"Towards the improvement of the energy poverty and energy efficiency policy implementation framework in rural and suburban areas across Europe"

Dimitris Papantonis (TEESlab-UPRC), Akis Apostoliotis (TEESlab-UPRC), Marco Peretto (IEECP), Stefan Bouzarovski (IEECP), Prof. Dr. Alexandros Flamos (TEESlab-UPRC)

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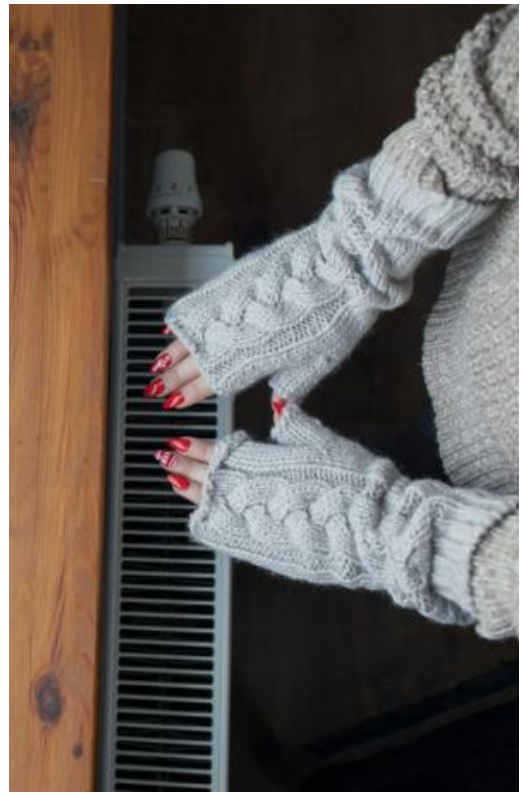
General context: the need behind the RENOVERTY project

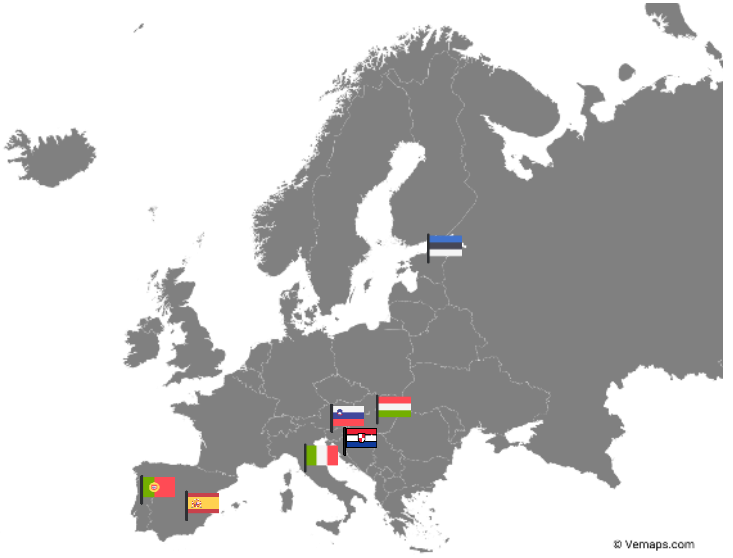
- Causes of energy poverty at the local, regional, national, and European scales have recently become clearer, yet an absence of practical and theoretical understanding of how to address the issue in rural areas exists.
- Rural areas across Central Eastern (CEE), Southern Eastern (SEE), and Southern Europe (SE) are traditionally much poorer, and more vulnerable to energy poverty.
- Despite their need for support, they are left behind in the energy transition, and practices to reduce energy poverty are lacking.



RENOVERTY main objective

Design a scalable series of renovation roadmaps with operating models for 7 vulnerable rural areas across CEE, SEE, and SE, while ensuring the replicability of the model in the European Union.

- ✓ Supporting 12 Local Action Groups (LAGs) for the creation and implementation of Rural Energy Efficiency Roadmaps (REERs).
- ✓ Empowering all (non) public actors in rural areas to become involved in the process of renovating vulnerable districts/buildings.
- ✓ Delivering a scalable operating model, to support the replicability of REERs and guide more public actors to renovate rural vulnerable districts after the project ends.



Setting the ground for energy poverty alleviation in rural areas

Framing and conceptualisation of rural energy poverty in the relevant literature, with the aid of a systematic review of relevant sources.

Exploration of socio-economic drivers and specific characteristics, that increase exposure of rural areas to energy poverty.

Map-out, assess, and categorise policies targeting energy poverty and/or energy efficiency in rural contexts.

Identification of the distinct barriers to designing and implementing energy efficiency policies to alleviate energy poverty in rural contexts.

