



ASSIST
2GETHER

**Report of the 3rd
Market Actor's Dialogue
25 March 2020
FINLAND**



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Presentation and context of the meeting

Practical details

Location: Webinar (GoToMeeting) due to COVID-19 precautions

Originally planned location: Kalasataman Kummeli, Sörnäisten rantatie 29, Helsinki

Date: Friday 25 March 2020

Time: 09:00 – 11:00

Originally planned time: 09:00 – 13:00

Remote involvement:

Participants

[participant list removed from this version]

30 webinar participants represented stakeholders in a wide range, including energy and renovation advisors (9 participants); state organisations (6 participants); NGOs (5 participants); research and education institutions (4 participants); social sector experts (3 participants); and an industry organisation (1 participant). In addition, 4 private or anonymous participants and 3 event organisers from VaasaETT attended the webinar.

Presenters:

Senja Laakso – Centre for Consumer Society Research at the University of Helsinki

Siina Lepola-Lång – Kela Social Insurance Institution of Finland

Juha Salden – Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health

Jukka-Pekka Pentikäinen – Peruskorjaamisen ja rakentamisen kehittämiskeskus

Mirva Gullman – social sector expert

Tuula Närvä – The Finnish Green League

Organisers:

Sini Numminen – VaasaETT

Hanna Launonen – VaasaETT

Roosa Turkkila – VaasaETT

Presentation of the meeting

OBJECTIVES

The initial objective of the event had been to hold a physical meeting to discuss energy poverty in Finland and to collect feedback to the draft Vulnerable Consumers Protection Framework Paper (D7.5). As the concept of “energy poverty” is not familiar for many in Finland, and it has not been in political discourses lately, it was considered relevant to invite expert speakers to introduce the participants to the topic from perspectives that are more familiar for them. Each expert presentation was planned to be succeeded by a discussion time. During the discussions, feedback to the related framework paper sections could be collected.

The agenda was made up around three parts: citizen and their income and well-being; energy poverty phenomenon and old Finnish housing stock; and solutions.

In the first part, the Finnish official approach in which the prevention of energy poverty is essentially a part of social policy, was studied. First, an expert from Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, was invited to provide an overview of the Finnish social security system to ensure discussant to have the best background information of different types of social support mechanisms citizen could have access to. Some of this information may be new for some energy sector operators, especially. For example, understanding the eligibility criteria of heating cost allowance available for poor would be a relevant piece of background information about affordability of heating. Then, voice was given for recipients of social assistance (which is the last-resort form of financial assistance for individuals and families which covers some of the basic necessities of life) – to understand the perspectives and experiences of the poor regarding their household energy expenses.

The second part was dedicated to housing stock and energy issues in detached houses – as a core group of people under the threat of energy poverty in Finland live in the countryside in old oil or electricity heated detached houses built in the 1950’s¹. Recent consultation with energy advisors (to D4.5) and other ASSIST research has brought understanding that this sector of homeowners may comprise even a larger group of energy poor than previously acknowledged, and problems may be more severe today. Those houses have got older, some energy expenses have increased, and many homeowners have retired, and thus their income has decreased. Therefore, an expert working with housing renovation was invited to underline sectoral particularities from his daily work.

¹ Laura Oja, Anu Vaahtera, Iivo Vehviläinen, Sanna Ahvenharju ja Laura Hakala. (2013). Selvitys energiaköyhyydestä—Kotitalouksien energiakustannukset. Ministry of Environment.

Third part was reserved to policies and political solutions. A social policy expert having studied energy poverty in Finland was invited to provide economic and cross-sectoral insights on the national social support system as a whole and on the effectiveness of different support mechanisms (housing support, social support, energy cost support, energy renovation support) that concern energy poor and are there to alleviate energy poverty in Finland. Finally, voice was reserved for a decision-maker regarding the ongoing social support renewal process in Finland.

Generally, the objective of the event was to shed light to relevant manifestations of energy poverty and to give a voice also for poor people, and to deliver these perspectives for decision-makers and the public. The event was promoted widely for different NGOs working with vulnerable consumers, also with speaker invitations. The event was also promoted among decision-makers, among them also the Finland's Minister of the Environment and Climate Change was invited. Through ASSIST steering committee relevant ministries were invited, too.

Due to precautions against the global virus epidemic COVID-19, executed by the Finnish government on 13 March, the discussion event had to either be cancelled or relocated to a virtual environment. We did not prefer to cancel the event because of its uniqueness in the Finnish context and because so much preparatory work had already been done. We decided to organise a webinar, but limit the part deserved for discussion. (The initially planned physical discussion event would have allowed time to also present the policy paper process thoroughly.) All other speakers agreed to participate, but, one speaker Iiris Suomela, member of the Finnish parliament, had to unfortunately cancel her attendance due to the sudden and heavy parliamentary workload.

