

ENGAGER: Energy Poverty Action

Report from Working Group 2 meeting: Dublin, 20th March 2018

In March 2018, Working Group 2 (WG2) of the ENGAGER COST Action met at Dublin City University. WG2, led by Dr Harriet Thomson and Dr Siddharth Sareen, aims to develop an operational European energy poverty framework at multiple scales using both existing and new data sources. It also seeks to examine key issues related to how existing measures detect energy poverty, and to create an interdisciplinary expert network and specialist outputs related to this topic.

The purpose of the first group meeting in Dublin was to consider the development of a common language framework for the group, and to make plans for activities and outputs during the first year of the COST action.

The first part of the day focused upon the development of a **common language framework**. Firstly, members were asked to reflect on contributions that could be made as individuals and as a collective.



WG2 in Dublin

In terms of **individual contributions** to addressing energy poverty, there was a range of experience within the group of engaging with a range of audiences including communities, practitioners and academics. The ability to translate messages on the ground but also to advocate and raise awareness about energy poverty at a practitioner-level was highlighted. This was supported by skills within the group in evidencing energy poverty using a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches. A link to the EU Energy Poverty Observatory was also recognised as strength.

Reflecting on the **collective contribution** that the group could make to addressing energy poverty, it was felt that the WG could provide a platform for new conversations to take place and simultaneously provide a link groups working in a similar area. As a group it would also be possible to identify the gaps in knowledge concerning energy poverty, given the variety of disciplinary perspectives and methodological approaches amongst members. The ability to work with WG1 to translate an agreed definition of energy poverty into a new indicator using a range of datasets was also recognised as a strength. The group can also capitalise on new variables through ad-hoc modules on existing surveys, such as the European Social Survey and the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions.

Thinking about the **future contribution of WG2**, group members identified that the EU was likely to prefer a single definition of energy poverty that varies country by country, rather than a multiplicity of definitions. There was lots of debate amongst the group about whether such a definition should rely on existing expenditure-based data, or whether a new approach was required. In discussing this several tensions were recognised - *should it be a relative or absolute measure? – how can we reflect the fact that different people experience thermal comfort in different ways? – how to reflect the tension between technical building characteristics and individual practices?* The limitations of existing data sources were identified as one of the main practical limitations.

Following on from these reflections, a range of key phrases and concepts were identified that could form part of a common language framework for the group. Group members identified a range of terms including but not limited to: affordability, lived experience, behavioural insights, energy services, social return, entitlement, interdisciplinary and co-benefits.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to planning future activities. There are several exciting upcoming activities planned for the group over the coming year. These include a review paper, policy briefs and building upon the opportunity for Short-Term Scientific Missions (STSMs) within the COST action. These activities are to be developed further before the next group meeting.