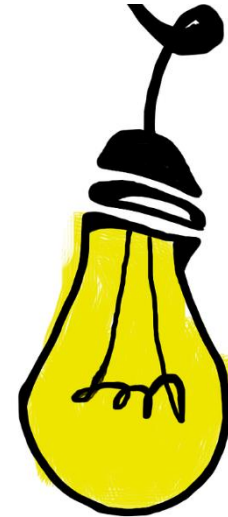


Keeping the lights on:

Which EU countries are taking action on energy poverty?



Momentum is higher than ever for bold action to halt climate breakdown. As students, grassroots groups, and the yellow vest movement call for a radical redesign of our energy system to jointly take on climate change and inequality, new EU energy laws have included action on energy poverty, highlighting opportunities for progress and setting new requirements.

EU countries must now take into account energy poverty in their building renovation strategies, target homes in energy poverty in annual energy savings measures, and assess the number of households living in energy poverty. Legislation also recognises the role of community energy in reducing energy poverty. Additionally, if governments acknowledge a “significant” rate of energy poverty nationally, they must set in motion action plans to tackle the issue.

December 2018 was the first test of member states’ willingness to embrace these new opportunities, with the submission of draft National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs), where countries outlined policies and measures to take on climate change.

The results are in and they show us there is still a long way to go. Although many member states recognise the need for action, Greece is the only country to make new significant commitments to tackle energy poverty. In general, little attention is given to addressing the issue of disconnections, in a context where 7 million Europeans receive notices each year¹, putting them at risk of being cut off of basic needs such as heating, cooling or light. A majority of member states do not mention the role of energy communities. Energy efficiency targets are a crucial indication of ambition to massively renovate homes to make them warm and decent for all, but the 2030 target will likely not be met². Finally, only one member state, Greece, announces a numerical objective to reduce energy poverty. Governments have failed to embrace the opportunity to jointly tackle climate change, cut energy bills, create green jobs, and ensure social justice.

¹ ACER Market Monitoring Report 2015

² Coalition for Energy Savings - [Analysis of NECPs](#)

The Right to Energy coalition, bringing together trade unions, social organisations, health and environmental groups has been campaigning for two years to achieve progress in EU policy, in a situation of both environmental and social urgency. We call on governments to:

- **Provide immediate support to households:** enforce the right to energy by banning disconnections and provide families in need with financial support;
- **Eradicate indecent housing:** launch massive home renovation programmes to ensure everyone is provided a decent home, cut energy bills and CO2 emissions;
- **Recognise the role of energy communities** in reducing energy poverty. Governments must ensure conditions are in place to allow these projects to flourish.

	Summary	Energy poverty rate	Recognises a significant rate of energy poverty	Energy efficiency	Limits disconnections	Recognises role of community energy
Austria	Austria recognises the opportunity to jointly tackle climate change and social inequality but does not commit to new policies or measures to alleviate energy poverty.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Not mentioned	Yes
Belgium	Access to energy is recognised as a right but not enforced. High differences between regions, and no national plan to tackle energy poverty.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Disconnections restricted in Brussels and Flanders	No
Bulgaria	Bulgaria has the highest rate of energy poverty in the EU but does not commit to a plan to tackle the issue, nor propose new measures.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Very low 2030 target	Not mentioned	No
Croatia	Croatia announces new monitoring schemes and highlights the importance of renovating homes – however it foresees an increase in energy consumption for 2030.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees an increase in energy consumption	Protected customers for electricity and gas	No

	Summary	Energy poverty rate	Recognises a significant rate of energy poverty	Energy efficiency	Limits disconnections	Recognises role of community energy
Cyprus	Despite high levels of energy poverty and one of the highest excess winter death rates in the EU, Cyprus does not recognise a "significant" issue.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees an increase in energy consumption	Limited to people with critical health issues	No
Czech Republic	Czech Republic is working to better measure energy poverty and underlines the need for an integrated approach -- however the country minimises the issue and does not yet commit to new policy.	High	Mentioned as a possibility	Very low 2030 target	Limits disconnections for vulnerable consumers	Yes
Denmark	Denmark defines energy poverty as a social issue thereby minimising the role of energy policy in alleviating it, and does not commit to new action.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Not mentioned	No
Estonia	Despite a high rate of energy poverty, Estonia does not outline new commitments to guarantee access to energy or boost home renovations.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Limited during winter	No
Germany	Germany minimises the role of energy policy to alleviate energy poverty. The NECP outlines no new measures.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Not mentioned	No
Greece	Greece is the only country to have included an objective for energy poverty alleviation in its NECP and supports community energy as a key solution. However, it foresees an increase of energy consumption.	High	Objective to reduce energy poverty by 50% by 2025 and 75% by 2030	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Measures to protect households	Yes
Finland	Finland minimises role of energy policy and does not commit to action to end energy poverty.	Low	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Limited in winter	No

