Currently, the country has in place only short-term relief measures (energy price caps, subsidies, one-off payments), which mitigate immediate hardship but do not address structural vulnerabilities.
- There are missing long-term interventions targeting energy efficiency improvements, enhanced social protection, and policies ensuring the energy transition is equitable.
- There is no clear definition of energy poverty and absence of operationalization of energy poverty indicators.
- The vulnerable communities have difficulties paying the energy bill on time due to low incomes.

[24] European Commission (2020). Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan of Germany for the period 2021–2030. Brussels.

[25] European Commission (2023). 2023 Country Report – Germany. European Semester. Brussels.

[26] BMWK – Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (2023). Germany's updated National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) 2021–2030. Berlin.

[27] European Environment Agency (2023). Energy poverty in Europe: Indicators, impacts and policy responses. EEA Report. Copenhagen.

- Split-incentives is a barrier where the person who pays for an investment (landlord, owner) is not the one who benefits from it and tenants do not have the right to make renovations on the building to improve the energy efficiency, so neither side has a strong motivation to act.

3.2. Italy

3.2.1. National Policy Framework and Obligations for Addressing Energy Poverty in Italy

Italy aligns with the European Union (EU)'s definition of energy poverty, understood as a condition in which households are forced to limit their energy consumption to levels that compromise health, comfort, and well-being, due to the combined effects of low-income, high-energy costs, and poor energy efficiency of buildings. The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), adopted in 2019 and updated in 2023-2024, explicitly recognizes energy poverty as a key social dimension of the national energy transition. The plan reflects a growing awareness that achieving climate neutrality must go hand in hand with ensuring affordability and social inclusion. In this framework, the NECP sets out several core commitments:

- Quantitative target: The plan aims to reduce the share of households experiencing energy poverty to below 8%, starting from an estimated baseline of around 8.6% in 2016, as calculated by the Bank of Italy and used by the Italian Observatory on Energy Poverty (OIPE)[28]
- Monitoring framework: The NECP mandates the systematic monitoring of energy poverty through OIPE, established in 2019, and the adoption of a composite national indicator combining high energy expenditure with deprivation metrics (e.g., zero heating expenditure paired with low total expenditure).[29]
- Policy instruments: A broad portfolio of measures is identified to alleviate energy poverty, balancing short-term financial support and long-term structural interventions, such as: i) the "social bonuses" for electricity and gas, introduced in 2008, which provide bill discounts for vulnerable consumers. Since 2021, these benefits have been granted automatically based on income data, increasing coverage among eligible households; ii) tax deduction schemes for energy efficiency and seismic renovation (e.g., Ecobonus and later Superbonus 110%) include provisions to enhance access for low-income households and social housing, notably through the transferability of tax credits to third parties; iii) the complementary mechanisms, such as the National Energy Efficiency Fund (NEEF), local heating subsidies, the National Energy Income Fund (NEIF, a revolving fund enabling low-income families to install Photovoltaic (PV) systems), and the promotion of energy communities with social objectives, contribute to addressing structural vulnerabilities[30].

3.2.2. Current Status and Trends of Energy Poverty in Italy

Despite the establishment of a coherent policy framework, energy poverty remains a structural and multidimensional issue in Italy, deeply intertwined with socio-economic inequalities, housing quality, and regional disparities. The phenomenon has been further exacerbated by the recent energy price shocks of 2021-2022, which significantly increased household energy expenditures and widened existing vulnerabilities. According to the OIPE (Energy Observatory Hub in Italy), as well as recent analyses from the Research Group on Social Indicators (GRINS) and the Bank of Italy, approximately 8-9% of Italian

[28] Castellini, M., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & Valbonesi, P. (Eds.). (2023). *La povertà energetica in Italia: Rapporto 2023 dell'Osservatorio Italiano sulla Povertà Energetica (OIPE).* Osservatorio Italiano sulla Povertà Energetica.

[29] ONPE. (2021). Context and schemes to tackle energy poverty in Europe: Italy. Observatoire National de la Précarité Énergétique.

[30] ONPE. (2021). Context and schemes to tackle energy poverty in Europe: Italy. Observatoire National de la Précarité Énergétique

households are currently estimated to be in energy poverty, corresponding to about 2.2 million families, or roughly 8.5% of all households [31] [32] [33]. The social dimension of energy poverty is particularly evident among families with children. A national study conducted in collaboration with Save the Children revealed that, by the end of 2021, around 583,000 families and nearly 950,000 minors, equivalent to roughly 10% of all minors in Italy, were living in energy-poor conditions. These households often inhabit dwellings that are poorly insulated, inadequately heated, and suffer from limited ventilation and natural light, directly affecting health and educational outcomes.[34] Indicators of material deprivation confirm this structural weakness. Before the energy crisis, around 11% of the Italian population reported being unable to keep their home adequately warm, compared to a European Union average of about 7% in 2019. Moreover, Italy continues to record above-average levels of housing deficiencies, including dampness, structural deterioration, and overcrowding.[35] The energy price surge of 2021-2022 further aggravated this situation. Analyses by GRINS and OIPE indicate that household energy bills increased by approximately 20%, pushing a growing number of families into conditions of energy vulnerability and amplifying territorial disparities, particularly between northern and southern regions, and between homeowners and tenants.[36] Data from the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) reinforce this picture: a significant portion of the Italian population remains at risk of poverty or social exclusion, and housing and energy costs represent a disproportionate burden for low-income households, especially in rented accommodation.

On the policy side, the principal measures foreseen by the NECP have been implemented, with varying degrees of effectiveness: i) the social bonuses for electricity and gas, targeted bill discounts based on income and household size, have been substantially improved. Since 2021, their automatic allocation through the income database has significantly expanded coverage, addressing one of the main administrative barriers that previously limited access (only one-third of eligible households applied before automation); ii) the Ecobonus and Superbonus 110% schemes have stimulated a massive wave of building renovations and energy-efficiency interventions. However, several evaluations highlight that access to these incentives has been easier for middle- and high-income homeowners, while low-income families and tenants, those most exposed to energy poverty, have faced financial, informational, and bureaucratic obstacles; iii) new and emerging measures, such as energy communities and the NEIF, which finances PV installations for low-income households, represent innovative and socially oriented solutions. Nonetheless, they are still in the early stages of implementation, and their impact on the overall incidence of energy poverty remains limited so far.

3.2.3. Gap Analysis: NECP Commitments vs Actual Situation of Energy Poverty

[31] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[32] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[33] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[34] Osservatorio Italiano sulla Povertà Energetica. (2024). *Rapporto annuale 2023*

[35] Observatoire National de la Précarité Énergétique. (2021). *Context and schemes to tackle energy poverty in Europe: Italy*. ONPE

[36] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

The comparison between Italy's NECP commitments and the current reality highlights that, despite a coherent framework and significant progress in policy design, several structural and implementation gaps persist. These gaps concern both the effectiveness of short-term measures and the capacity of long-term interventions to reach the most vulnerable households. The NECP sets a quantitative objective to reduce the share of households in energy poverty below 8%, starting from a baseline of about 8.6% in 2016. However, the most recent estimates from the OIPE and GRINS indicate that 8-9% of Italian households are still affected by energy poverty, very close to or slightly above the target threshold. The situation has further deteriorated since the 2021-2022 energy price surge, which caused a sharp increase in household energy expenditures [37] [38] [39]. As a gap, although the institutional and monitoring framework is well established, the quantitative reduction target has not yet been structurally achieved. Without more ambitious structural measures, there is a tangible risk of backsliding, particularly under volatile market conditions. The NECP acknowledges that traditional social bonuses for electricity and gas, introduced to reduce energy bills for low-income households, were historically under-utilised, with only about one-third of eligible families applying due to administrative barriers. Following the 2021 reform, the bonuses became automatic, dramatically improving coverage and ensuring that benefits are now distributed directly through the income database. Nevertheless, the adequacy of support remains limited. Analyses by GRINS in 2024 highlight that, despite improved access, the monetary value of the bonuses is often insufficient to offset the substantial rise in energy costs observed during the recent crisis [40]. As a gap, administrative simplification has successfully expanded access, but the level and duration of support remain inadequate and unstable in the face of high and volatile energy prices. The NECP identifies building renovation and energy efficiency as central levers for tackling the root causes of energy poverty, through instruments such as the Ecobonus, Superbonus 110%, and the NEEF (National Energy Efficiency Fund). These measures aim to improve thermal performance, reduce energy demand, and enhance living conditions for vulnerable groups. In practice, however, distributional outcomes have been uneven. Evaluations by GRINS in 2024 reveal that the majority of renovation incentives have been captured by middle- and high-income homeowners, who possess the necessary capital and information to undertake large-scale projects [41]. Conversely, low-income families, tenants, and social housing residents, those most exposed to energy poverty, often face barriers such as a lack of upfront capital, complex administrative procedures, and split incentives between landlords and tenants.

As a gap, while Italy has introduced powerful fiscal incentives for energy renovation, these instruments lack sufficient targeting toward energy-poor households. Without corrective mechanisms, they risk reinforcing social inequalities rather than reducing them. Italy has made significant progress in monitoring energy poverty, with a national composite indicator managed by OIPE and regularly reported to the

[37] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[38] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[39] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[40] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[41] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

European Commission (EC). This indicator captures both excessive energy expenditure and inadequate consumption, providing a reliable basis for national tracking. However, several dimensions remain underexplored. For instance, summer energy poverty, the inability to keep homes cool during heatwaves, is becoming increasingly relevant in Italy's Mediterranean climate, but is not yet fully included in official metrics. Similarly, tenants and overcrowded households, who often face high energy costs but limited agency to renovate, are still weakly represented in disaggregated data [42]. As a gap, while monitoring is comparatively advanced, broader multidimensional and disaggregated indicators, covering aspects such as tenure type, geographic disparities, age, and health status, are needed to guide targeted interventions and social policies.

Independent analyses by the ECCO think tank note that the updated NECP (2024) provides "considerable attention" to energy poverty but still lacks a detailed quantification of financial resources necessary to mitigate the distributive impacts of the energy transition, particularly under the new EU ETS2 covering buildings and transport .[43] In parallel, the Italian government has implemented temporary measures, such as tax cuts and emergency packages for energy bills, to provide immediate relief. However, according to recent economic analyses and policy reviews.[44] These interventions remain short-term and reactive, and are not yet embedded in a coherent, long-term strategy explicitly aligned with NECP objectives. As a gap, the governance and funding architecture for tackling energy poverty is still fragmented and largely crisis-driven, rather than being an integrated component of Italy's long-term decarbonization and social equity strategy.

3.2.4.Insights from Energy Cafés

Energy Cafés in Italy were organized to encourage participants to share their perspectives and experiences related to energy poverty, renewable energy solutions, and the potential of renewable energy communities to address energy affordability challenges. In the (tab.2) below are presented the findings from the energy cafe, showing that the majority struggle to pay the energy bill and lack information on the existing schemes to find support. Moreover, they are not aware of existing measures and they would like to have more specialized information. Another topic included the renewable energy communities and the extent to which the respondents can adopt them. There is a high interest in collective solutions, but there is limited knowledge on the existing energy communities. Furthermore, awareness and education tools are needed to support the establishment of community-based renewables.

