



European
Social
Catalyst
Fund

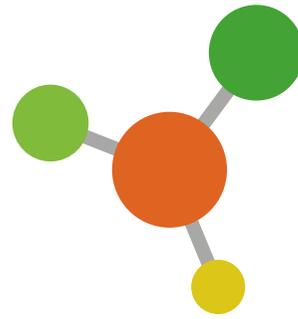


SUITE

SCALING UP INNOVATION
TOGETHER FOR ENERGY
VULNERABILITY



This project has been supported by the European Social Catalyst Fund which has been established and co-funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, Genio, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the King Baudouin Foundation



SUITE

SCALING UP INNOVATION TOGETHER
FOR ENERGY VULNERABILITY

PLAN WITH A LOCAL COVERAGE

Cluj-Napoca **Romania**



This project has been supported by the European Social Catalyst Fund which has been established and co-funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, Genio, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the King Baudouin Foundation

LOCAL COVERAGE PLAN

CLUJ-NAPOCA

ROMANIA

ASSIST Scalability Plan & Delivery model

Analysis of the Local context PAGE 4

Delivery Model PAGE 7

Stakeholders consultation PAGE 12

Economic viability of the scalability plan PAGE 13

Dissemination Strategy PAGE 16

Communication and Branding PAGE 16

Planning and Monitoring PAGE 17

Risk Management PAGE 23

Analysis of the Local context

Energy poverty is a phenomenon that touches various dimensions of the Romanian society. Studies conducted by the Centre for the Study of Democracy (2018) indicate that around 20% of the households are affected by various forms of energy poverty. From a more analytical perspective, based on various conventional cost indicators, the percentage of the energy poor in 2018 was evaluated at the following level: Twice the National Median (2M) – approx. 13%; Low Income High Cost (LIHC) – 12%; Hidden Energy Poverty (M/2) – 15,5%, indicators which are on the rise, as compared to previous years (Sinea, 2018). The European Union Survey on Living Conditions (EU-SILC) reports on more qualitative data on energy poverty. According to this, in 2019, 13,7% of the Romanian population had arrears on utility bills ([EUROSTAT, 2021](#)); whereas the percentage of the population that was unable to keep their house adequately warm was 9.3 in 2019 ([EUROSTAT, 2020](#)). All these indices display only aspects of energy poverty manifestations in Romania. The households that receive some kind of non-financial protection are not quantified (Sinea, 2018).

If it is to consider a definition of EP, then there are several factors that should be taken into account. Firstly, it is a question of affordability (households cannot afford to heat or to cool their houses properly). Secondly, households do not have access to modern means of energy, aspect present especially in post-communist countries. As factors that exacerbate energy poverty, beside the low-incomes and the poor access to infrastructure, the quality of the buildings, the poor consumption patterns and the legal framework are equally important dimensions. In terms of effects, energy poverty leads to social exclusion and can hinder basic rights, such as the educational and socio-economic development of individuals.

When it comes to geographical distribution, energy poverty is equally present in both urban and rural areas. While there are not necessarily forms of pockets of energy poverty, in urban areas the phenomenon touches mainly the low-income families living in energy inefficient buildings (mainly panel-type multifamily building blocks, but also single-family units). In rural areas, around 80% of the households use wood for heating, have limited access to modern energy infrastructure, and their buildings are highly inefficient. These criteria overlaps the low and irregular incomes most people have in the rural areas.

In addition to this urban/rural division, in Romania there are also forms of extreme energy poverty, which include informal living, scarcity and no access to energy infrastructure (electricity and/or gas). Roma communities, but not only, are the most affected by this form of energy poverty. As an example, 7% of the households do not have access to electricity or are connected illegally to the grid.

Existing regulations

So far, energy poverty was mainly addressed in the Romanian legal framework in the Law 123/2012, as the primary law, and by the ANRE regulations, as secondary legislation. The primary law does not define energy poverty as a distinct term, but explicitly defines the vulnerable customer as a limited category, being “the final customers belonging to a category of household customers who, due to age, health or low income, are at risk of social marginalization and who, in order to prevent this risk, benefit from social protection measures, including financial measures”. A new legal draft envisions a clear definition of the vulnerable consumer and the criteria for obtaining

heating benefits. The bill was initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and now it is in the process of public consultations.

Other important legislation sets the standard of energy efficiency in buildings (Law 372/2005 and Law 101/2020) and regulates the mechanisms for thermally rehabilitating the building stock (Government Decree 18/2009), especially the multifamily building blocks. Important to mention is that energy efficiency legislation does not directly address the problem of energy poverty and neither the legal provisions that set the framework for thermal rehabilitation, even though there is an increased potential to tackle the phenomenon directly through these provisions.