As the duration of online meetings needs to be restricted in order to avoid loss of audience, we decided to find an alternative way (questionnaire) to address the need to receive contextual contribution from attendants. It was more preferred option than cutting down external experts already prepared and much awaited presentations. However, the webinar agenda as such were addressing many relevant points mentioned in the Framework paper regarding the Finnish situation. Furthermore, the webinar platform provided a Chat box for discussing and attendees utilized it during the online event.

AGENDA

09:00–09:15 Sini Numminen (ASSIST and VaasaETT): Welcome and the purpose of the event

09:15–09:30 Senja Laakso (University of Helsinki Centre for Consumer Society Research): Definitions of energy poverty

Section 1: Small incomes, disadvantages and energy costs

09:35–09:45 Siina Lepola-Lång (Kela, the Social Insurance Institution of Finland):

Basic social support for people living in Finland

09:50–10:00 Juha Salden (poverty activist): Energy poverty and basic social assistance. The perspective of the disadvantaged

Section 2: Housing, houses and energy consumption

10:05–10:15 Jukka-Pekka Pentikäinen (Peruskorjaamisen ja rakentamisen kehittämiskeskus PRKK): What type of people and houses are concerned when it comes to energy poverty in Finland?

Section 3: Options for solutions

10:20–10:40 Mirva Gullman: Is energy poverty about social politics or energy politics?

10:40–10:50 Tuula Närvä (The Finnish Green League): Fixed energy costs and future's social support system

11:00 End of event

Feedback to the framework paper content was collected through a set of questions that were sent to all enrolled people prior to the event. The following set of questions was sent to all participants and they were requested to reply-back by 30 March, 2020:

- Is there energy poverty in Finland? What does it mean and whom does it concern?
- Do you face energy poverty, energy frugality or their threat in your work, obligation or personal life? How? How these people could be helped?
- Would you come up with one policy action, with which energy poverty threat could be alleviated in Finland? How would it be realized?
- Which important issue, thematic topic, fact or point of view remained untouched in this webinar? Why is it connected with the topic of energy poverty?
- Your message for the decision-makers
- One comment on every presentation

Planning the event, invitations, marketing and stakeholders represented

Event planning and marketing started at a very early stage. The first “save the date” email was sent for all ASSIST collaboration partners and VCSC members as early as 12 February 2020. Many stakeholders were also approached over phone, which also resulted in the information on the event being disseminated even further. For

example, the invitation was dissemination within the network of southern Finland's energy advisors who have become increasingly concerned of their energy poor customers in their daily work.

The meeting was widely promoted especially for organisations who are in contact with vulnerable consumers, including ASSIST project collaboration organisations among which the Finnish Federation for Social Affairs and Health (Soste), that is the umbrella organisation of social sector NGOs in Finland, kindly disseminated the invitation through their networks. There was an observation that the voice of energy poor has probably not been heard often enough in the course of ASSIST project and therefore, Soste also invited also the members of their network of "experience experts", people who have experienced poverty in their own lives. In addition, all ASSIST HEAs and anybody having been in contact with ASSIST project were invited. In the communication, citizen and organisations were invited to hold short speeches with a low threshold or send their written statements on the topic.

Eventually, 30 people attended the webinar. 36 people had enrolled the discussion event or the webinar or demonstrated interest in the policy paper process (see Annex 1), but not all of them attended. In addition, a few extra last-minute participants joined and used the webinar access link available on the website. Webinar participants represented stakeholders in a wide range, including energy and renovation advisors (9 participants); state organisations (6 participants); NGOs (5 participants); research and education institutions (4 participants); social sector experts (3 participants); and an industry organisation (1 participant). In addition, 4 private or anonymous participants and 3 event organisers from VaasaETT attended the webinar.

Discussion about energy poverty in Finland

Introduction

Sini Numminen (ASSIST and VaasaETT) welcomed participants to the webinar and encouraged everybody to be active, comment and pose questions, as following the original plan of this event to be a discussion about the important topic of energy poverty. She also kindly requested all participants to send their answers to the questionnaire, thinking especially whether a topic, an aspect, an approach or a piece of information is in their opinion missing in the agenda. Energy poverty is a multi-sectoral but not well-defined and only little researched issue in Finland and therefore it is possible that some perspective is missing.

She also informed the participants about the Finnish official energy poverty alleviation strategy according to which “prevention of energy poverty is part of general social policy”². She posed a question to the audience whether this strategy is recognizing all forms of energy poverty in Finland or whether also other policy sectors should be involved. Finland does not, at present, have dedicated measures against energy poverty as such, but the official strategy relies the structures of the social support system, that are considered as “very comprehensive”.