Table 2 Insights from Energy Cafes in Italy

Theme	**Key findings**	**Policy Implications**
Energy poverty	Struggle to pay energy bills Lack of information and support Low awareness of existing measures	Need for accessible local advice Clear communication on support schemes Targeted measures for vulnerable households

[42] Behrens, C., Forni, L., Fortuna, F., Giarda, E., Giovanardi, F., Lo Passo, V., Panarello, D., Castellini, M., Valbonesi, P., Faiella, I., Lavecchia, L., Miniaci, R., & others. (2024). *Analysis of measures to enhance the energy efficiency of Italian buildings – Energy poverty in Italy*

[43] ECCO Climate. (2024, October). *National energy and climate plan: Progress report*. ECCO Think Tank.

[44] Reuters. (2025, February 28). *Italy approves a $3 bln package to help with energy costs*. Reuters.

Renewable energy communities	High interest in collective solutions Limited knowledge of energy communities Perceived complexity of participation	Awareness and educational tools Simplified rules and procedures Support for community-based renewables

Summary :

- The vulnerable communities do not have access to information to reach out to the existing measures that address energy poverty.
- The existing indicators do not fully capture the entire multidimension analyses of the energy poverty in the country. The additional indicators need to be addressed and considered.
- The high energy cost remains and the level of affordability for citizens is low compared to higher-income groups

3.3. Albania

3.3.1. National Policy Framework and Obligations for Addressing Energy Poverty in Albania

Almost 60% of the Albanian total energy supply is met through fossil fuels, mostly by oil. The share of modern renewables in final energy consumption in Albania is 42%. In terms of electricity generation, 98% of the electricity is generated from hydropower (2022), and the remaining 2% come from Solar PV.

Albania has been working to diversify its energy sources and increase the share of renewable energy in its overall energy mix. Key renewable energy sources in Albania include hydropower, wind, and solar energy. Albania has set renewable energy targets as part of its commitment to the European Union and its efforts to enhance sustainability. These targets aim to increase the share of renewable energy in the overall energy mix. Like many countries, Albania faces challenges in terms of regulatory frameworks, financing, and infrastructure development. Overcoming these challenges is crucial for the successful deployment of renewable energy projects. Albanian current legal framework includes instruments such as **Law No. 43/2018, on the Electric Power Sector** [45]which introduces the category of vulnerable consumers and assigns protection responsibilities to the regulator. In parallel the **Law No. 116/2016 on the Energy Performance of Buildings**[46] provides a structural approach to addressing energy poverty by promoting energy efficiency in residential buildings, including requirements for energy performance certificates, minimum efficiency standards, and the gradual renovation of the building stock. This law aligns with EU directives and aims to reduce energy consumption and costs for households, particularly those living in inefficient dwellings, which are disproportionately affected by energy poverty. Albania's NECP outlines the country's strategic framework for achieving its energy and climate objectives from 2021 to 2030 [47]. The plan is aligned with the EU's energy and climate framework, ensuring that Albania's energy transition contributes to a secure, sustainable, and affordable energy system while reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing renewable energy sources. The country has made significant strides in prioritizing renewable energy, enhancing energy efficiency, and reducing its carbon footprint. These efforts reflect Albania's

[45]Republic of Albania. (2015). Law no. 43/2015 on the power sector. Energy Regulatory Entity (ERE).

[46] Law No/116/2016 on the Energy Performance of Buildings

[47]Leskoviku, Artan. 2024. Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, Albania. Presented at the Thirteenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, United Nations Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand, December 2–4, 2024.

commitment to building a more environmentally friendly future and achieving the ambitious climate targets set for this decade. The NECP serves as a strategic roadmap, guiding the country towards achieving key goals, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, increasing investment in renewable energy, lowering energy costs, and enhancing the security and sustainability of the energy sector. Albania has introduced several key legislative actions to support the objectives outlined in the NECP. In 2023, Law No. 24/2023 was enacted to promote renewable energy, aligning the country's policies with EU Directive 2018/2001. This law aims to accelerate the transition to a more renewable-based energy system and increase energy security by expanding the integration of renewable sources. Additionally, Albania implemented the National Action Plan for Renewable Energy Resources (NAPRER) in 2018-2020, which is central to enhancing energy security and integrating wind, solar, and hydropower projects into the national energy mix. Albania's NECP sets clear and ambitious targets for 2030, which include:

- An 18.7% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.
- An 8.4% reduction in final energy consumption.
- Achieving 54.4% of total final energy consumption from renewable sources.

One of Albania's most notable achievements is its zero-emission electricity generation, positioning the country as a leader in decarbonising the energy sector. The country's reliance on hydropower makes it a leader in renewable electricity production, with substantial progress towards renewable energy integration. Albania's government officially approved the initial version of the NECP on December 29, 2021, signalling the country's proactive approach to sustainable energy. The draft plan was submitted to the Energy Community Secretariat (ECS), which provided detailed recommendations to refine the plan further [48]. The NECP is a critical tool that helps Albania demonstrate its commitment to achieving climate neutrality and fostering a greener transition. It offers a clear framework for transparent action, enabling the country to showcase its dedication to energy transition and climate goals to both its citizens and international stakeholders. The targets set in the NECP are influenced by various factors, which are explained in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of the plan. These include:
These areas will be key to ensuring that Albania not only meets its energy transition goals but also strengthens its energy resilience and enhances its climate sustainability over this decade. The NECP is Albania's central framework for driving forward its energy transition and meeting climate objectives for 2021-2030.

3.3.2.Current Status and Trends of Energy Poverty in Albania

Energy poverty in Albania is currently not clearly defined or systematically monitored. Although the Law on power sector No. 43/2015 defines a 'vulnerable customer' as someone entitled to special rights concerning electricity and gas supply based on social status (Article 95), no specific policies directly address the root causes of energy poverty. Albania's National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) of Albania recognizes energy poverty as an important social and energy policy challenge and commits to measures such as defining energy poverty, establishing monitoring systems, improving residential energy efficiency, and supporting vulnerable consumers. However, the reality in Albania shows a significant gap between these policy commitments and actual living conditions. At least 37% of Albanians are suffering from energy poverty, far above the European average of 5%, according to a study from DOOR and EIHP [49] to address energy poverty in energy community contracting parties. This drives them to use wood to heat their homes, directly impacting the health of those around them. Other estimates show that about 33.8% of Albanians

[48] National Energy and Climate Plan of the Republic of Albania. Version 31 October 2024.

[49] Study on Addressing Energy Poverty in the Energy Community Contracting Parties

(more than 800,000 people) live in households that cannot afford adequate heating during winter. Energy poverty is also reflected in household spending patterns: around 45% of households spend more than 10% of their total expenditure on energy, a commonly used threshold to identify energy poverty. Structural factors contribute significantly to this situation, including low household incomes, inefficient housing stock, and limited access to modern heating systems. Many homes lack proper insulation, and a large number of households rely on wood or biomass for heating [50] which increases health risks and indoor air pollution. In addition, available policy measures mainly rely on financial compensation schemes for vulnerable consumers, while long-term solutions such as building renovation programs, energy efficiency investments, and systematic monitoring of energy poverty remain limited. As a result, despite recognition of the issue in the NECP and alignment with European energy policy frameworks, energy poverty remains widespread in Albania, demonstrating a clear gap between policy obligations and the everyday energy realities faced by households.

3.3.3.Gap Analysis: NECP Commitments vs Actual Situation of Energy Poverty

The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) of Albania outlines strategic commitments to improve energy efficiency, expand renewable energy, and ensure a fair energy transition while protecting vulnerable consumers. However, a significant gap remains between these policy commitments and the real situation of energy poverty experienced by households. Despite progress in the energy sector, particularly the high share of renewable electricity production, many Albanian households still struggle to access affordable and adequate energy services.

While the NECP acknowledges the need to protect vulnerable consumers and improve energy efficiency in buildings, the implementation of targeted measures remains limited. Many dwellings in Albania suffer from poor insulation and inefficient heating systems, increasing energy consumption and costs for households. As a result, families often rely on firewood or reduce heating usage,[51] which can negatively affect health and well-being. In the (tab.3) the NECP commitments are presented together with the current situation in Albania, as well as the identified gaps between the planned targets and the existing conditions. This comparison highlights the areas where further improvements are needed to ensure alignment with the commitments

Table 3 NECP vs. Energy Poverty in Albania

NECP Commitments	Current Situation in Albania	Identified Gap
Recognize and address energy poverty through national policy frameworks.	Energy poverty is acknowledged in national strategies and discussions linked to the NECP and social protection policies. However, a clear official national definition and measurement framework for energy poverty is still evolving.	Lack of a standardized national definition and monitoring indicators, which makes systematic tracking and targeted policy design difficult.

[50] INSTITUTE OF ENERGY FOR SOUTH-EAST EUROPE

[51] Politiko. (2022, January 31). 37% of citizens suffer from energy poverty, use wood for heating: How Albania ranks in the region.

Improve energy efficiency in residential buildings, especially for vulnerable households.	A large share of Albania's housing stock is poorly insulated and energy inefficient, particularly in rural areas and older buildings. Energy renovation programs remain limited in coverage	Insufficient large-scale renovation programs targeting low-income households and limited financial mechanisms to support building retrofits.
Improve data collection and monitoring of energy consumption and vulnerable households.	Data on energy poverty is fragmented across institutions, and detailed household-level energy consumption data is limited	Lack of integrated data systems and regular monitoring, making it difficult to design evidence-based policies.

3.3.4.Insights from Energy Cafés

The Energy Café in Albania engaged students and teachers in a participatory discussion on energy-related challenges. Participants shared experiences related to energy affordability, housing conditions, and household energy consumption, while also discussing practical solutions to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs.In the (tab 4) below are presented the findings from the energy cafe.

Table 4 Insights from Energy Cafes in Albania

Theme	Key findings	Policy Implications
Energy Affordability & Energy Poverty	High proportion of households struggle to pay energy bills during winter. Low-income working families experience similar vulnerability to traditionally defined "energy poor" groups.	Policies must address affordability holistically, including support for low-income households and families in energy-inefficient housing.
Access to Information & Support Measures	Participants largely unaware of existing subsidies and energy efficiency programs. Application procedures perceived as complex.	Simplify communication of support schemes and provide local advisory points.
Housing conditions	Poor ventilation and insulation lead to damp, mould, and related health issues.	Integrate housing quality standards with support renovation grants
Heating systems	The majority rely on inefficient heating (wood, old electric heaters)	Promote access to modern, efficient, and cleaner heating systems through subsidies or incentives

Summary:

- There is no clear definition of energy poverty in place and there are no monitoring indicators that track over time.
- Insufficient long-term renovation strategies that support the vulnerable communities.
- Poor ventilation, presence of damp, mold and other health related issues.

3.4. The Netherlands

3.4.1. National Policy Framework and Obligations for Addressing Energy Poverty in The Netherlands

The National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) are strategic frameworks established by EU member states to outline their energy and climate policies for the period 2021-2030, aiming for a climate-neutral Europe by 2050. The NECPs serve as essential tools for EU countries to plan and implement their climate and energy strategies. They are required under the Regulation (EU) 2018/1999, which governs the Energy Union and climate action. Each member state must submit its NECP to the European Commission, detailing how it intends to achieve the EU's climate and energy targets, including a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy sources.

