

## Press release

New project set to lift citizens in CEE and CIS region out of energy poverty by developing and piloting a set of community tailored actions

For immediate release

**Brussels, 11 February 2021 – In line with the EU efforts to tackle energy poverty as addressed in the Renovation Wave, the H2020 funded project ComAct, which stands for *Community Tailored Actions for Energy Poverty Mitigation*, will provide a set of financial, technical and organisational instruments that can be replicated all over Europe to lower the monthly costs of investments and increase efficiency and multiple benefits coming from the renovation of multifamily buildings. ComAct's approach will be tested in five pilot countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Republic of North Macedonia, Lithuania and Ukraine), representing the different sub-regions of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region and in the former Soviet Union republics (CIS) territory, scope of the project due to the high concentration of energy poverty.**

In 2019, 6.9% of the EU population said in an EU-wide survey that they could not afford to heat their home sufficiently<sup>1</sup>. Energy poverty<sup>2</sup> represents a problem all over Europe, and is particularly high in the East, South, South-Eastern and Baltic regions of Europe, where GDP per capita often falls below the EU average. In most of these countries, the quality of housing is low, and the affordability of heating or cooling cost is high, despite the progress made in recent years through public investments in energy efficiency policies and measures and efforts to involve the stakeholders addressing the problem.

The situation in the former Soviet Union republics (CIS region) is even more severe. For example, in Ukraine, 70% of flats in multifamily apartment buildings, hosting more than 30 million people are highly energy-inefficient due to its outdated equipment which poses serious challenges for many households still facing the decision between heating and eating.

Implementing energy efficiency measures is more complicated in these countries than in Western Europe, particularly due to mass privatisation of the housing sector combined with the deconstruction of the social safety net during the 1990s. Privately owned multi-family apartment blocks predominated, and increased of energy costs became a burden to family budgets. In parallel, socialist-era collective maintenance mechanisms were abandoned, whereby the decay of homeowners' associations has not been adequately addressed.

ComAct seeks to face these issues head on. The H2020 project aims to address energy poverty in this region by empowering and activating the communities of homeowners' associations, developing and adapting financial tools for low income families, and optimising technical solutions that provide most favourable cost-benefit ratio for the energy efficient improvements in multi-family apartment buildings.

This approach will be tested in five pilot countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, Republic of North Macedonia, Lithuania and Ukraine), representing the different sub-regions of the CEE and CIS territory. The impact will already be visible in the timeframe of the project, with its aim to involve more than 3000 consumers and trigger almost 10 million euros of investments in sustainable energy. However, the biggest impact of ComAct lies in the lessons learned coming out of the pilots, to be replicated all over

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<sup>1</sup> [2019 EU-wide survey](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.openexp.eu/>

Europe: this falls well in line with the [renovation wave](#)<sup>3</sup> commitment to use renovation as a lever to address energy poverty and access to healthy housing for all households. ComAct's contribution will be key in providing EU countries a set of instruments to lift millions of its citizens out of energy poverty and to ensure that buildings provide a healthy and affordable living and working environment.

More information can be found on the ComAct website: <https://comact-project.eu/>

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## NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Energy poverty results from a combination of low income, high expenditure of disposable income on energy and poor energy efficiency, especially as regards the performance of buildings. People in inefficient buildings are more exposed to cold spells, heatwaves and other impacts of climate change. Inadequate comfort and sanitary conditions in housing and work environments, contribute to lower productivity, health problems and higher mortality and morbidity. Adverse effects on mental health can be particularly acute due to stress over the question 'heat or eat?'

**ComAct, which stands for *Community Tailored Actions for Energy Poverty Mitigation***, is an EU-funded project under the Horizon 2020 framework for research and innovation that looks to address this serious issue by providing a set of financial, technical and organisational actions to make high-impact and high-cost energy-efficient improvements in multi-family apartment buildings in the CEE and CIS regions affordable and manageable for energy-poor communities as well as to create the necessary assistance conditions for lifting them out of energy poverty.

### ComAct process



<sup>3</sup> [renovation wave](#)

The **project partners** are IWO – Housing Initiative for Eastern Europe (Germany), LVOA-ALCO – Alliance of Lithuanian Consumer Organisations (Lithuania), BPIE – Buildings Performance Institute Europe (Belgium), Habitat for Humanity International (Slovakia), MRI – Metropolitan Research Institute (Hungary), Odessa Housing Union Association (Ukraine), ENOVA (Bosnia and Herzegovina), EnEffect (Bulgaria), Habitat for Humanity Macedonia (Republic of North Macedonia).



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