

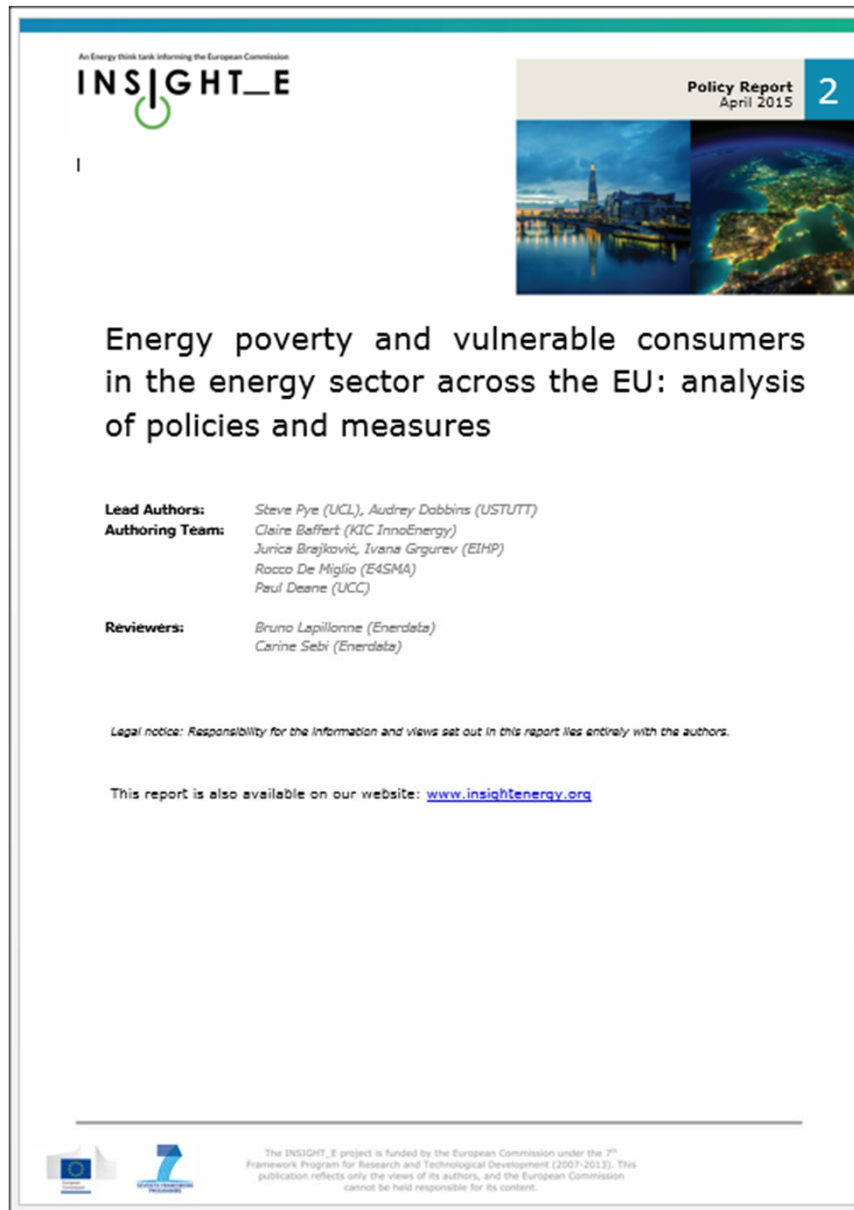
Energy poverty and vulnerable consumers in the energy sector across the EU: analysis of policies and measures

Based on a report by the INSIGHT_E Consortium
www.insightenergy.org

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INSIGHT_E Consortium policy report

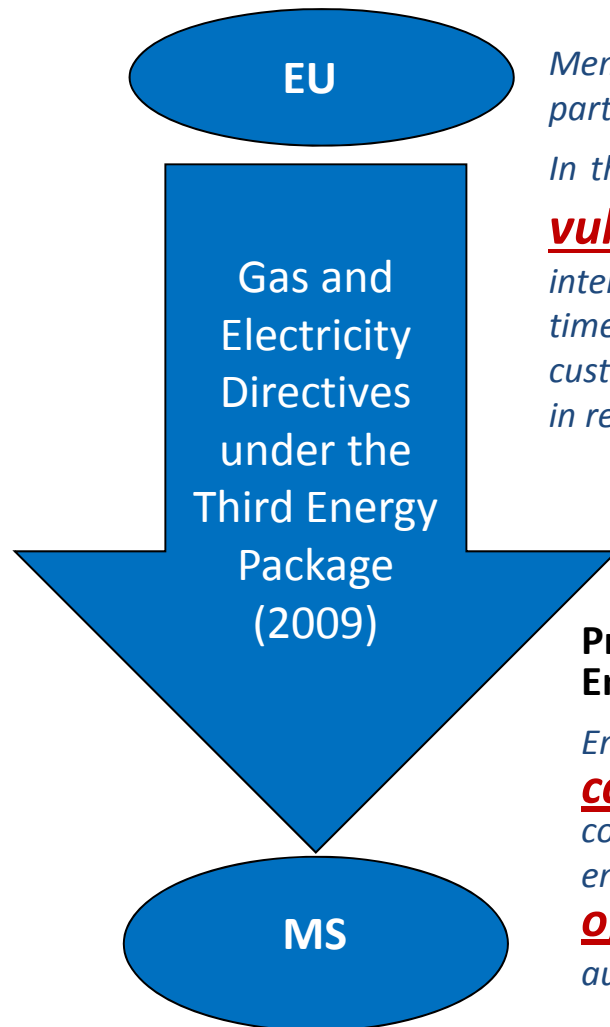


- 6 month study covering all MS
- Broader focus to include vulnerable consumers
- Focused on policies and measures
- Orientated towards providing recommendation for COM
- Available soon on www.insightenergy.org

Research Objectives

1. What is a vulnerable consumer? What is energy poverty?
2. How is the challenge being addressed at European level and by Member States?
3. What can the Commission do to address this issue across the European Community?

EU policy directs protection for vulnerable consumers and recognition of energy poverty



Member States shall take appropriate measures to protect final customers, and shall, in particular, ensure that there are adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable customers.

*In this context, **each Member State shall define the concept of vulnerable customers which may refer to energy poverty** and, inter alia, to the prohibition of disconnection of electricity to such customers in critical times. Member States shall ensure that rights and obligations linked to vulnerable customers are applied. In particular, they shall take measures to protect final customers in remote areas.*

Protection of vulnerable consumers further entrenched in the EC Energy Union communication (2015)

*Energy poverty negatively affects living conditions and health. **It has many causes**, mostly resulting from a combination of low income and general poverty conditions, inefficient homes and a housing tenure system that fails to encourage energy efficiency. Energy poverty can only be **tackled by a combination of measures, mainly in the social field** and within the competence of authorities on the **national, regional or local levels**.*

European estimates of energy poverty

- Our main understanding is informed by analysis using proxy indicators from EU-SILC (for example, EPEE 2009; Thomson and Snell 2013; Tirado Herrero and Bouzarovski 2014).



