



Sustainability Action Plan for the REACH project

This document is product of the planned activities of Work Package - WP2 of the “Reduce Energy Use and Change Habits” (REACH) project co-funded by the IEE Programme of the European Union.

The document presents the actors, activities that should be included and undertaken to support the future implementation and continuation of REACH project activities.

1. Executive summary

Energy poverty is a persistent problem in Bulgaria, affecting a significant proportion of its citizens. Based on the State of the Energy Union country factsheet for Bulgaria published by the EC in 2015, three proxy indicators are used to assess energy poverty – arrears on utility bills, inability to keep home adequately warm and dwellings with leakages and damp walls. In this context, Bulgaria is considered the most vulnerable EU country in terms of energy poverty.

The National Security Strategy, adopted in 2011, lists energy poverty as one of the main threats to national security. However, by February, 2017 the term energy poverty is still not officially defined or recognized in Bulgarian legislation, although the energy poverty and the inefficient heating models topics are gathering larger popularity after the implementation of the REACH energy poverty round table.

Currently nearly 276 000 households benefit from state assistance for heating, according to the Social Assistance Act. Each year, 85 million BGN from the state budget are spent to support “energy poor” households without creating any sustainability in this process or improving the conditions of the households receiving the heating aid. They remain energy poor.

On the other hand there is no action plan or specific programme to reduce the number of people in need of energy support. This creates a vicious circle, in which the same individuals and families receive energy aid, year after year, without getting any real support to actually improve their quality of life and stop being dependent on the fuel aid program.

2. Goals and objectives of the Sustainability Action Plan

The goal of this action plan is to outline steps and stakeholders in order to ensure sustainability of the pilot actions at:

3. Integrating REACH approach in existing structures

Running Schneider Electric energy poverty fund

A mechanism for training of students and volunteers with the aim to support energy poor households in Plovdiv region have been identified in the name of "Schneider Electric energy poverty fund". A smaller scale project similar to REACH aiming to reduce the energy and water usage of 50 energy poor households, with financing worth 5000 euro, was implemented in December 2016, with the financial support of the fund.

It included training activities, household visits and a dissemination part. The project engaged total of 20 volunteers both from Schneider Electric Bulgaria and Red Cross volunteers.

As the fund runs on yearly basis similar actions are planned to be conducted in 2017, as well.

- the mechanism provides opportunities for implementing households visits, but to limited extend and limited number of devices – 50 households.
- Its main mission is to engage volunteers in the implementation of the actions – these are either volunteers from vocational schools or volunteers from the Red Cross organization.

4. Actors that can make REACH approach sustainable

The following actors have been identified as possible to make REACH approach sustainable:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as an administrator of the only existing supporting program for energy poor households.
- Ministry of Environment and Water - establishes emission limit values of harmful emissions into the atmosphere and develops and submits programmes for the progressive reduction of the total annual emissions
- Ministry of Energy - develops energy strategy, promote the production and consumption of energy from renewable sources
- Ministry of Regional Development as the body responsible for housing stock
- The managing body of the different operational programmes
- Permanent Parliamentary commissions – for instance for Permanent Parliamentary commissions for Environment ; Energy
- The managing body of Norway Grant scheme
- Municipality managing structures

5. Most likely way forward

The abatement of energy poverty requires a combination of measures, among which are interventions to improve the energy efficiency of dwellings, improved energy efficiency services and the education of households on behavioral changes to reduce energy consumption. Empowering energy poor households to reduce energy usage is an important step in energy poverty abatement, but it needs to be accompanied first by wider measures on policy level, thus allowing different energy saving schemes to become more established.

For sustaining project actions at national level and following its mission the following specific actions have been identified to be essential for future success.

Forming new strategic partnerships with relevant stakeholders and running already established

The Energy Agency of Plovdiv has already identified and build four strategic partnerships with relevant NGOs and private organizations in the name:

1. EAP – Schneider Electric Bulgaria
2. EAP – Friends of the Earth Bulgaria
3. EAP – Active users organization – Bulgarian Energy and Mining forum
4. EAP – Eco community organisation

EAP will continue working with the aim to increase the effectiveness of required actions by building up partnerships and networking with NGOs and other stakeholders.

Elaboration of an energy poverty definition

By February, 2017 the term energy poverty is still not defined in Bulgarian legislation, although the energy poverty topic gathers a large popularity recently, and even larger since the implementation of REACH round table (6th December, 2016).

There is a strong need of elaboration of a definition of energy poverty and this is an essential measure for implementation of next level of steps.

Energy Agency of Plovdiv will focus on achieving changes of national policies with the aim to address energy poverty.

Proposing a national scheme aiming to reduce the number of energy poor households



The Energy Agency of Plovdiv together with the Friends of the Earth Bulgaria will work on proposing and putting into policy makers agenda a strategy forming the foundation of a 15-year program, aiming to reduce the number of energy-poor households by 10% annually, by reduced consumption and increased efficiency in heating. Similar scheme is possible to be combined with high cost measures with low cost measures.

Proposing REACH approach at Municipalities sustainable energy action plans

EAP works and develops Sustainable Energy Action Plans for large number of municipalities in Bulgaria. Reach approach will be presented as a possible measure at every SEAP that EAP develops.

Working with funding managing authorities /Norway Grants Scheme/

Funding for low-cost energy efficiency measures in low-income households falls within the scope of few of cohesion funds. EAP is already invited to participate at the round table for the next level of measures following under the scope of the Norway Grants Scheme. Thus EAP will work on proposing some measures targeting households with low incomes.

Identifying other mechanisms on delivering of low/high-cost energy efficiency measures to low-income households.

Funding for low-cost energy efficiency measures in low-income households falls within the scope of the three Cohesion Policy funds. What is most important, however, is that project proposals for low-cost energy efficiency schemes are eligible under the relevant OPs. OPs supported by CF and ERDF funding can provide financing for relevant schemes implementing low-cost energy efficiency measures, including in combination with higher cost energy efficiency improvements or other resource efficiency options.

Supporting low-cost energy efficiency measures in low-income households is generally within the scope of Horizon 2020 and all this information should be communicated with relevant stakeholders and policy makers.

Elaboration of a list of practical measures and solutions aiming the abatement of energy poverty to be sent to different parties and stakeholders

A set of specific measures and best practices addressing energy efficiency in low-income households and implementation of renewable energy with a focus on action should drafted and



be put into policy makers minds. This also includes facilitating existing ICT-based solutions, for energy efficiency and information on energy consumption and costs.

6. Identified stakeholders

The implementation of the outlined actions will be done by working with stakeholders and policy makers, already identified within REACH timespan, like:

- Association of Bulgarian Energy Agencies (ABEA)
- Bulgarian Energy and Mining forum
- National Association “Active users”
- Schneider Electric Bulgaria & Schneider Electric foundation
- Red Cross – branch Plovdiv
- Za Zemiata – Friends of the Earth Bulgaria
- Association of Bulgarian Energy Agencies
- Green Synergy Cluster