

SHORT TERM SCIENTIFIC MISSION (STSM) SCIENTIFIC REPORT

This report is submitted for approval by the STSM applicant to the STSM coordinator

Action number: CA 16232

STSM title: Energy Poverty reinforcing migration drivers? On the interlinkage between energy poverty, place and prospects of European internal migration

STSM start and end date: 20/09/2021 to 01/10/2021

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PURPOSE OF THE STSM:

The STSM in Cluj-Napoca sought to elaborate a first overview on the interlinkages of energy poverty and migration by respecting the qualities of place. Firstly, the investigation focused separately on the two main topics, migration and energy poverty, and how these topics are recognizable and analysed in Cluj-Napoca:

- 1) Which migration patterns and which groups of migrants leaving or coming to Cluj-Napoca can be differentiated?
- 2) How are the citizens of Cluj-Napoca affected by (the risk of living in) energy poverty? How does the fabric of the city (especially housing) has an impact on the vulnerability of citizens?
- 3) How does the national and local politics and policies (re-)act on the different challenges of migration and energy poverty?

Secondly, the question was raised where the differentiated migration patterns and forms of energy poverty are connected to each other and how a migration-energy-nexus can be described:

- 4) How does (the vulnerability of living in) energy poverty affect the (personal) opportunities and resources to leave the country or to return to the country? How are (non-Romanian) immigrants compared to the (Romanian) citizens affected by energy poverty? How does the individual and collective provision of (energy) infrastructures change due to migration?

DESCRIPTION OF WORK CARRIED OUT DURING THE STSM

These are the main activities carried out during the STSM:

- Reviewing the literature and studies on Romania with a focus on Cluj concerning the following topics: emigration and immigration, energy supply and energy poverty, current city development and housing challenges
- Contacting experts and stakeholders with the help of my host
- Developing semi-structured interview guides
- Conducting five interviews with experts and stakeholders on migration and energy poverty (incl. documentation of these interviews)
- Field trips to various neighborhoods and sites of Cluj-Napoca and documentation of these field trips (focusing on the neighborhood Mărăști and Bulgaria)

DESCRIPTION OF THE MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED

Cluj-Napoca is a growing city due to economic prosperity, especially in the field of IT and logistics, and a rich higher education landscape. At the same time it's compared to other Romanian cities a very expensive city, in particular concerning the housing market.

The main results of the STSM are shortly summarized along the above-mentioned questions:

- 1) The city is a destination for immigrants: students, Romanian returnees and internal Romanians, refugees and migrants from conflicted areas, workers from Central and Southeast Asia, EU-citizens and well-educated third-country-citizens with job offers. Still, estimatedly 25 % of the Romanians live abroad ("Romanian diaspora"). Due to a lack of data no differentiated emigration patterns can be described especially for the city.
- 2) Citizens of Cluj-Napoca live in or are at risk of energy poverty due to poverty (caused by non or low income), high consumption and bad energy efficiencies of the buildings.
- 3) Politics on migration focus on the emigrated Romanians giving them economical incentives to return to Romania (e.g. ESF-funded project "Diaspora Startup"). Politics react on energy poverty indirectly through addressing poverty and supporting the refurbishment of buildings. These politics and social subsidies are managed by the national state and inadequate as well as insufficient in various respects. The local authorities could support these measures, but at the moment Cluj-Napoca is not doing it. For students the universities provide dormitories and at least the UBB is guaranteeing a dorm place for international students. But all in all there are too less dormitories for the students and they compete with other immigrants on the tight and expensive rental market.
- 4) *The forms of migration that can be observed in Cluj-Napoca are connected differently to the vulnerability of energy poverty. The linkages, as researched on in this STSM, are expressed in the oppourtunities and challenges on the housing market.*
 - a. *Emigration and return migration:* Romanian citizens left to work abroad to gain a higher living standard in their home country. They invest into the refurbishment of their apartments or houses or purchase an own building or flat. (Despite the urban centre, people in rural areas also invest to gain access to the water and sewage supply system.) At the same time emigrants, who wish to return to Romania at a certain moment, try to save as much money as possible. Therefore, they are more likely to accept poor housing conditions, including less energy supply, abroad.
CONCLUDING THESIS: *The individual improvement of housing and (energy) supply in the home country is a push-factor for migration, while migration may put people into a position of an energy poor housing in the destination country.*
 - b. *Immigration of vulnerable groups:* Refugees and migrants from conflicted areas coming to Cluj-Napoca have difficulties getting access to the housing market and have to spend a huge amount of their income on the rent. The same applies for (Romanian) students that have no access to the dormitories. Refugees can access public subsidies for the rent and energy supply only for the first two months.
CONCLUDING THESIS: *Refugees and poor migrants as well as students are especially at risk of living in energy poverty.*

Open questions:

- How energy poverty affects the (individual) opportunities and resources for migration couldn't be observed during the STSM, because the group of immobile people (in an emigration country) is an underresearched field.
- Likewise, the immigration of foreign workers (mainly from Asia) and how they are affected by energy poverty is an unanswered question because it's a new form of migration to Cluj and there are no empirical results available yet.
- During the field trip, mainly in the districts Mărăști and Bulgaria, several current housing challenges that are connected to energy supply, distribution and consumption were observed. There needs to be done more neighbourhood-based research to elaborate the connection to migration.

FUTURE COLLABORATIONS (if applicable)

The STSM was an initial step to describe a migration-energy-nexus. As many threads could be picked up in the short time, further interviews (online) are planned following the STSM in October 2021. Furthermore, I intend to continue the collaboration with my host on this topic in an upcoming research project. Looking at the results (and mostly at the open questions) the research should be extended with more case studies and/or focused neighbourhood-based surveys.