AROE & arrears on bills (EU-SILC)

Widely quoted estimate from EPEE - between **50 million and 125 million** people in energy poverty. (10-25% of European population).

Country	Overall rank
Finland	1
Denmark	2
Sweden	3
Luxembourg	4
Czech Republic	5
Netherlands	6
Slovakia	7
Austria	8
Germany	9
France	10
UK	11
Malta	12
Belgium	13
Estonia	14
Ireland	15
Spain	16
Italy	17
Poland	18
Greece	19
Lithuania	20
Hungary	21
Slovenia	22
Portugal	23
Cyprus	24
Romania	25
Latvia	26
Bulgaria	27

Source: Thomson (2015)

Energy poverty as a distinctive problem while linked to the issue of vulnerable consumers

Vulnerable Consumers

- Large variation in definitions used
- Definitions ***should*** address vulnerability associated with **socio-economic** (income, age, health) and **energy use** (heating system, fuel, building fabric, payment methods) characteristics.

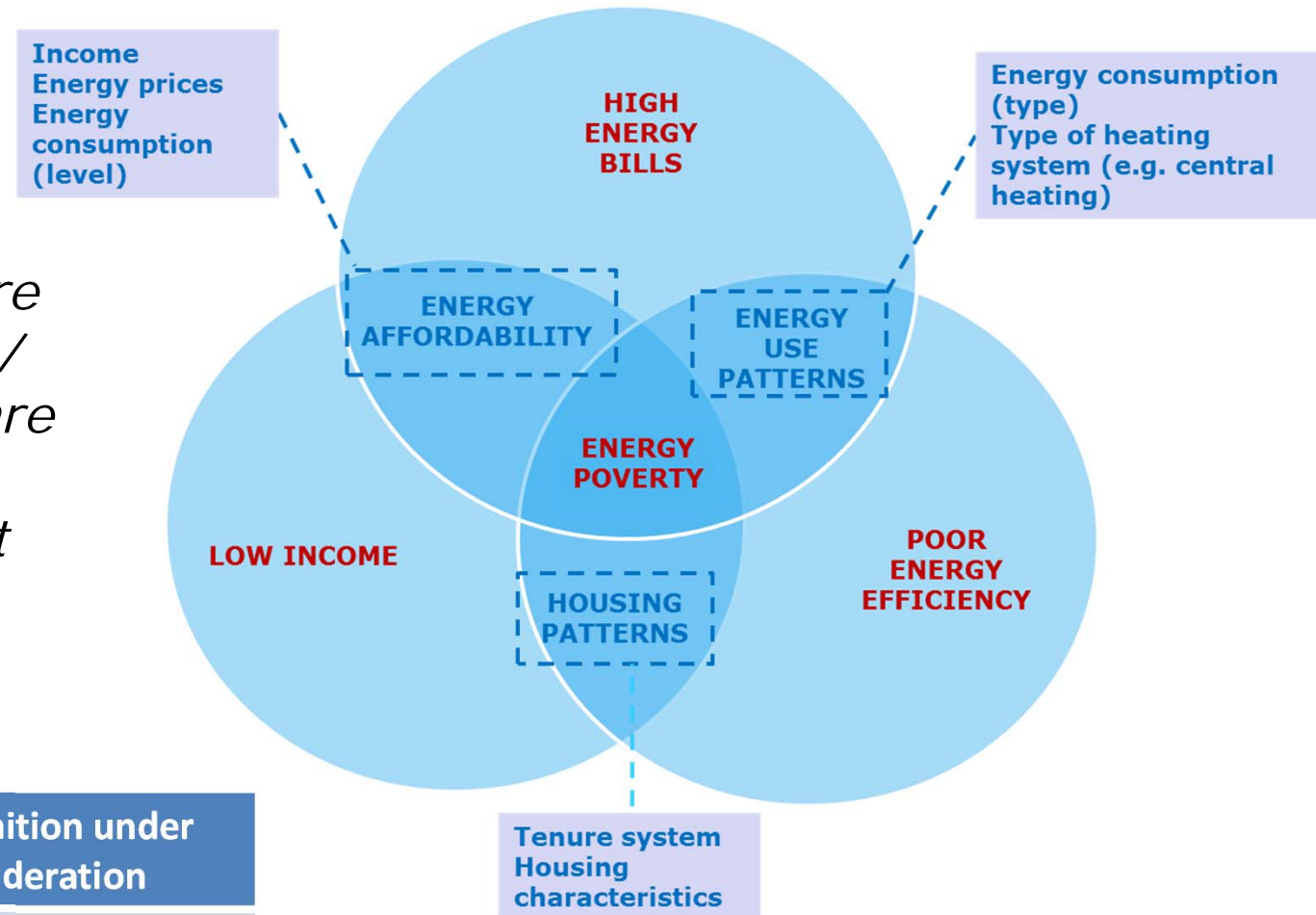
Definition type	Member State (MS)	No. of MS in category
Energy affordability (low income / high expenditure)	FR ² , IT, SE	3
Receipt of social welfare	BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, FI ¹ , HR, HU, LT, LU, MT ⁴ , PL, PT, SI ^{3,6}	14
Disability / health	CZ, NL, SK, IE	4
Range of socio-economic groups	AT, BE, ES, GR, RO, UK ⁵	6
Not available / Under discussion	LV	1

- ***Recommendation 1.*** Recognise that the issues of vulnerable consumer protection and energy poverty are distinct.
- ***Recommendation 2.*** Provide additional guidance on what constitutes vulnerable consumers (based on Member States' experiences).

Energy poverty as a distinctive problem while linked to the issue of vulnerable consumers

Energy Poverty

- Commonly understood as:
a situation where individuals and / or households are not able to adequately heat their homes at affordable cost



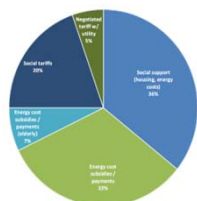
Official definition	Definition under consideration
UK, Ireland, France, Slovakia	Italy, Austria, Malta, Cyprus

Recommendations for defining energy poverty

Recommendation 3. *Explicitly define what energy poverty is and urge Member States to act to alleviate it, but without prescribing the metric to be used by Member States.*

- EU level:
 - No harmonised data for expenditure type metric
 - Consider going beyond elec and gas
- MS level:
 - MS will need to look at appropriate metrics for their own national context – available data
 - Inclusion of mobility

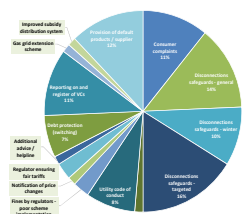
Financial Support (20%)



Largely aimed at supporting households in financial difficulty with energy bills

- The majority delivered through social policy targeting vulnerable consumers.
- Necessary short-term financial relief to households
- Enhanced targeting of energy-poor needs to be balanced against administrative complexity.