She also showed some preliminary results from the ASSIST consumer survey, and published quotes from two energy poor households representatives which demonstrates the critical importance of monitoring the energy poverty levels also in the cold Nordic country of Finland, in terms of the ability to keep homes adequately warm. The following two citations demonstrate that these vulnerable consumers may suffer from energy poverty:

“I have done everything to save in energy expenses, but unfortunately I cannot shift to ground heating [from oil and wood heating] because I cannot afford the related high investment costs. I have reduced electricity consumption and use LED lighting. The indoor temperature is kept below 20 degrees, at the expense of our comfort, we keep the energy costs moderate. I have tried to look at the different energy offerings because the prices are extortionate.” (Consumer ID 3, ASSIST ex-post consumer survey 2019)

“I live in a relatively old house, build in the 50’s that still has the original insulation. This insulation renewal option and the consequent savings have been calculated several times, but such renovations would be so expensive that I prefer buying more electricity with that money and realize other small repairs and be satisfied with smaller consumption and cooler indoor temperature. Wood as a supporting heating fuel has been important and I save good amounts of money every year like that.” (Consumer ID 72, ASSIST ex-post consumer survey 2019)

Definitions of energy poverty and Finland

Senja Laakso, a researcher at the University of Helsinki Centre for Consumer Society Research, presented the variety of energy poverty definitions and indices. Finland appears divergent in statistics. On the other hand, the share of the population unable to keep homes adequately warm has been low (1.7%) but the M/2 and hidden energy poverty metrics show surprisingly high values for Finland. It is important to be

² Finland’s Integrated Energy and Climate Plan (Publications of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment 2019:66). (2019). Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland. http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/161977/TEM_2019_66.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

following up the European discussion, and keep on researching the phenomenon, so that the true manifestations of energy poverty are understood and depicted using suitable and comparable metrics.

Furthermore, not much research has been done in Finland on the in-country energy poverty, so some forms of energy poverty may remain hidden behind statistics. Laakso also showed situations (news headlines) of lack of air conditioning making some houses overheated in the summer, and of energy poverty situation of homeless people.

Energy poverty among the recipients of basic social assistance

Siina Lepola-Lång from Kela presented the basics of the Finnish social support system, including what type of support can be sought from different state or city organisations or other institutions or companies. She also detailed who could be eligible to the basic social assistance, which is the last form of social support and that is targeted to be only temporary mechanism to help people in difficult economic situations.

Then Juha Salden, a poverty activist, drew a picture of an energy poor in Finland who could be, in his description, somebody surviving with some basic social assistance, his/her social network consists of other poor people, often has multiple diseases, or other social risk factors.

He brought up the hurdle experienced by people who are getting basic social assistance: there is a maximum euro limit set for electricity invoice grand total, that they could get reimbursed in a form of an energy allowance. That limit puts the most vulnerable in a situation where they might not keep their homes adequately warm or air-conditioned. Some electricity costs may sometimes be unavoidable (e.g. floor heating). Furthermore, the fixed limit is inadequate because the electricity distribution prices have increased steadily in recent years, but the energy allowance level has remained the same. Salden calls for a law restricting the distribution monopolies from constantly increasing their charges.

"The Finnish social support system does not understand all expressions of energy poverty. The basic needs of the energy poor are not met: the amount of energy allowance is insufficient. A law should also be imposed to stop the constant increases in electricity distribution charges" (Juha Salden, poverty activist).

Salden also proposed the new energy efficiency subsidy scheme be used by housing cooperatives in blocks of houses to construct solar panels which would decrease the electricity expenses for the inhabitants.

Low incomes, old detached houses and new energy efficiency policies

Jukka-Pekka is a renovation expert working with household renovation needs assessment. He has over ten years of experience and knows the current condition of private properties (detached houses) especially in the large semi-urban or non-urban areas of the country. Pentikäinen had three key concerns: 1) difficulties in setting up priorities when making house repairs, 2) lack of suitable support structures for the poorest households living in houses in the need of some energy efficiency repair and 3) governmental plan of phasing out oil heating which hits especially the low-income households.

First, Pentikäinen called for pragmatism in household renovation strategies. Each house requires an appropriate technical assessment before one should decide upon a renovation strategy. A nuisance in the market today are some door-to-door technical salespeople who appear having a vision the overall needs of a house, but actually he/she is selling one service or technical solution and makes it appear more lucrative than it actually is. Sometimes low-income families have invested e.g. in roof insulation, even though same energy efficiency would have been reached just with new windows.

Secondly, Pentikäinen raised problems with the new energy efficiency subsidy scheme which has recently been opened for applications by the Ministry of Environment. Grants are available for renewing heating systems, but they cover only around 20% of the total expenses of an energy renovation project, which would not make the project realizable among the poorest consumers. A ground heat pump may cost 20 000 €.

The perspective was backed up by an energy advisor per email after the webinar: *“The new energy efficiency subsidy scheme is not benefiting those who would need household energy renovation support the most. Being eligible for receiving a grant is basing on a computational and disputable in-depth technical assessment. I, as a HVAC technician and energy advisor cannot answer citizen’s queries whether they could get the grant or not. Government takes a complex and bureaucratic direction with energy efficiency programs. In my opinion the new energy efficiency subsidy scheme does not at all respond the needs of energy poor. For them, a simple support for purchasing a heat pump, for example, would be good. It should not be listed as energy poverty prevention mechanism because those in most need will not benefit from it. Many energy advisors share this opinion with me.” (Marjo Kekki, energy advisor)*

This new energy efficiency subsidy scheme was added to the Framework paper by the VCSC to page 19, in the list of Finnish energy poverty alleviation mechanism.

