



# Report on gender-responsive methods against energy poverty

## Deliverable D2.5

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## Executive Summary

This deliverable (D2.5) was developed under Task 2.3, “Design of gender-responsive models to combat energy poverty for demonstrators,” and addresses the structural and gendered dimensions of energy poverty in Europe. It is grounded in the recognition that energy poverty is not gender-neutral. Women are disproportionately affected due to persistent income and pension gaps, higher rates of part-time employment, longer life expectancy, and a greater likelihood of living in single-parent or single-person households. In addition, women often carry a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, which increases their exposure to inadequate heating, cooling, and energy services, as well as to rising energy costs. Against this background, the report aims to strengthen social justice and promote gender-inclusive access to affordable and renewable energy, while formulating practical and policy-oriented recommendations for a fair and inclusive energy transition.

The report builds on the following core pillars: a review of existing financial schemes at local, national, and EU levels, and the identification of good practices within energy communities and citizen-led initiatives. The review of structural, financial, and capacity-based approaches across Europe highlights that energy poverty prevention typically operates at three interconnected levels: structural and policy-level strategies, direct financial support mechanisms, and capacity-building and empowerment measures. Structural strategies, such as targeted energy efficiency renovation programmes, social energy tariffs, consumer protection measures, and one-stop-shop advisory models, address the root causes of vulnerability. While these measures can significantly reduce energy expenditure and improve housing quality, they often rely predominantly on income-based targeting and do not systematically incorporate gender-sensitive criteria. This indicates a clear need to embed gender mainstreaming more explicitly into structural programme design, including targeted outreach to female-headed households and stronger integration with social services. The assessment of financial support mechanisms shows that although many schemes promote renewable energy deployment and energy efficiency, only a limited number explicitly integrate gender equality objectives or address the specific risks faced by women in energy poverty. Common barriers include complex application procedures, co-financing requirements, property ownership criteria, and insufficient targeted communication. However, selected examples demonstrate that simplified procedures, automatic eligibility mechanisms, complementary advisory services, and solidarity-based financing instruments can substantially improve accessibility for vulnerable households. Gender-responsive financial design requires attention to eligibility criteria, administrative burdens, forms of support (grants versus loans), and safeguards against rent increases or displacement. Capacity-building and empowerment approaches emerge as particularly effective complementary measures.

In-home energy advice, multilingual counselling, energy literacy and financial literacy programmes, and peer-to-peer support models enhance households’ knowledge, agency, and long-term resilience. Women-centred empowerment initiatives – such as training women as energy advisors, retrofit ambassadors, or





technicians – contribute not only to reducing energy poverty but also to strengthening women’s participation in the green transition and addressing labour shortages in emerging sectors. Linking energy poverty alleviation with skills development and access to green jobs further reinforces inclusive local economic development.

Across these domains, the deliverable identifies broader strategic transformation areas necessary for scaling gender-responsive action. These include the systematic application of gender-responsive methodologies based on recognition, distributive justice, and procedural justice; the development of inclusive financial schemes that remove structural barriers to capital and participation; the promotion of women’s leadership and representation in energy communities; the integration of energy initiatives into local economic development strategies; and stronger policy coherence across local, national, and EU levels. Multi-level governance and collaboration between public authorities, civil society organisations, women’s networks, and energy communities are essential for achieving long-term structural change.

Based on these findings, the deliverable formulates targeted recommendations to mainstream gender equality across energy policies and funding frameworks, design accessible and inclusive financial instruments, strengthen women’s participation and leadership, embed social safeguards such as solidarity funds and social tariffs, and enhance coordination across governance levels. Concrete good-practice solutions include the application of Gender Impact Assessments in scheme design, systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data, tailored outreach to underrepresented groups, the establishment of mentoring and peer-support structures, one-stop-shop advisory services, and the strategic use of EU funding instruments such as the Social Climate Fund to support community-led investments and vulnerable households.

