

# WELLBASED



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## TACKLING ENERGY POVERTY AS A PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITY: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WELLBASED PROJECT



# 2

**ACTION FIELD**

**Effective Governance to implement urban programs against energy poverty through health lenses**

These recommendations guide local and other policymakers in shaping effective policies for a healthier, more equitable future. Local authorities play a key role in tackling energy poverty while improving public health. Although many strategies exist, this document focuses on bridging the gap between energy poverty and health—two interconnected fields but often separate policy areas. Drawing on insights from the EU-funded WELLBASED project,

it highlights the need to integrate health considerations into energy poverty policies and vice versa. A holistic approach can lead to more effective and sustainable solutions that enhance the wellbeing of vulnerable populations.

WELLBASED Policy recommendations are divided into the following five actions fields:

1	2	3	4	5
<p><b>Local action: urban programs to fight against energy poverty through health lenses:</b> key aspects to consider in urban programs to fight against energy poverty and its health effects.</p>	<p><b>Governance:</b> suggestions on how to promote collaborative frameworks for multilayer and multidimensional action at local level to ensure urban programs implementation from a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach.</p>	<p><b>Capacity Building:</b> recommendations for developing training programs for different stakeholders to identify and address the health implications of Energy poverty.</p>	<p><b>Monitoring and Evaluation:</b> guidelines to track Energy poverty and health indicators, as well as the effectiveness of integrated policies and interventions.</p>	<p><b>Funding:</b> considerations about funding schemes to tackle Energy poverty considering health, mainly based on the financial models analyzed within WELLBASED.</p>

This policy brief corresponds to the second action field, **Effective Governance to implement urban programs against energy poverty through health lenses**, using a Health in All Policies approach.

*The first category summarizes the findings more directly linked with our project results and experiences, focused on replication of WELLBASED local urban programs (WUPs). The four last categories are based on the structure of the EU Policy Recommendations against Energy Poverty issued in 2023 (EC, 2023).*

### Energy poverty is a complex Public Health problem affecting physical and mental health of most vulnerable groups

People in energy poverty often live in homes with poor indoor air quality, damp, mold or lack of ventilation, exposed to extreme temperatures that have these impacts:

- Aggravation of **respiratory diseases** (asthma, bronchitis and other chronic lung diseases) and favour the **development of respiratory infections**, especially in children and older people.
- Increased **risk of hypertension, heart attacks and strokes**, especially in older people or those with pre-existing conditions.
- Aggravation of **musculoskeletal problems**, such as **joint pain or arthritis**, especially in older people.
- Financial difficulties, high worries about the lack of thermal comfort in the home and the feeling of inability to improve one's personal situation which leads to **anxiety, depression and chronic stress**.
- **Social isolation and stigmatisation**.
- Poor **quality of sleep** that impacts on mental health, cognitive performance and physical health (increased risk of cardiovascular and metabolic diseases).
- **Nutrition and food security problems**. Increased risk of metabolic diseases such as **type 2 diabetes, hypertension and heart disease**.
- High risk of **frailty and dependency** for older adults.


**Energy poverty amplifies existing health and social inequalities.**

### Gaps identified in EU energy poverty and Health policies

There is a lack of integration between health and energy policies. Health and energy policies are often addressed separately, preventing a comprehensive approach to tackling the health effects of Energy Poverty.

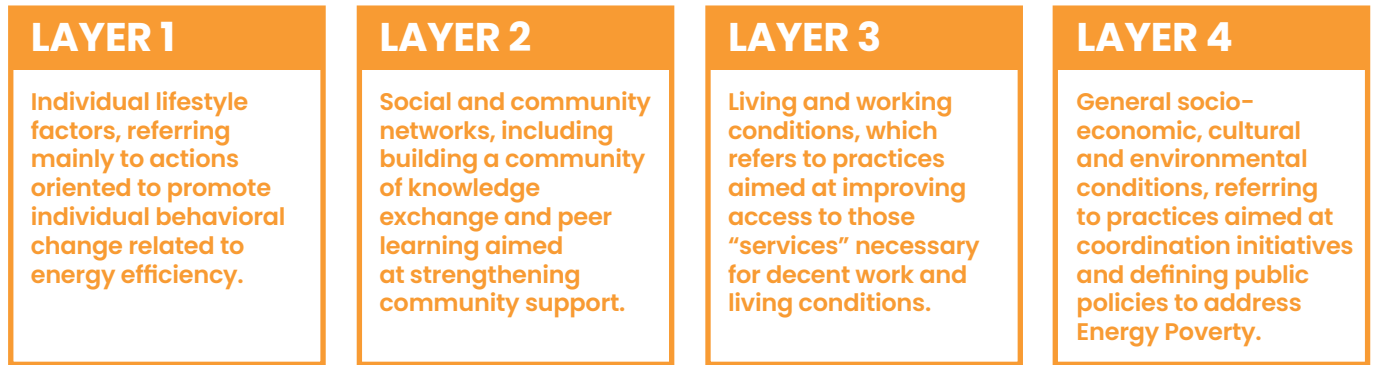
**In Energy Policies:** While there is a growing recognition of the intersection between energy efficiency and health, explicit integration of health considerations remains limited. Policies often acknowledge potential health benefits but lack specific measures or mandates to address health impacts directly related to energy efficiency improvements.