Key Objectives

1. Climate Neutrality: The NECPs aim to facilitate the transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050, aligning with the European Green Deal and the Fit-for-55 legislative package.
2. Investment Mobilization: They are designed to mobilize public and private investments necessary for achieving climate and energy goals, ensuring a coordinated approach across various government departments.
3. Public Consultation: Member states are required to consult with citizens, businesses, and regional authorities during the drafting process to ensure that the plans reflect a broad range of interests and insights.

The Netherlands have the Integral Energie & Klimaatplan (INEK), translated in English as Integral Energy and Climate Plan. The Netherlands is highly exposed to global warming because of the geographical location, but it also produces a lot of greenhouse gas (methane and carbon dioxide) due to the intensive cattle breeding. There is a need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% in 2030 compared to the year 1990. The government wants the producers of greenhouse gas to pay more, and that the reducer of greenhouse gas gets rewarded for sustainability initiatives. The government is working on ways to reduce the electricity bottlenecks that the increase of electric cars and trucks has created. Subsidizing households to invest in more solar panels, home batteries and heating pumps. Social Climate Plans to support the transition to climate neutrality. Design principles: righteous, robust and sustainable, Righteous means: energy is affordable for everyone, between income groups, generations, companies, cities, rural areas and NL versus the rest of the world, Robust means: to make sure we have sufficient energy infrastructure, demand and supply must be met during any time in a day, Sustainable means: The earth cannot deliver infinitely; our energy transition needs to support biodiversity and a circular economy. Consumption in the Netherlands must also consider effects elsewhere in the world. The integral approach in the Netherlands consists of 5 dimensions:

1. **Decarbonization**

The Netherlands wants to be completely circular by 2050. Replace earth gas with green gas, produce renewable energy (solar and wind energy), new houses are built without earth gas connections. Cars become fully electric. Companies have restrictions on leasing fossil-fueled cars. Transition from earth gas to hydrogen distribution to existing housing. This is mainly done by creating large-scale wind parks and solar parks. Next to phasing out coal, gas and nuclear energy exchanges.

2. **Energy efficiency**

The main goal is to reduce the total usage of energy by 32,5% compared to the predicted energy usage in 2020 by 2030. Phasing out the usage of fossil energy for heating and cooling buildings. Renovation of buildings also reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The main goal of the government is to reduce

energy consumption for consumers who are energy poor. Mobility has been subsidized for all kinds of vehicles, boats and trucks. In the Netherlands, agriculture is subsidized to reduce the usage of energy.

3. Energy securing

The Netherlands has decided to close the earth gas exploitation in the north of the Netherlands. This closure of gas fields is related to the issue that a lot of houses are impacted by earthquakes. Since the invasion of Russia into Ukraine, the Netherlands is more dependent on LNG imports. To ensure that households are protected during cold winters, the Netherlands has created storage for gas consumption. The gas sector is also under the attention of our National Cyber Security Center. They monitor threat information concerning the gas sector. Critical Entities Resilience (CER) directive consists of policies to ensure incidents are reported when essential services are disrupted.

4. Internal Energy Market

The Netherlands has experienced a growing issue with the electricity capacity of its network. Due to the increase in electric car usage and the demand for more houses, the usage of electricity has grown immensely and regularly causes network congestion. There is a strong need to diversify the usage of energy so that the infrastructure can be used more optimally. A project has been created to increase the network capacity due to the increase in demand and supply within the network. Optimal storage of energy is also needed to make the supply and demand of the network more flexible.

In 2026, the Netherlands is set to implement significant changes in energy policy aimed at combating energy poverty. Key measures include:

1. Extended Specific Energy Poverty Support: The duration of the Specific Energy Poverty Support will be extended until 2027, allowing municipalities more time to implement the program. Energy Poverty Fund: A fund will be established to address energy poverty and improve access to emission-free and emission-efficient mobility and transport within the European Union.
2. New Energy Law: The new Energy Law will better align the energy market with the need for households to generate, store, and use electricity flexibly. It will also provide consumers with more choices and protection.
3. Energy Tax Reduction: The energy tax will be reduced, with a reduction of €529 for those with an electrical connection.

These measures are part of the government's broader strategy to support energy poverty and promote energy efficiency and sustainability.

3.4.2.Current Status and Trends of Energy Poverty in The Netherlands

Energy poverty is becoming a pressing issue in the Netherlands, affecting a growing number of households. While the country has ambitious climate goals and a strong renewable energy agenda, the transition has not been equally beneficial for everyone. Structural challenges in the housing market, economic barriers, policy inconsistencies, and grid congestion are all contributing to a system where lower-income households bear a disproportionate burden.

For many households, transitioning to a more energy-efficient home is simply unaffordable. **High upfront costs for renovations, such as installing better insulation, heat pumps, or double-glazed windows,** put these improvements out of reach for those who would benefit the most. While subsidies exist, they are often **complex to apply for, requiring paperwork and technical knowledge** that many vulnerable households lack access to. **The rising cost of energy** further worsens the situation. The shift toward renewable energy has led to fluctuations in electricity prices, and lower-income households, who already struggle with high rent and living costs, are particularly affected. Compounding this issue is the energy tax structure, which places a disproportionately higher burden on small consumers than on large industrial users. While

businesses benefit from lower energy taxes, private households end up paying more, making energy poverty a systemic issue that needs urgent policy intervention.

Social and Behavioral Challenges

Beyond economic and policy-related barriers, several social and behavioral factors make tackling energy poverty even more complex.

- **Digital divide:** Many government support programs are primarily accessed online, making it difficult for elderly or digitally excluded households to apply.
- **Language barriers:** Non-Dutch-speaking communities often miss out on vital energy efficiency information.
- **Lack of trust:** Some households, particularly those in vulnerable situations, are hesitant to engage with government programs or allow energy efficiency upgrades in their homes.
- **Limited awareness:** Many people are simply unaware of how to reduce their energy consumption effectively or what support is available to them.

3.4.3. Gap Analysis: NECP Commitments vs Actual Situation of Energy Poverty

The Netherlands has established a comprehensive framework to transition toward a low-carbon, sustainable future while ensuring economic resilience and social equity. At the core of its strategy is the Climate Act (Klimaatwet), enacted in 2019, which sets legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 49% by 2030 and achieving a 95% reduction by 2050, compared to 1990 levels [52]These objectives are operationalised through the National Climate Agreement, a collaborative framework between the government, businesses, and civil society that outlines sectoral measures across electricity, industry, transport, agriculture, and the built environment.

To align with EU-wide objectives, the Netherlands has also adopted the NECP 2021-2030 [53], which provides a roadmap for achieving these reductions through a combination of renewable energy expansion, carbon pricing mechanisms, and technological innovation [54].
Energy poverty in the Netherlands is defined by a combination of low household income, high energy bills, and/or low energy-efficiency housing, meaning households struggle with heating and general energy costs. In 2024, households experiencing energy poverty spent an average of 11.5 % of their income on energy bills, which was markedly higher than the national average. This reflects a significant affordability challenge even as broader economic conditions improved compared with earlier years [55].

The gap between the NECP's general intention to protect vulnerable consumers and the actual energy poverty trends suggests several structural weaknesses:

[52] Ministry of Climate Policy and Green Growth, "Climate policy," Government.nl, accessed May 12, 2025

[53] Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021–2030, final version, November 2019

[54] Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan 2021–2030, final version, November 201

[55] Statistics Netherlands (CBS). (2025, July 28). Energy poverty rose to 6.1 percent in 2024.

1. **Lack of binding energy poverty targets:** The NECP does not establish specific measurable goals to reduce energy poverty, leaving progress hard to monitor against national benchmarks [56].
2. **Dependence on temporary supports:** The rise in energy poverty after the end of emergency allowances and price caps shows that without structural, ongoing financial support mechanisms, vulnerable households remain exposed to fluctuations in energy costs [57] .
3. **Affordability and energy efficiency shortfalls:** Although the NECP includes measures to improve energy efficiency and protect consumers, current outcomes, such as an 11.5 % energy burden for energy-poor households, indicate that policies have not yet translated into sufficient relief for those most affected [58].
4. **Integration with social policy:** The NECP's approach to energy poverty appears more fragmented and reactive rather than embedded in a comprehensive social protection framework, leaving coordination between energy, housing, and income support weaker than needed for consistent results [59].

3.4.4.Insights from Energy Cafés

The Energy Café in the Netherlands was organized in The Hague and brought together youth, local residents, elderly participants, migrants, and representatives of minority groups. Participants reflected on themes such as energy poverty, renewable energy solutions, housing energy efficiency, and the role of local support mechanisms such as municipal energy coaches. The participatory format aimed to stimulate dialogue and gather community perspectives on barriers and opportunities in the energy transition. In the (tab 5) below are presented the main findings from the energy cafes. The rise in energy prices has negatively impacted the lives of Dutch citizens. According to the respondents the price is not affordable and the government needs to compile policies that align with the population's needs. The energy-poor households usually live alone in social housing and in most of the cases, the pension is the only source of income. Saying that, the energy tax might be deducted for such a category. Additionally, another issue encountered during the energy cafes is the upfront cost of the energy efficiency investments. The long-term renovation strategies from the government should enable the increase of energy efficiency. Participants admitted also that they experience discomfort because they are unable to pay the electricity and heating bills and need to save by using less energy.

Table 5 Insights from Energy Cafes in The Netherlands

Theme	Key findings	Expectations
Affordability of energy	Energy should be affordable for everyone, between income groups, generations, companies, cities, rural areas and NL versus the rest of the world.	Extended energy poverty supports, allowing municipalities more time to implement improvement programs. New law to better align energy markets with the need for households to generate, store and use electricity flexibly.

[56]Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. (2024). *Netherlands updated final national energy and climate plan (NECP) 2021–2030*. Government of the Netherlands.

[57] Statistics Netherlands (CBS). (2025, July 28). Energy poverty rose to 6.1 percent in 2024.

[58] Statistics Netherlands (CBS). (2025, July 28). Energy poverty rose to 6.1 percent in 2024.

[59] Kingdom of the Netherlands. (2024, November 10). *Biennial transparency report (BTR1)*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Energy quality of the home	Energy-poor households often live in social housing, are more often single-person and mainly rely on pensions or benefits	The energy tax will be reduced for households with an electrical connection.
The ability to invest in the energy quality of the home	Owners of low-price rented housing have no intention of improving the energy quality of these houses because it will cost them investments.	Financial support from the government, making houses more efficient.
Social and health impacts	Hidden energy poverty is based on households that consume less energy by lowering temperature, do not cook or shower less to avoid energy costs. This has an impact on people's health and wellbeing.	To make sure we have sufficient energy infrastructure, demand and supply must be met at any time of the day.

Summary:

- The vulnerable consumers are usually referred to as single living citizens, which is most common in the Netherlands. They live in social houses and the main source of income is the pension.
- The NECP does not define clear targets for addressing energy poverty within a certain period of time.
- The vulnerable communities are quite exposed to energy cost fluctuations since they are heavily reliant on short-term financial mechanisms.
- Up-front cost for vulnerable communities remains a barrier which prevents them from investing in the building renovation models.
- There is no holistic approach which coordinates the social, economic and energy/building component among the citizens to fully address energy poverty.

