



**Tackling energy inequalities  
through joint action and  
knowledge exchange**

**ENGAGER: European Energy  
Poverty - Agenda Co-Creation and  
Knowledge Innovation**





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## Introduction

Millions of people across the world suffer from energy poverty, commonly understood as a household's inability to secure needed levels of energy in the home. Energy poor households typically struggle to pay for their energy bills, or access suitable energy infrastructures.

Energy poverty is common in Europe, even if its existence is not widely known among most members of the public. The EU Energy Poverty Observatory ([www.energypoverty.eu](http://www.energypoverty.eu)) reports that more than 7 per cent of the EU's population could not afford to keep its home adequately warm in 2018, with more than 6 per cent experiencing energy bill debt.

In Europe, energy poor households often have low incomes and live in poorly insulated homes with damp and mould. Their heating systems and energy appliances tend to be ageing and inadequate. Living in energy poverty adversely affects their health and well-being, and has serious economic, political and social consequences for the countries where it is more widespread (particularly in Southern and Eastern Europe).

EU institutions and laws have recently recognized the existence of energy poverty, and have formulated specific measures to address the problem.

### European Energy Poverty:

Agenda Co-Creation and Knowledge Innovation (ENGAGER) is an Action funded via the European Co-operation in Science and Technology (COST) scheme. The Action radically transforms the extent and depth of scientific knowledge about energy poverty in Europe.

ENGAGER establishes multidisciplinary collaborations and innovative methods for knowledge exchange among academics, public policy officials, civil society and representatives of vulnerable households. It offers a unified platform to harness the analytical insights and resources produced by multiple ongoing and past energy poverty research and action projects in Europe and beyond.



## Who we are

ENGAGER draws together scholars and practitioners based both within and outside Europe who focus on various aspects of the energy poverty challenge.

**Action Chair: Professor Stefan Bouzarovski**  
**Action Vice-Chair: Slavica Robić**

At present, the Action has more than **200 members from 41 countries** – principally EU member states, but also most non-EU member states in Europe, as well as the United States, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Action members are based in a variety of institutions: universities, government bodies, think tanks, companies, advocacy groups.

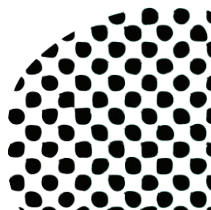
The Action is co-ordinated by a Management Committee (MC) with more than 100 delegates nominated by their respective COST National Coordinators. Each participating COST Member State (<https://www.cost.eu/who-we-are/members/>) is represented by at least one nominated MC Member. The MC is responsible for overseeing progress towards the Action's objectives and making strategic decisions. Representatives from COST Near Neighbour Countries and International Partner Countries (<https://www.cost.eu/who-we-are/cost-strategy/international-cooperation/>) can act as Observers in the MC.

ENGAGER is steered by a Core Group (CG) of members nominated by the MC to carry out the day-to-day tasks and activities of the Action (<http://www.engager-energy.net/core-group/>). The MC elects the Core Group (CG). The CG also harmonizes and integrates the methodological frameworks and results emerging from network members, and also serves as a quality control mechanism.

Action activities are organized into four Working Groups (WGs). Working Groups perform the tasks required by the Action to fulfil the objectives of the network project plan. They are organized in thematic areas relevant to different aspects of the energy poverty challenge.

WGs are open to participation for all interested individuals, and are central to both the operational and intellectual development of the Action.

A full list of statutory members involved in the Action can be found at: <https://www.cost.eu/actions/CA16232/>







## What we do

By promoting international collaboration and supporting researchers and activists from marginalized backgrounds – in terms of age, gender and geography – ENGAGER seeks to generate a step change in how energy poverty is theorized, detected and addressed.

### STSM Co-ordinator: Dr Nikolas Katsoulakos

The Action relies on various networking instruments offered by the COST programme. These are designed in a manner that offers flexible responses to research needs as they develop and evolve.

Within ENGAGER, Working Groups are the primary organizers and leaders of networking activities. In the main, this includes international workshops and conferences involving a variety of stakeholders: academia, practitioners, policy-makers, citizens, advocacy groups, media workers. Workshops and conferences take place across Europe and are open to all ENGAGER members. Their outcomes include reports, proceedings and policy briefs.

Training Schools provide intensive training in emerging research topics within the organizations involved in the Action. They

involve expert guidance and thought leadership, and draw in trainees from across the network. They result in training handbooks and toolkits.

Short Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) lead to visiting fellowships aimed at strengthening existing and fostering new collaborations. They do so by providing researchers with funds to visit an institution in another country, subsequently opening opportunities to learn new methods, share data and engage in collaborative research projects. Many STSMs lead to scientific papers.