**In Health Policies:** There is a general lack of recognition of energy poverty as a significant social determinant of health. Current health policies and initiatives do not explicitly incorporate strategies to address the health impacts associated with energy poverty, leading to missed opportunities for comprehensive disease prevention and health promotion.

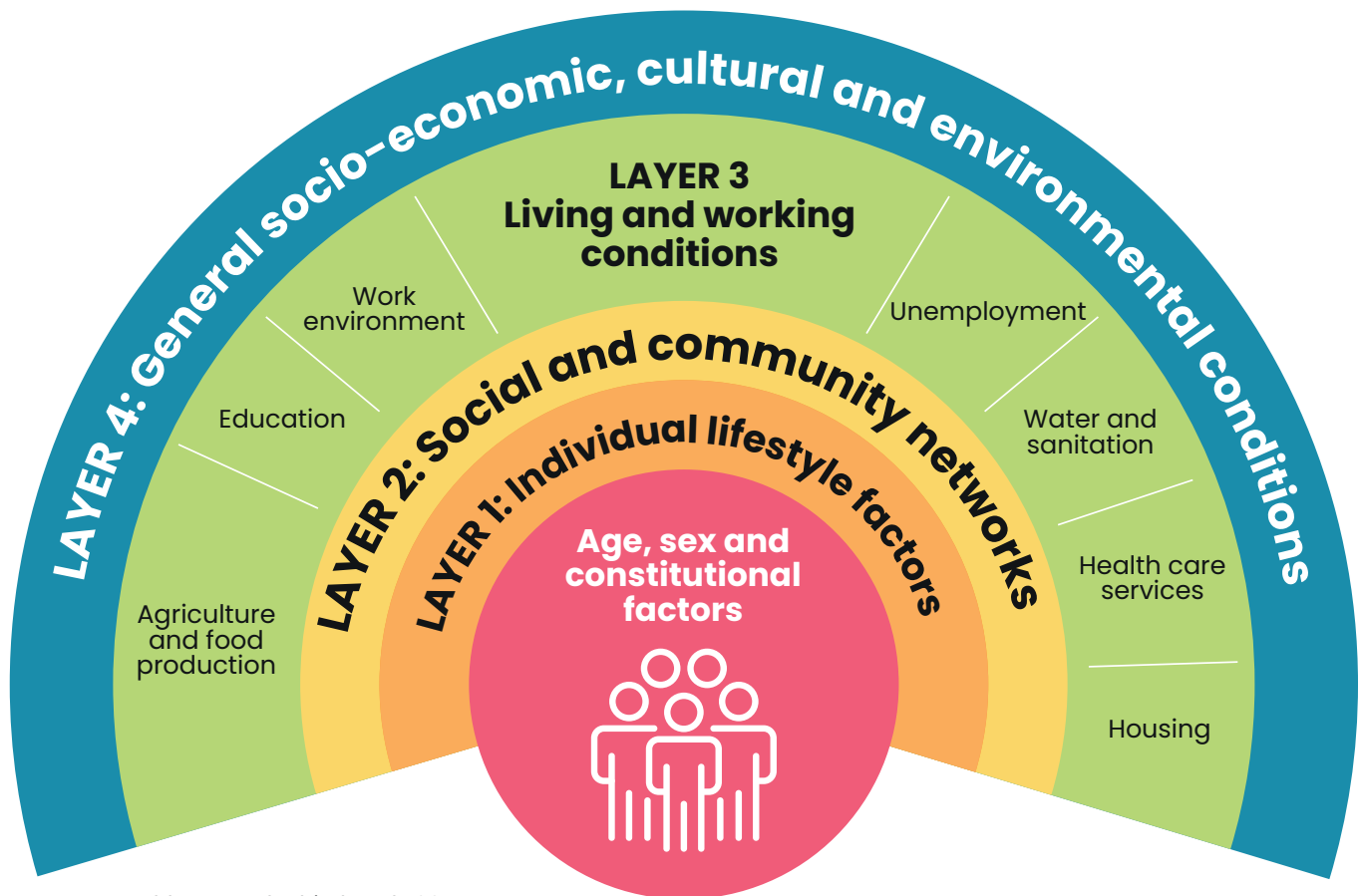


# WELLBASED project and WELLBASED Urban Programmes (WUPs)

Horizon 2020 WELLBASED project aimed at designing, implementing, and evaluating a comprehensive urban programme: WELLBASED Urban Programmes (WUPs) that combine Energy Poverty and health action. The design of the programme was based on the social ecological model of health determinants (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991), to reduce Energy Poverty and its effects on the citizen’s health and wellbeing. These programmes have been implemented and evaluated in six different pilot cities (Valencia – Spain, Heerlen – The Netherlands, Edirne – Turkey, Jelgava – Latvia, Obuda – Hungary, and Leeds – United Kingdom). WUPs contain interventions to act on health determinants at each Layer of the socio ecological model:



WELLBASED provides evidence of the positive impact of health promotion interventions in the fight against Energy Poverty (Stevens, M, Van Grieken, A. et al. 2024)



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

# CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

To implement the WUPs or other comprehensive multilayer, holistic and multidimensional Energy Poverty and health plans, it is necessary to create governance instruments that ensure effective coordination, participation of the various actors involved, and constant monitoring of results. These instruments should be inclusive, adaptable and facilitate collaboration between, at least, the energy, health, housing and social welfare sectors.

Effective Multilayer and Multidimensional Planning to implement a Health in All Policies approach requires strategic coordination across sectors and government levels:

### Crosscutting Strategies:

Integrating actions at national, regional, and local levels through partnerships.

### Intersectoral Cooperation:

Collaborate across organizational, sectoral, and geographical boundaries.

### Unified Funding Streams:

Ensure programmes consolidate efforts and funding sources.

WUPs and other urban programs face implementation challenges. They rely on local execution, but resources, budgets, and implementation depend on broader government levels and sectors based on the social determinants targeted.

By implementing these recommendations, policymakers can ensure that WUP governance structures are robust, inclusive, and aligned with health equity and social justice principles.

# CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

Governance must be built since the beginning of the planning process, with a clear and strong leadership, from the design phase to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

## General principles for effective governance of urban programs to implement Health in All Policies approach to fight against energy poverty

### Establish Strong and Cross-Sectoral Leadership

Local governments must take a clear leadership role in coordinating WUP initiatives. Strong political commitment is essential to drive cross-sector collaboration between energy, health, housing, social welfare, and environmental actors.

### Build a Shared Understanding of Energy Poverty and Health

Ensure that all stakeholders operate with a common definition of Energy Poverty and its health impacts. Implement training programs on the socioecological model of health determinants, following successful examples such as the training carried out by València Citizen School of Right to Energy.

### Strengthen Capacity Building for Effective Governance

Invest in capacity-building initiatives that foster a common language and shared perspectives across different policy sectors. This will bridge existing gaps and promote cohesive problem-solving approaches.

### Break Institutional Silos and Foster Collaboration

Create dedicated spaces for dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders to dismantle administrative and operational silos. Encouraging interdepartmental and intersectoral engagement will enhance policy coherence and impact.

### Ensure Inclusive and Representative Governance Structures

Governance bodies must actively include diverse stakeholders beyond the public sector. These should encompass landlords, private tenants, ethnic minorities, vulnerable groups, NGOs, charities, energy utilities, private health providers, housing funds, and local communities to co-design effective solutions.



# CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

## VALÈNCIA CITIZEN SCHOOL FOR THE RIGHT TO ENERGY

The Citizen School of Right to Energy was created by the Municipal Foundation València Clima i Energia depending on its Municipal Energy Office in the framework of the implementation of València WELLBASED pilot. It aims to claim and raise awareness among all citizens about the Right to Energy. The Citizen School provides expert and tailored advice, training workshops, group meetings, open talks, activities to strengthen the city’s associative fabric. In the pilot intervention area, it aimed at providing knowledge and community building around energy issues, promoting peer-to-peer learning, access to public resources and empowerment based on the concept of Energy Right.

