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Winter school report

Visit of CIFE Energy Students to Cluj – Organised by FSPAC, Babes Bolyai University

Within ENGAGER Network

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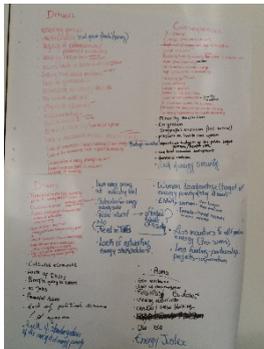


Students of the energy programme of CIFE (Master in Global Energy Transition and Governance) were welcome by George Jiglau and Anca Sinea, from the Faculty of political sciences (FSPAC) of University Babes Bolyai in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, from February 18 to February 22. Together with the students of this faculty, CIFE students debated the issue of energy poverty and justice in Romania.

The first morning session was organised around a world café leading students to debate with each other about the drivers and consequences of energy poverty in Central and Eastern European countries, the possible measures addressing it and the innovative ways to cooperate and fund the policies. For 3 hours, students discussed and come up with very interesting proposals for all 3 topics.



The results of this brainstorming were presented to ENGAGER experts (energy poverty network within COST Action) during the next morning session. Questions arose and were discussed with the experts about the communist legacies, the rural/urban divide, the (lack of) quality of the building stock as main drivers of energy poverty in Central and Eastern European countries. The issue of the welfare support was raised as part of the possible solutions while considering at the same time how to reduce energy subsidies. This led them to distinguish between energy poverty and energy justice and to consider how to





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rethink the whole energy system to avoid winners and losers of the transforming energy sector. Finally the last part of the discussion consisted in debating the necessity of innovative ways to address the issue. The first point underlined the need for stronger partnerships including NGO who at the moment fill in the gaps created by weak institutions in Central and Eastern European countries. The second point focused on the funding and the taxation system and how to redirect the existing subsidies to avoid inequalities. Finally trust building among stakeholders and between stakeholders and communities was another key element of debate.

The last morning session was dedicated to discussing the theories of justice. This session was led by



Professor Irena Kantor and discussed with George Jigla and Anca Sinea from FSPAC. The application of theories of justice to the energy sector is very relevant to show the gaps in the system, knowing that justice is far from being the main driver of the policy maker as the Emergency Decree introduced in Romania on December 28, 2018 shows it. The content of the law on the energy aspect is written in such confused ways that all interpretations and understandings are possible which can easily lead to populist discourses in the end. The distinction between rights, right and justice needs to be kept in

mind when dealing with energy poverty issues and measures to address it. To this list of concepts equity can be added.

All afternoon sessions were dedicated to visits and meetings with local stakeholders.

The students had an exchange with Daniel Dranca, head of the energy efficiency bureau of the town hall who exposed the projects of the city addressing energy efficiency issues in the public building, improving the public lighting to reduce the energy bill, introduce electric buses. Debates led to emphasize that good governance is needed at all levels of government in order to develop appropriate projects, get the funding, raise awareness and improve the transparency of the decision making process.





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This meeting was followed by an appointment with the CEO of the district heating company, Regia Autonoma de Termoficare, Cluj-Napoca. This company is providing 50,000 apartments with heat and



hot water thanks to 200 installations spread across the city and 16 km of pipelines. 80 millions Euros were invested to improve the IT system and the efficiency of the gas boilers in order to provide better service to end consumers. Investment carried out in cooperation with foreign companies led to a 30% decrease in consumption over the past 10 years resulting staff reduction from 1,000 employees to 110. The strategy of the company over the next 10 years is to get into cogeneration in all their plants, to improve renewable energy installations and to go direct to the clients. As

far as vulnerable consumers are concerned the company does not have any special obligations nor policy, whether in terms of tariffs or of services provided. The city hall is responsible for delivering energy subsidies and special support to families in need. The visit of the dispatching room and of one installation was one highlight of this visit.

On the next afternoon, a guided tour was organised in the city by Valentin from Cluj Guided Tours. This tour allowed the students to visit residential and industrial areas in order to understand better the housing problems linked to the lack of harmonised urban planning procedures, the management of the communist industrial legacies, the lack of energy efficiency in old buildings and the higher standards of new housing stock. The students got an insight of the pending challenges of the city in terms of housing access, access to services and transport and energy efficiency.



The meeting of the last afternoon of this great week in Cluj impressed the students. They had the chance to meet Linda Greta Sziga, Human Rights activist and top list of a new political party, called Demos (Democratie Solidaritate). She explained how almost ten years ago her Roma community was evicted from the places where they lived because their land was taken by the Church and how they ended up on the landfill of Pata Rât in the outskirts of Cluj living in a heap of garbage with no access to



decent housing nor electricity, water or heating. 400 families still live in such undecent conditions. Alternative systems were found to have access to energy in these informal settlements. Families who are legally connected illegally resell electricity to their neighbours, sometimes overpricing them. This leads to conflicts within the communities. The city and the utilities tolerate these illegal connexions resulting in their non action on the topic, except when utilities don't get paid and send the police to disconnect the families. As activist and politician running for the



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European elections, Linda Greta Sziga tries to defend a few priorities such as access to decent housing, education, services and health care for all.

Captions of the pictures (by Noémie Longin)

Picture 1 : The group of students in front of FSPAC, during a break

Picture 2 : Discussion of table 3 on the policies and measures to address energy poverty in Central and Eastern European during the world café of the first morning session

Picture 3 : The poster of table 1 after the discussions with the three groups of the world café

Picture 4 : Presentation of the results of table 3 on innovative ways to organise partnership and funding

Picture 5 : A group picture with Irena Kantor, George Jigla and Anca Sinea who debated with the students about the theories of justice applied to energy

Picture 6 : Discussion with Daniel Dranca, head of the energy efficiency bureau of Cluj-Napoca town hall

Picture 7 : Visit of the district heating company, Regia Autonoma de Termoficare

Picture 8 : Start of the guided tour with Valentin, the guide from Cluj Guided Tours

Picture 9 : Meeting with Linda Greta Sziga, Human Rights Activist, top list of Demos