3.5. Kosovo

3.5.1. National Policy Framework and Obligations for Addressing Energy Poverty in Kosovo

Kosovo's legal and policy framework for the energy sector remains fragmented and overly focused on formal alignment with the energy community treaty and the EU acquis. This external orientation often masks domestic shortcomings, such as inconsistent implementation, regulatory gaps, and a lack of strategic coherence tailored to Kosovo's specific energy challenges and institutional capacities. Key laws, including the Law on energy (No. 05/L-081), the Law on electricity (No. 05/L-085), the Law on the energy regulator (No. 05/L-084), and the Law on energy efficiency (No. 06/L-079), provide the formal foundation for a liberalized and market-oriented energy system[60]. These are complemented by the Law on energy performance of buildings, the energy strategy 2022–2031, and its implementation program (IPESK 2022–2025), which aim to support decarbonization, diversification, and energy security. However, while these laws establish a strong theoretical framework, their operationalization remains uneven.

Kosovo's governance is shaped by a relatively young institutional framework built in the aftermath of war and international supervision. The Ministry of Economy oversees energy policy, while the Energy Regulatory Office (ERO) acts as the sector's independent regulator. KOSTT, the transmission system

[60] Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Kosovo. 2023. "Ministry of Economy." Accessed May 12, 2025.

operator, became fully integrated into the European grid only in 2020 - an important milestone for regional cooperation [61].

Kosovo has developed a draft National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) for the period 2025–2030 [62] in line with Energy Community requirements, although the plan has not yet been formally adopted. The Energy Strategy of the Republic of Kosovo 2022–2031 therefore, continues to function as the main strategic framework guiding the energy transition and measures addressing affordability and vulnerability (Government of Kosovo 2023). Kosovo's Energy Strategy acknowledges the need to expand support to up to 200,000 households and improve energy efficiency, yet implementation remains limited by administrative capacity constraints and insufficient targeting mechanisms. Moreover, the lack of a registry of vulnerable consumers and the absence of integrated policy coordination hinder effective intervention.

3.5.2 Current Status and Trends of Energy Poverty in Kosovo

Energy poverty in Kosovo is a structural condition produced by the interaction of low incomes, inefficient housing, and an electricity-dependent heating system. In contrast to EU Member States, Kosovo still lacks a legally adopted definition of energy poverty and a comprehensive monitoring framework, resulting in policies that treat vulnerability primarily through social assistance rather than energy policy instruments. Current measures focus on subsidising electricity consumption for vulnerable households, covering over 36,000 beneficiaries, and implementing a block tariff system intended to shield low-consumption users from price increases. While these measures mitigate acute hardship, they do not address the structural drivers of energy poverty, particularly the inefficiency of the residential building stock and the absence of accessible renovation programs. The residential sector represents the core issue of the problem. A large proportion of households rely on electricity for space heating due to the absence of alternative systems, making winter energy consumption both unavoidable and financially destabilizing. Poor insulation, dampness, and outdated construction significantly increase energy demand while simultaneously affecting health outcomes and quality of life. In this context, energy poverty manifests not only as an inability to pay bills but as a restriction on everyday life, mobility, and well-being.

According to data from the Kosovo agency of statistics[63], 43% of households in Kosovo struggled to pay their utility bills at least twice a year, and an equal percentage could not afford to sufficiently heat their homes during the cold season. This situation was exacerbated in February 2022 when energy tariffs were increased for households consuming more than 800 kWh per month, impacting over 22% of Kosovar electricity consumers[64].

3.5.3.Gap Analysis: NECP Commitments vs Actual Situation of Energy Poverty

Kosovo's draft National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) for 2025–2030 is part of its compliance with the Energy Community's Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action. Like other Contracting Parties, Kosovo must integrate climate mitigation, renewable energy, energy efficiency, and consumer protection, including measures for vulnerable energy users, into an overarching plan. However, while the draft plan recognizes the importance of vulnerable consumers, it lacks a clear, systematic framework for addressing energy poverty directly, and this gap considerably weakens its

[61]Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Kosovo. 2018. "Lluka: Kamenica Part of Projects in Energy, Waters and Digital Economy." Accessed May 12, 2025

[62]United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (n.d.). *Documents and resources*.

[63] Kosovo Agency of Statistics. 2022. Annual Energy Balance in the Republic of Kosovo in 2021. Pristina: Kosovo Agency of Statistics. Accessed May 12, 2025

[64] World Bank. 2019. Poverty and Distributional Analysis: Electricity Poverty and Protection of Vulnerable Customers in Kosovo. Washington, DC: World Bank. Accessed May 12, 2025.

alignment with the lived realities of households in Kosovo [65]. At the core of the problem is the absence of a legal definition of energy poverty and a data-driven monitoring framework within Kosovo's NECP.

Although the plan acknowledges the need to protect consumers in need and mentions the creation of support schemes, it states that Kosovo lacks a legal definition of energy poverty and reliable data to quantify the problem. As a result, many vulnerable households remain invisible in policy design and support planning. Although the draft NECP refers to support schemes for vulnerable consumers, these are limited and primarily focused on a narrow category, such as recipients of social assistance or war-related benefits, which means many energy-poor households remain outside support eligibility. This narrow targeting does not reflect the broader, multi-dimensional nature of energy poverty in Kosovo or its underlying causes (low income, inefficient housing, and rising energy costs). The plan also lacks a timeline, budget allocations, or concrete implementation measures for expanding these schemes beyond their current limited scope.

3.5.4. Insights from Energy Cafés

Energy Cafés in Kosovo were organised primarily in Prishtina, with participation also involving citizens from other municipalities such as Istog, Peja, Mitrovica, and Ferizaj. The sessions engaged youth, students, civil society representatives, local residents, and energy activists. The event combined open discussions, guided storytelling, and participatory reflections on everyday energy practices. Participants shared experiences related to energy affordability, coping strategies, and expectations regarding a fair energy transition, while qualitative documentation and interviews captured their perspectives.

Table 6 Insights from Energy Cafes in Kosovo

Theme	Key findings	Expectations
Energy affordability	Families heat only one room, use appliances at night when electricity is cheaper, and reduce comfort because bills are too high. Energy costs cause stress.	Provide financial support and fair electricity prices for vulnerable households so they don't have to sacrifice basic comfort.
Housing inefficiency and vulnerability	Poor insulation and old buildings make homes expensive to heat. Renters cannot improve the homes but still pay high bills.	Renovate buildings, especially for low-income households, and require landlords to meet minimum energy standards.
Trust and institutional support	Many people don't trust that prices will stabilize and don't know about available support programs.	Improve communication, offer local advice services, and make support easier to access.
Energy transition and expectations	People want renewable energy and independence, but worry about costs and access.	Support solar panels and other renewables for households and help citizens join energy communities.

Summary

[65] Kingdom of the Netherlands. (2024, November 10). *Biennial transparency report (BTR1)*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

- There is no clear definition of energy poverty and its monitoring indicator despite it being mentioned in the NECP.
- There are no long-term renovation strategies in place that protect vulnerable groups.
- The existing short-term measures are not distributed based on a clear multidimensional energy poverty analysis.
- The National Energy Efficiency fund is in place, but more communication channels shall be in place to reach the final consumers.
- Among the citizens, there is a lack of trust towards the government regarding price stabilization and supportive programs.
- The local communities have shown interest in the use of renewable energy (solar energy) but hesitate over the upfront cost. Additional support shall be given from the government in this regard.

3.6. Greece

3.6.1. National Policy Framework and Obligations for Addressing Energy Poverty in Kosovo

The revised Greek National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), adopted in late 2024, sets out an ambitious pathway towards climate neutrality by 2050, with strong emphasis on decarbonization, renewable energy deployment, electrification, and improvements in energy efficiency. The plan prioritizes large-scale investments in renewable electricity, grid reinforcement, storage, and the electrification of end uses, alongside renovation of the building stock and gradual phase-out of fossil fuels[66]. Energy poverty is formally acknowledged within the NECP framework, primarily under the pillars of energy efficiency, consumer protection, and social cohesion. References to vulnerable consumers, protection from disconnections, and targeted efficiency measures are present, reflecting compliance with EU governance requirements. However, these references remain largely high-level and indirect, embedded within broader sectoral strategies rather than articulated as a standalone or cross-cutting priority. The NECP's core orientation is predominantly techno-economic. Social dimensions, including energy affordability and differentiated household capacity to participate in the transition, are addressed mainly through assumptions that efficiency gains, market reforms, and long-term price stabilization will yield indirect social benefits. As a result, the plan places limited emphasis on the lived experience of energy poverty, the heterogeneity of vulnerable groups, or the immediate distributional impacts of transition costs. Importantly, the NECP was finalized before the adoption of the updated National Energy Poverty Action Plan [67]. As such, its treatment of energy poverty reflects an earlier policy stage, prior to the more detailed diagnostic work, indicators, and targeted measures later introduced in the dedicated plan. This sequencing has significant implications for policy coherence and implementation, particularly in relation to monitoring, targeting, and local-level delivery.

3.6.2. Current Status and Trends of Energy Poverty in Greece

Greece continues to face a structurally high incidence of energy poverty compared to the EU average, reflecting a combination of income constraints, high energy prices, climatic exposure, and a weak residential building stock. According to recent Joint Research Centre (JRC) analyses, Greece is among the Member States with the highest overlap of energy poverty indicators, with a substantial share of the population classified as energy poor under more than one metric, including the inability to keep homes

[66] Hellenic Republic, Revised National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP), adopted December 2024

[67] Hellenic Republic, Ministry of Environment and Energy, Updated National Energy Poverty Action Plan, December 2025.

adequately warm and high energy expenditure relative to income [68]. This places Greece consistently above the EU average, particularly in southern and eastern regions. The deterioration observed since 2021 has reversed a longer-term downward trend in energy poverty across the EU. In Greece, this reversal has been sharper, driven by energy price volatility following the 2022–2023 crisis, persistent inflationary pressures, and limited household capacity to absorb cost increases [69]. While wholesale prices have partially stabilized, end-user affordability has not recovered proportionally, especially for low-income households, tenants, and elderly people. Energy poverty in Greece, therefore, manifests not as a temporary shock but as a long-standing condition of vulnerability. Structural characteristics amplify this situation. A large share of the Greek housing stock remains poorly insulated, ageing, and inefficient, particularly in multi-apartment buildings constructed before modern energy performance standards. Climatic conditions further compound vulnerability: colder winters in northern regions increase heating demand, while increasingly intense and prolonged heatwaves raise cooling needs, especially in urban areas and island regions. These dynamics reinforce year-round energy pressure rather than a purely seasonal problem. Within this context, energy poverty in Greece is closely linked to broader social outcomes, including health risks, reduced living standards, and constrained life choices. JRC evidence highlights strong correlations between energy poverty, low or unstable income, and poor housing quality, underscoring the need to treat energy poverty as a core social and structural issue rather than a marginal or residual policy concern (JRC, 2024).