In conclusion, this deliverable demonstrates that integrating gender responsiveness into energy poverty action is not an optional add-on but a fundamental requirement for achieving a socially just and inclusive energy transition. By addressing structural inequalities, removing access barriers, and empowering women as active participants in renewable energy systems, gender-responsive approaches enhance both social equity and the effectiveness of climate and energy policies. The proposed recommendations provide a practical and transferable framework to advance inclusive energy solutions across Europe.





## Purpose and Scope of the Deliverable D2.5

The report was developed under the task 2.3 “Design of gender-responsive models to combat energy poverty for demonstrators”. The aim of this task is to strengthen social justice and promote gender-inclusive access to renewable and affordable energy for individuals and households affected by energy poverty, with a specific focus on women as a disproportionately impacted group. Energy poverty is not gender-neutral: women are more likely to live in low-income households, single-parent families, or part-time employment situations, and they often carry a higher burden of unpaid care and domestic work. These factors increase their exposure to inadequate heating, cooling, and energy services, as well as to rising energy costs. It is therefore essential to expand women’s access to clean, affordable, and sustainable energy solutions. This task examines concrete measures and models to support this objective.

The task includes a comprehensive review of existing financial schemes at local, national, and EU levels, assessing their degree of gender responsiveness. This review examines eligibility criteria, application procedures, governance structures, and distributional effects, with a focus on whether these schemes effectively reach women and other vulnerable groups. Particular attention is paid to whether financial instruments explicitly integrate gender equality objectives, use gender-sensitive indicators, or apply intersectional approaches.

Finally, the task aims to identify good practices that successfully integrate social and gender-responsive approaches and financial mechanisms within energy communities and citizen-led energy initiatives. These include cooperative models, community energy funds, solidarity-based financing mechanisms, and tailored support schemes that lower entry barriers for women and low-income households.

Consequently, this deliverable addresses the gendered and social dimensions of energy poverty and explores pathways to enhance gender-inclusive access to renewable and affordable energy. It builds a review of existing financial schemes at local, national, and EU levels, and an assessment of good practices from energy communities and citizen-led initiatives. Based on these inputs, it formulates targeted recommendations and practical solutions aimed to support a fair and inclusive energy transition. The focus lies on promoting women’s empowerment and mainstreaming gender equality across all stages of energy policy design, implementation, and evaluation.





## Basic information on gender and energy poverty

### Gender Dimensions of Energy Poverty

Energy poverty remains a significant challenge across Europe and is shaped by structural inequalities that intersect with gender, income, age, household composition, and socio-economic status. Low-income households, single-parent families, elderly people, and migrants are disproportionately affected. Women are particularly vulnerable due to persistent gender gaps in income and pensions, lower average earnings, higher rates of part-time employment, longer life expectancy, and a greater likelihood of living alone or in single-parent households, which face elevated risks of poverty. In addition, women are often underrepresented in decision-making processes related to energy planning, financing, and governance. This structural exclusion not only limits their influence on energy systems but also increases their exposure to and specific risks of energy poverty.

EU institutions and EU-linked research therefore emphasise that energy poverty should be consistently gender-mainstreamed – that is, addressed with a gender and intersectional lens across the full policy cycle, from data collection and programme design to implementation and impact assessment.

This requirement unfolds within a broader EU policy framework in which tackling energy poverty has become a core priority. Under the Clean Energy for All Europeans Package (2019), the EU:

- Recognizes energy poverty explicitly in EU energy legislation.
- Requires Member States to identify and monitor energy poverty.
- Calls for National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) to address vulnerable consumers.
- Promotes energy efficiency as a key structural solution.
- Encourages consumer empowerment, protection against disconnections, and fair energy markets.

More recently, the European Green Deal, the Renovation Wave Strategy, and the Social Climate Fund further reinforce the EU's commitment to ensuring that the energy transition is socially just and inclusive.