	Summary	Energy poverty rate	Recognises a significant rate of energy poverty	Energy efficiency	Limits disconnections	Recognises role of community energy
France	France aims for a low energy efficiency target and doesn't mention the role of energy communities.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Unambitious 2030 target	Forbidden during winter	No
Hungary	Hungary minimises the issue despite a high rate of energy poverty. The country does not commit to new measures.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Not mentioned	Yes
Ireland	Ireland is considering new policy to take on energy poverty, such as minimum standards for buildings. No commitments are made in the NECP however.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Not mentioned	Yes
Italy	Italy underlines that the rate of energy poverty is likely to increase, and considers the issue in a holistic perspective. However, no national plan or objective is announced.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Not mentioned	No
Lithuania	Lithuania highlights the importance of immediate and structural answers – but does not commit to new policies.	High	Recognition that Lithuania has one of the worst rates of energy poverty, but no objective or plan	Final energy target not available	Not mentioned	Yes
Luxembourg	Luxembourg calls for progress at EU level on energy poverty, leads on energy efficiency and highlights its free public transport scheme as a good example of how to guarantee the right to energy.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Adequate 2030 target	Limitations to disconnection	No
Latvia	Latvia has announced a possible target to be set in 2021. The country holds one of the highest rates of energy poverty.	High	No recognition, objective or plan despite high rate of energy poverty. Target to be set in 2021?	Low 2030 target	Not mentioned	No

	Summary	Energy poverty rate	Recognises a significant rate of energy poverty	Energy efficiency	Limits disconnections	Recognises role of community energy
Malta	Malta has one of the highest excess winter deaths rates in the EU, but does not commit to new policies and foresees an increase in energy consumption for 2030.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Not mentioned	No
Netherlands	The Netherlands insists on the social character of energy poverty, thereby minimising energy policy's role. No new commitments.	Moderate	No recognition, objective or plan	Very low 2030 target	Limitations to disconnection	Yes
Poland	With a high rate of energy poverty, Poland is working on a comprehensive strategy to take on the issue. Gas is worryingly highlighted as a solution.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Not mentioned	No
Portugal	Portugal recognises the systemic causes behind energy poverty, and plans to initiate work to tackle the issue – but no new commitments are announced.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Foresees increase in energy consumption	Not mentioned	Equivocal wording
Romania	Romania underlines the importance of a holistic approach. It recognises access to energy as a right but does not announce an objective or a national action plan.	High	Romania has announced a new strategy to eliminate energy poverty, but sets no objective	Final energy target not available	Limited for vulnerable consumers	Yes
Sweden	Sweden minimises the role of energy policy and does not commit to action to end energy poverty.	Low	No recognition, objective or plan	Very low 2030 target	Disconnections are monitored	No
Slovenia	Slovenia doesn't commit to new measures or policies despite a high rate of energy poverty.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	No final energy target set	Not mentioned	No
Slovakia	Slovakia recognises a holistic approach is required, but doesn't commit to new measures or policies.	High	No recognition, objective or plan	Low 2030 target	Not mentioned	Yes

	Summary	Energy poverty rate	Recognises a significant rate of energy poverty	Energy efficiency	Limits disconnections	Recognises role of community energy
Spain	Spain has a holistic perspective and recognises the right to energy, supports community energy and has taken steps to ban disconnections. Its energy efficiency target is low.	High	Target has been announced in new strategy: at minimum a 25% reduction in energy poverty by 2025	Low 2030 target	In its new strategy, Spain has banned disconnections during extreme weather, a first step towards complete protection	Equivocal wording
United Kingdom	Situations vary across regions as competences are devolved. No new measures are announced, and no link is made with community energy. No final energy efficiency target was given.	Moderate	National Fuel Poverty strategy to be updated in 2019. Scotland has its own strategy and fixed an objective to alleviate energy poverty.	No final energy target set	No additional measures announced, nothing to tackle the rising issue of self-disconnection	No

Methodology

This briefing has been written in collaboration with Društvo za oblikovanje održivog razvoja (DOOR), Greenpeace Greece, Friends of the Earth Slovenia, CLER (France), ZERO (Portugal), Friends of the Earth Hungary, RWADE, Heinrich Boll Greece. NECPs analysed were versions submitted to the EU Commission. The energy poverty rate is based on the 2019 Open Exp report putting forth a composite domestic energy poverty index. The level of the energy efficiency target is assessed based on analysis from the Coalition for Energy Savings.

Further reading

- *Time to pick up the pace, Analysis of the NECPs (2019) - [CAN-Europe](#)*
- *Analysis of NECPs of eight Member States (2019) - [Bankwatch](#)*
- *European Domestic Energy Poverty Index Briefing (2019) - [Open Exp and Right to Energy](#)*

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