3.6.3. Gap Analysis: NECP Commitments vs Actual Situation of Energy Poverty

A clear gap emerges between the obligations and orientations set out in the NECP and the empirical reality of energy poverty in Greece. While the NECP complies formally with EU requirements to consider vulnerable consumers, it does not fully internalize the scale, persistence, and multidimensional nature of energy poverty documented in recent JRC evidence and national assessments. The plan underestimates the extent to which affordability constraints, poor housing quality, and climatic exposure intersect to create long-term vulnerability. The timing of policy instruments is critical. The updated National Energy Poverty Action Plan, adopted in December 2025 [AC2], introduces a more explicit national definition, improved identification methodologies, and a structured set of measures addressing protection, structural renovation, and information and coordination. However, this plan was developed after the NECP and therefore operates largely in parallel, rather than being fully embedded within the core energy and climate strategy. This temporal disconnect risks fragmenting policy responses and weakening alignment between strategic targets and social outcomes. In practical terms, the NECP's heavy reliance on market-based mechanisms and long-term efficiency improvements does not sufficiently address short- to medium-term energy poverty pressures. Vulnerable households often lack the financial capacity, tenure security, or administrative access required to benefit from renovation schemes or renewable self-consumption initiatives envisaged in the NECP. Without stronger social targeting and proactive outreach, these measures risk reinforcing existing inequalities. Finally, the gap is also institutional. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks under the NECP focus primarily on energy, emissions, and investment indicators, while energy poverty monitoring is developed separately under the Action Plan. Bridging this gap will require systematic integration of energy poverty indicators into NECP implementation, stronger coordination between energy and social policies, and greater involvement of local authorities and trusted intermediaries. Without such integration, the risk remains that Greece's energy transition will progress technically while leaving structurally energy-poor households behind.

[68] European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Who is "energy poor" in the EU? (JRC138418), 2024

[69] European Commission, Joint Research Centre, Energy poverty in the EU – 2024 status quo (JRC139550), 2024.

3.6.4. Insights from Energy Cafés

Energy Cafés in Greece were organized in Kastoria (Northern Greece), Herakleion (Crete), and Chania (Crete) to capture perspectives from different climatic and socio-economic contexts. The sessions were conducted as participatory engagements using structured questionnaires as discussion tools rather than formal surveys. The facilitation encouraged open dialogue and reflection on everyday energy practices, housing conditions, climate impacts, and perceptions of energy justice. This approach enabled participants to share lived experiences and identify policy-relevant insights related to energy poverty and the energy transition.

Table 7 Insights from Energy Cafes in Greece

Theme	Key findings	Expectations
Energy affordability and energy poverty	Energy poverty is experienced as constant financial pressure rather than temporary hardship. Households struggle to cover basic needs for heating, cooling, and electricity, with winter heating costs dominant in northern regions and both heating and cooling critical in Crete.	Shift from short-term bill relief to structural affordability measures. Introduce permanent, income- and climate-sensitive support mechanisms, differentiated by regional climatic conditions.
Housing conditions and energy efficiency	Poor insulation, old building stock, humidity, and outdated systems are core drivers of vulnerability. Both tenants and owners face significant barriers to renovation due to cost, ownership structures, and administrative complexity.	Prioritise targeted renovation schemes for energy-poor households. Strengthen public financing, simplify procedures, and address split incentives between landlords and tenants through regulatory and financial tools.
Tenure and access to improvements	Tenancy status strongly limits the ability to improve energy performance, particularly for young people and households in apartment buildings with shared ownership. Awareness of solutions exists, but agency is limited.	Develop tenant-focused renovation instruments, minimum energy performance standards for rented housing, and incentives for collective decision-making in multi-apartment buildings.
Climate impacts and rising energy needs	Climate change intensifies vulnerability. Colder winters increase heating demand in northern Greece, while prolonged heatwaves in Crete drive growing cooling needs. Housing and urban environments are perceived as unprepared.	Integrate climate adaptation into energy poverty policy. Explicitly address summer energy poverty, cooling needs, and urban heat in national and local energy and housing strategies.
Everyday energy practices	Behavioural changes such as reducing heating hours, limiting appliance use, and adjusting routines are forced adaptations driven by cost, not voluntary	Avoid over-reliance on behavioural narratives. Focus policy on structural reductions in energy demand through building upgrades and affordable access to efficient technologies.

	efficiency choices. These practices reduce comfort and well-being.	
Social and health impacts	Sustained energy pressure leads to reduced spending on food, leisure, transport, clothing, and education, with reported impacts on physical and mental health, productivity, and quality of life.	Recognise energy poverty as a cross-sectoral social issue. Strengthen coordination among energy, health, housing, and social services, and proactively identify vulnerable households.
Perceptions of the energy transition	The energy transition is widely perceived as socially unjust. Participants report unequal access to subsidies and benefits, with costs borne by citizens while advantages accrue to higher-income groups or large actors.	Embed social justice criteria explicitly in energy transition policies. Ensure fair distribution of costs and benefits and prioritise vulnerable groups in funding and programme design.
Information, trust, and governance	Access to information is uneven, and procedures are seen as complex. Trust is higher in local actors, NGOs, and social services than in central authorities.	Strengthen local-level delivery through municipalities and trusted intermediaries. Invest in accessible advisory services, clear communication, and simplified administrative processes.
Collective solutions and participation	Strong interest in energy communities, net-metering, and collective solutions, provided they are accessible, credible, and supported. Participation is valued when linked to real-life problems.	Support community-based energy initiatives with targeted funding, technical assistance, and simplified participation rules. Anchor participation mechanisms at the local level to enhance legitimacy and uptake.

4. Gaps Analysis Across Countries

The following (tab 8) shows a comparison between all partner countries in the project (Greece, Albania, Kosovo, Italy, Netherlands and Germany) and highlights gaps and potential needs for improvements. The level of comparison is conducted based on the policy effectiveness, presence of monitoring tools for energy poverty, building conditions, financial instruments and the level of capacities to address energy poverty.
Regarding the policy effectiveness, all partner countries have adopted the NECAP but only Italy has defined the targets to reduce energy poverty. The EU countries have adopted many more laws that allow better addressing energy poverty. In regard to monitoring and data systems, Italy has the most advanced monitoring system (referring to the Energy Observatory Hub data), followed by Netherlands, Germany and Greece, which already collect data but lack integrated frameworks for benchmark indicators. The weakest are Albania and Kosovo, which suffer from fragmented or missing data systems. Among all partners, there is a lack of integrated multidimensional monitoring tools addressing the energy, social and economic components. In regard to the building conditions, the common challenges are present almost in the whole countries, particularly in Albania and Kosovo, where there is poor insulation and low building conditions, whereas in EU countries, there is a renovation program in place, but the tendency to profit more is towards high-income people. Additionally, regarding the financial instruments, the EU countries offer subsidies, tax reductions and social bonuses, but often insufficient or difficult to access. In Albania and Kosovo, there is limited financial support, mainly short-term subsidies rather than structural and long-term solutions. In regard to institutional capacity, Albania and Kosovo are struggling due to a lack of administrative capacities and limited stakeholder coordination in place.

Table 8 Gap analyses across countries

Area	Greece	Albania	Kosovo	Italy	Netherlands	Germany
Policy effectiveness	NECP (2024) addresses energy poverty indirectly; National Energy Poverty Action Plan (2025) exists but is not fully integrated into NECP; reliance on consumer protection and efficiency measures without a standalone strategy.	NECP (2023); Law No. 24/2023 on Renewable Energy; Law No. 43/2015 (Power Sector) defines vulnerable consumers but no dedicated framework.	Draft NECP (2025–2030); Energy Strategy 2022–2031; No legal definition of energy poverty	Strong policy framework with a target to reduce energy poverty below 8% (baseline ~8.6%).	Comprehensive framework but no binding targets; INEK (NECP); Climate Act (2019); Social Climate Plans, Energy Poverty Fund (planned); Energy Law (2026).	NECP (2021–2030); energy poverty addressed via price brakes, social welfare, consumer protection.
Monitoring tools	Monitoring mechanisms exist	No unified monitoring;	Lack of data systems and registry; limited	A relatively advanced monitoring system	National statistics track energy burden	Data from EU-SILC and

	but are not fully integrated into the NECP, limiting coherence between energy and social indicators.	fragmented institutional data.	evidence-based targeting.	exists, though gaps remain in capturing multidimensional aspects such as summer energy poverty and tenure-related vulnerabilities.	(~11.5% for vulnerable households), but lack of clear national benchmarks linked to policy targets.	national studies used, but no official definition or integrated monitoring framework for energy poverty.
Building conditions	A large share of the housing stock is old and inefficient, with significant barriers for tenants and limited access to renovation programs.	Housing stock is largely inefficient, with poor insulation and limited renovation initiatives, particularly affecting low-income households.	Poor insulation and heavy reliance on electricity heating increase vulnerability.	Renovation schemes exist but mainly benefit higher-income households; vulnerable groups excluded.	Ecobonus/ Superbonus exist but benefit higher-income groups mainly.	Policies focus on building efficiency and renovation, but the split incentive problem (landlord–tenant) remains insufficiently addressed.
Financing instruments	Financial support remains limited and insufficiently targeted, with a reliance on long-term market-based mechanisms rather than immediate structural support.	Financial mechanisms for addressing energy poverty are limited, with insufficient support for energy efficiency investments and vulnerable households.	Subsidies mainly cover electricity consumption; lack of structural financing for efficiency	Social bonuses improved access, but were often insufficient to offset rising costs (~20% increase in bills).	Energy tax reduction (€529); subsidies; planned Energy Poverty Fund; complex access.	Price brakes, direct transfers; energy costs increased (€52/month).

Level of capacities	Institutional coordination remains limited, particularly between national strategies and local-level implementation, affecting policy effectiveness.	Institutional and administrative capacity is limited, with low levels of awareness and coordination across stakeholders.	Administrative constraints and weak targeting limit policy effectiveness	Improved administration (automatic bonuses), but barriers remain for vulnerable groups.	Limited integration between energy and social policy institutions; weak linkage between NECP implementation and social outcomes.	Weak integration of energy and social policy systems

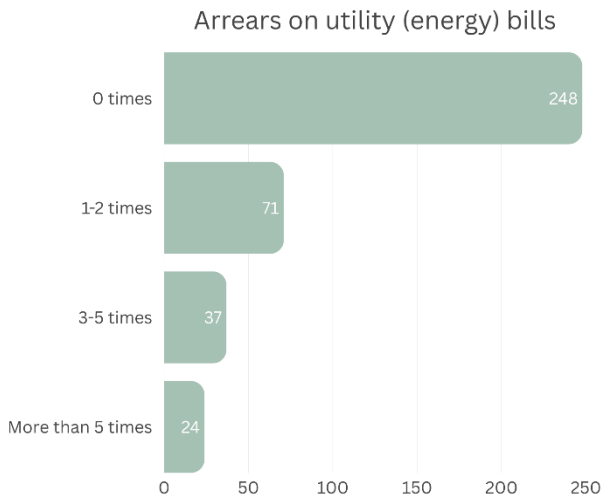
5. Energy Poverty Survey in Partner Countries: Key indicators and insights

As part of the implementation of the *POWERINGCITIZENS* project, a survey was conducted with the aim of identifying energy poverty across the six partner countries. The questionnaire was designed based on the 11 indicators for monitoring energy poverty, as defined by the Energy Poverty Advisory Hub (EAPH).
In total, 380 respondents from the project's partner countries participated in the survey. The distribution of respondents is as follows: 17% from Italy and Albania, 13% from Kosovo and Greece, 26% from Germany, 7% from the Netherlands, and 6% from non-partner countries.
Regarding gender distribution, 187 female respondents, 185 male respondents, 7 non-binary respondents, and 1 preferred not to disclose. The following section presents selected survey findings in graphical form, highlighting some of the key indicators.