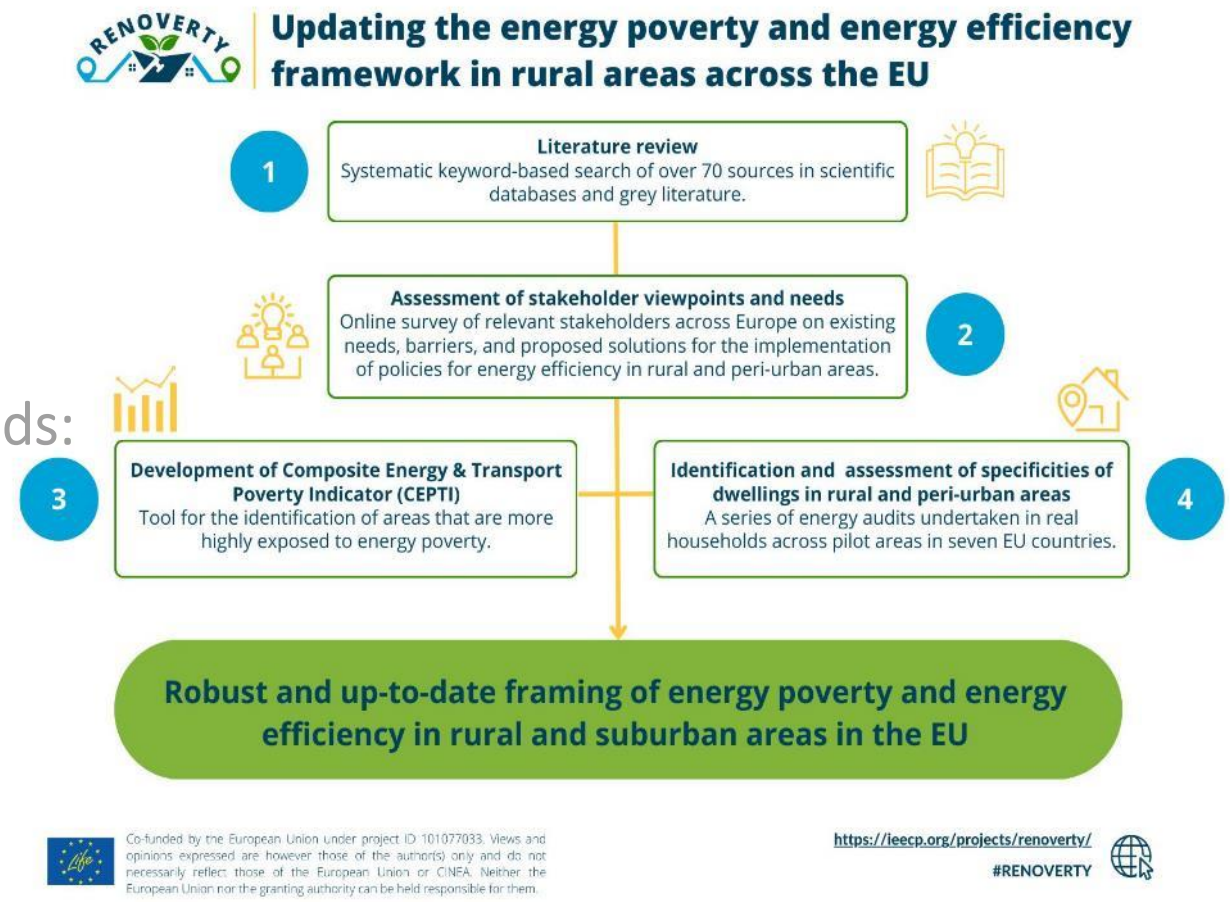
Step 1: Literature review

1) Literature review:

- Review of scientific and policy literature: over 80 relevant sources
- Outcomes of relevant EC-funded projects
- Recording and analysis of existing energy poverty and/or energy efficiency policies in rural areas

2) Assessment of stakeholder viewpoints and needs:

- Survey of relevant stakeholders across Europe
- Key insights on existing needs, barriers, and proposed solutions for energy poverty and energy efficiency in rural contexts
- 130 stakeholders/experts from the fields of academia, policymaking, private and social sectors



Literature review outcomes: Identified characteristics of rural areas

Specific demographic structures (more elderly people, young people aged 10 to 19, fewer people of working age)

Educational capabilities (Limited access to education, specifically tertiary education)

Lower labour capabilities (fewer job prospects, narrower variety of activities, unemployment rate)

Lack of infrastructure and services (Transportation limitation, access to grids and resources)

Literature reports evidence of increased exposure to energy poverty in rural areas while the current policy landscape does not necessarily address the particularities of rural areas

Literature review outcomes: Energy poverty drivers in rural areas

Nature of the housing stock – challenges in renovation

Limited choice of energy sources

Lower incomes – Higher energy costs

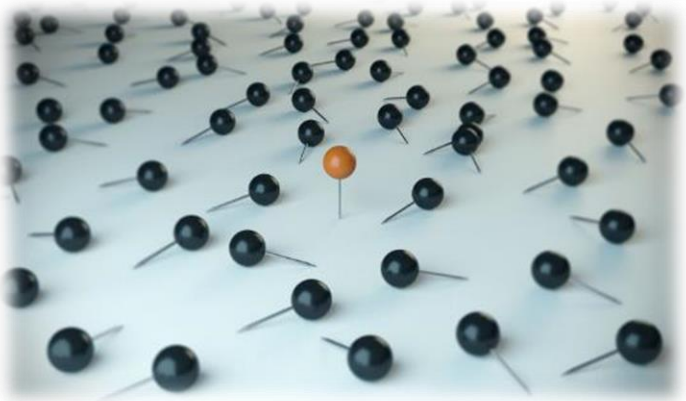
Consumer behaviour

Increased exposure to energy poverty

Literature review outcomes: Policy status in rural contexts

25 policies from European countries were gathered and analysed:

- ✓ Most policies are implemented at the national level.
- ✓ Mention in rural areas - no special requirements
- ✓ Policies started after 2013.
- ✓ Lack of monitoring/evaluation.
- ✓ Lack of relevant policies in Southern (SE), and Southern Eastern (SEE) Europe.