How Energy Poverty is currently being tackled in Romania

- **Financial and non-financial mechanisms:** Energy poverty is currently approached through a heating aid system through the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the institutions in subsidiary. Beneficiaries receive a percentual compensation of heating fuel bills depending on household income and fuel used. The system is well institutionalized, however the criteria employed and the application-based allocation limits many from accessing benefits. Non-financial mechanisms are mainly in the form of prohibition from disconnection and they exclusively apply to the ill impaired whose lives depend on electricity, despite several other categories being included in the category under law. Other national programmes have aimed at installing PVs or insulating households but have been limited in scope or little functional due to bureaucracy or lack of funding. Private funds through bank loans are usually destined to households that are solvable. Various NGOs have privately developed particular models on relief that apply at a very small scale: community mediation, provision of fair priced

electricity to households which are not connected to the grid, the installation of PVs to isolated communities.

- **Thermal rehabilitation:** Thermal rehabilitation programmes have been implemented during the pre- and post-accession period on EU and national grants. So far only 5% of the residential buildings have been rehabilitated, however, so far targeting based on energy vulnerability has not been operated. Mainly multifamily buildings have been rehabilitated, whereas single family buildings, which are almost 60% of the residential facility, have been at a disadvantage. Most of these rehabilitations have been superficial (below 30%). Single family households have a particular manifestation of energy poverty due to their low structural quality and location in the rural area, where heating is based up to 80% on highly polluting wood burning processes. Recent programmes aimed at thermal rehabilitation have been not functional due to lack of funds and administrative capacity.

Innovation scalability proposal

This model innovates through its approach. There has never been in Romania a project that addresses energy poverty by **creating a network of energy advisers**. Moreover, the project will be piloted at local level, assessed and then readapted. In the process of creating the network, local and regional stakeholders will be involved in a consultation process, both in designing training materials and sending people for becoming professional energy advisers.

The model will be **tested in the municipality of Cluj-Napoca**, the second wealthiest city after Bucharest. Cluj-Napoca is the suitable place for testing the model because the city is a mosaic of situations: energy poverty manifestations appear in various neighbourhoods,

including the rich ones; in the city there are households with low incomes located in inefficient multifamily building blocks; people display consumption patterns that are unsustainable and lead to high energy costs; at the outskirts of the city there is an entire community that lives in informality and disconnected to the grid.

In addition, in a context of low trust in institutions, people living in Cluj-Napoca tend to trust the local public authorities more than they trust the national authorities. For these reasons, creating a local network of energy advisors, collaborating with the local authorities and bringing various stakeholders on board, and generating practical knowledge in such an environment, makes this model innovative.

Private sector potential

Similar to the situation in other European countries, energy poverty needs to be addressed from a systematic and structural perspective, involving different sectors towards a common goal. Nowadays one of the key identified challenges is funding and public services are overwhelmed by the pandemic crisis, therefore, the collaboration between the public and the private sector is considered to be essential.

The work done on the interviews and organization of focus groups has shown that reaching private companies is not an easy task, since at the moment it is not a first goal for any private company, and even more after the economic situation (after Covid19). The Romanian Model has to start with public authorities and then partner with professional organisations. However, municipalities must take the lead.

The **private sector** would get the following benefits by getting involved in the SUITE project:

1. Increase their visibility and improve their reputation. It gives them some assets and knowledge to explain to their stakeholders and their consumers/clients.
2. Economic incentives opening the possibility to new contracts (commercial action)
3. Corporate Social Responsibility mechanisms.

Energy poverty is a big issue in Romania, in both urban and rural areas. The private sector is aware of this problem and it is willing to leave the conversation open with the SUITE project. There are already other initiatives regarding this issue, so the conversation is open and the problem is acknowledged which is already a very big step towards tackling energy poverty in Romania. Nevertheless, private actors may not be ready for a financial contribution to this model, since they do not know exactly how they can fit in the organisation in terms of energy advisors, whether to train them themselves or trained by the model, to hire other employees to do this specific job, etc.

The private stakeholders proposed to first go to the community to see how it goes and after the model is implemented, they will be willing to help. At the moment, they showed an interest in giving feedback on training material and sent their workers to be trained in the programme. Moreover, there is a lot of bureaucratic resistance to change and a high workload; it is difficult to get them involved when they are already involved in other social projects and have a lot of work.

Counting with the support of the private sector, both in financial and non-financial resources, would imply the possibility of increasing the project impact, both in terms of reach with more social operators trained, and in terms of available offered services.

Delivery Model

The scalability of the ASSIST model in Romania will be focused in the city of Cluj-Napoca, being the main public stakeholder the **municipality of Cluj-Napoca**, with a focus on the Department of Social Assistance and the Department of Energy Efficiency, where there is an interest for addressing the problem of energy poverty. For the robustness of the model, all the other stakeholders should partner with the local authorities and provide their input. One of the biggest challenges of this model will be the limited time of the stakeholders, as their workload is already very high.