5.1 Arrears on utility (energy) bills

As shown in the chart below (chart 1), a large majority of respondents (248) report no arrears, indicating consistent ability to meet energy payment obligations. However, 71 households report arrears 1–2 times, suggesting occasional financial strain or temporary liquidity issues. More concerning are the 37 respondents reporting arrears 3–5 times and 24 reporting more than 5 times, which signal persistent financial distress and a higher risk of energy poverty requiring targeted assistance.

Chart 1 Arrears on utility (energy) bills



5.2 Energy efficiency of the dwelling

The chart below (chart 3) illustrates a mixed perception of building energy efficiency. Perceptions are distributed across categories, with 126 respondents indicating neutrality, which may reflect limited awareness or difficulty assessing efficiency performance. Positive evaluations include 98 satisfied and 32 very satisfied respondents, suggesting acceptable conditions in part of the housing stock. Conversely, 98 unsatisfied and 26 very unsatisfied respondents point to significant dissatisfaction, likely linked to poor insulation, high energy costs, or inadequate building standards.

Chart 3 Satisfaction with Building Energy Efficiency

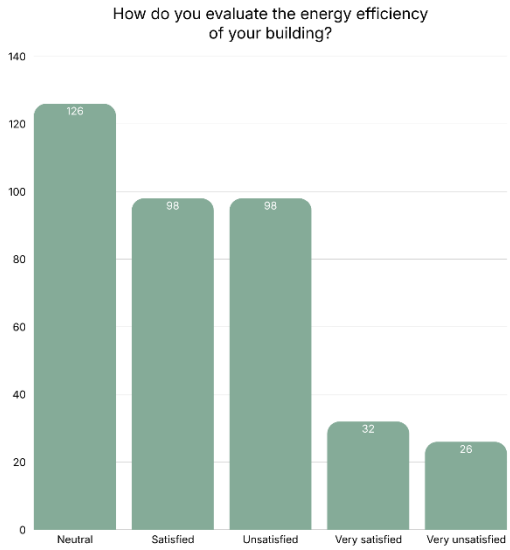
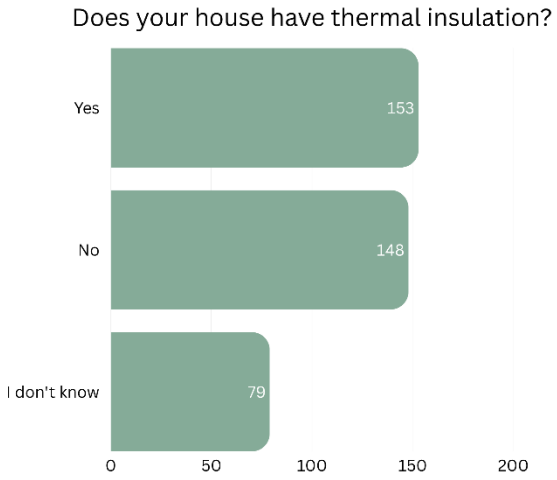


Chart 2 Household Access to Thermal Insulation



As presented in the chart above (chart 2), 153 respondents report having thermal insulation, while 148 report none, showing a near-even split in infrastructure quality. Additionally, 79 respondents do not know whether insulation is present, suggesting limited awareness and potential barriers to energy efficiency improvements.

5.3 Energy expenditure relative to income

The chart below (chart 5) shows that 69.4% of respondents report incomes above €700, indicating a relatively strong income base. However, 10% fall within €300–700 and 2.1% below €300, reflecting varying levels of financial vulnerability. A combined 18.5% either do not know or prefer not to answer, pointing to income uncertainty or sensitivity.

Chart 5 Household Income Distribution

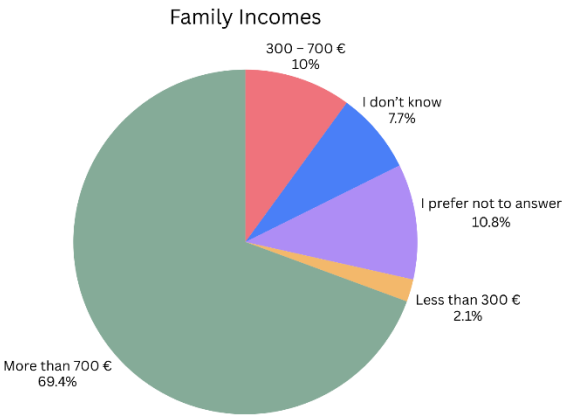
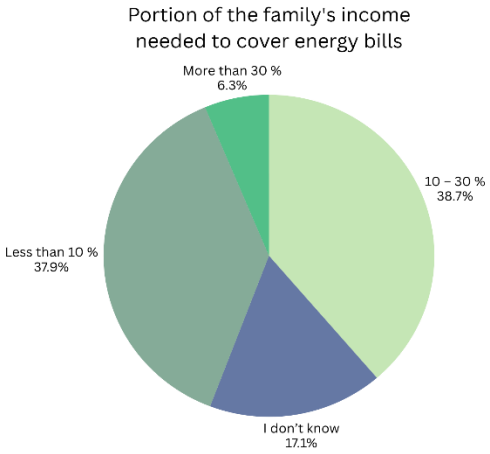


Chart 4 Energy Expenditure as a Share of Household Income

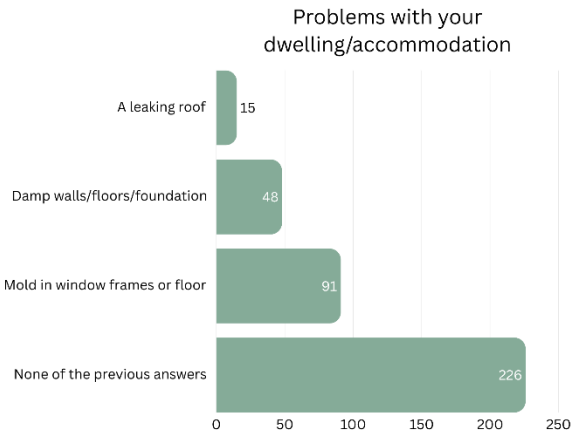


As illustrated in the chart above (chart 4), 37.9% of households spend less than 10% of income on energy, while 38.7% spend 10–30%, indicating generally manageable costs. However, 6.3% exceed 30%, suggesting energy poverty conditions. Meanwhile, 17.1% are uncertain, indicating limited awareness of household expenditures.

5.4 Housing conditions

As illustrated in the chart below (chart 6), 37.9% of households spend less than 10% of income on energy, while 38.7% spend 10–30%, indicating generally manageable costs. However, 6.3% exceed 30%, suggesting energy poverty conditions. Meanwhile, 17.1% are uncertain, indicating limited awareness of household expenditures.

Chart 6 Reported Problems in Dwelling Conditions



5.5 Impact of energy costs on household well-being

The data from (chart 7) indicate that while the majority of respondents (205) report never struggling to cover essential expenses, a notable share experience financial pressure, with 120 reporting sometimes, 27 often, and 12 most of the time.

A similar pattern emerges in (chart 8), where most respondents (183) report never skipping activities due to energy costs. However, 122 report doing so sometimes, 35 often, 16 most of the time, and 6 always.

Taken together, the findings suggest that although most households appear financially stable, a significant proportion faces intermittent energy-related financial strain. This is reflected both in occasional difficulty covering essential expenses and in behavioral adjustments, such as reducing everyday activities.

Chart 7 Household Financial Difficulty in Covering Essential Expenses

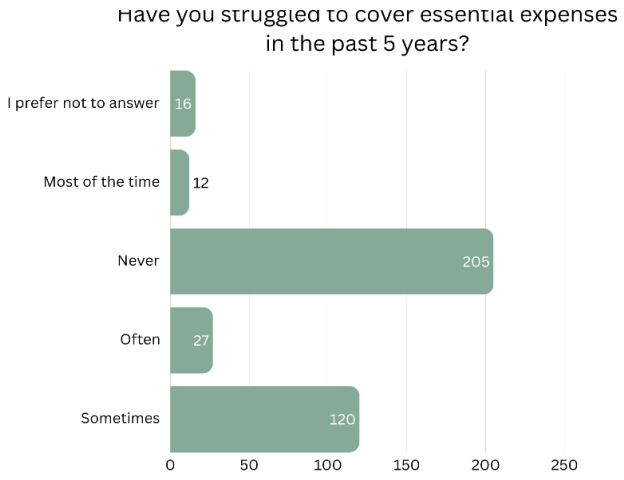
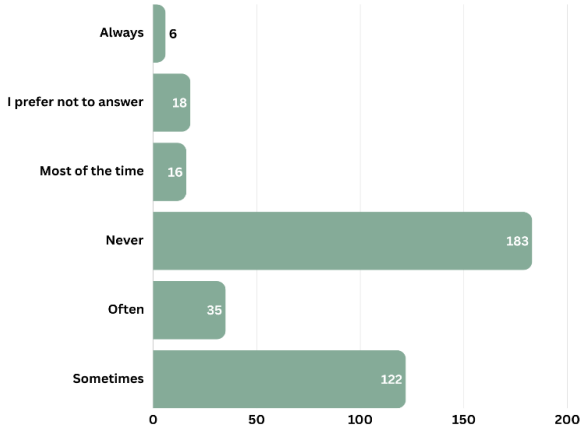


Chart 8 Behavioral Impact of Energy Costs on Households



The survey findings reinforce the key challenges identified throughout the policy analysis, confirming that energy poverty remains a widespread and multidimensional issue across partner countries. The results highlight persistent difficulties related to energy affordability, inefficient housing conditions, and limited access to effective support mechanisms, particularly among vulnerable households. By complementing policy-level analysis with direct household experiences, the survey provides critical evidence of the gap between policy intentions and real-life outcomes. These insights further underline the need for more targeted, integrated, and long-term policy interventions, as outlined in the following recommendations.

6. Recommendations

1. **Strengthen policy frameworks** by developing dedicated energy poverty strategies and integrating clear targets within NECPs, particularly in Albania and Kosovo. Almost all partner organizations shall define clear energy poverty monitoring targets in their NECP. They shall mainstream the information to other sectoral strategies that are related to social, economic or environmental. Moreover, the countries, mainly Albania and Kosovo, shall prioritize the definition of energy poverty concept and operationalize it into indicators. Other countries, such as Greece, Germany and Netherlands shall put efforts to have a more detailed definition of the concept.
2. **Improve monitoring systems** through the establishment of integrated data platforms and energy poverty observatories that combine social, economic, and energy indicators. Albania and Kosovo shall learn from the international practices and establish the Energy Poverty Observatory hub. Such hubs must host experts from universities, NGOs, consultants who can contribute to the preparation of a clear methodology for energy poverty mapping and monitoring and defining a system to be regularly in place. Moreover, all the countries shall set up and introduce the multidimensional analyses of energy poverty which considers several components related to energy, building environment, social and economic. Energy poverty is not occurring due to just one factor but several factors.
3. **Prioritize inclusive renovation programs** targeting low-income and vulnerable households, while addressing structural barriers such as the landlord–tenant split incentive. All partner countries have already developed and adopted long-term renovation strategies for public and residential buildings, which represents a positive step forward. However, persistent barriers, particularly the misalignment of incentives between landlords and tenants, continue to hinder the implementation of energy efficiency measures and limit the uptake of renovations among vulnerable groups.
4. **Enhance financial support mechanisms** by shifting from short-term subsidies to long-term, targeted investments in energy efficiency and clean energy access. The current short-term mechanism does not fully address energy poverty. The partner countries, especially Albania and Kosovo, shall integrate and set up long-term financial mechanisms that unlock the potential for building renovation. Such financial instruments can be soft loans, energy efficiency funds, grants, or direct financing of the building.
5. **Increase awareness** by implementing targeted information campaigns and outreach activities to inform citizens, especially vulnerable households, about energy poverty, available support schemes, and energy-saving practices. This should include collaboration with local authorities, NGOs, and community organizations to ensure effective dissemination and engagement.

