

HOW TO ALLEVIATE ENERGY POVERTY AT LOCAL LEVEL?

Get inspired by Covenant of Mayors cities & regions!



Covenant of Mayors
for Climate & Energy
EUROPE



Signatories and Coordinators of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy are taking local action to mitigate climate change, adapt to its unavoidable consequences and provide their citizens with access to secure, sustainable and affordable energy. Transitioning to low-carbon and resilient cities can only happen with all citizens on board.

How can local authorities engage in a social energy and climate transition?

► With regard to the energy transition, many Covenant of Mayors municipalities, provinces and regions are already taking action to reduce energy poverty and make sure that basic energy services such as lighting, heating and cooling, cooking, using appliances, and moving around, are accessible to all.

Energy poverty can be defined as:

“A situation where a household or an individual is unable to afford basic energy services (heating, cooling, lighting, mobility and power) to guarantee a decent standard of living due to a combination of low income, high energy expenditure and low energy efficiency of their homes”.¹

According to principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights “everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, **energy**, transport, financial services and digital communications.” Some elements around

energy markets or building standards are determined at national or European level. However, as city authorities are the closest level of governance to citizens and have key competences on housing and transport, they are well-placed to inform and support vulnerable citizens.

► With regard to adaptation to climate change, cities can assess and map social vulnerability to climate-related events and identify and involve vulnerable groups for the design of fair adaptation policies at local and regional levels.

In this leaflet, you will find energy poverty success stories from Covenant cities and regions. These examples are clustered in three sections:

- **Reducing energy bills through interventions on buildings**
- **Promoting energy savings and cost-efficient behaviours**
- **Protecting energy consumers through mediation services**

We hope that you will enjoy your journey through these impactful actions, and that these can serve as an inspiration for your sustainable energy and climate action plan!

For more information on the definition of energy poverty, key figures and how to get started, please refer to our introductory leaflet on energy poverty:

http://bit.ly/energy_poverty_info

¹ European Commission, Citizens' Energy Forum 2016

Navarra Region, Spain

Energy renovations of residential buildings in deprived neighbourhoods



640,647
inhabitants



Covenant
of Mayors
Coordinator
since 2018

Since 2014, the Navarra Region has undertaken an integral energy renovation of Txantrea, a deprived district of Pamplona, to improve the quality of life of residents and reduce their heating and hot water costs. The renovations consisted in the construction of new thermal envelopes for public and residential buildings constructed between the 50s and the 80s, the renewal of the old district heating systems, and the creation of a new district heating network using biomass. These activities have reduced the energy consumption by 70%. Households' thermal comfort has significantly improved, including during summer as the new insulation system also functions as a protection

FACTS & FIGURES

- 600 apartments renovated during 2014-2017
- Average energy bills have been reduced by €560 / year / household
- 500 NZEB housing units to be built in 2018-2021
- Expected reduction of heating costs of 90%

against excess heat. Renovations were financed by the European Commission (Mobilising Local Energy Investments – Project Development Assistance) and the Government of Navarra under the Efidistrict project. When the project came to an end in 2018, NASUVINSA, the regional agency responsible for urban development and social housing got a €40 million loan from the European Investment Bank to build 500 nearly zero-energy building (NZEB) housing units over the next three years. The regional government contributes with a 25% subsidy of the value of the investment for any property developer that will be involved or commissioned.

► **More info:** www.efidistrict.eu/en

Porto Torres, Italy

Fighting energy poverty with social photovoltaic panels



22,335
inhabitants



Signatory
since 2011



21%
by 2020

The municipality of Porto Torres in Sardinia developed an effective solution to face energy poverty by installing photovoltaic panels on the roofs of families in need. The city council has created a revolving fund of €250,000 for 2017, and the same amount is allocated for 2018. These resources are used to buy photovoltaic panels leased free of charge to families with financial difficulties for a

maximum of 25 years. The families will consume part of the energy produced by the panels for free and the surplus is sold to the national electrical grid. These revenues are reinjected into the fund which allows new families to be included the following year. It has been calculated that in the next 25 years around 400 families will benefit from this initiative.

FACTS & FIGURES

- 5 million people affected by energy poverty in Italy today
- 118,000 kWh/year of renewable solar energy generated
- €150 to €200 of savings per year for each family
- 400 families will benefit from the policy in 25 years

► **More info:** Sean Christian Wheeler, sindaco@comune.porto-torres.ss.it

► **More case-studies on building interventions:**

- Porto, Portugal: <http://bit.ly/PortoCoM>
- Ghent, Belgium: <http://bit.ly/cityGhentCoM>

Brest Metropole, France

Engaging with citizens from deprived neighbourhoods to promote solutions to energy poverty



215,647
inhabitants



Signatory
since 2009



20%
by 2020

Since 2014, Brest Metropole has been working with people who spend more than 10% of their income on energy bills to help them reduce their energy expenses. Most of those citizens live in deprived neighbourhoods with a damaged public and private housing stock and high vacancy rates. With the Climate Active Neighbourhoods (CAN) project funded by Interreg North-West Europe, Brest Metropole is motivating inhabitants from four different neighbourhoods to become more aware of their energy consumption and reduce it.

Brest Metropole also engages with local partners (Energence, Compagnons bâtisseurs) and grassroots groups to organise activities such as DIY, repair cafés for energy appliances, quizzes or children's games. These activities help establish links with inhabitants and, in a second step, invite them for an individual home energy visit where they are informed about energy saving behaviours and given more efficient appliances. An annual event called 'Toit par toi' also spreads messages on poor housing conditions and energy poverty.