In Romania the creation of a **National HEA network** involves the creation of local networks from scratch, which can then be extended at the national level. All interviewees consider that the model should be piloted firstly locally and, after a rigorous process of assessment, expanded nationally.

For the **local level**, here are the steps to be pursued indicated during interviews:

1. Establishing partnerships with all the relevant stakeholders between them.
2. Designing an operational plan (financial plan, coordinator of the process, key activities and tasks, timetable).
3. Designing the content of the training. Materials should be in Romanian.
4. Consulting with professional organizations and other stakeholders involved on the viability and clarity of the training materials.

5. Conducting the training, starting with the Department of Social Assistance and the established networks within the department (community mediators, elders' clubs, etc.). Continue the training with the NGOs and their networks and all the other stakeholders involved.
6. Supporting formed energy advisors to replicate their knowledge.
7. Design an app that can be used on phones, where part of the counselling materials can be incorporated in an interactive and digital manner. The app should be designed for households who may manifest various forms of vulnerability but are not necessarily energy poverty and it will be an instrument able to accompany training.
8. Pilot the one-stop-shop, with the support of the municipality.
9. Assessment of the models and activities implemented.

Objectives and functions

The Scalability and Delivery model will have a **strong public component**, since both financial and human resources can be used for piloting the model and reaching the target group. In addition, a partnership with private institutions, including professional organizations, NGOs and companies is encouraged and necessary for the viability of the project.

The main objective of the model is to implement the entire resources and methodologies from the ASSIST model at **local level**, meaning that after training materials are updated, this training will be launched through a mobile app in order to provide social operators from the Department of Social Assistance with the specific knowledge to detected energy poverty situations.

For piloting the model and making sure that there is a genuine commitment to create the network of advisors, it is planned to involve the following stakeholders:

- The Department of Social Assistance (including Centrul de Zi pentru Varstnici – elderly centre and community mediators).
- Department of Energy Efficiency from the Cluj-Napoca Municipality.
- NGOs – Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Popoarelor (The Foundation for People's Development), O Masa Calda (A Warm Meal), Focus Eco-Center`.
- Professional organizations – Romanian Society of Energy Auditors and Managers (SAMER), Civic Imagination and Innovation Center (CIIC).
- Universities – Babeş-Bolyai and the Technical University who run specialised educational programs in social assistance or energy efficiency respectively.

Being a varied group of stakeholders, specific roles have been envisioned for each of them. As such, it is aimed to train the first energy counsellors with the help of the Department of Social Assistance (be it community mediators, people part of the elders' group or other social workers) who is currently involved in identifying vulnerable households of various categories and handing out energy poverty benefits. The Department of Energy Efficiency designs local strategies and programs on energy efficiency and is currently

extending its activity to also cover households, which have previously not been part of the program. As the respondents have suggested, these two departments should collaborate to develop a network of energy counsellors and there the one-stop-shop.

Furthermore, the social workers and representatives of the NGOs can be trained to identify and engage with the vulnerable consumers. Professional organizations and the universities will be valuable in designing the training materials and widening the network of program beneficiaries to other stakeholders.



Figure 1:
Stakeholders' roles

Stakeholders' needs covered by the model

- **Public administration** (the Department of Social Assistance with all its workers and interest groups alongside the Department of Energy Efficiency) will improve their knowledge and understanding on energy poverty and will adapt their strategies and measures for this category of citizens. Moreover, within their existing networks Cluj-Napoca municipality departments will be able to identify the vulnerable consumer and design solutions based on the needs much easier. By possessing grass-root knowledge the Department of Social Assistance can involve the vulnerable consumer in the active process of learning, tailoring solutions directly with the person in need. However, one of the biggest challenges mentioned during the interviews and focus groups is the financial dimension of the project. Who will pay for the training? And who will pay to support the energy advisors? As potential solutions for these financial challenges, is to start to model with a European funding and then find other financing alternatives with the stakeholders. For example, the municipality can co-finance the model if the pilot proves functional and suitable for addressing energy poverty. Also, the municipality can attract other European and Governmental funds for keeping the network active and viable.
- The **social NGOs**, having good grass root knowledge can be trained and increase their capacity in finding solutions for energy poverty and deliver the message in the group of vulnerable consumers.
- The **professional organizations** can be involved in the design of the training materials, but also have access to other networks of potential energy advisors. For example, SAMER is in contact with the energy auditors who have a very good

technical understanding of the situation and can give valuable input in this regard. In addition, the energy auditors can be trained themselves as energy advisors and have a more social understanding of the problem of energy poverty. Their on-field activity can be very valuable for the vulnerable consumer, especially when they collaborate with the municipalities, as one of the interviewees suggested. During the focus-group discussions, SAMER looked interested in being actively involved in this project.