Energy poverty prevention in pilot projects typically operates across three interconnected strategic levels:

1. Structural and Policy-Level Strategies
2. (Direct) Financial Support Mechanisms
3. Capacity Building, Energy Empowerment and Literacy





## Review of Structural, Financial, and Capacity-Based Approaches to Energy Poverty

This section reviews key structural, financial, and capacity-based approaches that have been developed across Europe to address energy poverty, with a particular focus on their relevance for gender responsiveness and social inclusion.

### Structural and Policy-Level Strategies

Structural and policy-level strategies aim to address the root causes of energy poverty through systemic, regulatory, and institutional change. Rather than focusing solely on short-term financial relief, these approaches seek to transform housing quality, market regulation, and welfare systems in ways that prevent vulnerability from emerging or deepening. Despite these efforts, structural measures frequently rely on income-based targeting alone and do not systematically consider gendered patterns of vulnerability. This indicates a need for more explicit integration of gender-sensitive criteria in structural programme design.

A central structural approach consists of **prioritising low-income and energy-poor households within energy efficiency renovation programmes**. Targeted renovation schemes can significantly reduce energy expenditure by improving building envelopes and heating systems. Municipal programmes that fully subsidise insulation measures, window replacement, or heating system upgrades for low-income households represent particularly effective interventions, as they address the structural inefficiencies that lock households into high energy costs. In social housing contexts, retrofitting programmes that combine energy efficiency upgrades with rent protection mechanisms are crucial in preventing so-called “renoviction,” where renovation leads to rent increases and displacement. From a gender perspective, targeted outreach to female-headed households is essential, given the overrepresentation of single mothers and elderly women living alone among the energy poor. Integrating social services into renovation programmes helps identify women at risk, such as widows or single parents, and ensures that structural improvements reach those most in need.

Another key structural instrument is the **introduction of regulated social energy tariffs and consumer protection mechanisms**. Social tariffs that provide reduced electricity or gas prices for low-income households help stabilise energy affordability. Complementary regulatory measures, such as winter disconnection bans and legal obligations for suppliers to offer instalment-based payment plans, strengthen consumer protection and reduce the risk of energy deprivation. Eligibility criteria that reflect different socio-economic realities – including structural income disparities, unpaid care work, and part-time employment patterns – can improve access and fairness.





Structural prevention can further be strengthened by **integrating social welfare systems with energy advisory services**. One-stop-shop models, which combine housing advice, energy consultation, and social assistance within a single institutional framework, reduce administrative barriers and improve access for vulnerable groups. Local energy poverty observatories that collect gender-disaggregated data allow municipalities to better understand who is affected and why. Additionally, pilot programmes that integrate energy poverty screening into routine social work assessments ensure that energy vulnerability is detected early and addressed holistically.

## Financial Support Mechanisms and Gender Responsiveness

Financial support mechanisms shape access to renewable energy investments, renovation measures, and energy cost relief. The instruments and financial schemes such as renovation grants, heating replacement support, appliance replacement, emergency bill support, revolving funds/soft loans, advice and outreach services tied to funding uptake, and targeted support for tenants/landlords. These schemes may target households, tenants, landlords, or energy communities, and their design determines who can benefit and under what conditions.

To assess these mechanisms for gender responsiveness and intersectionality, the review focuses on whether their design accounts for:

- **Eligibility and targeting:** Does it reach groups with higher risk of energy poverty, including women in specific household situations, e.g., lone parents, older women living alone?
- **Form of support:** grants vs loans; upfront financing; guarantees; micro-grants; on-bill solutions and questioning whether it matches unequal income/wealth patterns.
- **Administrative burden and access barriers:** digital-only applications, complex documentation, language barriers, limited opening hours, which can systematically exclude people with higher care burdens or lower administrative capacity.
- **Tenant/owner split incentives and affordability safeguards:** preventing rent hikes or ensuring “housing cost neutrality”.

These review dimensions are consistent with the EED’s emphasis on protecting those affected by energy poverty and ensuring that measures do not exacerbate inequalities.