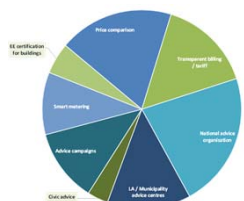
Consumer Protection (27%)



Aimed at ensuring households maintain access to energy

- Dominated by disconnection protection.
- Diverse set of measures, primarily coordinated by regulators and energy supply companies.
- Many measures e.g. billing information, codes of conduct, debt protection are often most prevalent in competitive markets.

Info / Awareness (21%)



Aimed at ensuring households have access, can use energy efficiently, reduce debt

- Include measures relating to price comparison and transparent billing, mostly evident in Member States with the most liberalised markets.
- Where there is a strong civic society movement in relation to energy or fuel poverty, the number of **awareness campaigns** is higher.

Energy Efficiency (32%)



Aimed at reducing energy consumption through building energy efficiency and energy efficient appliances and rational energy use

- **Energy efficiency measures**, particularly those focusing on building retrofit, are a key part of a strategy to address energy poverty.
- There is considerable scope for increased targeting of such measures, although this requires an understanding of which are the energy-poor households.
- There are a wide range of approaches to implementation e.g. funding source, extent of targeting, implementing body. Such factors need to be considered in view of national circumstances.

Recommendations: Disseminating good practice measures

Recommendation 4. *Develop a database of measures used by different Member States, relating to vulnerable consumer protection and energy poverty.*

Build on work of VCWG, listed research initiatives, and this study.

- Experience exchange
- Transferability lessons

Recommendations: Disseminating good practice measures

Recommendation 5. Support measures that promote the targeting of energy efficiency measures to address energy poverty.

Encourage MS to develop more targeted measures on low income households.

Allocate higher share of EU funding, particularly focusing on regions with greatest need.

- Energy efficiency measures most critical
- Improving targeting of measures
- Financing and funding

Recommendations: Develop data systems

Recommendation 6. *Develop data reporting mechanisms that allow for improved indicators for measuring energy poverty.*

Facilitated by Energy Poverty Observatory to help support the development of different indicators, and improve current proxy datasets.

Need for MS coordination on datasets and best practice.

- Define metrics and develop data collection mechanisms (amend & harmonise existing surveys; collect new data)
- Energy Poverty Observatory to host and coordinate through mandate and budget allocation

Recommendations: Measures appraisal

Recommendation 7. Introducing a stronger requirement in impact assessment guidelines to evaluate the impact of policies on vulnerable consumers, and the energy poor.

Need to understand both the potential and actual impact of measures.

- Policy revisions need to be appraised for effects (positive and negative) on lower income households

Thank you!

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Learn more about INSIGHT_E:

www.insightenergy.org

@EuropeEnergy

Look out for published report on the INSIGHT_E website in early June.

Presentation references

EPEE (2009). Tackling Fuel Poverty in Europe: Recommendations Guide for Policy Makers. http://www.fuel-poverty.com/files/WP5_D15_EN.pdf

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Preston, I., White, V., Blacklaws, K., Hirsch, D. (2014). Fuel and poverty: A Rapid Evidence Assessment for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE). June 2014.

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Energy poverty under-researched, but visibility of and research into issues increasing

Project	Country/ Geographic focus	Brief description
ACHIEVE (Action in low-income Households to Improve energy efficiency through Visits and Energy diagnosis)	Bulgaria, France, Germany, Slovenia, UK	Energy consultations, energy efficiency in appliances and behaviour, Information and awareness; Training energy advisers, consultations in 1900 households with the aim of reducing energy use and costs through energy efficiency, awareness raising and training
BPIE (Building Performance Institute of Europe)	EU-28	Report (Alleviating fuel poverty in the EU) estimating the extent of fuel poverty in the EU-28 with recommendations for alleviating energy poverty, especially regarding energy efficiency in buildings
EC-LINC (Energy check in low-income households)	Austria, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, United Kingdom	A European project providing information and support to households in fuel poverty and training long-term unemployed to become energy advisors to low-income households.
ELIH-MED (Energy efficiency in Low-income housing in the Mediterranean)	Italy, Spain, France, Malta, Greece, Cyprus, Slovenia	This project brought together partners from 7 countries to improve energy efficiency and promote energy savings in low income housing in the MED area.
Energy Cities	Energy Cities has members active in many Member States	A network of cities in Europe focussing on addressing various energy issues on the local level; locally led energy transition
Energy City	Budapest, Prague, Munich, Bologna, Treviso, Ludwigsburg, Velenje	The objective is to contribute to a reduction in energy consumption and CO ₂ emissions on a local level across Central Europe with a focus on energy efficiency in buildings
EPEE (European fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency)	Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, UK	Retrofitting of old buildings for low-income tenants with a focus on identifying the most effective measures for the national context and highlighting fuel poverty as a priority in policy
EU Fuel Poverty Network - Thomson and Snell	Europe	Online information portal for researchers of EU fuel poverty to raise awareness and increase dialogue about fuel poverty in the EU; Developing methodologies to assess energy poverty
EVALUATE (Energy Vulnerability and Urban Transitions)	Post-communist states of Eastern and Central Europe	Study to investigate a shift in the paradigm to address the underlying causes of domestic energy deprivation
FinSH (Financial and Support Instruments for Fuel Poverty in Social Housing)	France, Italy, Germany, UK, Poland	Development of financial and support measures for social housing providers to support social housing tenants

Metrics

UK experiences in defining fuel poverty

- UK has moved from 10% threshold (expenditure as share of income) to low income-high cost indicator.