Literature review outcomes: Barriers and gaps analysis

Financial barriers

- Lack of capital / High upfront cost
- Higher energy Burdens / Low income
- Credit access / Debt Aversion

Geographic barriers

- Geographic isolation
- Shortage of local energy efficiency workers
- Lack of expertise

Awareness / Access barriers

- Lack of awareness / Skepticism
- Lack of time / Priorities
- Lack of access to marketing channels

Regulation barriers

- Unsupportive and inconsistent policy setting
- Lack of strong sub-national territorial components in policy making

Step 2: Assessment of stakeholder viewpoints and needs

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2) Assessment of stakeholder viewpoints and needs:

- Survey of relevant stakeholders across Europe.
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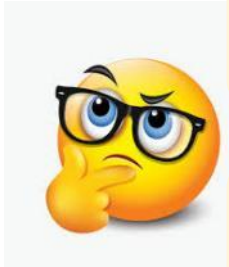
Survey outcomes: Assessment of Energy Poverty Drivers in rural areas

Most important Drivers of energy poverty (EU level):

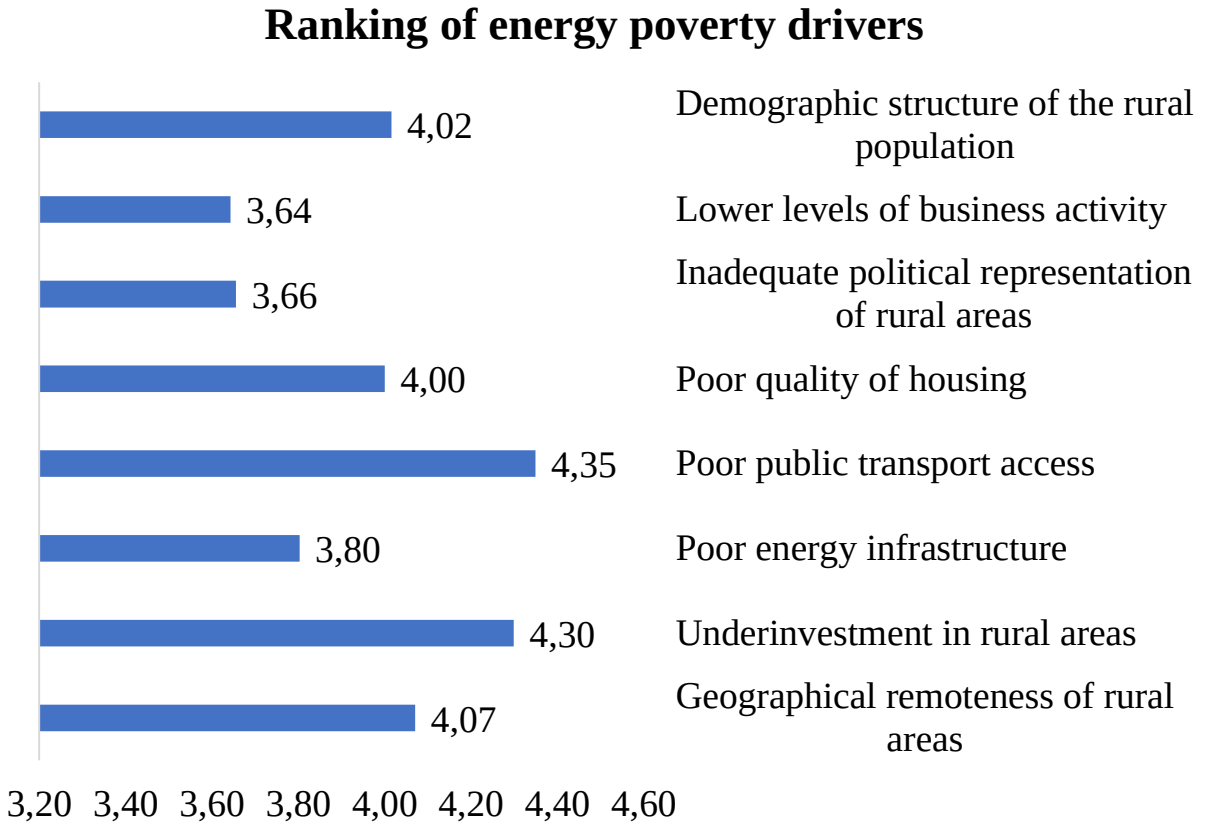
- Poor Public Transport
- Underinvestment in rural areas
- Geographical remoteness
- Demographic structure
- Poor housing quality