The review of financial support mechanisms and schemes highlights that while many programmes aim to support renewable energy deployment, only a limited number explicitly address gender equality or energy poverty. Common barriers include complex application procedures, co-financing requirements, lack of targeted outreach, and eligibility criteria linked to property ownership. However, several schemes demonstrate good practices by integrating gender-sensitive criteria, simplified procedures, and complementary advisory services.





These approaches show that financial instruments can play a key role in improving women's access to renewable energy and supporting inclusive energy community models.

## Capacity Building, Empowerment and Literacy Approaches

Long-term prevention of energy poverty requires strengthening households' capabilities, knowledge, and agency. Capacity building and empowerment measures complement structural and financial instruments by enhancing informed decision-making and sustainable behavioural change.

Against this background, **tailored in-home energy advice** has proven particularly effective. Trained energy coaches who visit households can provide individualised guidance on consumption patterns, billing issues, and available support schemes. Multilingual advisory services are essential in reaching migrant women who may otherwise face language barriers. Such interventions typically result in reduced energy consumption, increased awareness of consumer rights and support mechanisms, and strengthened confidence and autonomy.

**Energy literacy and financial literacy programmes** further enhance households' ability to navigate energy markets. Workshops for single mothers on understanding energy bills, training sessions on switching suppliers, and school-based programmes targeting young women and girls contribute to building long-term resilience. By improving knowledge of contracts, tariffs, and consumption patterns, these initiatives reduce the risk of exploitative contracts and unnecessary expenditure.

Finally, **women-centred energy empowerment programmes** promote women as active participants in the energy transition rather than passive recipients of support, fostering leadership and participation. Training women as peer-to-peer energy advisors, retrofit ambassadors, or technicians not only addresses labour shortages in the green sector but also enhances community trust and accessibility, especially among marginalised groups. Supporting women's access to green jobs, such as energy renovation or solar installation, can combine energy poverty alleviation with employment opportunities. Programmes that integrate energy efficiency measures with vocational training thus contribute simultaneously to social inclusion, economic empowerment, and climate objectives.

Capacity building and empowerment approaches are among the most widely tested approaches in European pilot projects, combining targeted energy advice, energy literacy, behavioural support, and low-cost efficiency measures, particularly for vulnerable households, in order to empower those affected by or at risk of energy poverty.

The advisory and empowerment-based models are especially relevant for women, as single mothers, elderly women, and migrant women are often overrepresented among energy-poor households. Outreach through trusted intermediaries, multilingual advisory services, and home visits have proven particularly effective in reaching these groups.





## Illustrative national and EU project examples

Several EU and national projects seek to address structural drivers of energy poverty. These include among others:

- **H2020-project: EmpowerMed:** The overall objective was to tackle energy poverty and to help improve health of people in the coastal areas of Mediterranean countries, with a particular focus on women. <https://www.empowermed.eu/>
- **H2020-project: SocialWatt. Connecting Obligated Parties to Adopt Innovative Schemes towards Energy Poverty Alleviation:** Focused on improving the ability of energy suppliers and obligated parties to identify and support energy-poor households within Energy Efficiency Obligation Schemes by developing specific tools. <https://www.socialwatt.eu/>
- **H2020-project: COOLTORISE. Raising summer energy poverty awareness to reduce cooling needs:** Expands the policy focus beyond winter heating by tackling summer overheating through household-level interventions combined with stakeholder capacity building and awareness-raising. <https://cooltorise.eu/>
- **LIFE24-CET-project: Renew-It. Deploying collective self-retrofit practice to lower cost of deep energy retrofit in multifamily buildings:** Promotes collective self-retrofit approaches in multifamily housing to reduce renovation costs, strengthen local capacities, and enable neighbourhood-scale transformation. <https://ressorts.life/projets/renew-it-life/>
- **H2020-project: ASSIST. Support Network for Household Energy Saving:** Established a transnational network of trained energy advisors providing personalized energy advice and on-the-ground support to vulnerable consumers, with a strong focus on building local advisory capacity across several EU Member States. <https://www.aisfor.it/progetti-30-assist>
- **H2020-project: EnergyMEASURES. Tailored measures supporting energy vulnerable households:** Delivered customised energy advice complemented by small-scale material interventions such as low-cost efficiency devices to achieve immediate and practical reductions in household energy consumption. <https://energymeasures.eu/>
- **H2020-project: POWERPOOR. Empowering Energy Poor Citizens through Joint Energy Initiatives:** Focused on empowering energy-poor citizens to participate in collective energy solutions, including energy communities, by strengthening organisational capacities and facilitating access to joint renewable initiatives. <https://powerpoor.eu/>
- **H2020-project: ENPOR. Energy Poverty in the Private Rented Sector:** ENPOR addressed energy poverty among tenants in private rented housing. The project analysed barriers and drivers for implementing energy efficiency policies in the Private Rented Sector, developed methods to