- The **universities** are hubs of knowledge. But more than this, students from the Faculty of Social Assistance can become energy advisers and work together with the Department of Social Assistance from the municipality. Trained students can split the burden of the social workers and use the existing networks to reach out to the vulnerable consumers. The biggest challenge remains the financial dimension.

Procedure and offered services

For developing and implementing the training, one of the first steps is to **establish the network of partners** that support the implementation of the ASSIST model. Once the network is established and partners engage into the project, understanding their responsibilities and commitments, the coordinating team will establish the operational plan, including the calendar of activities. The next phase will imply the **development of the training materials**, where feedback and support will be asked to the Romanian Society of Energy Auditors and Managers. Once the training materials are finalized and are in Romanian, through the partners of the project **participants at the training will be recruited**. Our aim is to train 25 people per year coming from various networks (Social Assistance Municipalities Department, social NGOs, professional organizations

like SAMER, students, private companies). The training will have a mixed component – online and offline. In case the pandemic situation will not allow it, then the training will be exclusively online.

The aim is to **train people that have various professional backgrounds** and through them to assist the vulnerable consumers from various communities. For example, social workers from the Department of Social Assistance (Cluj-Napoca municipality) are in contact with the Elderly Clubs. Having low-incomes and living in inefficient buildings, the elder people are one category of potential vulnerable consumer. Capacitating the social workers with the tools and knowledge from the training, they will be able to advise the people in need. Moreover, representatives from the Elderly Clubs can be formed as energy advisers and they can assist their peers in need. In a similar pattern, the NGOs that provide social services have access to various vulnerable groups. Once trained, these workers can reach the people in need. The concept behind our approach is the **snowball method**. It is aimed to reach the most important nodes of the network and afterwards they can offer the energy advisory services to other communities in need. In the second year of the project, after assessing the initial steps, with the support of Cluj-Napoca municipality, it is **aimed to pilot a one-stop-shop model**, considered as a good complementary solution for addressing energy poverty, the one-stop-shop represent a one step further for institutionalizing the energy advisors' network.

Finally, according to the type of vulnerability people are confronting with, the energy advisors can offer counselling on various areas with potential impact:

Offered services

- Behavioural changes towards heating
- Using energy efficient appliances to reduce energy consumption

- Social benefits (including heating benefits)
- Counselling and support to navigate the bureaucratic system
- Support for accessing funds for thermal rehabilitation

While there are a variety of situations that can be covered and it is impossible to foresee all the scenarios, energy advisors will touch two main components within their activity: behavioural changes recommendations and access to social and financial benefits advice.

Training and accompaniment

As for the **training**, it is expected to train at least 25 people per year.

Depending on the pandemic situation and the preference of the participants, training will be organized either online or on sight, or both, and will be supported from the existing tools, resources and materials from the ASSIST project; nevertheless, an app will be created. Training will only require to be updated, adapted and to be translated into Romanian.

This training will consist of approximately **6 sessions** of specific general information on energy poverty; causes and effects, situation on the ground in Romania as compared to EU, Romanian and European legislation, existing solutions (financial, non-financial, etc.) good practices and analysis of situations on the ground, etc.

SWOT matrix

The following SWOT matrix is drawn taking into consideration the local context of Romania, on the expertise and lessons learnt from the implementation of ASSIST and on the topic of energy Poverty, and all the input provided by the different actors participating in

the focus group and interviews. It consists in the identification of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that will be included in the further overall analysis to help to determine different strategies to follow in the decision-making process.

Strengths

- Direct access to the target group by accessing the existing networks (public authorities and NGOs)
- Good relationship with Cluj-Napoca municipality based on previous working experience and on our status – research center, part of Babes-Bolyai University.
- The municipality has a genuine interest in understanding and tackling energy poverty.
- Professional organizations are interested in finding solutions for the vulnerable consumer.
- There is a growing interest in climate changes and this subject can be used when discussing the manifestations of energy poverty.

Opportunities

- Since energy poverty is still a new concept, it is possible to pilot within this model a successful program of tackling energy poverty.
- There is an interest in the Romanian Parliament for this problem and the agenda can be pushed forward.
- Cooperation between stakeholders can make the model viable.
- New European Funding opportunities.

Weaknesses

- Limited financial resources.
- Limited interest from the companies to support the ASSIST Model.
- The municipality doesn't have an office or a designated person to deal with energy poverty.
- Poor general awareness on the concept of energy poverty.
- While energy poverty is a constant in the rural area, there are limited resources (financial and human resources) to pilot the model in rural communities.