Hereby these discussants could be considered somewhat disagreeing with the addition: the scheme may not alleviate energy poverty because it is not very useful for the poorest household owners. The scheme may increase energy efficiency of some properties but not those of among the most vulnerable.

Pentikäinen also discussed the governmental plan of a gradual phase out of oil heating in all buildings and private properties. Through a simple calculation, Pentikäinen demonstrated that in many cases a heating system renewal may not be a reasonable choice, especially as in many cases the oil heaters who are pensioners, will most probably not inhabit the property until the investment has paid itself back.

“The phase out of oil heating hits especially the energy poor. In legislation, it would always be worth looking in a longer-term which are the practical implications and what really makes sense. Many older oil-heated properties have low monetary value, especially in some areas further away from larger cities, and a modernization of the heating system may cost more than the house is worth. Renovating all old properties do not always make sense from the global material efficiency perspective either.”
(Jukka-Pekka Pentikäinen, house renovation expert)

Here is another reference to the framework paper (for example on page 19 where the oil heating phase out was proposed to be mentioned by the 3rd VCSC. VCSC, however, was not taking a stance on how the phase-out affects different groups of people).

Are solutions to energy poverty part of social policy or energy policy?

Mirva Gullman wrote her university research thesis on energy poverty among detached house owners in Finland. She had looked holistically at different social, housing and energy support mechanisms available for the energy vulnerable people and assessed the global cost-efficiency of these mechanism. In her study, she had scrutinized the budget of a family receiving housing allowances and energy allowances (to cover heating costs of a detached house) and found, that in some cases, it would be more economic to have the amount of allowances paid in a form of housing and energy allowances, in heating repairs or energy efficiency repairs instead. That would be cheaper option both for the social support organisation and the vulnerable family in a semi-long term.

As a solution, she suggests more cooperation between different policy sectors and governmental organisation, to better identify optimal solutions in different housing and social cases. For example, a social support institution may not always have all necessary technical information of the formation of energy costs in different types of housing, or the saving potential through different renovations. Currently the

renovation support grants, and new energy subsidies are issued by The Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA); and the housing and energy allowances are issued by Kela, the Social Insurance Institution. Gullman asked whether the recently started social security renewal process could look also at energy and environment issues. Could also the well-being of the environment be integrated in the social support system?

"In Finland, energy poverty is usually part of a wider poverty problem. In the future, climate change will bring more problems with housing and heating, among other things. In order to find solutions to energy poverty, we need to develop our social security system to be more flexible. One very important aspect is to understand that social welfare could go hand in hand with the ecological perspective." (Mirva Gullman)

After the presentation of Gullman, a renovation advisor of VTKL raised the issue with current renovation allowances available for aged people and disabled people. These allowances could in some cases be used also for energy renovations. She reminded, that in order to get the allowance, the person should anyway first pay the full 100% of the investment, and the grant is only paid afterwards. Eventually, the allowance could cover a maximum 50% of the energy renovation investment costs. She reminded, that the required several thousands of euros is often not available in the bank account of the poorest citizen.

Tuula Närvä is a politician in the city of Vaasa, Finland, and the member of the Green League. She raised the current question of the corona virus as an example of a "black swan", which is a metaphor used to depict some unexpected and undesirable issue that shakes the society and calls for urgent action. A vulnerable consumer may suffer from types of issues more severely. Närvä said that predictability is an important value in a social support system, and she suggested some type of basic income type of structure could bring the needed feeling of security for many. A vulnerable person should be able to rely that there is some basic support even though the world is changing.

Could be said, that at least these presenters may recommend exploring solutions to energy poverty not only as part of social policy, but in cooperation with multiple policy sectors. This approach may differ from the Finnish national strategy, which highlights the tools offered by the comprehensive social support system as primary means to tackle energy poverty. Framework paper reference: page 20 (and some others).

Unfortunately, a one concluding remark could not be rightfully made, as a webinar format did not allow a debate on this topic to be continued. However, seems that even though "energy poverty" is not much discussed in Finland, there are cases and

groups of consumers who are more vulnerable when it comes to their basic energy, such as the aged people living in old detached houses in the countryside. Their position shall be monitored, even though they would not be categorized as “energy poor” in the national discourses.

As one webinar participant concluded: *“Energy poverty is a complex web, connected with energy and climate politics, social politics, regional politics and demography, especially with aging of population.”* (Leo Koltola, house owner)

Other comments delivered after the event

There were six answers sent to the questionnaire. Generally, people found the event important, unique and touching widely different perspectives.

Two letters were delivered by NGOs, (The Consumers’ Union of Finland and Finnish Energy representing the energy industries), two from professional HEAs, one from a social sector expert, and one from a house owner. These comments and citations are reported in this document in connection with the discussion topics of the presenters, or in the succeeding sections.