identify and support energy-poor tenants, and worked with national and regional stakeholders to co-design and implement targeted policy measures. ENPOR also produced the Energy Poverty Dashboard, compiling best practices and policy tools to help Member States tackle energy poverty in rental housing more effectively. <https://ieecp.org/projects/enpor/>

At the enabling level, the **Energy Poverty Advisory Hub (EPAH)** provides ongoing technical assistance to municipalities across Europe. While not a pilot project itself, EPAH functions as a long-term structural support mechanism under EU policy, helping local authorities diagnose energy poverty and design targeted interventions. <https://energy-poverty.ec.europa.eu/>

## Broader Strategic Impact Areas for Gender-Responsive Action

The review of structural, financial, and capacity-based approaches, together with the associated exemplary projects, indicates that gender responsiveness remains uneven and can be strengthened across multiple domains. At the same time, the analysis reveals that effective action extends beyond individual instruments and unfolds across several broader strategic transformation areas. These areas define long-term objectives and provide orientation for structural change within energy communities and public policy frameworks.

### Gender-Responsive Methods

Gender-responsive energy poverty action is based on three interrelated methodological levers. First, recognition and visibility, which require the systematic use of sex-disaggregated and intersectional data, complemented by qualitative insights into lived experiences and decision-making power. Second, distributive justice, ensuring that targeted relief and investments effectively reach those most exposed to energy poverty risks. Third, procedural justice, which emphasises meaningful participation of affected groups in planning and governance, alongside the removal of structural and administrative barriers. Embedding these dimensions across the policy cycle strengthens the structural integration of gender equality in energy poverty action.

### Inclusive Financial Schemes

Gender-responsive energy transitions require financial systems that systematically integrate equality and social justice objectives. Inclusive financial schemes aim to remove structural barriers that limit women's access to capital, investment opportunities, and public funding. This includes addressing inequalities linked to income distribution, property ownership, credit access, and administrative complexity. Strategically designed funding instruments should therefore combine simplified procedures, flexible co-financing models, targeted outreach, and dedicated support mechanisms to ensure that financial benefits reach those most exposed to energy poverty. Embedding gender-sensitive monitoring frameworks and impact assessments strengthens transparency and ensures that public and community-level investments contribute to measurable social and gender outcomes.





## **Women's Participation, Leadership, and Empowerment**

A gender-responsive energy transition requires stronger representation of women in governance and decision-making structures within energy communities and related initiatives. Enhancing women's leadership capacity, technical knowledge, and financial literacy contributes to more democratic governance structures and strengthens the long-term sustainability of renewable energy initiatives.

## **Inclusive Economic Development**

Gender-responsive energy initiatives can contribute to local economic resilience by linking renewable energy deployment and renovation activities with skills development, social enterprises, and vocational training opportunities. Strengthening women's access to green jobs and local value chains supports both economic empowerment and community-based development.

## **Social Inclusion and Reducing Energy Poverty**

Reducing energy poverty requires energy community models to prioritise accessibility, affordability, and active participation. Beyond financial design, this includes lowering administrative barriers, ensuring transparent communication, and involving vulnerable groups in governance and decision-making. Particular attention should be paid to women disproportionately affected by energy poverty to ensure that community energy initiatives foster genuine inclusion rather than reproducing existing inequalities.