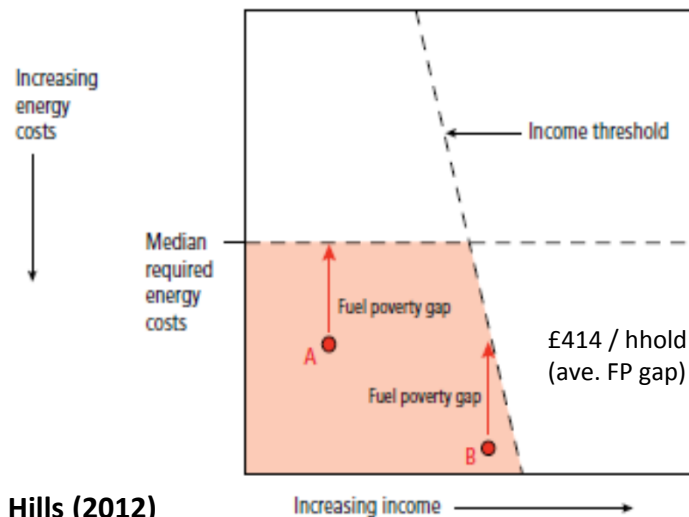
1. Choice of metric matters – but always trade-offs

2. Needs to lead to effective policy

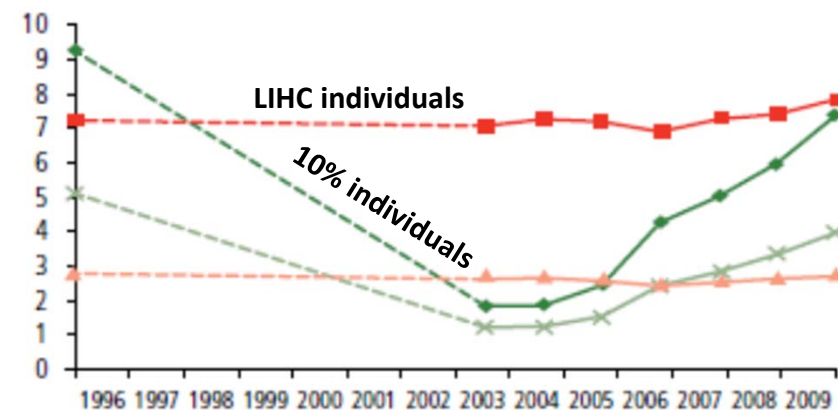
3. Applicability data dependent

	Pros	Cons
Original 10% definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplicity (in calculating and communicating). • A fixed threshold and target. • Covered the four dimensions: income, energy efficiency, price and occupancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overly sensitive to fuel price changes • Potential for higher income households to be defined as fuel poor somewhat misleadingly.
New LIHC definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less sensitive to fuel prices. • Focuses policy efforts on energy efficiency. • Prompted a new fuel poverty strategy and target for England. • 'Gap' provides measure of severity of fuel poverty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex to calculate and describe • Use of the median to set the fuel cost threshold - a benchmark considered too high by some • Moving (relative) measure – implications for political commitment • Inconsistency in approach to measuring fuel poverty throughout UK

Source: Preston et al. (2014)



Source: Hills (2012)



Source: Fuel poverty data, 1996 and 2003-2009 (DECC)

Metrics / Indicators

EU-SILC proxy energy poverty indicators

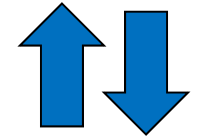
- Population at risk of poverty (60% of median income)
- Population unable to keep home adequately warm
- Population with arrears on utility bills
- Population in dwellings with leakages and damp walls
- Population unable to keep home adequately cool (new since 2012)

Other proxy indicators:

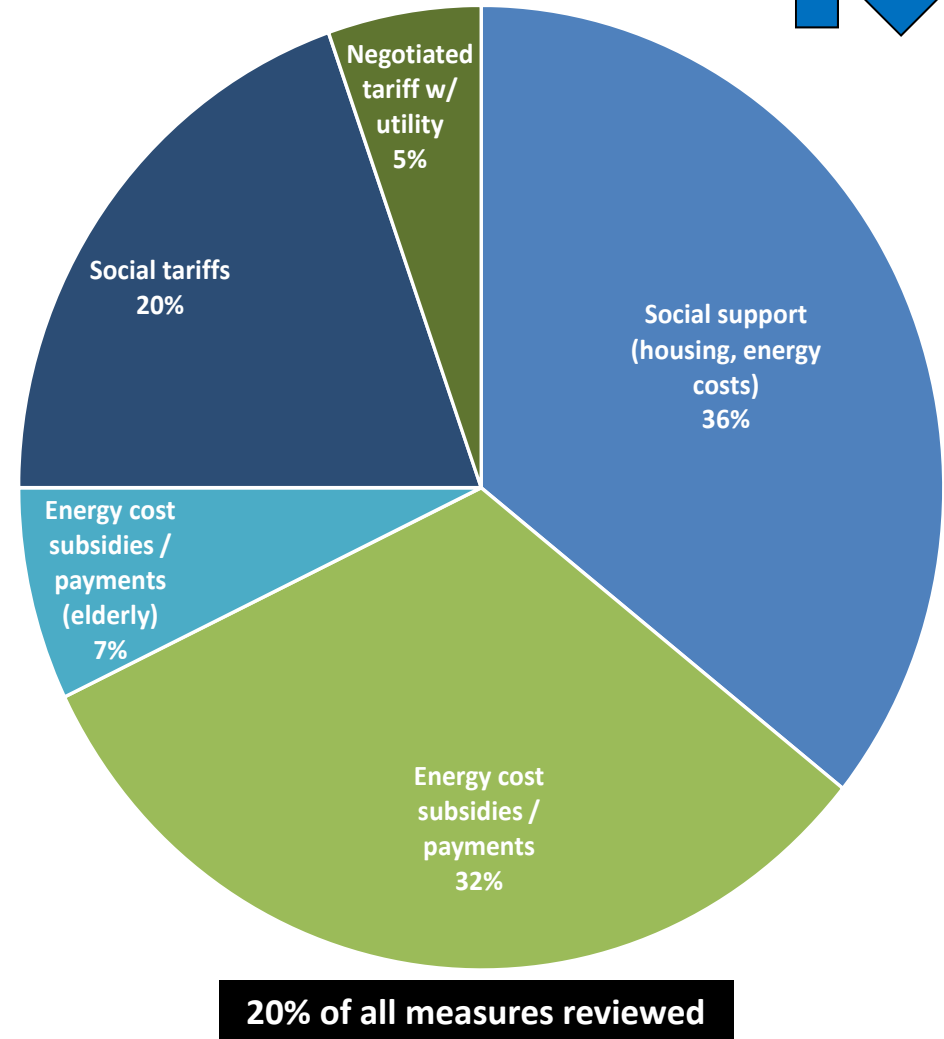
- Energy prices
- Energy expenditure
- Energy consumption
- Tenure status
- Heating type

