

Is there energy poverty in my municipality? Where is it concentrated and how severe is it? Who are those most affected? What are the most significant determining factors?

Alert signals of the possible presence of energy poverty can come from everywhere. This can be information received from social services regarding a significant number of households calling for assistance because of very high energy bills or you may simply have seen the national report on energy poverty and you suspect that your municipality may be affected. **Diagnosis** is the beginning of a series of events which comprise the endeavour of energy poverty mitigation, and it is fundamental to understanding the root causes.

The Energy Poverty Advisory Hub proposes **7 practical steps to help municipalities in their efforts to start analysing and addressing energy poverty** regardless of geographical, cultural and economic settings. You can use these steps as a checklist or recipe book starting from the most relevant. The core of the methodology can be tailored to your context and support you in developing a robust set of actions, or to embed energy poverty into your existing climate and energy plans. At the end of this first phase, you will have at your disposal a complete “Local energy poverty diagnosis” report which will effectively support you not only in planning and implementing actions but also in engaging with a wider network of stakeholders, based on concrete evidence.

So let's start looking at the steps to energy poverty diagnosis.

7 practical steps to energy poverty diagnosis – Energy Poverty Advisory Hub learning guide



Context and Coordination

Step 1 - Understand the complexity of energy poverty



Objective:

Understand the topic in greater depth

Start by gaining a full overview of how energy poverty is manifested in the municipality. Read up on what is energy poverty, the causes, the drivers, the consequences and what is at stake when it comes to diagnosing this challenge. During your research you will find various publications and learning material that may be useful at different stages.



Activity:

Create a list of all the available resources



Step 2 - Identify and engage the stakeholders involved



Objective:

Establish a Working Group

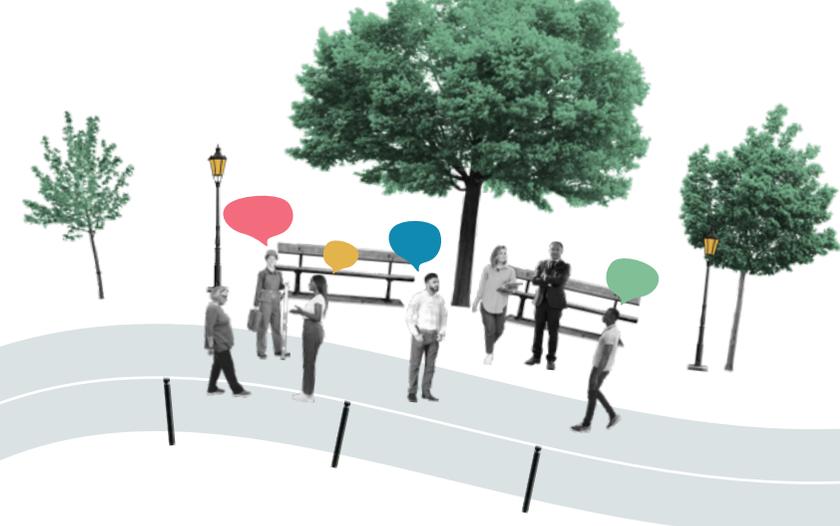
Energy poverty touches on various spheres of society, including the social, energy, housing, health and environmental sectors. In order to ensure that you access different perspectives, start joining forces with internal (from other departments) and external (outside the municipal administration) stakeholders. With internal stakeholders, consider creating a cross-departmental working group with the capacity to bring diverse technical and social perspectives to the diagnosis.

With external stakeholders, reach out to local experts, Civil Society Organisations, non governmental organisations, Social Services, Cooperatives, Research Centres, Universities, Energy Agencies/Companies, Banks, Investment Funds, Small and medium sized enterprises etc. to explore the possibilities of collaboration.



Activity:

Map internal and external stakeholders and host meetings to identify potential synergies.



From Information to Definition

Step 4 - Define the information you are going to collect: relevant indicators and other sources

Step 3 - Establish and analyse a hypothesis

Objective:

Detail the original observation with additional elements

No matter what triggered your interest to diagnose energy poverty, it is useful to put together the various hypotheses, which may provide additional information on the starting observation. At this stage you will build on the practical experience and knowledge of the working groups with regard to local challenges and the provision of support to vulnerable citizens. Additionally, you will combine it with the information obtained through the research conducted (step 1) to establish a set of hypotheses relating to potential issues to be investigated.