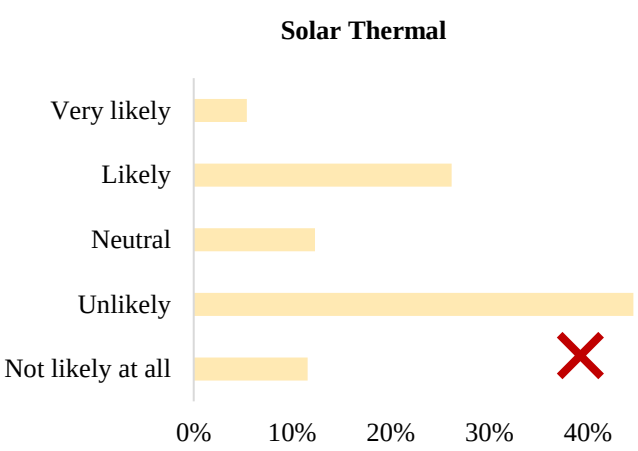
Southern Eastern Europe :
- Poor Public Transport
- Geographical remoteness

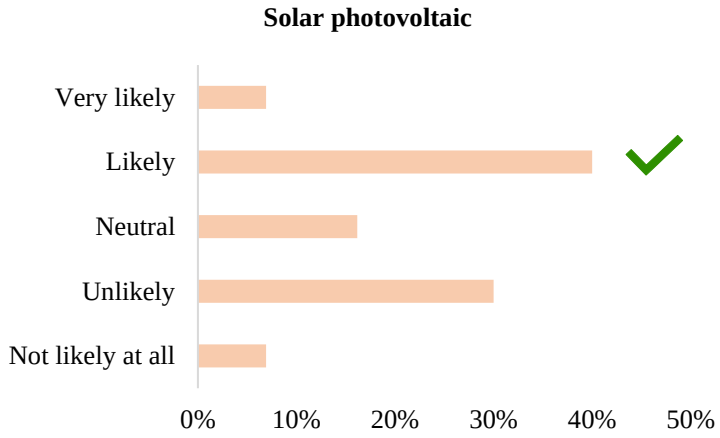
Southern Europe :
- Poor Public Transport
- Underinvestment in rural areas

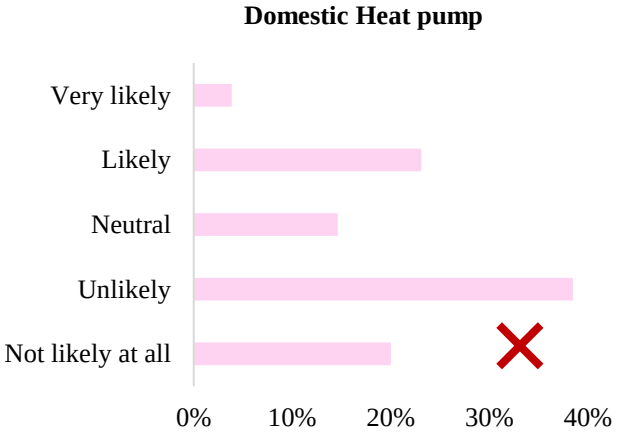
Central Eastern Europe :
- Poor housing quality

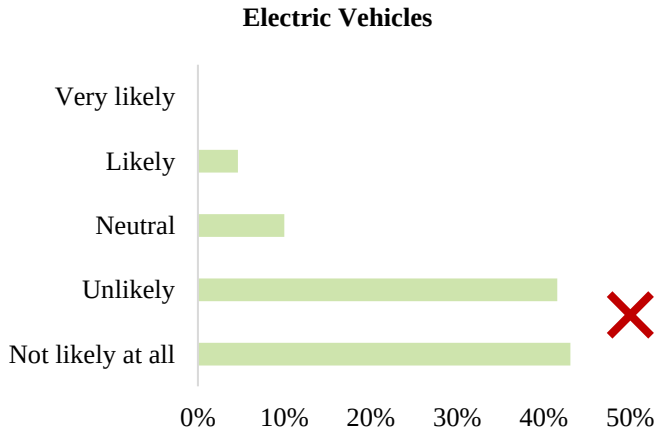


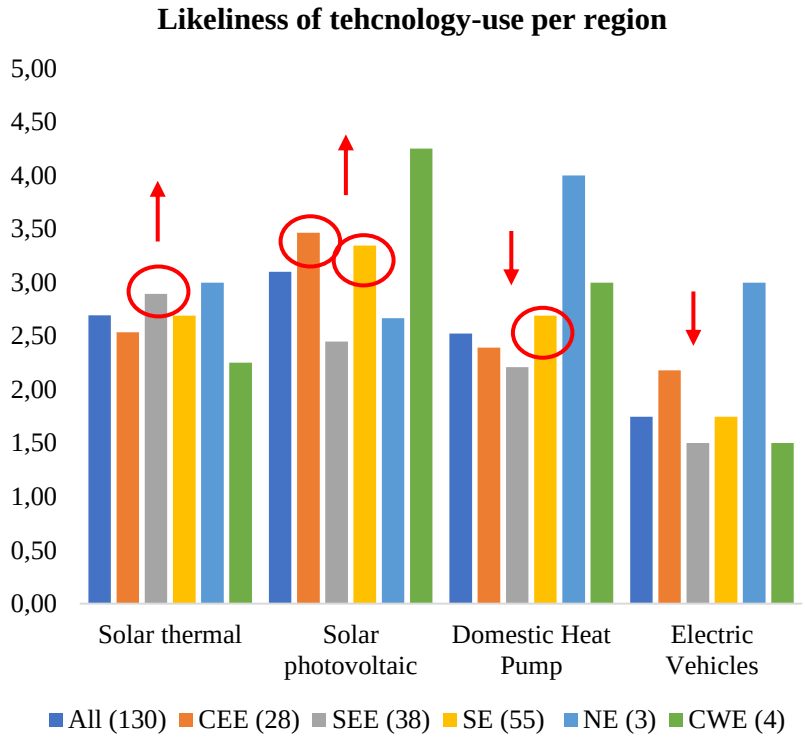
Survey outcomes: Utilisation of renewable energy/ electrification technologies in rural areas





