

## PRESS RELEASE

# Second Interregional thematic seminar of the POWERITY project on EU regulatory framework supporting the reduction of energy poverty

8th and 9th April 2021, online



On 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> April, the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Energy Environment Agency (AURA-EE) organised the second interregional thematic seminar of the POWERITY project about the EU regulatory framework supporting the reduction of energy poverty, in particular the use of renewable energies by vulnerable groups. This two-day online seminar, held in the framework of the POWERITY project in which AURA-EE is partner, financed by the Interreg Europe programme, gathered up to 137 participants from all over Europe.

The first day focused on how can the EU Green Deal contribute to increasing the use of renewable energy by vulnerable groups while the second day addressed the means to overcome barriers of a normative character. Other European projects shared their experience on local policies to promote renewable energies. Besides, several good practices at regional level from the POWERTY partners were shared to stakeholders working to tackle energy poverty. Despite the online format of this seminar, participants were still able to virtually visit the "Préau des Colibris in Voiron" (France), a shared housing with solar photovoltaic and thermal installations financed by a third-party.

## 1 DAY 1: HOW CAN THE EU GREEN DEAL CONTRIBUTE TO INCREASE THE USE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY BY VULNERABLE GROUPS?

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**Patrick Biard**, Head of European and International Affairs at AURA-EE, opened the first day of the seminar by presenting its objectives. **Joaquin Villar Rodriguez**, from the Andalusian Energy Agency, lead partner of POWERTY, reminded the audience the main features of the project.

The first session set the scene and gave some insights about the EU agenda for energy poverty. **Teresa Aristegui**, policy officer at DG Energy of the European Commission, stated that energy poverty is intertwined with the EU Green Deal objectives proposed by the Commission. The Commission considers energy poverty at the centre of the Just transition. In the context of the Fitfor55 package, the Commission is revising the Renewable Energy directive, the Energy Efficiency directive, the Energy Community directive and the Renovation wave and will make sure that the issue of energy poverty is addressed in all aspects. The Commission has published a recommendation and a guidance document for Member States (MS) in order to make it easier for them to define and identify energy poverty and to help spread good practices. Teresa Aristegui also emphasised the DG Energy local initiatives such as EU Energy Poverty Observatory and the European Semester. She concluded highlighting the importance of Interreg funding and making sure that all EU funding available interlaces effectively.

We had the pleasure to welcome **Katharine Krell**, thematic expert low-carbon economy of the Policy Learning Platform (PLP) of the Interreg Europe programme. She explained the usefulness of the Platform for projects of territorial cooperation. The Platform offers online learning possibilities with experts support and policy briefs, and personalised policy advice with peer reviews, and a good practices database where one can find all good practices of the POWERTY partners.

The second session of the day was about the **state of the art of the regulatory framework** in the POWERTY partners' countries. Each partner assessed the existence of an energy poverty regulation, the translation of the renewable energy directive and the energy community directive into national law. This session highlighted that only France and Spain have a national energy poverty strategy, a proper definition of energy poverty and a solidarity fund for energy bills or housing. France, Lithuania and Spain have a national energy poverty observatory. France is the only one to have energy certificates dedicated to reduce energy poverty. And Bulgaria is the only one not to have subsidies for the energy renovation of housing.

Ryan Weber, from Nordregio, leader of the **Social Green project**, another Interreg Europe project, presented its policy solutions for mitigating energy poverty. He highlighted the role of the energy communities as a key concept to tackle emerging technical, societal and economic challenges, the need for bottom-up development solutions and leading organisations to pave the way.

Roland Tual, from **REScoop**, developed its views regarding local energy communities as a way to reduce energy poverty by granting easy access to renewable energy for vulnerable groups. He demonstrated how EU directives can support the creation of local inclusive energy communities involving vulnerable groups, and gave some already-existing examples.

As a third session, Patrick Biard moderated a **roundtable** which discussed how the revision of EU directives can better support the reduction of energy poverty. Participants could react to the above-mentioned

presentations in polls. From the discussions, it appears that there is a highly shared opinion that the production of RES for and/or by vulnerable groups can help alleviate energy poverty. NECPs are valuable and effective tools to design and implement energy poverty mitigation measures but, at the moment, they are mainly targeting efficiency measures in buildings. Dedicated indicators should help monitor the implementation of these RES production measures.

Besides, the EU clean energy package establishes a clear link between energy communities and energy poverty. Community energy also enables certain groups of households to participate in the energy transition, who otherwise might not have been able to do so. This opinion is commonly shared amongst the participants. Engaging vulnerable groups in energy communities should be facilitated by measures ensuring that:

- Setting up costs are supported by MS or regional authorities
- Technical assistance is provided by authorities to address all legal, technical and financial topics

Furthermore, effective technical assistance should be designed in concert with vulnerable groups. One-stop shop solutions at local level should be supported. The proposal from the Commission to expand the use of ESCOs and implement solutions enabling to overcome high up front costs is highly supported and considered as an effective measure to support RES projects by vulnerable groups.