Threats

- Large municipalities have a better capacity to absorb funds, leaving the rural or smaller ones in a vulnerable position and with limited resources.
- Social workers fatigue in getting involved in another project.
- If incentives are not attractive, trainees may look for other job opportunities.

Potential Users

Potential users of the service would be all those users that confront energy vulnerability. While they may be dispersed all across the city or in the surrounding areas, most likely all of them have low or medium-low incomes, live in inefficient buildings and may already be confronted with other forms of vulnerabilities (age, health

conditions, disability, etc.). In addition, there is the potential that some beneficiaries may live in informality or in social houses and their vulnerability is exacerbated.

This way, a total of **300 people** is expected to benefit from the model over a two-year period.

Stakeholders Consultation

The aim of having a focus group session and interviews with different actors, representing different sectors that may play a role in the overall proposed model was to validate its viability. As already stated, the model pursues a **local coverage** and wants to find a point of collaboration between the public and the private sector in order to guarantee its economic sustainability in the long run.

With this purpose, interviews were held in May, while the focus group session was held on the 27th of May including different actors from the public sector.

As the table shows, the Scalability Plan was improved and validated by representatives of both the public and the private sector. Through the focus group session, it was possible to contrast different points of view from the economic, the public and the social perspective, allowing to shape a plan that not only foresees for its sustainability but it addresses in the best possible way the existing needs of vulnerable people in Romania, more concretely in the city of Cluj-Napoca.

Table 1:
List of participants to the Focus Group Session and interviews



10 people

Focus Group Participants

1. Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, Representative from the Energy Efficiency Department - technical officer.
2. A representative from the Warm Meal Association -cofounder.
3. The director of ProNZEb think-tank.
4. A representative from ENEL - Head of Department.
5. Ashoka Romania, Expert on Energy Poverty - Regional Director.
6. University of Economic Studies, Expert on Governance and Energy Policies - Associate Professor, energy expert.
7. A representative from the Local Energy Agency of Alba Iulia - Director.
8. A representative from the Union of Tenants Association, HABITAT - National Director.
9. A representative from Metropolitan Area Association - Executive Director.
10. University of Babes-Bolyai – Expert on Energy Poverty.

10 people

Interviewed actors

1. Municipality of Cluj-Napoca, Representative from the Social Assistance Department - Chief Social Service Department.
2. A representative from the Romanian Green Building Council - Executive Director.
3. Municipality of Alba-Iulia, a representative from the Energy Efficiency Department - Technical expert on energy efficiency.
4. A representative from the Foundation for People's Development - Director.
5. Technical University, Expert on Energy Efficiency - Cluj Municipality Energy Manager.
6. A representative from the Focus Eco-Center NGO.
7. A representative from the Civic Imagination and Innovation Center - Cluj Municipality Public Investment Officer.
8. Babes-Bolyai University – Expert on Energy Poverty.
9. E.ON – Corporate Social Responsibility Expert.
10. Romanian Society of Energy Auditors and Managers - Director.

After conducting the interviews and the focus-group, all participants consider the idea of the project as suitable for addressing energy poverty. All stakeholders expressed their interest either in receiving the ASSIST training or in sending their colleagues or recommending it to their close professional network.

However, public authorities together with the NGOs seem to have the **higher interest in this model**. One of the reasons is that **public authorities** have the institutional capacity to support this kind of project as they are already in contact with vulnerable households through various aid programs. Moreover, they have access to other networks of social workers that can play an active role in the ASSIST Model (community mediators, elders' social groups, etc.). **NGOs**, as well, engage in partnerships with the public authorities and possess know-how on how to implement such models.

Professional organizations consider the model in line with their objectives and are willing either to share their expertise and/or to be trained for becoming energy advisors.

In the case of **companies** (utility companies), while they consider the model robust, there is no clear interest in the training and not yet a feeling of purpose. But, even in this scenario, there remains a window of opportunity for creating partnership between local authorities, companies and other professional organizations.

Lastly, the **universities** are interested in both contributing to the training package and in partnering with the other stakeholders.

The following public and local actors have shown their interest and willingness to collaborate or to enter into further collaboration discussions for the implementation of this Scalability and Delivery model in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania. (See [Annex 3](#))

Economic viability of the scalability plan

On the one hand, the **human resources** needed to carry out the scalability plan amount to **137.600,00 EUR** for the 2 years plan and correspond to the following profiles:



Program management:

- Program manager
- Program officer
- Stakeholder engagement officer
- Trainers
- Technical assistant



Beneficiaries

- Course participants
- 2 one-stop-shop officers

On the other hand, other implementation costs such as setting the network, developing the mobile App, adapting materials and doing the training and support will amount to **17.400,00 EUR**.