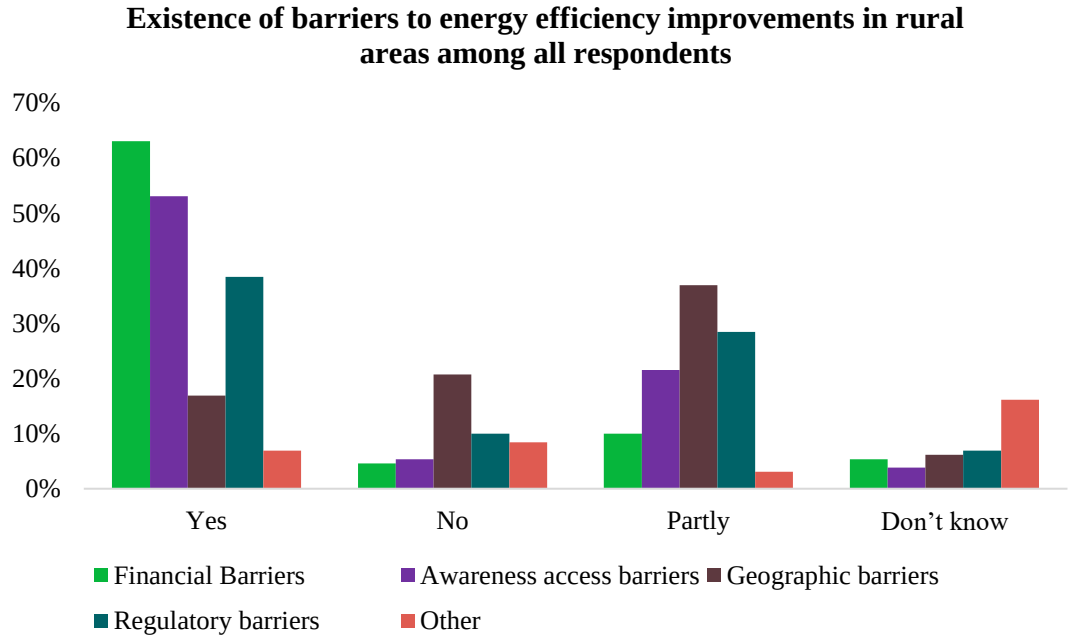


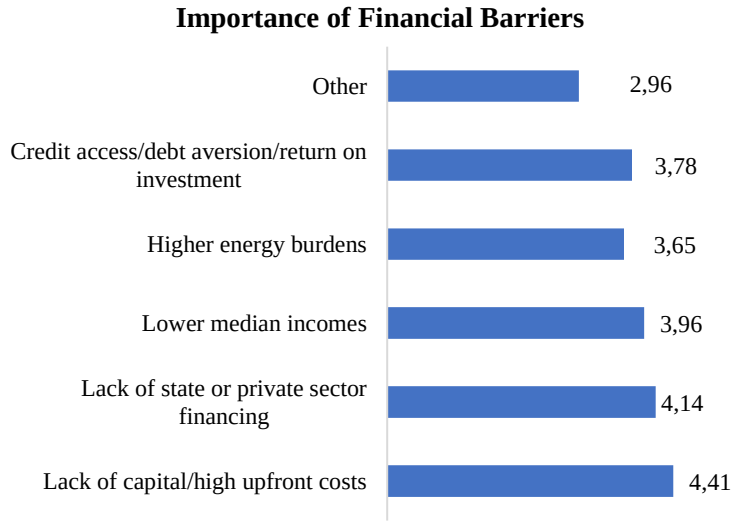




Survey outcomes: Assessment of barriers to implementing energy efficiency policies in rural areas

Financial barriers the most prominent ones, followed by awareness/access, regulatory barriers, and geographical.