Energy poverty in Finland in statistics

Representative of the energy regulatory authority commented that an interesting piece of information, sometimes neglected when countries are compared for their energy poverty, would be the share of energy expenses among total household expenditures. In Finland, during past 15 years, the average share has remained between 3–7% for different consumer groups, according to Statistics Finland³. Highest shares were found among people over 64-years-old. It would be relevant to monitor also this indicator in the future.

³ Tilastokeskus: “001 -- Kotitalouksien kulutusmenot kotitaloustyyppin mukaan 1985-2016” Tilastokeskuksen PxWeb-tietokannat [Viitattu 9.3.2020]. Saantitapa: http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/fi/StatFin/StatFin__tul__ktutk/statfin_ktutk_pxt_001.px/

Asumisen energiakulujen osuus kotitalouksien kulutusmenoista				
	2001	2006	2012	2016
Kaikki kotitaloudet	5 %	4 %	4 %	4 %
Yhden hengen talous, alle 65 v	3 %	3 %	3 %	3 %
Lapseton pari, alle 65 v *)	4 %	4 %	3 %	3 %
Yksinhuoltajatalous **)	4 %	4 %	3 %	3 %
Kahden huoltajan lapsiperhe **)	4 %	4 %	4 %	4 %
Yli 64-vuotiaiden kotitaloudet ***)	7 %	6 %	6 %	5 %
Muut kotitaloudet	6 %	5 %	5 %	4 %

*) molemmat alle 65-vuotiaita**) lapset alle 25-vuotiaita huollettavia***) kaikki jäsenet täyttäneet 65 vuotta

Is there hidden energy poverty in Finland?

Two participants deliberated forms of hidden energy poverty in Finland. One participant suggested that maybe better reaching of target audiences (energy poor) would require careful consideration. In Finland, the responsibility of all forms of poverty prevention (including energy poverty) activities are centralized into the social support services. Maybe the energy poor are not reached? For example, those who do not seek for social support services may seek support from diacony of churches, or not at all.

One renovation advisor (HEA) explained her experiences with aged pensioners:

“In my work, I have noted that among the aged population, especially among older widow ladies living alone, there are people who may suffer from energy poverty. They have small retirement pensions because they were long times home with children and during their working life, they had jobs with small salaries. They live in detached houses with high operational expenses. I have found there is a threshold with seeking for financial support. There is a certain culture of “making do”, even a shame of one’s own vulnerability.” (Nina Leino, renovation advisor of The Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older People)

Energy market perspectives

Two interest groups (The Consumers’ Union of Finland and Finnish Energy) also delivered their feedback, commenting particularly the energy policy and energy costs, taxes and expenses.

The Consumers’ Union of Finland found that the risk of energy poverty can be found in areas with aging population, and where the share of middle- and low-income households is the highest. The union also highlighted the variation in energy prices

around the country, and that electricity distribution charges have been increasing in the areas of dispersed settlement. The union called for decision-making that takes the effects on the people in the most vulnerable economic position into account, also when making decisions upon electricity distribution or energy prices. The commentary can be found in Annex 4.

Finnish Energy, the association of energy industries in Finland, also answered the questionnaire (see Annex 5). The association underlined the benefits of the comprehensive social support system of Finland enabling the identification of poverty in its all forms, and that the strategy should remain as the primary support strategy for those experiencing poverty. The association commented the topic from various aspects. One suggestion for energy poverty alleviation would be the notable reduction of electricity tax, as in electricity bills, taxes account for an average of 30%. The share of the tax is a significant expense especially for low-income residents living in electricity heated homes. The response in its entirety can be found in Annex 5.

Follow-up of the event

To maximize impact, the webinar was recorded and published on ASSIST YouTube channel. In addition, the webinar slides were published on the website and their availability was advertised in the social media of ASSIST. A press release or a summary in Finnish has been planned, to be delivered for Finnish politicians and governmental representatives. Unfortunately, the visibility for the event remained more modest than planned, as it was held only over the Internet but mainly because the COVID-19 epidemic headlines had just filled the media streams and there was nearly no space for any other topic that week.

However, the Finnish project partner is positive that the ideas and insight brought up during the webinar will be found and utilized also later on, as many researchers, governmental institution representatives and stakeholders attended the webinar, and because this ASSIST energy poverty webinar was possibly the first one ever of its kind in Finland.

Conclusions

Finnish 3rd Market Actors Dialogue event was attended by 30 people representing a variety of non-governmental organisations, state organisations, decisionmakers, social policy experts, researchers, private companies, energy advisors and private people. The topic of energy poverty was approached from three different perspectives: citizen and their income and well-being; energy poverty phenomenon and housing stock; and solutions. In addition to six excellent and highly relevant and

interesting expert speeches, also two associations sent their comprehensive statements on energy poverty in the context of this event.