The Action also provides travel grants for high profile events or conferences not specifically organized by ENGAGER. These are attended by Action members for the purpose of disseminating ENGAGER's achievements and exchanging knowledge. Many of the grants are targeted towards scholars from countries that are less represented in the European research mainstream.



## Working Group 1

### Integration - Transforming the state of the art

**Leads:** Professor Ute Dubois and Dr Anca Sinea-Lonca

WG1 aims to scope the state of the art in energy poverty scholarship. Based on an interdisciplinary expert network, the group reviews energy poverty approaches, both from a research and from a policy perspective. Its main goal is to analyse the conceptual issues arising from the different energy poverty research approaches that are currently on offer, and from the diversity of energy poverty problematics that can be observed through COST regions. The group also works on understanding the driving forces of energy poverty.

The group's purpose is to develop a common analytical framework that would (1) integrate the state of the art, (2) reach consensus on the elements involved in the conceptualization of EP and (3) surpass the state of the art.

The group is focused on the publication of review papers aimed at decision-makers and researchers, the organization of events with relevant stakeholders, as well as postgraduate and early career researcher collaborations, to draw in newly emerging academics and practitioners in relevant fields.

#### Some of the group's main achievements include:

A review report on conceptualizing energy poverty across Europe, a cross-WG policy brief, various workshops and conferences, STSMs, academic outputs, a winter school, a call for action, an edited book on energy poverty in Central and Eastern Europe, and an online energy poverty encyclopaedia (see <http://www.engager-energy.net/working-groups/>).



## Working group 2

### Indicators – Developing an operational European energy poverty framework

**Leads: Dr Harriet Thomson and Dr Siddharth Sareen**

WG2 considers the operationalization of a multi-scalar, EU-wide framework on energy poverty. The WG examines key energy poverty detection issues, including the manner in which existing measures capture susceptibility to energy poverty, in terms of energy access and needs, energy affordability, social norms, everyday practices, and technical infrastructure. The group aims to create an interdisciplinary expert network tasked with developing new ways of energy poverty monitoring at regional, national and COST-wide levels, as well as using available and emerging data sources.

The group is engaged in the production of toolkits on how to identify and measure

energy poverty, incorporating inputs from Eurostat and national statistical offices. It facilitates access to new expertise and skills through STSMs. These involve host institutions that use innovative methods to measure and monitor energy poverty, as well as the European Union Energy Poverty Observatory as a 'go to' point for statistical data and national reports on energy poverty in the EU.

The WG holds regular deliberative events with key stakeholders and decision-makers. A travelling element is embedded here, so as to engage participating countries and constituencies. The WG also aims to promote training on energy poverty concepts, data, and measurement methodologies. Many of the WG's activities are focused on early career researchers.

#### Some of the group's main achievements include

A review report on moving beyond the state of the art in energy poverty measurement, a cross-WG policy brief, academic outputs, various workshops and conferences, STSMs, a training school, and a call for action (see <http://www.engager-energy.net/working-groups/>).

## Working Group 3

### Dialogues – Co-producing emancipatory research and practice

**Leads: Dr Sergio Tirado Herrero and Marlies Hesselman**

WG3 is generating a hub for European dialogues between ENGAGER, on the one hand, and relevant EU policy institutions, NGOs, academia, businesses, advocacy groups and the social innovation community, on the other. It aims to establish inclusive engagement fora in various regions of the COST network – both within and beyond Europe – while also promoting the improved status of vulnerable customers among energy suppliers, housing and planning agencies, as well as environmental groups.

The WG works on identifying and implementing new ways of engaging key stakeholders through new participatory methods such as deliberative mapping, open space technology and urban living labs, and provides training to selected actors on media skills and engaging in dialogue with stakeholders. These activities bring about new partnerships, exchange opportunities, and collaborations that feed into the work of other ENGAGER WGs.

A distinct focus of the group is the exploration of governance practices surrounding the energy poor in all relevant policy areas, including low carbon transitions, energy



efficiency, housing, social exclusion, and internal energy markets. It also investigates policy learning processes, with a focus on policy transfer and policy mobilities.

The WG's activities are also extensively focused on examining and co-create the meaning, purpose, rights, and duties associated with the 'right to energy' in a dialogue across theory and practice.

#### Some of the group's main achievements include

A policy brief on making the most of qualitative evidence for energy poverty mitigation, a cross-WG policy paper, academic outputs, various workshops and conferences, STSMs, a training school, and a call for action (see <http://www.engager-energy.net/working-groups/>).