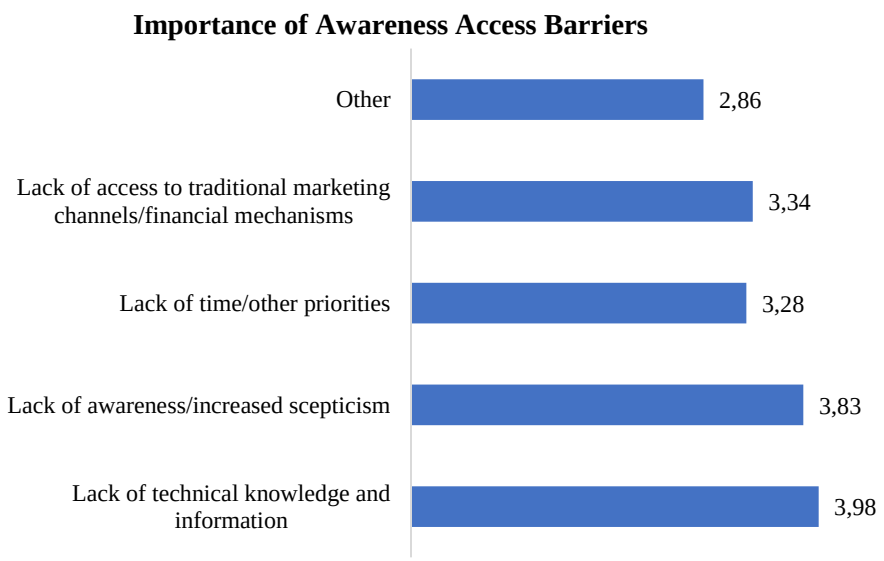




The most prominent financial barriers

- Lack of capital
- High upfront costs

Survey outcomes: Assessment of barriers to implementing energy efficiency policies in rural areas

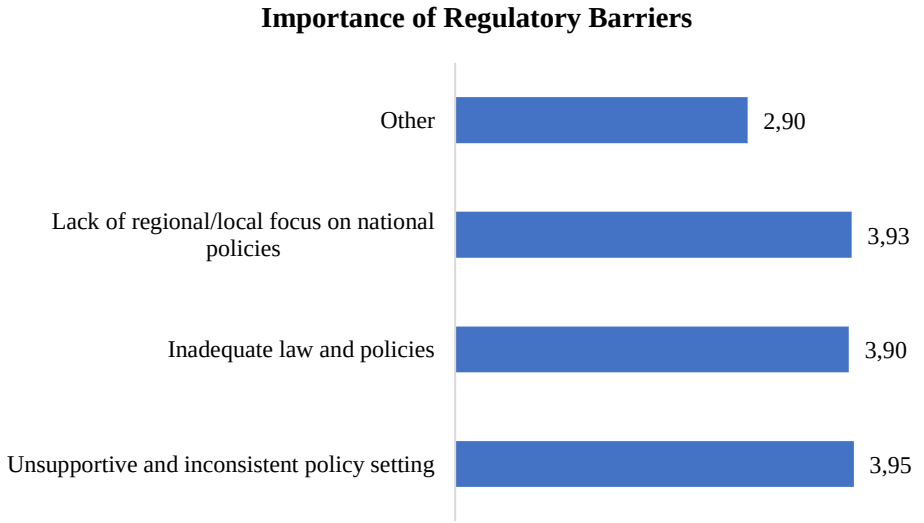


Most important **awareness/access barriers:**

- lack of technical information,
- skepticism of rural households.

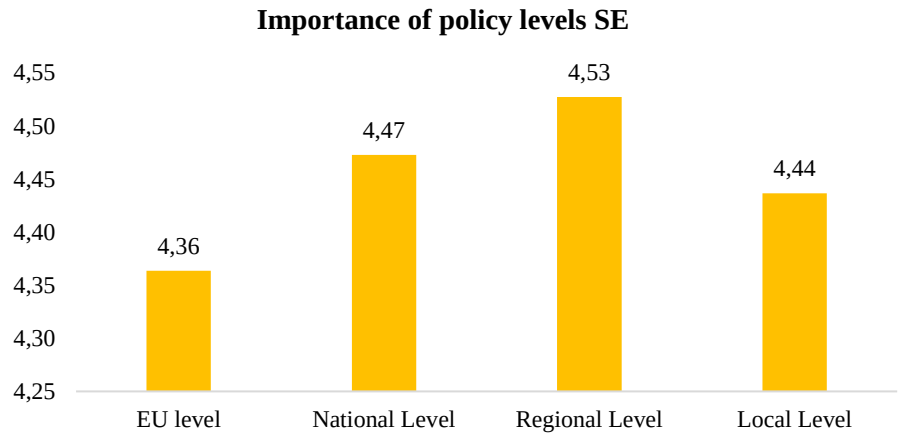
Most important **regulatory barriers:**

- Unsupportive and inconsistent policy setting.
- Lack of regional/local focus of national policies

