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Energy Poverty Handbook

A report produced with Right to Energy Coalition

Introduction

by Ciarán Cuffe, MEP and Kim van Sparrentak, MEP

A secure, stable, and affordable supply of energy is needed in our homes for heating, cooling, and powering appliances. People experience energy poverty when they cannot afford to access an adequate energy supply in their homes. As a result, they struggle to heat, cool, or light their homes. Energy poverty can occur due to low incomes, high energy bills, and energy inefficient buildings. The negative consequences on a person's physical and mental health and wellbeing can be severe.

At least ***50 million Europeans are living in energy poverty***, with society's most vulnerable being worst affected. Millions more are experiencing hardship as we live through an energy crisis that is causing prices to soar. The effects of this crisis on vulnerable households are compounded by extreme temperatures caused by climate change. These same households are confronted with a housing crisis all over Europe, with fast increasing rent and house prices.

Meanwhile, over seven out of 10 buildings in the EU are energy inefficient. A huge amount of energy is therefore being paid for, at elevated prices, and wasted. An energy inefficient home may be poorly insulated. It can be draughty or damp. By taking measures to improve the energy efficiency of our homes, we reduce our energy consumption needs. And after all, the cheapest form of energy is the energy we don't use.

This demands more action at the EU, national, and local levels to alleviate energy poverty and ensure no one is left behind in the energy transition. We need to bring energy prices down by reducing our dependence on expensive and volatile fossil energy sources. We must support vulnerable households with high energy bills, and assist them with energy efficiency measures and the switch to renewables.

As European Parliament rapporteurs on decent housing and energy efficiency in buildings, we are inspired to read the reports in this handbook of successful policies against energy poverty across Europe. One example of this is an initiative to empower Mediterranean women to fight energy poverty, including through the creation of DIY projects and citizen energy communities. This project demonstrates the benefits of a social justice approach to tackling this issue.

By tackling energy poverty and improving the energy efficiency of our homes, we can protect the most vulnerable in our society. We can offer everyone a decent standard of living, with better quality and more affordable housing, and improved health. The benefits of the green energy transition can and must be shared.

The goal of this handbook is to provide an updated overview of the causes of energy poverty as well as to compile best practices to combat this issue from concerned stakeholders across Europe. We would like to sincerely thank the Right to Energy Coalition, the editors, and all the authors who have done sterling work to create this handbook. Their dedication to tackling the issue of energy poverty is inspiring, and instils hope that we can overcome the problem of energy poverty. By combining their knowledge and expertise, this handbook may lead the way towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

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