As a result, the total estimated necessary **financial resources** amount to **155.00,000 EUR** and are summarized in the following table:

Concept	Amount
Trainers fee	12.000,00 EUR
Conception and design of the training materials	5.000,00 EUR
Online course platform for training materials	5.000,00 EUR
Energy Adviser App	5.000,00 EUR
Training venue	2.400,00 EUR
Management activities	28.800,00 EUR
Program secretariat	16.800,00 EUR
Technical support	7.000,00 EUR
Stakeholder engagement	12.000,00 EUR
Incentives for the trainees	25.000,00 EUR
Salaries for at least two people for the one-stop-shop	36.000,00 EUR
TOTAL COSTS	155.000,00 EUR

Table 2:
Total estimated costs for the implementation of the Scalability and Delivery model in Cluj-Napoca, Romania

The implementation of the scalability plan is expected to be financed through European grants and/or other private financial mechanisms.

Steps to reach the financing and set up the model

In order to guarantee the necessary financial resources for the proper implementation of the scalability and delivery model, the following step will be followed:

- Keep in constant update to the interested stakeholders to reach their commitment with the project.
- Identify and contact new potential stakeholders.
- Set meetings and focus group sessions, if necessary, with the interested stakeholder for discussing more concrete contractual and collaboration issues.
- Negotiate and reach collaboration agreements, setting requirements, justification material and defining responsibilities.
- Have a common meeting with the committed stakeholders (public and private) for defining rules and obligations in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

The Gantt chart on [page 20](#) plans the different tasks to ensure the financing of the initiative.

Sustainability of the model

As all interviewees indicated that the **HEA Network** should be firstly piloted at municipality level and local authorities should play an important part in this process, there are some aspects that should be addressed to ensure the sustainability of the project:

1. **Local Authorities** – While there is a constant pressure on the budget of local authorities and the development of an ASSIST network may represent an immediate additional burden (both financially and in terms of human resources), some interviewees explained that one solution for this challenge is the absorption of both national and European Funds. As energy poverty becomes more acknowledged, municipalities can attract funds for supporting the creation of the network and the implementation of the one-stop-shop solution. For instance, the Ministry of Local Administration and Development can support these kinds of initiatives.

In addition, the Regional Operational Programmes or other financial instruments can represent an opportunity for the sustainability of the initiative. At a future stage, the network should be backed up by a legal framework that supports and describes the purpose and the means of functioning.

2. **Partnerships with all the relevant stakeholders** – In order to make the model sustainable, all the relevant stakeholders should partner with local authorities. In this sense, **professional organizations** (energy auditors) should be active in both the design of the training, but also in being trainees to become energy advisors themselves. Since energy advisors offer their consultancy based on request, public authorities can collaborate with them and use their knowledge and skills to conduct household energy investigations and provide tailored solutions for the vulnerable consumers. As such, professional

organizations have the potential to become an important node in the network and offer their services to people affected by energy poverty.

3. Beside professional organizations, the **NGOs** that offer social services can play an active role and collaborate directly with the municipality to offer energy advice to vulnerable households. **Companies** (utility companies – gas and electricity) that have already implemented communitarian projects can provide their input in making the ASSIST model sustainable. They can also provide financial support and human resources that may contribute to the creation and maintenance of the network. Last but not least, **universities** not only can share their expertise, but departments such as the Faculty of Social Assistance can partner with the municipality by providing students that can be trained as energy advisors and work closely with public administration departments and other NGOs to reach out to vulnerable households.
4. In addition, to develop the **app and course online platform**, the knowledge and skills of the students/staff of the Communications Department will be used, or make a call for solutions – as a hackathon – where students will be encouraged to participate and design the application.

Dissemination Strategy

For disseminating the model and engaging professionals in the trainings the following **channels** will be used:

- Engage with the existing networks – academic, professional, NGOs, public authorities, mass-media. Send newsletters to these networks.
- Use social media accounts.
- Promote the ASSIST Model and the website www.assist2gether.eu.
- Promote the online platform where the training materials will be uploaded.
- Participate at local TV and radio shows to promote the ASSIST model.

Communication and Branding

Communication and branding will be performed exclusively in a targeted manner. The programme will be disseminated through the institutional network possessed by our organization, which comprises the most important actors in the area (public institutions and decision-makers, private companies and NGOs). Calls on admission to the programme will be circulated periodically to these actors. These calls will be complemented with personal engagement with these actors. The Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) is widely involved in policy-making events. Programme related information will be disseminated through these events also where appropriate. The development of the programme will be performed in close cooperation with these partners. They will be engaged in input and programme design; therefore they will feel engaged in the process, in supporting the programme with participants, dissemination and otherwise.