FACTS & FIGURES

- 150 energy visits to households between 2016 and June 2018
- 118kg CO₂eq saved/household/year thanks to energy visits
- €138 saved/household/year (water + electricity) following energy visits
- 50 t CO₂eq saved overall in 2 years thanks to energy visits and workshops

► **More info:** <http://bit.ly/CANproject>

Hasselt, Belgium

Social fares for public transport



77,594
inhabitants



Signatory
since 2008



41% by 2030

Since 2016, young people under 20 and citizens receiving public benefits including people on minimum wage, disabled people, people on social tariffs can ride public transport for free in Hasselt via a third-party payment scheme. Children under the age of six travel for free. Seniors are offered a yearly subscription for €50, and 50% of the subscription cost is refunded to students. The city had previously made buses free in 1997 and ridership had increased more than tenfold, reaching a maximum of 4.6 million travellers in 2006. However, as meanwhile the cost of the free bus experiment had also almost quadrupled in ten years, ultimately it was not sustainable. Yet, Hasselt still believes that mobility is key to social inclusion, and beha-

vioural change of new generations towards climate change mitigation. Therefore, the city still invests in improving access to sustainable mobility for the most vulnerable citizens. At national scale Luxembourg provides a card to use all public transport in the country free of charge to people receiving financial assistance from their municipality. Dunkirk, France, is the largest conurbation in Europe to offer free public transport to date.

FACTS & FIGURES

- 10,041 young people free subscriptions
- 3,067 vulnerable people free subscriptions
- 1,000 students refunded 50% subscription

► More info:

- Hasselt: Anneliese Meynaerts, De Lijn, anneliese.meynaerts@delijn.be
- Luxembourg: <http://bit.ly/Luxbus>
- Dunkirk: <http://bit.ly/Dunkirkbus>

► More case-studies on behaviours:

- Les Mureaux, France: <http://bit.ly/MureauxCoM>
- South Tyneside, Ireland: <http://bit.ly/TynesideCoM>

Vienna, Austria

A mediator to support vulnerable consumers



1.7 million
inhabitants



Signatory
since 2012



21% by 2020

220,000 people are unable to keep their home warm enough in Austria, of which 99,000 live in Vienna. In 2011, in order to help those people, Austria's largest energy provider Wien Energie created an ombudsman's office. The office safeguards the supply of energy to people in precarious living situations. It works in close cooperation with the city of Vienna and social institutions to find individual solutions such as cancellation of dunning costs and interest, or financial support. Those institutions provide specific criteria to define social hardships that help Wien Energie identify vulnerable groups and pass such cases on to the ombudsman's office. The ombudsman can

suspend reminders as well as prevent legal action and service interruptions to provide relief in the event of a crisis. The aim here is to give customers and social institutions some breathing space to work out a solution and take the appropriate steps. The model of the Wien Energie ombudsman office has been included in the national law on energy efficiency, to serve as a guideline for other energy supply companies.

FACTS & FIGURES

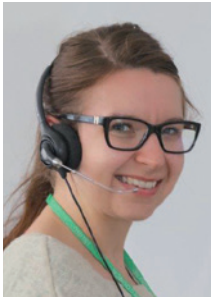
- 18,000 requests from social institutions received between 2011 and 2018
- 12,500 households successfully helped
- 290 coordination meetings between the Wien Energie ombudsman's office and the city of Vienna

► More info:

Tobias Rieder, Wien Energie GmbH,
tobias.rieder@wienenergie.at

London, UK

A fuel poverty referral network and free energy advice service for Londoners



7.8 million
inhabitants



Signatory
since 2009



38%
by 2020

The Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE) offers a dedicated helpline to help households reduce utility bills, tackle energy debt and ultimately stay well and warm. SHINE supports households of any tenure with an annual income below £16,190 (around €18,400) or falling under a SHINE target group (children, senior, disability, specific health condition). The SHINE hub offers support to consumers in arrears with their gas or electricity supplier

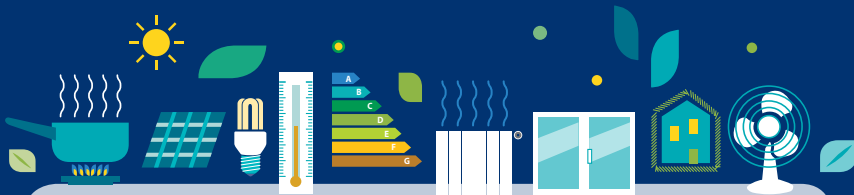
and can compare all the suppliers and tariffs on the market. SHINE then checks customers are on the cheapest possible tariff with their supplier and finds out if a household could save money with another supplier. The network also assesses and refers them for electricity and water discounts or heating and insulation grants, and negotiates repayment plans or applications for assistance clearing debt. When applicable, SHINE proposes home visits where an 'energy doctor' reviews energy bills, checks heating controls, contacts suppliers and fits energy efficient measures. The SHINE project started in the borough of Islington and in January 2017 it expanded to cover the whole of London, with funding from EDF Energy, and from the city of London.

FACTS & FIGURES

- The project has reached around 20,000 households across every London borough.

► More info: <https://shine-london.org.uk>

► More case-studies on market interventions: Newcastle, UK:
<http://bit.ly/NewcastleCoM>



This leaflet is available in French, German, Italian and Spanish in the Covenant of Mayors' online Library.

Learn more about the energy poverty challenge in Europe!

► www.eumayors.eu > Support > Energy poverty

The EU Covenant of Mayors Office is responsible for the overall coordination of the initiative in Europe. It is composed of networks of local and regional authorities: Energy Cities, Climate Alliance, CEMR, EUROCITIES, FEDARENE, & ICLEI Europe.

CONTACT



Covenant of Mayors Office

63-67 rue d'Arlon, 1040 Brussels – Belgium



press@eumayors.eu



[@eumayors](https://twitter.com/eumayors)

www.eumayors.eu

