

# WELLBASED



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



# 3

**ACTION FIELD**

# Capacity building

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 sustainable solutions that enhance the wellbeing of vulnerable populations.

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<p><b>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 third section, Capacity Building. This section provides concrete tools and methodologies designed to increase the capacity level of key stakeholders in addressing energy poverty. Specifically, it offers a set of recommendations targeted at policymakers, frontline workers, and households affected by energy poverty, as well as strategies to reshape the social perception of this issue. It is important to note that while the evidence gathered in the project

is framed within a local context, the proposed policy recommendations can be implemented at various political levels, including local, subnational, national, and European levels. By implementing these policies, the skills level of key stakeholders is strengthened, thereby equipping them more effectively to address the specific manifestations of energy poverty within their respective areas of intervention.

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

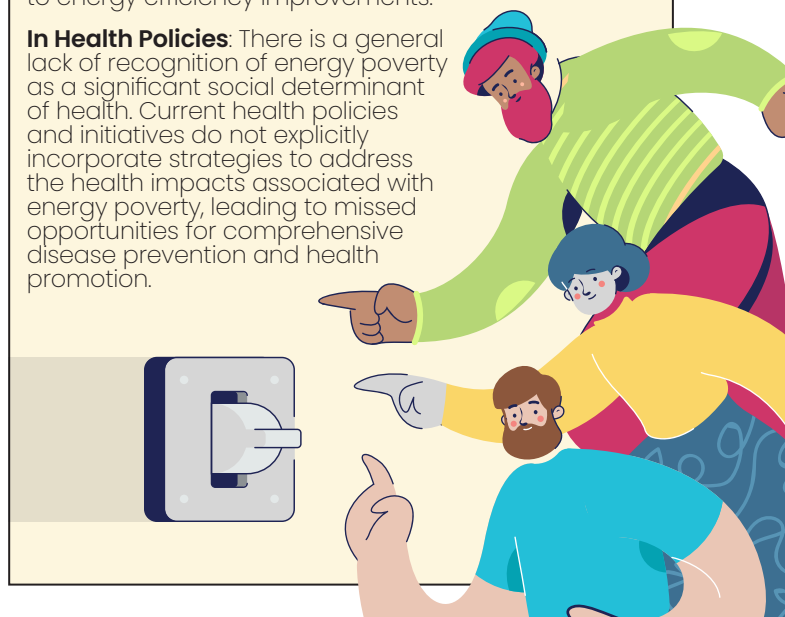
- People in energy poverty often live in homes with poor indoor air quality, damp, mold or lack of ventilation, exposed to extreme temperatures that have these impacts:
  - Aggravation of **respiratory diseases** (asthma, bronchitis and other chronic lung diseases) and favour the **development of respiratory 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**

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.



# CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

## ● Challenges in Addressing Energy Poverty:

- Political authorities recognize the importance of tackling Energy Poverty but lack a clear vision of how to approach it, what organizational capacities to build, and how to address its connection to health.
- Limited access to reliable data and scarce information on successful experiences hinder evidence-based policy design.

## ● Underutilized Roles and Gaps:

- Key professionals such as social workers and health professionals are often unaware of their potential role in early detection of Energy Poverty.
- Public programs exist to support vulnerable households, but many potential beneficiaries are unaware of their eligibility or the available resources.

## ● Barriers for Households:

- Lack of knowledge about energy bills and energy-saving practices leads to higher household costs.
- Social stigma discourages many families from seeking the help they need.
- Energy Poverty is often seen narrowly as an economic issue, neglecting its broader implications across health and social dimensions.

# \* CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

## 1 Promote knowledge sharing and collaboration

In order to facilitate the knowledge of successful experiences against Energy Poverty, knowledge sharing and collaboration between actors is an important method to increase the capacities of policy makers.

### DIFFERENT WAYS TO PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE SHARING:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the organization of events (forums, workshops) for the dissemination of good practices in the field,</li> <li>• facilitate peer exchanges, workshops, and networks to enable policymakers to learn from each other's experiences.</li> <li>• organize study tours, policy workshops, and fellowship programs in regions recognized for policy innovation, allowing policymakers to observe and learn from successful initiatives firsthand.</li> <li>• promote access to reliable data through the creation of a digital knowledge-sharing platform where resources, tools, and case studies can be accessed and shared across departments and regions, providing updated and disaggregated information on Energy Poverty,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage collaboration with universities, think tanks, and NGOs to bring fresh perspectives and evidence into policy development processes.</li> <li>• establish partnerships with international organizations to enable cross-country knowledge sharing, access to global best practices, and comparative policy research.</li> <li>• promote the establishment of "policy labs" within governmental bodies where policies can be tested and evaluated for impact before full implementation.</li> <li>• Joint training and workshops for health professionals and policymakers and energy policymakers to raise awareness of the interconnection between Energy Poverty and public health.</li> </ul>
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## CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

### 2 Adopt the WHO methodology for strengthening capacities at the political level

The World Health Organization's Ongoing Capacity Strengthening for Urban Health (2024) provides a useful methodology for policymakers to develop effective action programs against energy poverty. This guide, comprising a primer and an action guide, helps organizations— including public institutions—assess and enhance their capacities to address urban health challenges. Through a structured self-assessment process, organizations can strengthen their ability to make informed decisions, promote policies and changes, manage resources efficiently, and foster partnerships, participation, and knowledge sharing.

### 3 Strategic training for frontline workers: detecting and preventing Energy Poverty with practical tools and a health-focused approach

To design and to implement training courses aimed at front-line workers to provide them with training on Energy Poverty, its mechanisms and potential ways to anticipate its incidence. Thanks to these courses, workers will be trained to recognize indicators of Energy Poverty in households and learn about how Energy Poverty affects physical and mental health. This should be organized in such a way that it is not perceived as an additional workload for frontline workers, but as an early detection tool that can help prevent Energy Poverty arising.