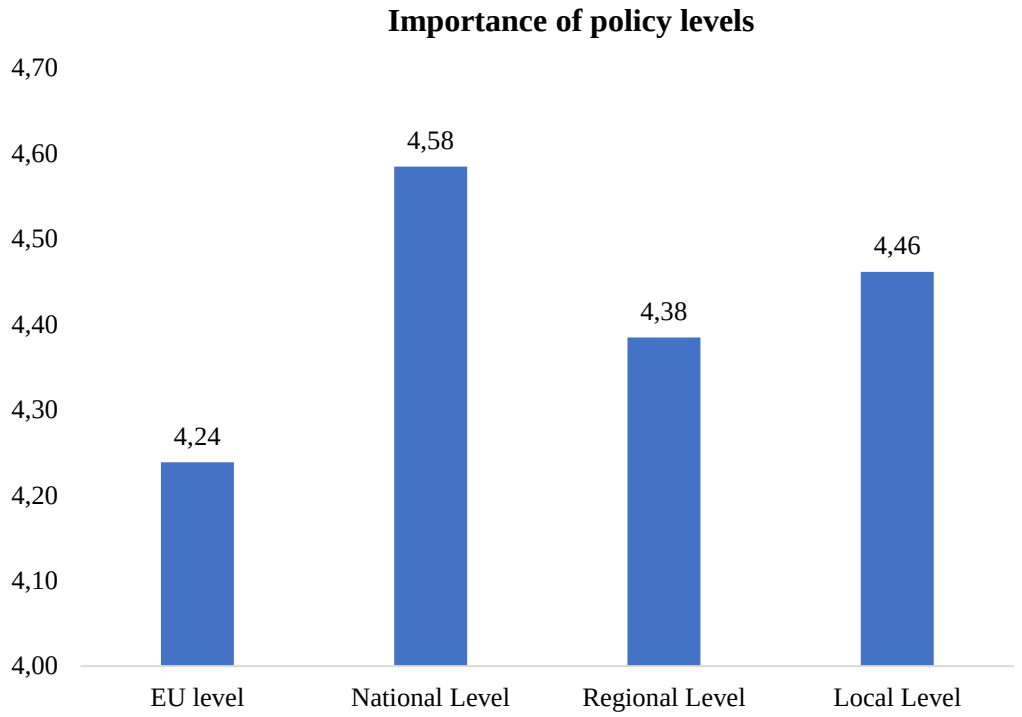


Survey outcomes: Importance of policy levels

! Most of the respondents consider policy at the national level to be the most impactful for the alleviation of energy poverty in rural areas.

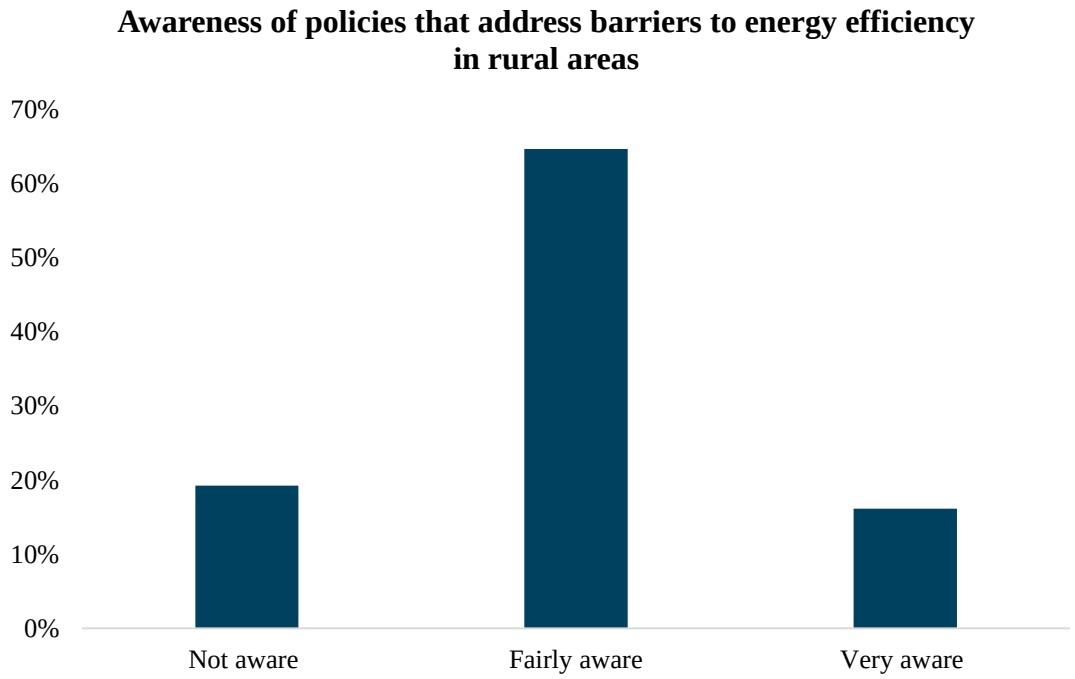


For Southern Europe, regional policy is considered of higher importance



Survey outcomes: Policy awareness in rural contexts

Most of the respondents declared themselves as *"fairly aware"* of rural energy efficiency policies.



However, when asked to name specific policies in their contexts, they mentioned general EU strategies and directives.