## **Policy Coherence and Multi-Level Governance**

Scaling gender-responsive approaches requires alignment across local, national, and EU policy frameworks. Coordinated action between public authorities, civil society organisations, women's networks, and energy communities strengthens institutional capacity and long-term impact.





## Recommendations and Good-Practice Solutions

Based on the identified strategic impact areas, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Mainstream gender equality across energy policies, funding programmes, and energy community frameworks.
- Design gender-responsive financial mechanisms that address structural barriers to access, including limited capital and property ownership.
- Promote women's participation and leadership in energy communities through capacity-building, mentoring, and governance measures.
- Integrate energy initiatives into local economic development strategies by promoting skills development, green employment pathways, and women's participation in emerging value chains.
- Integrate affordability and social inclusion mechanisms, such as social tariffs and solidarity funds, to effectively address energy poverty.
- Strengthen policy coherence and coordination across governance levels to scale up inclusive energy solutions.

### Good Practices: What “gender-responsive design” looks like in practice

The general recommendations can be translated into concrete good practices for energy and citizen communities to implement gender-responsive design:

- 1) **Integrate gender-responsive design principles into scheme development and evaluation:** Apply Gender Impact Assessment approaches to the design or revision of schemes (eligibility, subsidy levels, risk-sharing, application steps, outreach strategy, monitoring indicators). EIGE provides a step-by-step guide and toolkit for Gender Impact Assessment that can be adapted to energy poverty financing and community benefit-sharing. ([European Institute for Gender Equality](#))
- 2) **Identify and address gender-relevant exclusion patterns through data and outreach:** Make participation patterns visible by collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated and, where feasible, intersectional data (e.g., household type such as lone parenthood, age, tenure status). This enables the identification of groups underrepresented in membership or benefit-sharing. Tools such as the EPAH Energy Poverty Indicators Dashboard can provide reference indicators. Mapping “who is excluded” allows communities to tailor outreach, communication, and financial conditions accordingly ([Energy Poverty Advisory Hub](#)).
- 3) **Embed social aims in finance and benefit-sharing rules:** Integrate solidarity mechanisms (e.g., community hardship funds), reduced membership fees, targeted micro-grants for connection/participation costs, or benefit-sharing rules that prioritise households affected by energy poverty in financial schemes, with particular attention to women in vulnerable situations such as





single mothers, elderly women living alone, or women with limited access to income and property.

- 4) **Promote women's participation and leadership:** Actively increase women's representation in boards, steering groups, and technical working teams. Set gender-balance targets for governing bodies and offer targeted training on financial, legal, and technical aspects of community energy projects. Establish mentoring schemes or peer-support formats to support new female members, and ensure meeting formats and communication channels are accessible and compatible with care responsibilities.
- 5) **Adopt the one-stop-shop logic within or alongside energy communities** (directly operated, partnered, or "hosted" with municipalities/NGOs): Provide technical, administrative, and financial support in one place, with dedicated services for energy-poor and vulnerable households.
- 6) **Use EU funding channels as enabling finance** (especially the Social Climate Fund): National Social Climate Plans (funded via the Social Climate Fund, 2026–2032) could be used to support community-led investments and targeted participation (e.g., funding for community retrofits, enabling infrastructure, and access costs for vulnerable households).





## Conclusion

This deliverable demonstrates that integrating gender responsiveness into energy poverty action is essential for achieving a just and inclusive energy transition. The case studies highlight concrete, transferable approaches for embedding gender equality and social justice into energy policies, financial mechanisms, and community-based initiatives. Strengthening women's participation, removing structural access barriers, and prioritising vulnerable households enhances both social equity and the effectiveness of renewable energy systems. The recommendations outlined in this report provide practical guidance for policymakers, practitioners, and stakeholders to advance gender-responsive and socially inclusive energy solutions across Europe.