Categories of measures

Financial intervention



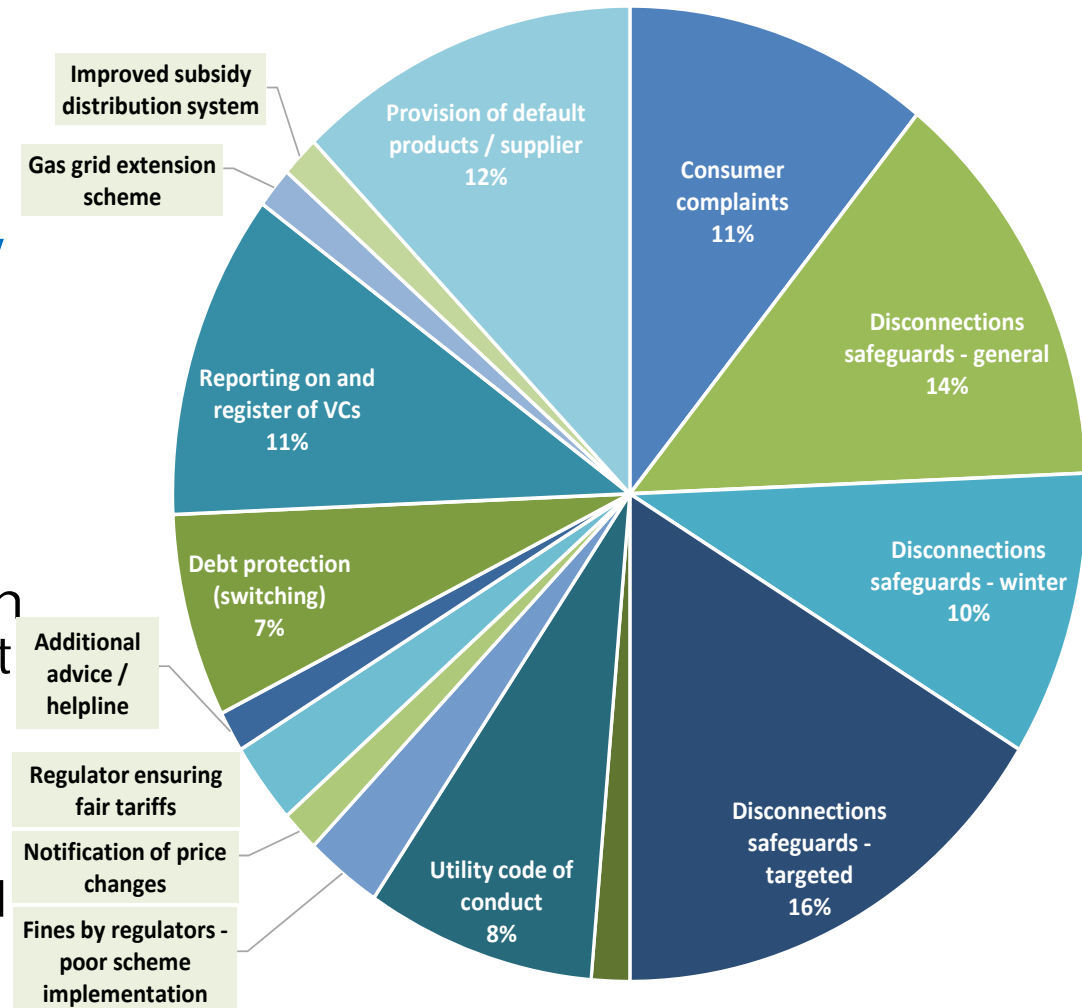
- For **40%** of Member States, social support is both a primary means of identifying vulnerable consumers and providing additional support.
- This reflects a more 'social-policy' led approach.
- The combination of ST relief while addressing structural issues is critical. Strong demonstration of programmes to improve efficiency of social housing stock.
- Additional targeting of energy-poor for such measures needs to be balanced against administrative complexity.



Consumer protection



- While a diversity of action is observed, 40% of measures relate to disconnection measures. Disconnection is primary measure for **20%** of Member States.
- Particularly strong role for regulators and utilities – although action also a function of market status.
- Also includes debt protection, helplines and targeted registration of vulnerable consumers.

