



## Energy Advice Points. Being cold at home is not normal. Energy is your right.

### Barcelona, Spain

#### IN A NUTSHELL

*The Energy Advice Points are a Barcelona City Council service that offers the necessary information, assistance and intervention for people to exercise their energy rights and prevents companies from denying them access to basic utilities.*

#### BACKGROUND

In Barcelona, roughly 10% of the 1.6 million inhabitants live under conditions of energy poverty. These people are cold at home, unable to cook food or use their oven. Although there is work to be done at the political level – for example, electricity and gas are still taxed as luxury services – there is room for improvement on the consumers' side by helping vulnerable consumers understand their bills and their rights under the current energy system.

Catalonian law (Llei 24/2015) prohibits companies from disconnecting vulnerable households from electricity and natural gas supply and obliges them to maintain energy services when households are facing economic difficulties. Still in 2017, some people kept having their energy supply cut in Barcelona. The main challenge is the lack of information citizens have regarding their energy rights as well as how to reduce their bills without losing comfort.

#### OBJECTIVES

In order to tackle this problem, the city council of Barcelona developed Energy Advice Points (EAPs) in 2017 with three objectives:

- tackle energy poverty
- guarantee the energy rights embedded in legislation
- improve the energy efficiency of homes, especially for the most vulnerable households.

Energy Advice Points also provide jobs to people in situation of long-term unemployment and older than 45 years. The Energy Advice Points were initiated after two successful pilot projects. The first one, called *Energia la Justa* (Fair Energy), trained 100 unemployed vulnerable citizens and employed them for 6 months as energy advisors helping 3,000 households in energy poverty to reduce energy bills and implement low cost energy efficiency measures in their homes. The second one, *Punts d'Atenció a la Pobresa Energètica* (Energy Attention Points) established four contact points in three districts in Barcelona where citizens could go to get energy related information and, if needed, make an appointment for interventions at home, including installation of low-cost energy efficiency measures.

The Energy Advice Points have three lines of action:

- 1 - Energy rights and energy efficiency
- 2 - Employment
- 3 - Prevention at community level



An Energy Advice Point

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### BARCELONA



**Population:**

1.6 million

**Area**

101 km<sup>2</sup>

**Signatory to the Covenant of Mayors since:**

2008

**CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction target:**

-40% by 2030

## ENERGY RIGHTS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

- Ensure access to basic supplies through defending energy rights: The municipality set up 11 Energy Advice Points around the city where citizens can ask information about energy (and water) supply. Each energy information agent spends around 20 minutes asking energy related questions in order to detect whether the citizen is in energy poverty and provides, when possible, tools and information to support them. Agents are trained to identify people that are in energy poverty but that social services or charities would otherwise not be able to detect.
- Detect potential energy poverty situations and prevent them from happening: When a potential case of energy poverty is detected, it is referred to one of the five back office points where an energy assessment agent spends one hour assisting the person with specific administrative procedures. These agents can support people to reduce energy consumption, reduce their energy bills or access financial support for energy bills, such as the Spanish social tariff.
- Increase energy efficiency of houses: In certain urgent cases, such as unexpectedly high energy bills, the person can be referred to in-home energy agents. These agents will conduct in-house visits to identify energy poverty conditions such as mould, provide information about energy efficiency, and install low cost energy efficiency equipment such as material to insulate windows and doors.

## EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

- Provide specialised training to unemployed citizens who have difficulties accessing the labour market. The municipality provides training and employment opportunities to 20 citizens every eight months. Specifically, the project trains long-term unemployed citizens who are over 45 to work under the first line of action as energy information agents, energy assessment agents and in-home energy agents.
- Improve the skills and career perspectives of the already employed energy agents who are part of the project team. The Energy Advice Points employ 40 people for two years, 32 of them are long-term unemployed people who were trained during the pilot project Energia la Justa in 2016.

## PREVENTION AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

Energy Advice Points identify organisations and NGOs which they can share information with. Through talks and workshops, citizens get a better understanding of how to reduce energy and water consumption while maintaining or improving living comfort and the state of their housing through the installation of low-cost energy efficiency measures. These talks also make more people aware of the Energy Advice Points' service and help detect additional cases that might need support. The main benefits from the Energy Advice Points are: civil society empowerment, reduction of social support requests, employment for citizens at risk of exclusion (unemployed 45+ year-olds).



**50,000** beneficiaries from energy advice in 2017-2018

**61** citizens employed under the project

**1,639** vulnerable households participating in community workshops on prevention



### FINANCING THE PROJECT

+ **Financing source(s):** City council

+ **Total amount:** €2 million

### USEFUL LINKS

- ▶ Energy rights webpage on city council website: <http://bit.ly/2PuvGiS>
- ▶ Barcelona Covenant profile: <http://bit.ly/2qkjBP1>



### CONTACT

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