POWERTY: RENEWABLE ENERGIES FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Andalusia, through the Andalusian Energy Agency, entity assigned to the Regional Ministry of Treasury, Industry and Energy, leads the European project POWERTY (*Renewable energies for vulnerable groups*) whose aim is to facilitate the use of renewabe energies among the vulnerable groups affected by energy poverty.

➢ **The main objective of this project, approved in August 2019 by the European Commission in the framework of the Interreg Europe Programme 2014-2020, is to reduce the number of persons affected by energy poverty and that, through the use of renewable energies, can heat and cool their homes, have hot wáter or light their homes, thus improving their quality of life and health.**

➢ **With a duration of three and a half years, POWERTY will design an action plan for each one of the regions involved in the project (Spain, France, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania and the United Kingdom) to promote low cost innovative solutions in the renewable energy sector, a greater knowledge of society of this type of installation and improve the policy instruments of the regional governments in 4 areas:**

   o **Technological: identifying new innovative renewable energy technologies, including collective and urban energy systems**
   o **Financial: new financing formulas for renewable energyies suitable for vulnerable groups such as ethical banking, microfunding/microlending, social corporate resonsibiity of companies**
   o **Regulatory**
   o **Social: with concrete actions to promote the empowering of vulnerable groups and make them active participants and protaganists in the energy transition.**

➢ **POWERTY has a budget of 1,127,226 euros, where 83.7% is provided by the European Commission through ERDF. The project is integrated in the thematic objective 3: "*Support the change to a low carbon economy in all sectors*".**

Who forms part of POWERTY?

The project is carried out by a European consortium of public entities, **under the coordination and leadership of the Andalusian Energy Agency**. The entities have been chosen to respond through renewable energies in the most effective way, and with the greatest possible impact, to the problem of energy poverty in Europe.

In this way, the consortium is composed of entities from different European regions and with different levels of energy poverty and use of renewable energies: regions from countries with the highest rates of energy poverty (Bulgaria) are included; as well as others that have been references in tackling energy poverty, such as the United Kingdom, represented by the University of Manchester.

The project partners are:

- SPAIN: Andalusian Energy Agency
- FRANCE: Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Energy- Environment Agency (AURA-EE).
- BULGARIA: Energy Agency of Plovdid (EAP)
- POLAND: Agglomeration Opole Trust (association of 21 municipalities) (AOT)
- LITHUANIA: Public Investment and Development Agency (VIPA)
- UNITED KINGDOM: University of Manchester – EU Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV)

In addition to the partners, the **"stakeholders"** have a relevant role in the project.These are public or private entities that develop an activity directly related to the topics addressed by the project (renewable energies and energy poverty) such as business associations of the energy sector, consumer organisations, energy cooperatives and non-profit companies, energy companies, Andalusian universities and research centres, and "ethical banking" financing bodies, among others.

In the case of Andalusia, the number of entities and organisations involved and their heterogeneity should be highlighted, which greatly favors a multidisciplinary approach, which is necessary to address such a relevant challenge as that of supplying vulnerable groups with renewable energies. There are almost 40 regional entities and experts in the field of renewable energies, as well as other areas more related to vulnerable groups in their multiple variants, in addition to national entities such as the Environmental Sciences Association (Asociación de Ciencias Ambientales - ACA), which is also the Spanish representative in the EU Energy Poverty Observatory, or ECODES.

What is being done

- **Action plans** in each of the regions of the consortium by means of an in-depth analysis of the 4 thematic actions (technological, financial, regulatory and social) where concrete measures will be established, as a result of the dialogue and collaboration with the stakeholders, and of the learning acquired from other European regions.

- **Good Practice Guide**. Successful initiatives and projects in these areas are being identified for application in the regions of the consortium.

- **Elaboration of a methodology to characterise energy poverty.**

- **Interregional Seminars** in Lithuania, France and Poland, on the thematic actions.

- **Bilateral meetings** with European entitites to transfer and implement good practices from one region to another.

- **Working tables with regional stakeholders.**

- **Communication actions, with special attention to vulnerable groups.**

- **Participation in different forums and events**, such as the Climate Change Conferene COP 25. More information.
  https://www.agenciaandaluzadelaenergia.es/es/actualidad/la-agencia-andaluza-de-la-energia-participa-en-la-cop25-en-un-taller-sobre-pobreza-energetica-y-cambio-climatico

Main results

POWERTY will facilitate the design of regional strategies that promote an increase in the number of vulnerable people affected by energy poverty who will benefit from renewable energy (electricity and heat to heat and cool their homes, electricity and heat to heat water, electricity to light their homes, electricity for cooking, etc.), enabling an improvement in their quality of life and health. These regional strategies to be implemented at the end of the project will focus on achieving the following results:

From a point of view of innovation, the promotion of low cost innovative solutions (equipment and installations) in the renewable energy sector, and a greater knowledge by society of this type of installation.