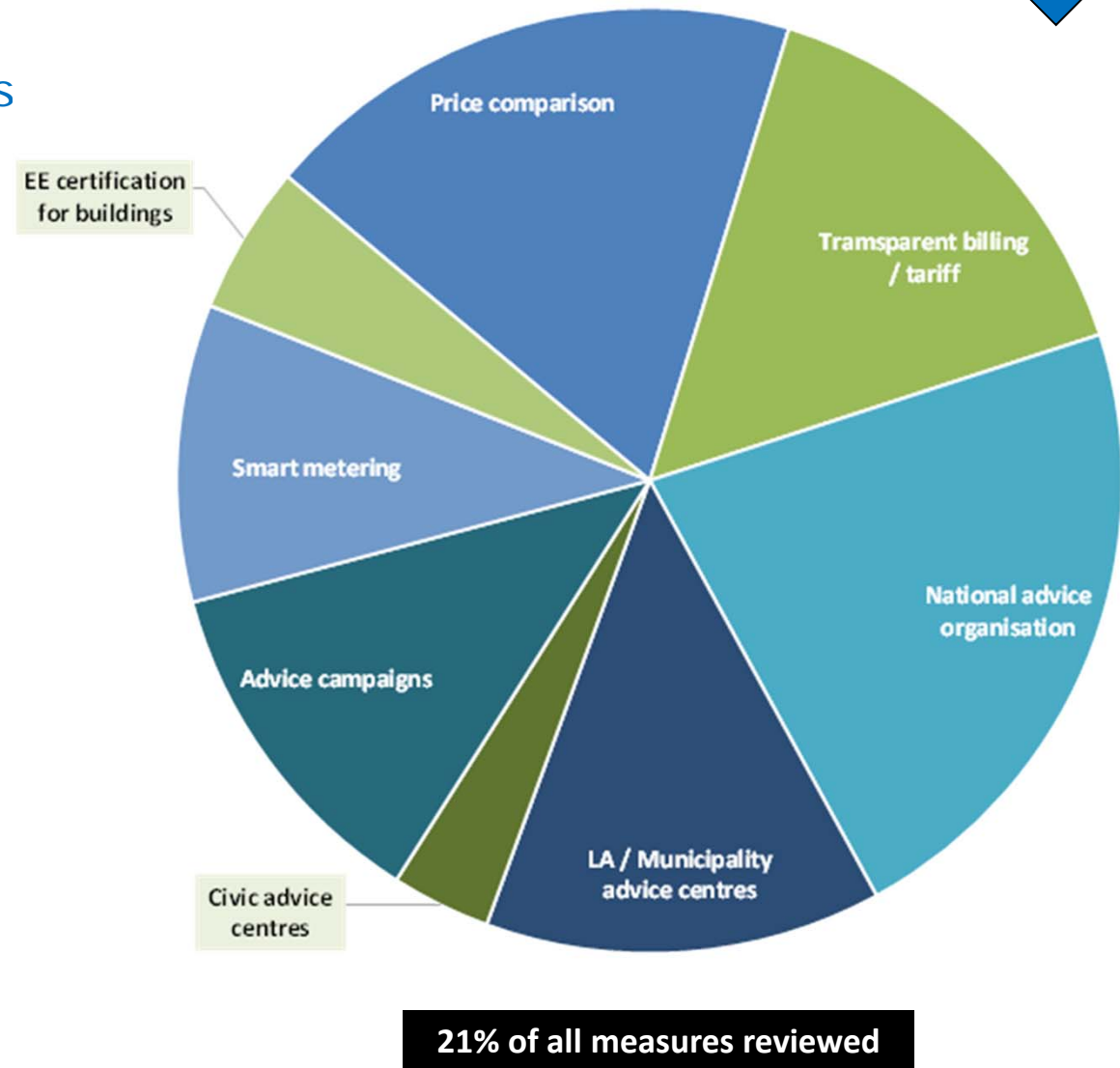


27% of all measures reviewed

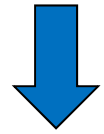
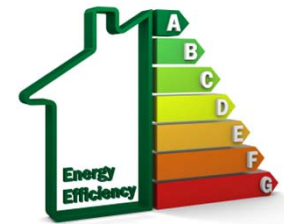
Information & awareness



- Stronger use of measures in Member States with strongly liberalised markets and where civic society movements evident.
- Member States with the most liberalised markets tend to be those that have more measures relating to price comparison and transparent billing.
- Greater awareness of energy poverty and how to tackle it could come through the greater use of **smart metering**.



Energy efficiency measures critical to addressing energy poverty



- 65% of measures relate to building retrofit measures of different types, 30% of which are specifically targeted.
- Many different type of measures identified, using differing approaches:

Type of measure	EE targeted measure
Low income households with employment benefits	Germany: <i>Stromspar-Check (Energy-savings-check for low-income households)</i> Belgium: <i>Energy savers (Energiesnoeiers) project</i>
Low income households	Croatia: <i>Energy efficiency & renewable energies for households</i> UK: <i>Energy Company Obligation (ECO)</i> Ireland: <i>Better Energy: Warmer Homes</i>
Social housing focused	France: <i>Habiter mieux programme ("Living better")</i> Netherlands: <i>Energy Saving Covenant / Energiesprong</i>
Communal buildings	Hungary: <i>SOLANOVA - renovation of large residential buildings and heat-supply-systems</i> Lithuania: <i>Multi-family building renovation via JESSICA funding mechanism</i>

ACHIEVE Energy Efficiency Savings

		BG	FR	DE	SI	UK	Average (project scale)
Households consulted		301	692	504	220	203	384
Average number of installed devices per household		8	22	10	9	8	11
Average investment costs € (devices) per household		30	56	51	29	41	42
Electricity	kWh	336	435	313	274	193	331
	€	34	55	78	39	33	49
	kg CO2	229	151	196	153	86	140
Water	m3	9	34	28	18	4	21
	€	7	97	104	36	8	53
Heat energy	kWh	258	708	751	555	400	592
	€	20	56	65	34	25	42
	kg CO2	114	151	156	168	77	160
Total	€	60	225	247	109	66	
	kg CO2	343	301	352	321	163	

Data set descriptions

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. Amend and harmonise existing surveys	Make existing survey more relevant for measurement and analysis of energy poverty.
1a. Amend the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC)	EU-SILC was not designed for analysis of energy poverty issues. Detailed recommendation suggests inclusion of new variables that capture issues of energy expenditure, payment method, efficiency measures and heating systems. Existing variables should be modified to help differentiate between issues of affordability and technical characteristics of building / heating systems. Changes to EU SILC would need to be considered by the Indicators Sub-Group of the Social Protection Committee, in consultation with Member State statistical agencies, so could be a lengthy process.
1b. Harmonise Household Budget Surveys (HBS)	Another approach is to harmonise national household budget surveys and create a pan-EU dataset of actual fuel expenditure across Europe. This would entail reducing variation in sampling, design and frequency. It would be a major effort, and would require cooperation across Member States. The limitations of using these data are that actual consumption is not necessarily a good indicator of energy poverty, due to under-expenditure in energy-poor households.
1c. Pan-European monitoring of cold-related morbidity and mortality	A final approach is to monitor health and wellbeing impacts of energy poverty via cold-related illnesses and deaths. An approach to this has been developed under the EuroMOMO project, as an example of best practice for standardising the measurement across Europe.
2. Collect new data	Develop new datasets requires a large investment in resources to establish new surveys but provides the basis for improved understanding of the critical issues of energy poverty.
2a. Dedicated EU28 household survey of fuel poverty	Types of data that would be needed include – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Sociodemographic, including income and household composition. Actual energy expenditure (all fuel types), and payment methods and tariffs. + Technical energy efficiency and housing quality data to allow estimation of required energy expenditure (comparable to the English Housing Survey) + Self-assessed health and wellbeing + Self-perceived affordability/burden, thermal comfort and shivering, with focus on keeping warm during cold winter months (or cool during hot summer months). + Inclusion of heating and cooling degree days to control for variations in climate.

MS and EU definitions of energy poverty

<i>Project</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
ACHIEVE	Fuel poverty. A fuel poor household is one that has a perceived difficulty or sometimes inability, to be able to afford its basic energy needs. Households in fuel poverty have energy costs, which are excessive, compared to overall household income.
BPIE	Fuel poverty. Study discusses different definitions used, but does not specify one specific one for the understanding of the study.
EC-LINC	Fuel poverty. A fuel poor household is one that cannot afford to keep adequately warm at reasonable cost, where acknowledgement is made that this definition may vary by country. This is generally defined as 21 degrees C in the living room and 18 degrees C in the other occupied rooms – the temperatures recommended by the World Health Organization.
ELIH-MED	Energy poverty. Although this has a focus on low-income housing so no specific definition is provided.
Energy Cities	Fuel poverty. Described as a result of a variety of factors causing people to live in badly heated homes and include " low income, high fuel cost, poor insulation, inefficient heating equipment, inability to manage budgets, personal choice of priorities, dependency on others and living in inappropriate or out of scale accommodation."
Energy City	Fuel Poverty. The inability to afford adequate energy services for the household.
EPEE	Fuel Poverty. A difficulty, or even incapacity to have proper heating in one's home, all this at a reasonable cost.
EU Fuel Poverty Network - Thomson and Snell	Fuel poverty. A term used to describe a situation when a household is unable to afford the most basic levels of energy for adequate heating, cooking, lighting and use of appliances in the home.
EVALUATE	Energy poverty. Defined as the inability to secure a socially- and materially-necessitated level of domestic energy services (heating, lighting, cooling, and so on); Energy vulnerability can be seen as the propensity of a household to suffer from a lack of adequate energy services in the home. Energy vulnerability can be seen as the propensity of a household to suffer from a lack of adequate energy services in the home.
FinSH	Energy or 'fuel' poverty. A term used to describe the situation a household finds itself in when it is not able to afford the energy bills for its everyday needs, such as heating, lighting and hot water.