### 4 Disseminate good practices

Promote awareness campaigns to disseminate good practices in household energy consumption and facilitate citizens' understanding of how energy bills work and other elements for greater efficiency, such as how to properly ventilate the home and its importance and promote as far as possible the replacement of appliances and heating systems with more efficient models. These campaigns should be tailored to the knowledge of the recipients since EP populations in some countries are already energy literate.





## CONCRETE ACTION POINTS

### 5 Improve information and advice

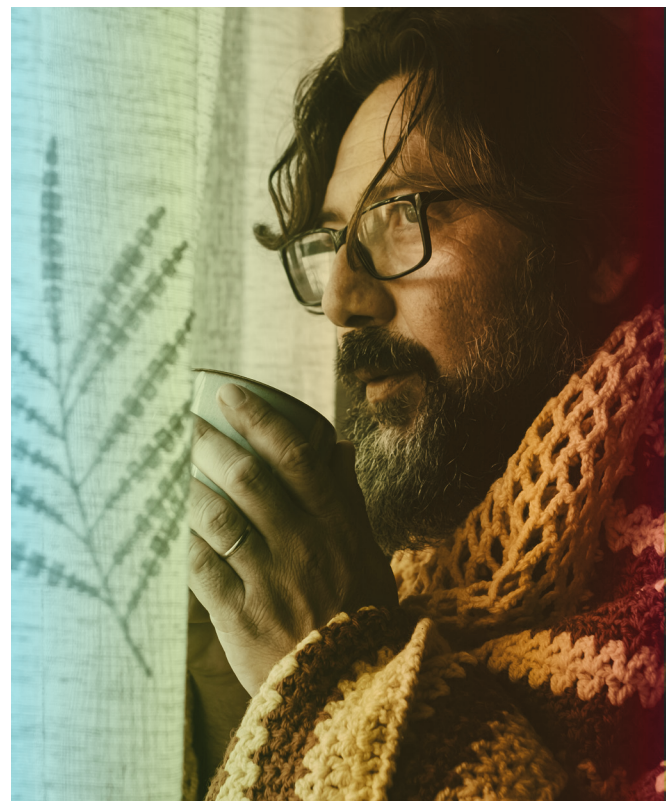
Establish local energy advice offices in vulnerable neighborhoods to inform the population about available energy assistance programs and the process for managing these resources.

### 6 Clear and accessible guidelines for people affected by Energy Poverty: key to addressing energy poverty and ensuring social justice

The development of assistance guidelines by public administrations is essential to ensure that currently existing programmes targeting individuals in situations of energy poverty effectively reach those who need them the most. These guidelines serve as a bridge between public policies and citizens, facilitating access to available resources and promoting equal opportunities. It is crucial that these guidelines are designed using clear, comprehensible, and accessible language for everyone, regardless of their educational background or technical knowledge. Simple and direct communication not only reduces access barriers but also builds trust in public institutions, ensuring that no one is excluded due to a lack of information. These guidelines should provide a detailed explanation of the eligibility requirements for accessing assistance, offering practical instructions on how to verify compliance with such criteria. Furthermore, they should include a step-by-step guide to help potential beneficiaries, outlining the necessary documents, deadlines, and the available channels for submission, whether in person or online.

### 7 Community health promotion

Promote educational interventions in schools, NGOs and communities in vulnerable neighborhoods to raise awareness of the risks associated with Energy Poverty and basic coping strategies.



**CONCRETE ACTION POINTS**

**8 Social awareness campaigns**

Generate public awareness of energy poverty and its impact, to reduce stigma and increase community support. Many individuals facing difficulties in affording adequate energy for their homes may not identify with terms like ‘energy poverty.’ Instead, they often perceive their situation as simply managing high bills, dealing with an inefficient home, or struggling to stay warm in winter or cool in summer. For this reason, direct communication with those affected should focus on practical concerns—such as reducing costs, improving comfort, or accessing support—rather than using technical or policy-driven language that may not resonate with their experiences.



**INSPIRING PRACTICE** ←

**Communication Campaign in València to create awareness on the Right to Energy.** During the Energy Poverty week, the message “We all have the Right to Energy” was deployed in city bus stops and public displays, as well as in social networks. Equally, an event was organized in this week to show the work done on Energy Poverty issues by local stakeholders, and an exhibition of pictures made by WELLBASED participants was also launched.

While policy-makers need to develop a comprehensive and technical vision to design effective policies, social workers and health professionals require specific tools to address this issue on a daily basis. Finally, vulnerable households need to be empowered through energy education and accessible resources and programs.





## REFERENCES

European Commission (2023): **Recommendation (EU) 2023/2407 of 20 October 2023 on Energy Poverty. European Public Health Alliance (2024): Powering Health Equity: Integrating Health for Effective Energy Poverty Policy.**

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

World Health Organization (2024): **Urban health capacities: assessment and response action guide.** Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

### AUTHORS:

**Elena Rocher Vicedo**, València Innovation Capital

**Delmir Giner Ibáñez**, València Innovation Capital

**Noemí García Lepetit**, València Innovation Capital

**Andrés Varró**, MUTK

With especial contributions from **Miriam Eiser-mann** (Energy Cities), **WELLBASED** partners and **WELLBASED Advisory Board**

### CONTACT:

Elena Rocher

Senior Health Program Officer

València Innovation Capital

[elena.rocher@lasnaves.com](mailto:elena.rocher@lasnaves.com)

[prensa@lasnaves.com](mailto:prensa@lasnaves.com)

Web: <https://wellbased.eu/>

### 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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