## 2 DAY 2: GOOD PRACTICES TO OVERCOME BARRIERS OF NORMATIVE CHARACTER

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The **second day** of the seminar shed the light on local initiatives and good practices to overcome barriers of normative character.

Francesco Filippi of the Fundacion MUSOL, partner of the **Local4Green** project, of the Interreg MED programme, developed a methodology to define green local fiscal policies to promote RES depending on the local specificities.

Then, the POWERTY partners presented their good practices related to normative. Noémie Zambeaux from AURA-EE presented the [zero-rated eco-loan scheme](#) to encourage renewable energy. It allows landlords to get a loan to finance energy refurbishment works for their main residence. Granted by banks, the loan is between €7,000 and €30,000 refundable for 15 years following works.

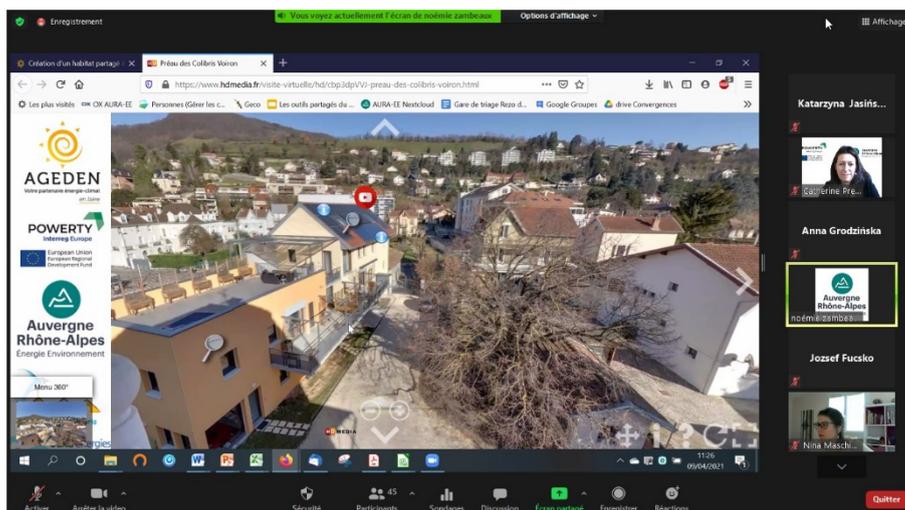
Maud Legros, from the Energy Direction of the French Ministry for Ecological Transition presented the [energy voucher](#) which is an automatic aid to pay energy bills given by the State to 5.8 million of vulnerable households per year in France, based on the income and the household composition.

Renata Adomavičienė, from VIPA, presented some [policy changes](#) introduced in the Lithuanian legislation in order to make renewable energy easy to use and install. The aim is to facilitate the installation of small-scale renewable energy source power plan, to extend the legislation related to prosumer of renewable energy, and to foster the use of renewable energy sources.

We had the honor to welcome Pedro Miguel Mancha Romero, General Director of Senior Citizens and Non-contributory pensions of the Regional Ministry of Equality, social policies and conciliation, who spoke about elderly energy poverty as a multidimensional problem. He presented as such the [First Andalusian plan for the Elderly 2021 - 2023](#) with a budget of more than 164 million euros. It includes 5 strategic lines such as prevention of dependency, attention to dependency, attention to specially vulnerable elderly people, promotion of good treatment of the elderly and fight against undesired loneliness where energy poverty impacts on four of them. One of the program of this plan that focuses on the reduction of elderly energy poverty is influenced by POWERTY project.

Katarzyna Jasińska, from AOT, explained **how the local government of the Opole voivodeship has implemented an air quality management system** in public administration through 2 main actions : the organisation and implementation of a unified management system, and increasing public awareness in the field of air quality by enhancing the involvement of local governments, society, NGOs and local entities.

Finally, participants **virtually visit** the French [good practice](#) “**Préau des Colibris**” in Voiron (France). The Préau des Colibris is an efficient shared habitat built with eco-materials. The roof is used to install both photovoltaic and thermal solar panels. This shared housing is owned by citizens, mainly low-incomes retired people very committed to ecology.



**Manon Burbidge**, from the University of Manchester, advisory partner of the POWERTY project, concluded the two-day seminar reminding the importance of accounting different vulnerabilities. Besides, putting energy poverty as one of the key element of the EU Green Deal for a Just transition is a positive sign for national and local levels to follow in the footsteps.

POWERTY next interregional seminar is planned on 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and will tackle the engagement of energy local authorities and citizens to raise awareness regarding energy poverty.