Member State	Energy / fuel poverty definition	Definition metric	Status
Austria	Households are considered at risk of energy poverty if their income is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold and they simultaneously have to spend an above-average percentage of their household income on energy.	Proposal to use multiple indicators: household income, housing expenses, energy costs; information about past due bills, disconnections, installations of pre-paid meters, etc.; subjective indicators, such as permanent household financial difficulties.	Unofficial definition under consideration
Cyprus	Energy poverty may relate to the situation of customers who may be in a difficult position because of their low income as indicated by their tax statements in conjunction with their professional status, marital status and specific health conditions and therefore, are unable to respond to the costs for the reasonable needs of the supply of electricity, as these costs represent a significant proportion of their disposable income.	Share of income spent on energy	Official definition
France	Definition according to article 11 of the “Grenelle II” law from 12 July 2010: Is considered in a situation of energy poverty “a person who encounters in his/her accommodation particular difficulties to have enough energy supply to satisfy his/her elementary needs, this being due to the inadequacy of resources or housing conditions.”	A quantitative threshold is missing.	As a result of no quantitative threshold, the definition is not sufficiently operational.
Ireland	Energy poverty is a situation whereby a household is unable to attain an acceptable level of energy services (including heating, lighting, etc) in the home due to an inability to meet these requirements at an affordable cost.	Spends more than 10% of its disposable income on energy services in the home.	Official national definition
Italy	A family is vulnerable when more than 5% of income is spent for electricity and 10% for gas.	As stated in the definition – spending 5% of income on electricity and 10% on gas	Unofficial definition proposed by regulator.
Malta	Energy poverty: inability to achieve a necessary level of energy services in a household. Fuel poverty: mainly linked to inability to achieve the necessary level of fuel use for heating homes (i.e., if the household were to spend on the necessary fuel, then it would fall below the poverty line).	Currently only using the EU-SILC indicator for share of population unable to keep the home adequately warm. Proposals to include subjective feedback from consumers through household budgetary surveys and compare energy consumption across sectors.	These are unofficial definitions proposed by NGO.

Member State	Energy / fuel poverty definition	Definition metric	Status
Slovakia	Energy poverty is defined as a condition when average monthly household expenditures for the consumption of electricity, gas and heat, represent a significant share of the average monthly household income.	<p>According to the Concept for the protection of consumers fulfilling conditions of energy poverty, issued by the Regulatory Office, the Statistical Office provides information on average monthly household expenditure for energy consumption and household income. A household can be considered as energy poor if disposable monthly income is lower than the minimum monthly disposable household income threshold.</p> <p>The threshold is published on the website of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, the Regulatory Office for Network Industries and on message boards of labor, social affairs and families, municipalities and municipal authorities.</p>	The threshold is currently a proposal.
UK (England)	A household to be fuel poor if i) their income is below the poverty line (taking into account energy costs); and ii) their energy costs are higher than is typical for their household type (DECC 2013).	<p>Low income, high consumption (LIHC). Two criteria include i) fuel costs are above the median level, and ii) residual income net of fuel cost spend is below the official poverty line. This applies in England, while other constituent countries use the 10% threshold metric.</p> <p>Note that England continues to report the 10% threshold metric for comparison, which is that a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use to heat it home to an adequate standard of warmth (21°C in living room, and 18°C in other rooms as recommended by WHO).</p>	Official national definition. Proposed target to ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency standard of Band C, by 2030 (DECC 2014b).
UK (Scotland)	A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use (Scottish Executive 2002).	The definition of a 'satisfactory heating regime' as per for Wales (below)	Official national definition. Target is that as far as reasonably practicable, fuel poverty will be eradicated by 2016.

MS definitions of vulnerable consumers

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Cat.¹</i>	<i>Definition of vulnerable consumers²</i>
Austria	C	The concept of vulnerable customer is implemented through a series of protection mechanisms for clearly identified groups of people/households according to social security and energy laws.
Belgium	A,B	<p><u>Flanders</u>: Cf. national definition of "sociale maximumprijs". In Flanders, vulnerable customers are those customers that are entitled to get the social tariff. National legislation defines the preconditions to get the social tariff.</p> <p><u>Brussels</u>: The Brussels Region applies the definition of vulnerable customer such as defined in the Directive. The categories recognised by the national Government as vulnerable ones are also recognised in the Brussels Region. The Brussels Region recognises two extra categories of customers as vulnerable: 1) which are recognised as vulnerable customers by local public aid centres and 2) ones that meet certain criteria defined in the regional legislation in terms of revenues and number of persons composing the household and whom are on that basis recognised as vulnerable customers by the Brussels regional regulator. For the two additional categories recognised in the Brussels Region the 'statute' of vulnerable customers is linked to a limitation of power supply and is limited in time and ceases once the customer has paid off his debt to his supplier.</p> <p><u>Federal</u>: The definition of the concept of vulnerable customers is implicitly recognized by the energy law and/or social security system in my country; The energy law/legal framework explicitly states what groups of customers are regarded as "vulnerable" based on personal properties of customers (disability).</p>
Bulgaria	C	Social Assistance Law through Ordinance No. RD-07-5 as of 16 May 2008 for provision of targeted benefits for heating is given once a year to Persons or families whose average monthly income in the last six months is lower or equal to differentiated minimum income; these citizens are eligible for heating benefits according to Art. 10 and 11. ³ From July 2012, vulnerable customers are defined in the Energy Act.*
Croatia	C	In its valid and effective wording, the Energy Act does not define 'vulnerable customer'; for consumers who can be regarded as 'socially disadvantaged', certain measures for their protection and support for their rights are provided for at the level of generally applicable legislation in the domain of social security law ⁴