Activity:

Create a list of hypotheses and analyse their robustness. Check the example below:

Hypothesis: We think there may be energy poverty in X neighbourhood due to the poor quality of dwellings

Questions: What are the problems with the dwellings (roof insulation, old building, old heating system etc.)? Why are they not refurbished?

Supporting information: Available.

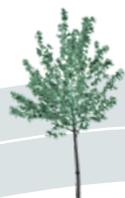
Objective:

Measure impact at a local level

Indicators are essentially a method for monitoring our efforts and are therefore useful in guiding and/or adjusting the actions to be implemented. The energy poverty indicators selected should be a mix of qualitative and quantitative keeping in mind that they should be suitable for monitoring local impact and provide a level of flexibility and nuance to capture vulnerability of the population. They should represent different aspects of the problem and provide informative results. At the same time, budget availability should be taken into account. Defining an indicator that is representative, measurable and precise may be challenging. A good starting point is to look at the available sets of 56 local energy poverty indicators proposed by The Covenant of Mayors jointly with the EPAH.

Activity:

Identify a set of indicators which may be suitable for your local context, and evaluate whether they can be useful in providing answers in relation to your hypothesis.



From Information to Definition

Step 5 - Collect data and additional evidence



Objective:

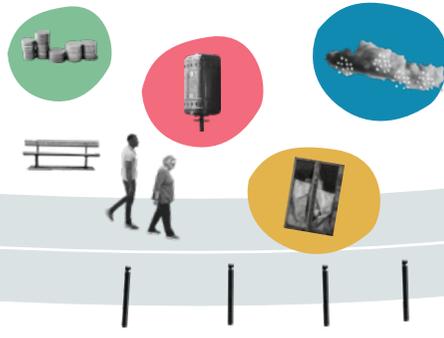
Integrate the information you possess

At this step it is time to seek the data that answer the questions posed in relation to they hypotheses and which can be associated with the selected indicators. It is important to verify that the data respects certain basic principles such as **Geographical distribution**. The data and evidence collated should be available at the scale of your interest. Pay attention to descaling national data that can create misinterpretations. **Time distribution** is also important to verify that the dataset is available for different periods to understand trends. Moreover, it is important that you ensure that the data will be updated in the future to enable monitoring the changes and effectiveness of your actions. Finally, **Validity and Reliability**, especially if data are not collected directly by you but they are provided by external bodies. It is necessary to validate the resources and make sure they are reliable, for instance, ensure that quantitative data was collected respecting statistical principles.



Activity:

After reviewing the already existing data, evaluate if you need more data that you can collect through national statistics, surveys, interviews and focus groups among others.



Step 6 - Processing all information and data



Objective:

Connect the dots between hypothesis, indicators and information

After selecting the indicators and collecting the data which adequately represent them, it is time to review the hypotheses established on Step 3. There is no single correct way of analysing data. You may identify a set of indicators and look at them individually or compare between each other, or you may consider them together. You can **re-analyse the hypothesis** in light of the new results you obtained, and discuss this within your established working group.



Activity:

Design a table with hypothesis, indicators, dataset and combine each of the hypothesis with the specific indicators and the dataset needed to monitor it.



Finalising



Step 7 - Define your local energy poverty and communicate it



Objective:

Conclude the first phase keeping record of the process and sharing key information.

Now that you have all the different elements, it is time to conclude the diagnosis phase with a structured report that keeps a trace of the methodology adopted and the steps performed. This will make it easier to remember what has been done and make the process clearer for an external person who wishes to understand how you performed the diagnosis. During this phase you will need to understand how to channel the information in order to engage different audiences who can support the proposed actions. Being able to communicate is a powerful tool to gain consensus, mobilise political will and/ or obtain funds. To achieve this, identify the key messages that you want to convey and define your target audience(s).



Activity:

Write your energy poverty diagnosis report draft and share it with the various stakeholders to gather their inputs. Appoint one focal person to finalise the editing and start thinking of the next phase: planning of actions.



This document is produced by the [Energy Poverty Advisory Hub \(EPAH\)](#), the leading EU initiative run by the European Commission at the request of the European Parliament. The content is based on the "[EPAH Handbook 1: A Guide to Energy Poverty Diagnosis](#)" that is part of the "EPAH Handbooks: A Guide to Understanding and Addressing Energy Poverty". The series of practical guidebooks for local governments and practitioners aims to assist local governments to tackle energy poverty ensuring that the social dimensions of energy transition are addressed efficiently.

Publication date: September 2023