The event was unique in Finnish context, as energy poverty is not much discussed as a topic as such, even though many encompassing phenomena regularly arise in the news, media and political arenas. Webinar speakers and discussants raised many relevant issues concerning the experiences of energy vulnerable people in Finland, including the position of the aged detached house owners; affordability of the new energy subsidy scheme; effects of renewable energy programs on the poor; position of the recipients of basic social allowance regarding energy expenses; and hidden energy poverty. As one concrete proposal, more cooperation between different policy regimes and governmental institutions was suggested, which may allow better identification of suitable support mechanism or solutions for the energy vulnerable people.

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the event was held in the form of an online seminar instead of an originally planned physical discussion event. The webinar format did not allow to address the ASSIST Framework paper draft in detail, but the presenters and participants delivered many relevant comments and insights regarding the Finnish situation and energy vulnerability. To maximize impact, the webinar was recorded and published on ASSIST YouTube channel. In addition, the webinar slides were published on the website. It is recommended that the webinar material remains available for stakeholders, policymakers and researchers also after the end of ASSIST project, as the material collection serves as a useful and unique overview on the energy poverty situation in Finland and relevant concerned questions.

Annexes

Annex 1. Enrolment list

[removed from this version]

Annex 2. Discussion event invitation (original plan)



KESKUSTELUTILAISUUS Energianiukkuuden ilmiöt ja kokemukset



AGENDA

Energia on perusasia. Joskus sen huomaa vasta kun siitä on puutetta, tai kodissa on kylmä. Yksi köyhyyden ilmenemismuoto liittyy kodin sähkön ja lämmön niukkuuteen – hankaluuteen selviytyä erilaisista elämisen kustannuksista, jotka kohoavat energian hintojen noustessa.

ASSIST-hanke kutsuu pienituloisten suomalaisten kanssa toimivat järjestöt, yritykset ja muut organisaatiot sekä tutkijat ja päätöksentekijät keskustelutilaisuuteen, jonka tavoitteena on tutkia, millaisia muotoja tämä hyvin poikkisektoraalinen energianiukkuus tai -köyhyyskysymys Suomessa ottaa.

Tapahtuman aikana on mahdollista tutustua eurooppalaisen ASSIST-hankkeen aikana koostettuun politiikkapaperiluonnokseen, jossa otetaan kantaa myös Suomen määritelmään energiaköyhyydestä ja ilmiön laajuuteen tai merkittävyyteen Suomessa. Luonnosta voi vapaasti kommentoida koko keskustelutilaisuuden ajan. Tapahtumasta koostetaan yhteenveto, joka toimitetaan Suomen päättäjille ja Euroopan komissiolle liittyen Suomen energianiukkuuteen.

AIKA: ke 25.3.2020 kello 9–13
PAIKKA: Kalasataman kummeli
Sörnäisten rantatie 29, Helsinki
(käynti Vilhonvuorenkadun puolelta)
ILMOITTAUDU tästä linkistä
LISÄTIETOJA: Sini Numminen
+358 44 9066 826
etunimi.sukunimi@vaasaett.com

ALUSTAVA OHJELMA

09:00 Tapahtuma alkaa

Tervetuloa, tapahtuman tarkoitus ja ASSIST-hankkeen kuluttajatutkimuksen tuloksia - **Sini Numminen, ASSIST-hanke/VaasaETT**

OSUUS 1: PIENITULOISUUS, VÄHÄVARAISUUS JA ENERGIAKUSTANNUKSET

09:15 Suomessa asuvien perusturva - **Siina Lepola-Lång, KELA**

09:25 Energian suhteellinen osuus kansalaisen menoista ja tuloista - **Senja Laakso, Helsingin yliopisto**

09:35 "Kohtuullinen sähkönkäyttö" ja toimeentulotuki.

Pienituloisten näkökulma - **Juha Salden**

09:45 Keskustelua ja kommentteja

10:00 Kahvitauko

OSUUS 2: ILMIÖ - ASUNTOKANTA, ASUNNOT JA ENERGIANKULUTUS

10:15 "Millaisia asujia ja asuntoja energianiukkuus Suomessa koskettaa?" - **Jukka-Pekka Pentikäinen, Peruskorjaamisen**

ja rakentamisen kehittämiskeskus PRKK

10:25 Keskustelua ja kommentteja

OSUUS 3: RATKAISUVAIHTOEHTOJA

10:50 "Onko energiaköyhyys sosiaali- vai energiapoliittinen kysymys?" - **Mirva Gullman**

11:00 Keskustelua ja kommentteja

11:30 Ilmasto- ja energiapoliittisten toimien vaikutus

pienituloisten kotitalouksien arkeen nyt ja tulevaisuudessa

11:40 Keskustelua ja yhteenveto

12:00 Lounas

13:00 Tapahtuma päättyy



ASSIST-hanke on saanut rahoitusta Euroopan unionin Horisontti 2020 -hanke- ja innovaatio-ohjelmasta avustussopimuksen Nro 754051 nojalla

Järjestäjinä:





vaasaETT

Annex 3. Webinar recording and presentations on the website



HOME

WEBINAARIN 25.3.2020 ESITYSKALVOT JA NAUHOITUS



KESKUSTELUTILAISUUS
Energianiukkuuden ilmiöt ja kokemukset

Helsingissä
ke 25.3.2020
klo 9-13

Järjestäjät:  ASSIST  Vaasa ETT

ASSIST-hankkeen keskustelutilaisuus **Energianiukkuuden ilmiöt ja kokemukset Suomessa** järjestettiin webinaarina 25.3.2020 koronavirustilanteen vuoksi. Ohjelmassa oli kuusi erinomaisen kiinnostavaa puheenvuoroa koskettaen energiaköyhyyttä tai sen uhkaa Suomessa. Voit katsoa koko ohjelman nauhoitteen tai ladata kalvoesitykset alta.