From an economic point of view, the project will also have a positive effect for companies in the renewable energy sector, as more renewable energy installations will be demanded, which will have an impact on the creation of specialised employment.

From a social point of view, as the project seeks a greater participation of vulnerable citizens in the design and management of renewable energy facilities, POWERTY will have a beneficial impact on vulnerable groups, strengthening neighbourhood and integration links.

In addition to the abovementioned benefits, POWERTY will have a positive effect in terms of decarbonisation of the energy system, with consequent environmental benefits (less pollution from fossil energy sources such as coal, oil, natural gas or nuclear).

Role of the Andalusian Energy Agency and Andalusia in this project

The Andalusian Energy Agency as lead partner assumes the functions of **coordination, monitoring and control of the project,** and must ensure that the objectives are achieved.

Andalusia has played a significant role in the development of the project given that it was this Agency who started it, selecting the partners to make up the consortium and coordinating the proposal.

The experience of the Agency in European projects such as **BUILD2LC** and in the **management and design of policy instruments such as the incentive programmes** for the sustainable energy development of Andalusia, or the Energy Strategy for Andausia, have been key for starting this project.

In Andalsia, work has begun with the **Commissioner for the Poligono Sur district of Seville** to analyse all the collaboration actions that can be opened in energy matters for the development of this group of neighbourhoods in this city.

Thus, the Polígono Sur district could be one of the entities that intervene as *stakeholders* or interest groups in the POWERTY project, collaborating with the Agency in the development of the Regional Action Plan that aims to increase access to clean, safe and quality energy through renewable energies for people affected by energy poverty.

Intervening as a *stakeholder,* the Commissioner for the Polígono Sur district will receive information on the good practices that are developed at European level and, in addition, will be able to participate directly in the activities of international character that will be organised together with the rest of the project partners, where they will know first hand these good practices that in other European regions are being carried out to tackle energy poverty and can contact with similar entities to establish collaborations.

How did POWERTY start?

POWERTY aims to *facilitate the use of renewable energies among vulnerable groups affected by energy poverty.*

The project arises from the need to respond to the clean, safe and fair energy transition proposed by the European directives, seeking the integration of all society, including people affected by energy poverty (elderly, unemployed or sick people, in a situation of slums, marginality or poverty ...) to achieve the decarbonisation of the energy system.

- The European Directive 2018/2001, on renewable energies, makes it obligatory to facilitate and promote the self-consumption of renewable energies, including vulnerable groups.

- The European Commission (Directive 2018/2001) and the Spanish Government (National Integrated Energy and Climate Plan) are increasingly giving a leading role to local energy communities, and are calling for vulnerable groups to be included. Moreover, among the aims of these communities, tackling energy poverty is often included.

- The new regulations in Spain for self-consumption through Royal Decree Law 15/2018 of 5 October and Royal Decree 244/2019 of 5 April, which has introduced very interesting elements such as collective self-consumption, proximity self-consumption, recognition of surpluses or simplification.

Energy poverty is a major problem in Europe. More than 50 million households across the EU suffer from this problem, and there are areas where it hits hardest, like Bulgaria or Lithuania, where a third of their population suffers from it. In Spain, according to data from the National Strategy against Energy Poverty, elaborated by the Ministry for Ecological Transition, between 3.5 and 8.1 million people are affected by energy poverty (the range is motivated by the differences between the evaluation methodologies applied). Therefore, an energy transition will be effective if it considers people in a situation of energy vulnerability.

Renewable energies are a very powerful instrument to tackle energy poverty. In addition, the cost of self-consumption and renewable energy installations is increasingly lower and therefore more people can opt for these types of installations. Even so, it is still a high cost for many people in a vulnerable situation.

There are also still many barriers and difficulties that prevent people in energy poverty from using renewable energies, such as technological, economic, regulatory and social barriers. POWERTY aims to remove these barriers, paving the way for any European to also benefit from a renewable energy supply.

Graphic material relating to POWERTY can be downloaded at the following link

http://soporte.agenciaandaluzadelaenergia.es/owncloud/index.php/s/i6SpH8wfHVfeiq6

All these materials belong to the Andalusian Energy Agency and can be used freely by the media.

Web pages

Official web
https://www.interregeurope.eu/powerty/

Section dedicated to POWERTY in the web page of the Andalusian Energy Agency
https://www.agenciaandaluzadelaenergia.es/es/la-agencia/proyectos-internacionales/proyectos-europeos/powerty