Planning and monitoring

Specific objectives

As already stated, each local scalability plan will count with specific objectives and indicators to be accomplished along the implementation of the plan for the next 2 years, starting on 2022 if possible. This Scalability plan aims to:

1. Scale ASSIST at **local level**, starting in Cluj-Napoca, with the potential to pilot the model in Alba-Iulia and Targu-Mures. These three municipalities represent two of the most developed NUTS3 Regions in Romania (North-West and Center). Cluj-Napoca is the second most developed city after the capital city, Bucharest, an university city, an economic center, a highly new technologies focused locality with advanced strategies on efficient energy consumption. According to a recent study conducted by the Center for the Study of Democracy, energy poverty is not displayed in pockets, but rather dispersed across the city in both old and new buildings affecting various categories of the population (elderly people, low and sometimes medium income families especially). Alba-Iulia is a medium sized city, with high ambitions on digitalization and smart technologies. The city and nearby villages are highly industrialized. The municipality collaborates with NGOs and professional organizations on energy efficiency strategies. Targu-Mures is a medium sized city, with little exposure to energy efficiency prospective or energy poverty strategies, but with a public administration open to dialogue and the new inputs on energy efficiency, climate actions and energy

poverty. In addition, Targu Mures is the headquarters of one of the largest electricity and gas providers operating in Romania.

2. **Train at least 15 people per year** from different categories, with the ambition to reach a higher number of people. To scale up the ASSIST model, it is intended to reach and train people from the following categories/sectors: social and municipality workers, community mediators, social workers, energy advisors, energy company employees, representatives of NGOs working in the field or in related areas and researchers from universities. These groups of people either interact on a daily basis with the vulnerable consumer or their work may have an impact on the vulnerable consumers.
3. **Support 10 vulnerable people per HEA per year.** In order to reach the vulnerable consumer, existing network of contacts and organisations will be used, such as: social workers will contact the beneficiaries of heating aid and other social benefits, including the people living in social houses; the energy advisers will contact the inhabitants of households; the community mediators will discuss with the most vulnerable categories of people, including the ones that confront with extreme manifestations of energy poverty.
4. **Count with the support of local entities and organizations** to join the network (both from the public and the private sector) and to pilot the ASSIST model. Some of these local actors

are (1) NGOs - Foundation for People's Development (FPD), Romanian Foundation for Children, Community and Families (FRCCF), Centrul de zi pentru varstnici, A Warm Meal (O Masa Calda); (2) municipalities - Cluj-Napoca, Alba-Iulia, Targu-Mures; (3) professional organizations - Romanian Society of Energy Auditors and Managers (SAMER), Civic Imagination and Innovation Center (CIIC), proNZEZ, Romanian Green Building Council (ROGBC); (4) companies - ENEL, Electrica, E.ON; Universities – Technical University, Babeş-Bolyai University (UBB).

5. **Find the necessary financial resources** through European grants or other private grants (foundations).
6. **Sustain the model in the long run** mainly by securing the financial resources. This objective goes in line with the fifth objective; therefore, similar actions will be done such as constant stakeholders mapping and negotiation with the most interested ones in order to set collaboration agreements. Moreover, always high-quality training material and assessment will be done, and satisfaction questionnaires will be fulfilled by the end-users in order to show the real importance and impact the project generates.

Indicators and evaluation mechanisms/strategies

The following indicators and evaluation mechanisms will be followed in order to (1) guarantee the correct implementation of the proposed plan, together with the accomplishment of the expected objectives, and (2) for influencing both the policy makers and the people accessing the services in order to catalyse change and action.

Table 3:

Indicators and evaluation mechanisms



Expected Objectives	
Geographical coverage	Local
Number of trained advisors	At least 25
Attended users	300 people
Number of stakeholders involved (private and public)	5
Municipalities commitment level (none - just dissemination - non-financial commitment - financial commitment - implementation - policy adaptation)	Potential to involve with no financial commitments
Private sector commitment level (none - just dissemination - non-financial commitment - financial commitment - implementation - policy adaptation)	Potential to involve with no financial commitments.

Continues on next page

Environmental and social factors

Reduction in energy consumption (kW/h)	Not applicable
Reduction in CO ₂ emissions (CO ₂ tons)	Not applicable
Comfort level improvement	High
Increase operator's empowerment	Medium
Increase users' empowerment (i.e., decreased vulnerability to the energy market) (qualitative)	High
Public acceptance of the model (qualitative)	High
Social operators' satisfaction (qualitative)	High
Training material usefulness (qualitative)	High

Indicators will be checked in a constant manner in order to identify possible deviations and apply the necessary corrections with time and in an effective way. It is worth noting that some of the indicators, the social ones, will be measured through the elaboration of questionnaires that will be fulfilled by the end-users and also by the social operators who receive the training and do the identification and assessment of vulnerable consumers.

Gantt chart

The scalability plan of the ASSIST model is conceived as a 2-year plan. The following Gantt chart shows the project planning, including milestones and all necessary activities for reaching them in a timely manner. It is expected to start with the Scalability of the model in 2022.