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Definition of vulnerable consumers</i>
Cyprus	A,B,C	The definition of vulnerable customers is determined in a Ministerial decree (CEER 2013). Additional public assistance is provided to recipients to satisfy special needs, including "heating 170 euro per annum". Recipients include persons with disability and medically confirmed patients treated abroad for a period not exceeding six months; persons with disability studying in an educational institution in Cyprus or abroad (for a period not exceeding by more than one year the normal period of their course) to obtain qualifications that will help them become independent of public assistance; and persons under the care of the director of the Social Welfare Services (SWS) when they become 18 years old and enrol in an educational institution in Cyprus or abroad in order to obtain qualifications that will help them become independent of public assistance ¹
Czech Republic		There is a legal term "protected customer" such as hospitals and ill people dependant on life-support equipment.
Denmark	C	There are no specific provisions regarding vulnerable consumers in energy law; instead this issue is dealt with in social legislation.* However the principal of universality exists where every citizen has a right to social assistance when affected by a specific event. Various schemes in existence for short and longer-term support to unemployed, social security for the non-working ²
Estonia	C	A household customer to whom subsistence benefit has been awarded pursuant to section 22(1) of the Social Welfare Act: A person living alone or a family whose monthly net income, after the deduction of the fixed expenses connected with permanent dwelling calculated under the conditions provided for in subsections 22 (5) and (6) of this Act, is below the subsistence level has the right to receive a subsistence benefit. Subsistence level is established based on minimum expenses made on consumption of foodstuffs, clothing, footwear and other goods and services which satisfy the primary needs. ³
Finland	B,C	In the energy market act there are defined in connection to the disconnection of the electricity. Also in the constitution there is a concept of basic rights and social security legislation defines the target groups.
France	B	Special tariffs are reserved for households with an income below or equal to a threshold of entitlement to supplementary universal health cover. These tariffs are available for both electricity and natural gas consumers. From the end of 2013, these social tariffs were further extended to cover all households with an annual reference fiscal income per unit (revenu fiscal de reference) lower than EUR 2,175. The number of households benefitting from the social tariff is expected to increase from 1.9 million to 4.2 million, equivalent to 8 million people.*
Germany	C	Vulnerable customers eligible for support are in line with the social security system (CEER 2013). Additional support is provided in terms of consumer protection in line with the Third Energy Package.*

Member State	Cat.	Definition of vulnerable consumers
Greece	A,B	Groups of customers defined under the Energy law: (a) The financially weak customers suffering from energy poverty. (b) Customers who themselves or their spouses or persons who live together, rely heavily on continuous and uninterrupted power supply, due to mechanical support. (c) Elderly who are over seventy years old, provided they do not live together with another person who is younger than the above age limit. (d) Customers with serious health problems, especially those with severe physical or mental disability with intellectual disabilities, severe audiovisual or locomotor problems, or with multiple disabilities or chronic illness who can not manage their contractual relationship with their Supplier. (e) Customers in remote areas, especially those living at the Non Interconnected Islands.
Hungary	A,B,C	Vulnerable customers' shall mean those household customers who require special attention due to their social disposition defined in legal regulation, or some other particular reason, in terms of supplying them with electricity.
Ireland	A	A vulnerable customer is defined in legislation as a household customer who is: a) critically dependent on electrically powered equipment, which shall include but is not limited to life protecting devices, assistive technologies to support independent living and medical equipment, or b) particularly vulnerable to disconnection during winter months for reasons of advanced age or physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health.
Italy	A	Several measures aim to protect customers (vulnerable household customers, utilities, activities relating to 'public service', including hospitals, nursing homes and rest, prisons, schools and other public and private facilities that perform an activity recognized of public service as well as household customers that require electricity-powered life-support equipment with severe health problems). Italian decrees establish the "social bonus" (a social support program) defined by the Government for the benefit of electricity customers whose annual income does not exceed a certain threshold (set up by the law and certified by equivalent economic situation indicator, that takes into account income, assets, the characteristics of a family by number and type). The "social bonus" is a discount (annual amount fixed the same in the free market or in the enhanced protection regime) of the electricity bill each year, dependent upon the use, number of people in the family, and climate zone
Latvia	D	There is no clear definition of vulnerable consumers yet, but plans exist to introduce several measures to inform and support vulnerable consumers.*
Lithuania	D	The persons to whom according to the procedure established by the Laws of the Republic of Lithuania social support is granted and/or social services are provided can be defined as socially vulnerable customers. The list of socially vulnerable customers and the groups thereof and/or additional social guarantees, related to supply of electricity, which are applied to such customers or their groups, are set by the Government or its authorized institution. Developing the definition (list) of vulnerable consumers is currently under discussion.
Luxembourg	C	All customers are de facto considered as potentially vulnerable in Luxembourg.*
Malta	C	Vulnerable consumers are supported through social policy. Recipients of social security are eligible for support
Netherlands	A	Legislation states that a household consumer for whom ending the transport or the supply of electricity or gas would result in very serious health risks for the domestic consumer or a member of the same household of the household customer is regarded as vulnerable, and thus disconnection is not permitted, unless a case of fraud has been proved
Poland	C	The energy law states that vulnerable customer of electricity is a person who is eligible to housing allowance (income support) because the level of its income is lower than a certain degree. That means that the concept of vulnerable customers is based on poverty

<i>Member State</i>	<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Definition of vulnerable consumers</i>
Portugal	C	The concept is defined in the energy sector law and corresponds to that of economically vulnerable customers which correspond to people receiving certain social welfare subsidies (social security system) with some contract limitations (e.g. contracted power). These customers have access to a social tariff.
Romania	A,C	Vulnerable customers are defined as household consumers with low income within the limits laid down in the Ordinance 27/2013*
Slovakia	D	The concept for the protection of consumers fulfilling conditions of the energy poverty was in preparation in 2013. Act on Energy Industry defines vulnerable household electricity customer as a strongly disabled person and whose vital functions are depending upon the uptake of electricity and uses electricity for heating. The DSO keeps records of vulnerable customers and can disrupt electricity distribution only after previous direct communication of these electricity customers with the DSO.
Slovenia	C	Social support is provided to households through a minimum income to households/individuals without an income or an income below the official level. ¹
Spain	A,B	The concept of vulnerable customers has only been defined so far for electricity customers. Vulnerable customers should fulfil at least one of the following criteria: a large family or a family where all members are unemployed; be low voltage consumers (less than 1 kV) with contracted demand lower than or equal to 3 kW; or a pensioner older than 60 years with a minimum level pension. Vulnerable customers' electricity tariffs are reduced by means of a "social bonus", which sets their tariffs at the July 2009 level. As of December 2012, 2,544,170 customers were defined as vulnerable.
Sweden	E	Vulnerable customers are defined as persons who permanently lack ability to pay for the electricity or natural gas that is transferred or delivered to them for non-Commercial purposes.
United Kingdom	A,B	Ofgem have defined vulnerability as when a consumer's personal circumstances and characteristics combine with aspects of the market to create situations where he or she is: -significantly less able than a typical consumer to protect or represent his or her interests in the energy market; and/or -significantly more likely than a typical consumer to suffer detriment, or that detriment is likely to be more substantial