[NAUHOITE YOUTUBEssa](#)

ESITYSKALVOT [kaikki yhtenä tiedostona](#) tai erikseen:

09:00–09:15 [Sini Numminen \(ASSIST-hanke ja VaasaETT\): Tervetuloa ja tapahtuman tarkoitus](#)
09:15–09:30 [Serja Laakso \(Helsingin yliopisto\): Energian suhteellinen osuus kansalaisen menoista ja tuloista](#)
OSUUS 1: Pienituloisuus, vähävaraisuus ja energiakustannukset
09:35–09:45 [Siina Lepola-Lång \(KELA\): Suomessa asuvien perusturva](#)
09:50–10:00 [Juha Salden: "Kohtuullinen sähkökäyttö" ja toimeentulotuki. Pienituloisten näkökulma.](#)
OSUUS 2: Ilmiö: Asuntokanta, asunnot ja energiankulutus
10:05–10:15 [Jukka-Pekka Pentikäinen \(Peruskorjauksen ja rakentamisen kehittämiskeskus PRKK\): Millaisia asujia ja asuntoja energiainiukkuus Suomessa koskettaa?](#)
OSUUS 3: Ratkaisuvaihtoehtoja
10:20–10:40 [Mirva Gullman: Onko energiaköyhyys sosiaali- vai energiapolitiittinen kysymys?](#)
10:40–10:50 [Tuula Närvä: Energian kiinteät kustannukset ja tulevaisuuden sosiaaliturva](#)


LUE TÄSTÄ: [Kuluttajajärjestön lausunto webinaarille energiaköyhyyteen ja sen uhkaan liittyen](#) (avautuu uuteen ikkunaan)

Lue myös:

Mirva Gullman (2019): Suomalaisten omakotiasukkaiden energiaköyhyys: Energia- vai sosiaalipoliittinen ongelma (opinnäytetyö)? Jyväskylän ammattikorkeakoulu, URL: <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-201903142949>




Lisätietoja

Sini Numminen
etunimi.sukunimi@vaasaett.com
Puhelin: 0449066826



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Annex 4. Comments on the subject from The Consumers' Union of Finland

23.3.2020

The Consumers' Union of Finland (Kuluttajaliitto, abbreviated as "Union" in the document)

"In Finland, energy poverty or scarcity is not yet widely used as a concept, and based on Union's own experience or member feedback, it is not a widespread problem. However, there is some experience of energy poverty and preventive measures should be considered for at-risk groups. According to a report published by the Ministry of the Environment in 2015, there are a total of 60,000–100,000 households living in owner-occupied housing at risk of energy poverty in Finland. An estimated 2% of Finns suffer from energy poverty.

In the opinion of the Union, the Finnish premise that energy poverty is seen as part of general poverty is in itself justified. The household economy is an entity in which all different groups of expenditure have an impact on the whole, and energy expenditure is one part of this whole. Therefore, policies that address poverty as a whole are better than tackling individual aspects of poverty. However, it is important for the Union to monitor the possible occurrence of energy poverty in Finland so that it and its causes can be addressed if it becomes a wider problem than it is at present.

In European terms, Finnish electricity prices are low, while prices of oil for heating are somewhat higher than the EU average. However, the situation of households and the risk of energy poverty varies greatly depending on the place and form of residence, as well as the type of heating. Risk groups include, in particular, 1) low-income households living in non-renovated apartment buildings in the 1960s and 1970s, 2) low- and low-middle-income households living in oil-heated detached houses, and 3) low-income households living in other large non-renovated detached houses built before 1980.

Regionally, the highest risk of energy poverty is in those regions where the population is declining and where the share of low- and middle-income economies is highest. The prices of both electricity and heating oil vary across Finland. It is possible for households to influence some of the energy prices through tendering of contracts, but the price of electricity distribution is such that cannot be influenced by the electricity consumer. Electricity distribution prices are currently under a great upward pressure to ensure the security of electricity supply. Increasing pressures are particularly pronounced for electricity distribution companies with a large sparsely populated areas – a significant proportion of these areas are the same where the risk of energy poverty is the greatest. The Union is of the opinion that when making decisions affecting the price of electricity distribution and other energy, the effects of the decisions on the most vulnerable households in particular must be examined. The financial situation of these households must be safeguarded.