POWERING CITIZENS

Empowering energy citizenship among energy-poor people through joint actions

POLICY MEMO

PROJECT CODE: **101147083-POWERINGCITIZENS-CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV**
DURATION: **01/06/2024 to 30/05/2026**
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Executive Summary

This Policy Memo examines the extent to which national energy and climate policies address the growing challenge of energy poverty across project partner countries: Germany, Italy, Albania, the Netherlands, Kosovo, and Greece and proposes potential recommendations. It focuses on the alignment between National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and the real-life conditions experienced by households, particularly vulnerable groups affected by rising energy costs, inefficient housing, and socio-economic inequalities.

Energy poverty has emerged as a critical issue within the broader energy transition, especially in the context of recent energy price shocks and increasing climate ambitions at the European level. While NECPs provide the main strategic framework for achieving decarbonization, energy efficiency, and energy security targets for the period 2021–2030, their capacity to integrate social dimensions, such as affordability and equitable access to energy, varies significantly across countries.

The scope of this policy memo is to deliver a comprehensive assessment of how energy poverty is addressed within national frameworks, by analyzing NECP-related policy commitments and examining current trends across countries. It seeks to identify key gaps between policy intentions and real-life conditions, while highlighting both shared challenges and country-specific structural differences. The analysis is further enriched by insights from community-level engagement activities, such as Energy Cafés, ensuring that policy findings are grounded in the lived experiences of affected households.

The analysis highlights a set of consistent findings across countries. Despite growing recognition of energy poverty in policy frameworks, significant gaps remain in translating commitments into effective and targeted action. In particular, challenges persist in reaching the most vulnerable households, ensuring adequate and sustained financial support, and addressing structural drivers such as inefficient housing. Moreover, weak integration between energy, social, and housing policies continues to limit the overall effectiveness of interventions. By combining policy review with empirical observations and stakeholder perspectives, this policy memo aims to contribute to a better understanding of how energy transition policies can be made more socially inclusive and effective in addressing energy poverty. The policy memo address several recommendations such as **Strengthening policy frameworks** by defining clear energy poverty targets, improving definitions, and aligning NECPs with social, economic, and environmental strategies, **improve monitoring systems** by establishing integrated data platforms and energy poverty observatories, and adopting multidimensional assessment approaches, **promoting inclusive renovation programs** focused on vulnerable households, **enhancing financial mechanisms** by shifting from short-term subsidies to long-term investments (e.g., grants, soft loans, energy efficiency funds) and Increasing the awareness through targeted campaigns and stakeholder engagement to inform citizens about energy poverty and available support.

Problem Statement

Energy poverty remains a critical and under-addressed issue across European and Western Balkan countries, driven by a combination of high energy costs, inefficient building stock, and persistent socio-economic inequalities. Many households are unable to afford adequate heating and cooling, forcing them to reduce energy use below comfortable and healthy levels, which negatively affects their well-being and quality of life. Despite commitment to addressing energy poverty through national frameworks, including National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) and related social and energy policies, implementation gaps persist. Existing measures are often fragmented, underfunded, and

insufficiently targeted, limiting their effectiveness in reaching vulnerable populations. Structural issues, such as outdated housing, limited access to energy efficiency investments, and weak institutional coordination, continue to exacerbate the problem. As a result, there is a clear mismatch between policy intentions and on-the-ground realities across the region.

As a result, energy poverty persists as a systemic issue, highlighting a significant gap between policy commitments and actual impact. Without stronger coordination, improved targeting of vulnerable groups, and more effective implementation mechanisms, current policy approaches are unlikely to deliver meaningful and lasting reductions in energy poverty.

Gaps Analysis Across Countries

The level of comparison is conducted based on the policy effectiveness, presence of monitoring tools for energy poverty, building conditions, financial instruments and the level of capacities to address energy poverty. Regarding the policy effectiveness, all partner countries have adopted the NECAP but only Italy has defined the targets to reduce energy poverty. The EU countries have adopted many more laws that allow better addressing energy poverty. In regard to monitoring and data systems, Italy has the most advanced monitoring system (referring to the Energy Observatory Hub data), followed by Netherlands, Germany and Greece, which already collect data but lack integrated frameworks for benchmark indicators. The weakest are Albania and Kosovo, which suffer from fragmented or missing data systems. Among all partners, there is a lack of integrated multidimensional monitoring tools addressing the energy, social and economic components. In regard to the building conditions, the common challenges are present almost in the whole countries, particularly in Albania and Kosovo, where there is poor insulation and low building conditions, whereas in EU countries, there is a renovation program in place, but the tendency to profit more is towards high-income people. Additionally, regarding the financial instruments, the EU countries offer subsidies, tax reductions and social bonuses, but often insufficient or difficult to access. In Albania and Kosovo, there is limited financial support, mainly short-term subsidies rather than structural and long-term solutions. In regard to institutional capacity, Albania and Kosovo are struggling due to a lack of administrative capacities and limited stakeholder coordination in place.

Table 1 Gap analyses across countries

Countries	Main gaps
Germany	- No official definition or integrated monitoring framework Policies rely on price measures (short-term) - Structural issues in buildings (heating dependence, efficiency gaps) Limited long-term targeted support mechanisms
Italy	- Strong framework but targets not fully achieved - Monitoring advanced but not fully multidimensional - Renovation schemes benefit higher-income groups - Financial support (social bonuses) insufficient vs rising costs

Greece	- Energy poverty addressed indirectly, no fully integrated strategy - Monitoring tools not well linked to policy (NECP) - Old and inefficient housing stock - Financial support insufficient and not well targeted
The Netherlands	- No binding energy poverty targets in policy - Monitoring exists but lacks clear benchmarks - Split incentive problem (landlords vs tenants) - Complex access to financial support; reliance on short-term measures
Albania	- No clear definition of energy poverty and weak policy framework - Limited and short-term financial support (no structural funding) - Weak institutional capacity and coordination
Kosovo	- No legal definition of energy poverty and incomplete NECP - Lack of data systems and targeting mechanisms - Financial support focused on consumption, not efficiency - Limited administrative capacity

Insights from Energy Cafés

The Energy Cafés were organized by the project partners in their respective countries as small, community-based gatherings aimed at engaging individuals sharing experiences and concerns about energy poverty. Energy Cafés provided an informal and safe space for citizens to share their everyday experiences with energy use, costs, and access. Across all countries, discussions consistently highlighted the growing burden of energy bills, limited awareness and access to support measures, and challenges related to poor housing conditions. Energy Cafés revealed a clear need for better-targeted, more accessible, and more inclusive energy policies. In the table below are listed key insights from energy cafes in each country.

Table 2 Insights from Energy Cafes across countries

Theme	Main Insight (Across Countries)	Policy Implication
Energy costs & coping	Households struggle with rising bills and reduce essential energy use	Expand targeted financial relief and social protection
Housing & efficiency	Poor housing conditions drive high energy consumption	Scale up renovation and efficiency programs

Access to support	Complex procedures exclude vulnerable groups from benefits	Simplify application processes and eligibility criteria
Income & vulnerability	Vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected	Strengthen income support and targeted protection measures
Information & awareness	Many households lack knowledge of support schemes	Improve outreach, advisory services, and local support
Policy & governance	Existing policies are often fragmented or poorly targeted	Enhance coordination and better target vulnerable groups
Behavior & coping strategies	Households reduce essential energy use to manage costs	Design policies that reduce the need for harmful coping strategies

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen policy frameworks** by developing dedicated energy poverty strategies and integrating clear targets within NECPs, particularly in Albania and Kosovo. Almost all partner organizations shall define clear energy poverty monitoring targets in their NECP. They shall mainstream the information to other sectoral strategies that are related to social, economic or environmental. Moreover, the countries, mainly Albania and Kosovo, shall prioritize the definition of energy poverty concept and operationalize it into indicators. Other countries, such as Greece, Germany and Netherlands shall put efforts to have a more detailed definition of the concept.

2. **Improve monitoring systems** through the establishment of integrated data platforms and energy poverty observatories that combine social, economic, and energy indicators. Albania and Kosovo shall learn from the international practices and establish the Energy Poverty Observatory hub. Such hubs must host experts from universities, NGOs, consultants who can contribute to the preparation of a clear methodology for energy poverty mapping and monitoring and defining a system to be regularly in place. Moreover, all the countries shall set up and introduce the multidimensional analyses of energy poverty which considers several components related to energy, building environment, social and economic. Energy poverty is not occurring due to just one factor but several factors.

3. **Prioritize inclusive renovation programs** targeting low-income and vulnerable households, while addressing structural barriers such as the landlord–tenant split incentive. All partner countries have already developed and adopted long-term renovation strategies for public and residential buildings, which represents a positive step forward. However, persistent barriers, particularly the misalignment of incentives between landlords and tenants, continue to hinder the implementation of energy efficiency measures and limit the uptake of renovations among vulnerable groups.

4. **Enhance financial support mechanisms** by shifting from short-term subsidies to long-term, targeted investments in energy efficiency and clean energy access. The current short-term mechanism does not fully address energy poverty. The partner countries, especially Albania and Kosovo, shall integrate and set up long-term financial mechanisms that unlock the potential for building renovation. Such financial instruments can be soft loans, energy efficiency funds, grants, or direct financing of the building.

5. **Increase awareness** by implementing targeted information campaigns and outreach activities to inform citizens, especially vulnerable households, about energy poverty, available support schemes, and energy-saving practices. This should include collaboration with local authorities, NGOs, and community organizations to ensure effective dissemination and engagement.

