

Energy Poverty and Awareness Issues in Austria – An Empirical Stakeholder Analysis

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The problem of energy poverty seems to be an essential issue within the different European energy policy goals even though its discussion and the implementation of adequate measures have only taken place to a small extent in Austria yet. Above all, poor households are affected higher than average by energy prices (especially for electricity and heating) with the result that these households can be called *energy* or *fuel poor*. According to current data from Statistik Austria (2010)¹, approximately 313,000 people in Austria are not able to keep their homes adequately warm due to their financial situation. As a consequence of their precarious life situations (pension, family with children, single parents, unemployed people), this income group has often an increased energy consumption and is mostly not equipped with efficient domestic appliances and heating systems. Due to limited budgets, the affected households may not be in the position to purchase energy efficient equipment which would reduce their energy consumption. Thus, a coherent strategy – not least because of the lacking discussion on the political level – is necessary in order to address the problem of energy poverty with adequate measures in Austria. Energy poverty is a topic crossing different disciplines so that a close interaction and coordination of different actors from social, energy and economic policy as well as from social organizations is required. This paper presents first results of a qualitative analysis, which is based on interviews conducted with different relevant stakeholders concerning energy poverty issues in Austria. The focus of the empirical work was on the perception by the experts and also on already carried out activities as well as the opportunities for action and restrictions in order to increase energy efficiency as a possible measure against energy poverty in low-income households.

¹ Vgl. Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz (Hrsg.) (2011) *Armutgefährdung und Lebensbedingungen in Österreich. Ergebnisse aus EU-SILC 2010*. Statistik Austria im Auftrag des BMASK. Sozialpolitische Studienreihe Band 8. Wien.