Achieving environmental goals may also require addressing energy pricing. Here, too, it must be ensured that raising energy prices does not impose an unreasonable burden on the most economically vulnerable households.

The Union also finds it important to investigate, how energy consumers' awareness of energy consumption and its impact, as well as energy prices and tendering, could be improved. In particular, there is a need to focus on the weakest consumers who do not have access or understand the information currently available, such as those who do not use the Internet, or the elderly and immigrants."

Annex 5. Responses to the questionnaire from Finnish Energy

27.3.2020

Finnish Energy (Energiateollisuus, abbreviated as "ET" in the document)

Q1: "Is there energy poverty in Finland? What does it mean and whom does it concern?"

"ET shares the general view that energy poverty occurs in Finland as part of other poverty, not separately.

Finland has a comprehensive social security system, which must continue to be the primary financial support for those experiencing poverty.

In Finland, the total price of electricity (including energy, distribution fees and taxes) for consumers is still one the cheapest in Europe in relation to purchasing power. The share of electricity expenditure in an average household expenditure has remained moderate.

The share of energy is determined in competitive markets. Finland is part of the European, efficiently functioning energy market, and the Finnish retail electricity market is highly competitive. This situation should be maintained. All policy measures must be targeted in such a way as to ensure the competitiveness of Finnish energy production, the efficient operation of the market and the equal treatment of market participants. Energy poverty must not be tackled by means that jeopardize the efficient functioning of the market.

The role of distribution pricing is emphasized in the public debate. On average, however, distribution accounts for only about a third of households' total electricity bills. Due to the pricing structure (basic fee), the share of distribution is relatively high for customers who use little electricity (holiday homes). However, in terms of euros paid, the costs are reasonable. A more significant factor than the price level (as such) behind the distribution price debate is the recent price increases. The situation stabilizes when the security of supply investments required by the law have been made.

Energy taxation must be developed as a whole and necessary measures to combat climate change must be taken into account. The basis of energy taxation in heating, industry and transport will flee in the next decade as fossil fuels are phased out. The entire energy system is undergoing a major transformation and technological development. The importance of electrification is growing. As part of the overall tax reform, the development needs and direction of electricity taxation must also be carefully considered. The government of Prime Minister Marin has rightly decided to reduce the electricity tax on industry. It should also be noted that household electricity taxes have risen sharply over the last decade. This, too, needs to be addressed."

Q2: "Will energy poverty or scarcity or its threat be met in your work, work or personal life? How? How could these people be helped?"

"ET has drawn up general terms and conditions, which have been negotiated with the authorities and the content is based on existing legislation. Regarding electricity supply disconnection, the operating methods as such that customers are given sufficient (3-4 months) time to find out their possibilities for paying the bills and getting support with their financial situation. Disconnections have been delayed for social reasons or during winter months. The customer will be sent several reminders of overdue invoices before disconnection, and the disconnection warning sent to the consumer includes advise on how to proceed in order to exercise consumer rights and the consumer is guided towards finding advice and payment options and contacting Kela to seek economic assistance.

In addition, ET has co-operated with Kela to make the processing of guarantees issued by Kela, for example, as smooth as possible. We have co-developed guidelines and training for energy companies.”

Q3: ”Would you come up with one policy measure to alleviate energy poverty or its threat in Finland? How would it be implemented?”

”ET sees that the fight against energy poverty is primarily part of social policy, not energy policy. Finland has a very comprehensive social support system, designed to guarantee a minimum income for all. As stated above, energy poverty occurs as part of other poverty and the phenomenon is very multidimensional. There are many factors or phenomena associated with poverty. The solutions must also take into account the overall situation of the household. Social policy actors have better means and skills to deal with the situation comprehensively.

Electricity tax should be significantly reduced. In electricity bills, taxes account for an average of 30%. It is denominated in euros and is based on the energy used (2.79372 cents / kWh). The share of the tax is thus significant for a low-income resident living in a house heated with electricity.

In Finland, comprehensive measures are also being taken to improve energy efficiency. These, in turn, also help to combat energy poverty. In addition to other public and third sector advice, energy companies are comprehensively committed to Energy Efficiency Agreements and thereby promote energy efficiency among their customers, e.g. through advice, communication and various other services.

Energy subsidies are a good way to promote energy efficiency and combat energy poverty. Counseling must ensure a wide awareness of the forms of support available and guidance to ensure that different sections of the population have a real chance of benefiting from subsidies.

A new problem is the condition of the housing properties of aging population in areas where housing values have plummeted. With regard to these, we share the view expressed at the event that subsidies should be targeted wisely. In certain areas / properties, support for housing should be limited to what is necessary, i.e. repairs necessary for the continuation of housing and compensation for heating energy costs with grants. This new phenomenon must also be taken into account in construction regulations and must not force citizens into unnecessary and unprofitable renovations.

If policy measures on energy poverty are compared between different Member States, the issue must be compared as a whole, taking into account, for example, the functioning of the energy market. Actions should not be detached from the whole.”