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POWERING CITIZENS

Empowering energy citizenship among energy-poor people through joint actions

POLICY MEMO

CURRENT SITUATION

- Energy poverty remains a persistent challenge across Europe and the Western Balkans
- Many households cannot afford adequate heating and cooling, affecting well-being
- Existing policy frameworks face implementation gaps and limited effectiveness
- Support measures are often fragmented, underfunded, and poorly targeted
- Structural barriers, including outdated buildings and limited investments, worsen the issue
- A clear gap persists between policy commitments and real-life outcomes

GERMANY

- No official definition or integrated monitoring framework for energy poverty
- Structural issues in buildings (heating dependence, efficiency gaps)
- Limited long-term targeted support mechanisms

ITALY

- Strong framework but targets not fully achieved
- Monitoring advanced but not fully multidimensional
- Renovation schemes benefit higher-income groups
- Financial support (social bonuses) insufficient vs rising costs

GREECE

- Energy poverty addressed indirectly, no fully integrated strategy
- Monitoring tools not well linked to policy (NECP)
- Old and inefficient housing stock
- Financial support insufficient and not well targeted

NETHERLANDS

- No binding energy poverty targets in policy
- Monitoring exists but lacks clear benchmarks
- Split incentive problem (landlords vs tenants)
- Complex access to financial support; reliance on short-term measures

ALBANIA

- No clear definition of energy poverty and weak policy framework
- Limited and short-term financial support (no structural funding)
- Weak institutional capacity and coordination

KOSOVO

- No legal definition of energy poverty and incomplete NECP
- Lack of data systems and targeting mechanisms
- Financial support focused on consumption, not efficiency
- Limited administrative capacity

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INSIGHTS FROM ENERGY CAFÉS

ENERGY COSTS & COPING

Households struggle with rising bills and reduce essential energy use

Expand targeted financial relief and social protection

HOUSING & EFFICIENCY

Poor housing conditions drive high energy consumption

Scale up renovation and efficiency programs

INCOME & VULNERABILITY

Vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected

Strengthen income support and targeted protection measures

ACCESS TO SUPPORT

Complex procedures exclude vulnerable groups from benefits

Simplify application processes and eligibility criteria

INFORMATION & AWARENESS

Many households lack knowledge of support schemes

Improve outreach, advisory services, and local support

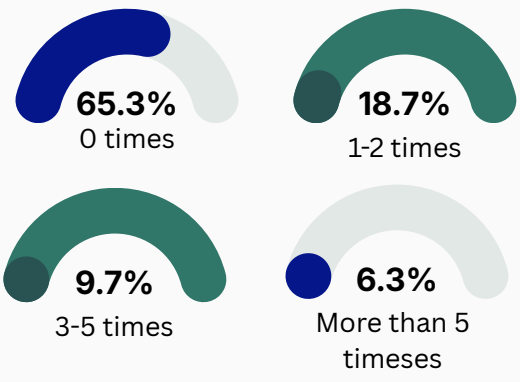
BEHAVIOR & COPING STRATEGIES

Households reduce essential energy use to manage costs

Design policies that reduce the need for harmful coping strategies

ENERGY POVERTY SURVEY IN PARTNER COUNTRIES: KEY INDICATORS AND INSIGHTS

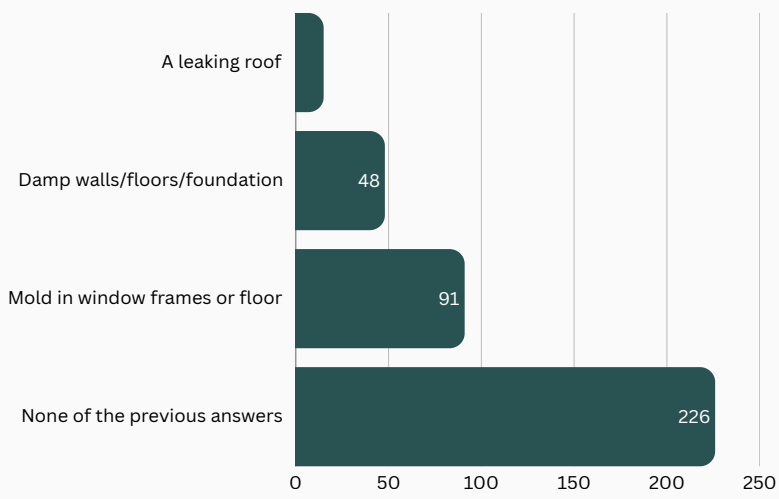
Arrears on utility bills



Over the past five years, have you experienced any delays in paying your energy bills?

Housing conditions

Problems with your dwelling/accommodation



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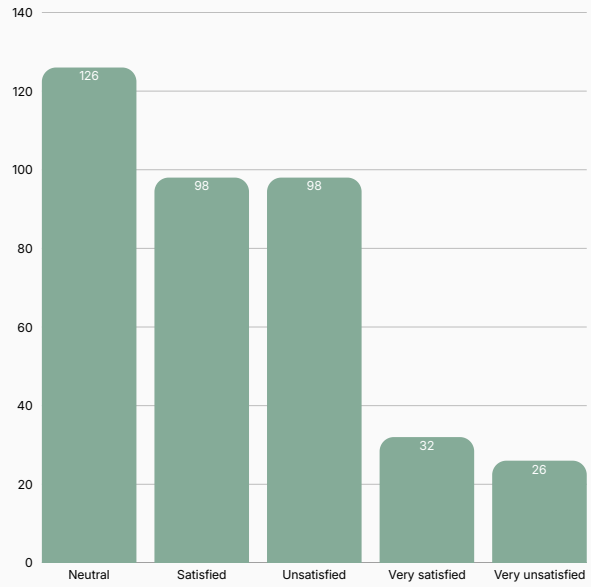
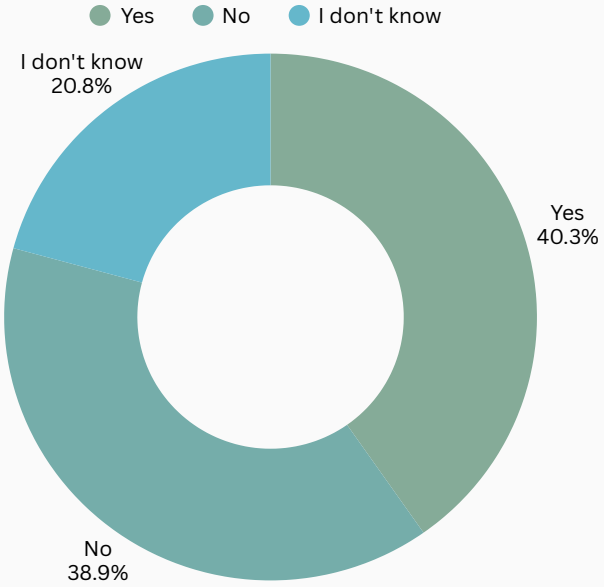
Energy efficiency

How do you evaluate the energy efficiency of your building?

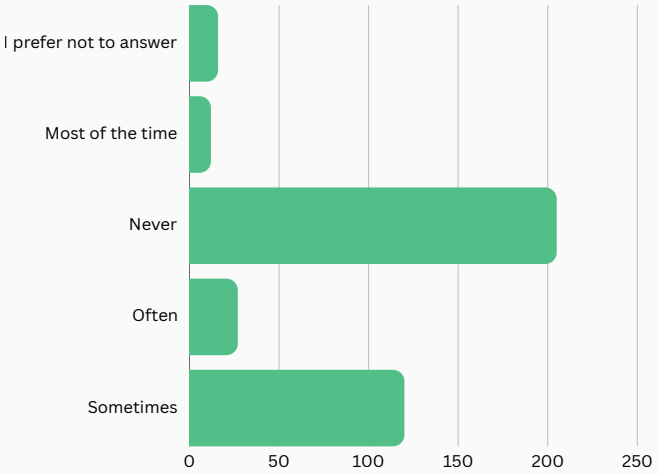


Does your house have thermal insulation?

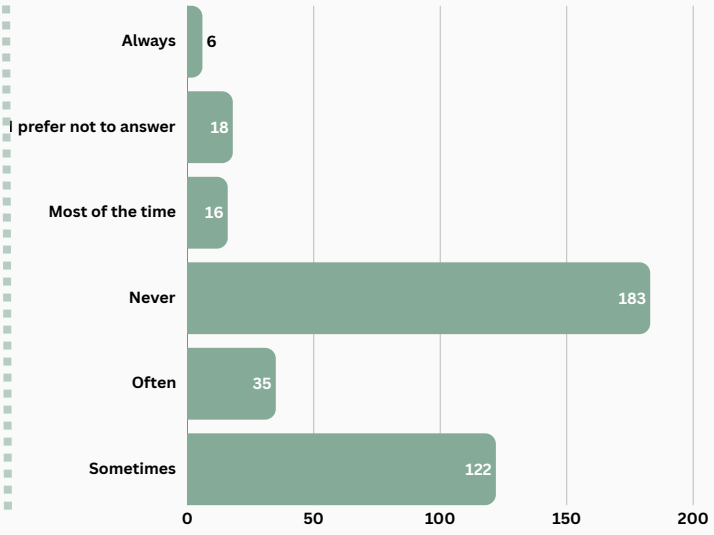


Impact of energy costs on household well-being

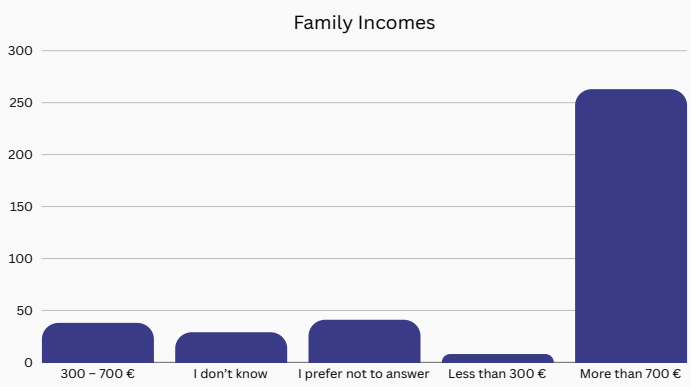
Have you struggled to cover essential expenses in the past 5 years?

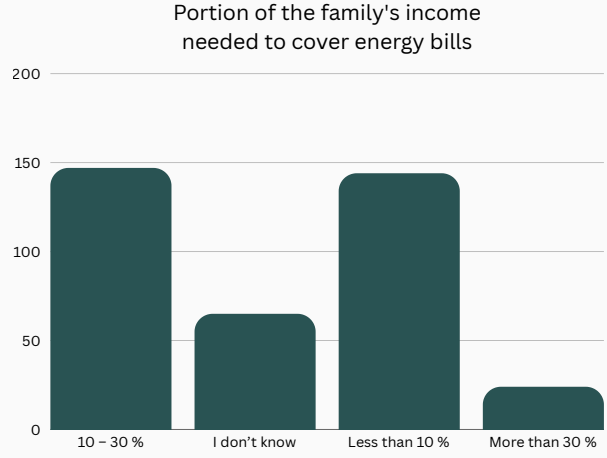


Have you skipped activities due to energy costs?



Impact of energy





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RECOMMENDATIONS

01. **Strengthen policy frameworks** by setting clear NECP targets, improving monitoring, and defining measurable indicators,prioritized in Albania and Kosovo, with further refinement in Greece, Germany, and the Netherlands.

02. **Improve monitoring** by creating integrated data platforms and Energy Poverty Observatories, adopting multidimensional indicators across all countries, with Albania and Kosovo building dedicated hubs based on international practice.

03. **Prioritize inclusive renovation programs** for vulnerable households, addressing barriers like the landlord–tenant split despite existing strategies.

04. **Strengthen financial support** by shifting from short-term subsidies to long-term, targeted investments in energy efficiency and clean energy, especially in Albania and Kosovo.

05. **Increase awareness** through targeted campaigns and local partnerships to inform vulnerable groups about energy poverty, support schemes, and energy-saving practices