Invisibility of rural areas

Survey outcomes: What can governmental bodies do more? (1/4)

EU-level

Financial mechanisms and support

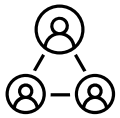
- ✓ Development of new funding mechanisms and financial support
- ✓ Make projects feasible and sustainable in rural settings

Policy transformation

- ✓ Introduction of policy changes in the existing legal and policy framework
- ✓ Setting targets for energy efficiency and energy poverty reduction in rural areas

Education and awareness building

- ✓ Large-scale outreach efforts such as workshops, training programmes and public campaigns
- ✓ Enhance awareness and understanding of energy poverty issues

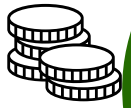


Stakeholder engagement and collaboration

- ✓ Engage with all relevant stakeholders, including governments, communities, and institutions
- ✓ Collectively address energy poverty

Survey outcomes: What can governmental bodies do more? (2/4)

National level



Financial support and incentives

- ✓ Dedicated funding for rural regions
- ✓ Tax incentives and subsidies for energy-efficient upgrades

Access to information, training, and financing

- ✓ Implement nationwide campaigns, educational programmes, and community outreach efforts
- ✓ Disseminate information about available resources, technologies, and energy-efficient practices

Policy transformation

- ✓ Propose plans and strategies that consider the unique challenges of rural areas
- ✓ Create subsidies, monitoring mechanisms, and legislation that encourages energy efficiency improvements

Survey outcomes: What can governmental bodies do more? (3/4)

Regional level

Empowerment and customised strategies

- ✓ Extend beyond urban-oriented strategies enabling the development of unique solutions for rural challenges
- ✓ Regional-level education and awareness campaigns

Financial support and accessibility

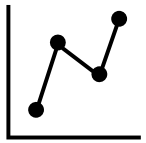
- ✓ Long-term funding, innovative financing tools
- ✓ Funding directed at areas with higher energy poverty prevalence

Inclusive infrastructure and innovation

Collaboration and advocacy

- ✓ Effective collaboration and cooperation between local, national, and European entities
- ✓ Advocacy for changes at higher levels, including harmonising regulations and access to incentives

- ✓ Initiatives include enhancing public transportation connectivity, upgrading energy systems, and promoting sustainable building practices
- ✓ Transition from dormitory villages to vibrant, self-sufficient rural communities



Data-driven planning and accountability

- ✓ Creation of dedicated departments to oversee local government activities can ensure accountability in implementing plans
- ✓ Facilitation collaboration between various stakeholders in data sharing

Survey outcomes: What can governmental bodies do more? (4/4)

Local level

Financial support and funding allocation

- ✓ Allocate funds for retrofitting buildings, implementing energy-saving technologies, and supporting energy-poor households
- ✓ Emphasis on the targeted allocation of funds based on the specific needs of different regions

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Local policy development

- ✓ Prioritise the energy challenges faced by rural regions
- ✓ Facilitate access to technical expertise, and develop specialised plans
- ✓ Provide support to the most remote and vulnerable communities

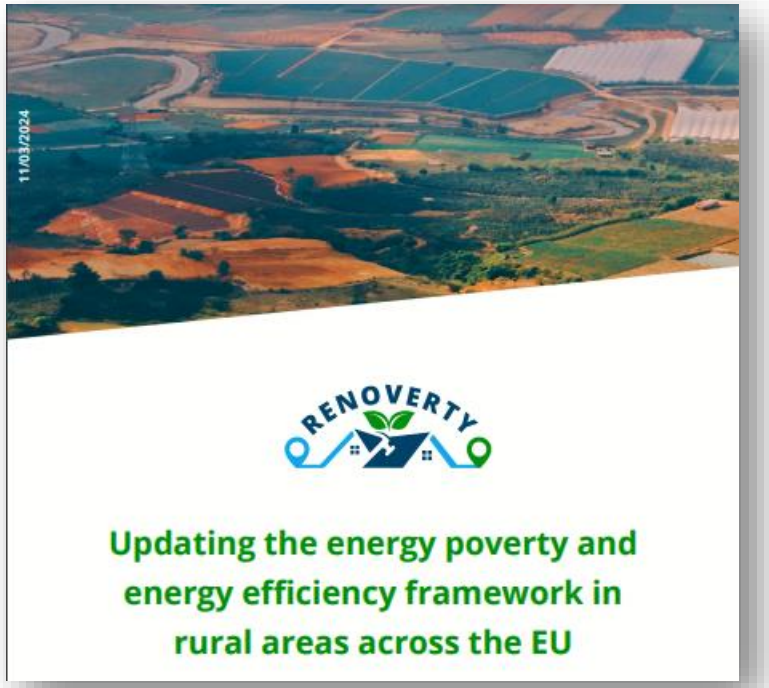
Coordination and collaboration with higher levels of government

- ✓ Work closely with authorities at other governance scales to overcome structural barriers and adapt policies
- ✓ Act as intermediaries to communicate the specific needs of their areas

Local engagement and participation

- ✓ Co-produce policies with local stakeholders
- ✓ Encourage rural residents to participate in local energy projects, and establish local energy communities

For more information



You can find the full RENOVERTY report here

Three factsheets summarizing the results!

Q & A

Discussion points

Questions

Comments

Thank you for your attention.

Dimitris Papantonis
Research Associate at TEESlab, PhD Candidate at University of Piraeus

SCAN ME

papantonis@unipi.gr

TEESlab - Technoeconomics of Energy Systems laboratory

@TEES_Lab

https://teeslab.unipi.gr/