Pilot participants were invited to regular group gatherings called “Berenars Energètics” (“Energetic Snack Time”) at the local Energy Office to learn about energy efficiency, bill optimization, healthy habits, and other topics of their interest, including spaces of mutual support to relieve stress and share experiences. Capacity building included the impacts of energy poverty on health, self-care, physical activity, healthy eating habits, budget-friendly nutrition, and techniques to improve sleep quality and mental well-being

The Citizen School included specialized training targeted to key professionals such as healthcare professionals, social workers, education centers and local NGOs about how to identify, cope with Energy Poverty cases and resources for referral of people.

The initiative focused on capacity building and empowerment, aiming to enhance participants’ sense of control over their lives and encourage behavioral changes towards healthier living patterns.

### 1 Map Stakeholders, Policy and Legal Frameworks to Guide Action

As first step, conduct a comprehensive mapping of key stakeholders, defining their roles, responsibilities, and capacities. Review legal frameworks at all governance levels—national, regional, and local—to ensure policy alignment and a clear scope for action.





# CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

## 2 Create a WUP Intersectoral Committee on Energy Poverty and Health

Establish an institutional committee comprising representatives from energy, health, housing, social welfare, and environmental sectors. This body should:

- Align and coordinate policy actions.
- Have representatives with decision-making power and resource allocation capacity.
- Ensure coherence and cooperation across government policies and interventions.
- Make data-driven decisions based on up-to-date information on Energy Poverty, health, and social vulnerability.
- Define and share intervention strategies collectively.
- Introduce health impact monitoring mechanisms before and after interventions.

### MULTISECTORAL COMMISSION OF VALÈNCIA MUNICIPAL STRATEGY AGAINST ENERGY POVERTY

Strategic framework developed by local government of the City of València to address and mitigate the effects of Energy Poverty up to 2030. A multisectoral commission has been established by the local government. This commission includes representatives from municipal services working on energy, social affairs, housing, consumer protection, and health. Its role is to review the strategy action by action, determine its feasibility and implementation, and define how each municipal service can contribute (e.g., the role of housing or health services).

## 3 Open Decision-Making Processes to Non-Governmental Actors

Expand participation in governance structures to include community representatives, NGOs, housing associations, and private-sector energy and housing actors. Their involvement is critical in designing innovative and context-specific solutions.

Include doctors, nurses, public health specialists, and other health professionals. Health professionals can contribute their experience and knowledge in identifying health risks arising from Energy Poverty, suggesting measures to mitigate these effects.

## 4 Integrate Health Professionals into Energy Poverty Policies

Incorporate doctors, nurses, public health specialists, and other healthcare professionals in policy discussions. Their expertise in identifying and mitigating health risks linked to Energy Poverty is invaluable for designing effective interventions.



# CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

## 5 Establish Citizen Participation Mechanisms

Create inclusive roundtables and dialogue spaces that prioritize the voices of affected communities, particularly older adults, low-income families, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. These forums should enable them to share their lived experiences, influence policy decisions, co-create solutions tailored to their needs.



## 6 Promote Education and Empowerment for Energy Resilience

Develop educational programs that enhance public understanding of energy management, its health implications, and sustainable practices. Empower citizens with the knowledge and tools to make informed energy choices, such as activities implemented in the València Citizen School for Right to Energy.



## 7 Form an Interdisciplinary Advisory Council for Strategic Guidance

Establish an advisory council composed of experts in health, energy, sustainability, and public policy. This council should:

- Provide technical and strategic advice to the WUP Intersectoral Committee.
- Support policy innovation and best practices.
- Conduct evaluations to assess intervention effectiveness.

With the goal of gaining a holistic view of Energy Poverty and its implications for health at implementing WUPs.

## REFERENCES

Dahlgren G, Whitehead M. 1991. **Policies and Strategies to Promote Social Equity in Health**. Stockholm, Sweden: Institute for Futures Studies.

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Stevens, M., Van Grieken, A. et al. (2024): **Final Analysis Report**, Deliverable No. D4.3, Wellbased, Grant Agreement No. 945097.

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### FURTHER READING:

[D3.4. WELLBASED Final Report on the Implementation of the Urban Program](#)

[D4.2. WELLBASED Intermediate Analysis Report](#)

[D4.3. WELLBASED Final Pilot Sites Analysis Report](#)

[D4.5. WELLBASED Report from the qualitative study](#)

[D5.1. WELLBASED Analysis of existing and alternative financial models](#)

[D5.5. WELLBASED Policy Recommendations](#)

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