## Working Group 4

### Innovation – Introducing path-breaking perspectives to the understanding of energy poverty

**Leads: Professor Katrin Grossmann and Dr Rachel Guyet**

WG4 is developing and consolidating knowledge around innovative solutions and co-benefits for alleviating energy poverty. This is achieved by linking social concerns and support practices with more other innovations in energy transitions such as emerging 'smart' technologies, 'sharing cities', decentralized energy technologies and practices, citizen-led initiatives for community-level energy service provision, municipal and civic ownership of energy systems, as well as informal and formal support networks around energy poverty. The group forges direct connections with innovative research and practice in domains such as energy efficiency, welfare provision, utility regulation, and public health,

bringing in a social justice perspective. WG4 also explores the governance of relevant innovations, in terms of challenges and opportunities brought about by ground-breaking models of multi-agency involvement in addressing energy poverty.

The WG's work emphasizes the need to develop the multidimensional aspects of energy poverty and a cross-sectorial approach within the energy poverty frameworks. Based on the diverse research and practical professional experiences of WG members, the group addresses energy poverty as an issue of social justice in low carbon transitions, as a socio-technological issue, as a political and policy issue, as an issue of social inequalities in cities – and thus housing policy.

#### Some of the group's main achievements include

A compendium on existing and missing links between energy poverty and other scholarly debates, a case study on innovation and energy poverty policies, a cross-WG policy brief, academic outputs, various workshops and conferences, STSMs, and a call for action (see <http://www.engager-energy.net/working-groups/>).



## Dissemination and knowledge engagement

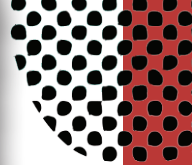
**Science Communication Manager:**  
**Dr George Jiglaă**

Promoting knowledge exchange and dissemination is a central component of ENGAGER's activities. The Action is regularly present at all large research and policy events in the energy, sustainability and housing domains. This includes EU Sustainable Energy Week, the Degrowth conference, the Urban Transitions Conference, and the Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference. ENGAGER also has an active social media presence, via Twitter (<https://twitter.com/EngagerCOST>) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/energy-poverty-action/>).

The Action has contributed to major improvements in the technical and scientific skills of its members. This has included improved knowledge of the drivers and consequences of energy poverty, policies to address the problem, its connections to related sectors, and its relevance to current debates around energy transitions, justice, low carbon and climate policy, housing, health and transport.

ENGAGER has an explicit thematic focus on Eastern, Central and Southern Europe, due to the higher prevalence of energy poverty in those regions. This emphasis has been embedded in the governing architecture of the Action, as well as the nature of its activities. At the same time, the Action is deeply committed to supporting and promoting early career researchers and addressing gender inequality across all of its work.

The Action is already exerting significant impacts upon national, EU and international efforts to address energy poverty. The Action's Chair, Stefan Bouzarovski, was named an 'ordinary hero' in the 2019 EU Protects campaign for his work on the topic. ENGAGER has also been mentioned in World Bank documents connected to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the European Commission's Joint Research Centre as one of only five pan-EU research projects explicitly devoted to energy poverty.



## Academic papers stemming from Action activities

- Bartiaux F, Maretti M, Cartone A, Biermann P and Krasteva V** 2019 Sustainable energy transitions and social inequalities in energy access: A relational comparison of capabilities in three European countries *Global Transitions* 1 226–240.
- Bouzarovski S** 2018 *Energy Poverty: (Dis)Assembling Europe's Infrastructural Divide* London, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bouzarovski S, Frankowski J and Herrero ST** 2018 Low-carbon gentrification: When climate change encounters residential displacement *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 42 845–863.
- Castaño-Rosa R, Sherriff G, Thomson H, Guzmán J S and Marrero M** 2019 Transferring the index of vulnerable homes: Application at the local-scale in England to assess fuel poverty vulnerability *Energy and Buildings* 203 109458.
- DellaValle N** 2019 People's decisions matter: Understanding and addressing energy poverty with behavioral economics *Energy and Buildings* 204 109515.
- Kyprianou I, Serghides D K, Varo A, Gouveia J P, Kopeva D and Murauskaite L** 2019 Energy poverty policies and measures in 5 EU countries: A comparative study *Energy and Buildings* 196 46–60.
- Martín-Consuegra F, Gouveia J, de Frutos F, Alonso C and Oteiza I** 2019 Energy consumption and comfort gap in social housing in Madrid, through smart meters and surveys information. 10th European Congress on Energy Efficiency and Sustainability in Architecture and Urbanism (EESAP 10) and 3rd International Congress on Advanced Construction (CICA 3).
- Petrova S and Simcock N** 2019 Gender and energy: domestic inequities reconsidered *Social & Cultural Geography* doi: 10.1080/14649365.2019.1645200
- Sareen S, Thomson H, Tirado Herrero S, Gouveia J P, Lippert I and Lis A** 2020 European energy poverty metrics: Scales, prospects and limits *Global Transitions* 2 26–36.
- Thomson H, Simcock N, Bouzarovski S and Petrova S** 2019 Energy poverty and indoor cooling: An overlooked issue in Europe *Energy and Buildings* 196 21–29.





[www.engager-energy.net](http://www.engager-energy.net)



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