Table 4:
Gantt for the Scalability Plan in the city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Gantt for the Scalability Plan Cluj-Napoca city

ID	Activity	YEAR 0	YEAR 1												YEAR 2												YEAR 3	
		MONTH 0	MONTH 1	MONTH 2	MONTH 3	MONTH 4	MONTH 5	MONTH 6	MONTH 7	MONTH 8	MONTH 9	MONTH 10	MONTH 11	MONTH 12	MONTH 13	MONTH 14	MONTH 15	MONTH 16	MONTH 17	MONTH 18	MONTH 19	MONTH 20	MONTH 21	MONTH 22	MONTH 23	MONTH 24	MONTH 25+	
1.	Establishing partnerships with relevant stakeholders																											
1.1	Mapping of new key actors (public and private)																											
1.2	Preparation of a brief project's presentation document																											
1.3	Negotiation with potential stakeholders																											
1.4	Elaboration of written collaboration agreements																											
2.	Design the operational plan																											
2.1	Adapt this Scalability plan if necessary																											
2.2	Financial plan																											
2.3	Distribution of tasks and responsibilities																											
3.	Study programme setup (including organizational details and content)																											
3.1	Review of training from local perspective																											
3.2	Adaptation and translation of training to local circumstances																											
3.3	Designing new content if needed																											
3.4	Professional organization consulting																											
4.	Recruitment of participants																											
5.	Conducting the training courses																											

Continues on next page

Milestones

The Cluj-Napoca city Scalability and Delivery model has established the following milestones:

1. Setting-up the working plan and establishing the programme coordinator.
2. Designing the training materials.
3. Recruiting the participants, contracting the trainer and conducting the training.
4. Support the trainees in passing on their knowledge and skills.
5. Assess the model and implement it in other municipalities.

Controlling strategies

It is intended to keep a constant control of the overall project along its lifespan, in order to foresee any possible deviations and correct them in a timely manner, following the continuous improvement principles. Therefore, the following controlling strategies will be followed:

- **Managerial follow-up:** monthly meetings will be held with the project stakeholders for general financial and managerial issues. Independently, internal meetings will be held with the social operators, in case things are unclear or suggestions arise.
- **Indicators check:** some milestones will be set at the beginning of the project regarding the expected achievement of the project indicators, so every 6 months; indicators will be checked to see how the implementation is going. The idea is to follow the Earned Value methodology.
- **Reporting activities:** every 6 months a project status report will be done, concerning all different aspects of the project.
- **Reviewing the identified risks:** every time a new risk is identified the risks table will be updated. On Managerial monthly meetings, participants will be asked if they have identified any risk or foreseeable risk. Risks will be monitored and controlled along the project's lifespan, especially the high severity risks.
- **Apply preventive and corrective measures:** in case any risk is materialized the corresponding corrective or preventive strategy defined will be implemented.

Risk Management

The table below summarizes the identified risks, and details a response strategy for each of them. From the 6 identified risks, 2 of them are considered of high severity, 4 of medium severity and 0 of low severity, this categorization will determine the prioritization of the risk both in terms of controlling and monitoring and in response.

Table 5:
Risk analysis and
management



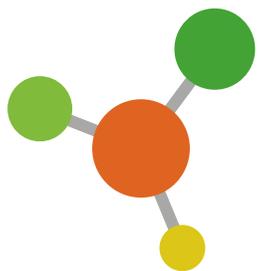
Risk Qualitative Analysis						Response Plan			
ID	Risk	Probability	Factor	Impact Factor	Severity	Name of the response	Description of the response	Strategy	Action
01	Limited financial opportunities existing on the market	60%	2	2	4 Medium	Reach other markets and financial sources	For implementing the project, it is intended to reach other financial opportunities, like European grants or private foundations mechanisms of supporting similar initiatives	Accept	Corrective
02	"Tiredness" of social workers (public authorities and NGOs)	50%	2	2	4 Medium	Financial stimulus and expand the network	While the workload is very high, social workers, once trained, have the potential to pass by the knowledge and just oversee the process. Also, within the training, they will receive a financial stimulus.	Mitigate	Preventive
03	Bureaucratization in the creation of a structure and supra-structure of energy advisors will leave little room of manoeuvre for making decisions and entering the most vulnerable communities	40%	2	2	4 Medium	Stakeholder engagement	Various actors will be engaged in the process of creating the networks of energy advisers. Having a strong grass-root component, each local network will have the capacity to adapt solutions based on the needs. Local networks will have a form of autonomy and will not be held to apply top-down measures.	Accept	Corrective
04	Lack of interest of the private sector	70%	3	2	6 High	Better pitch the model	Try to find the economic opportunities within this model and convince private operators to join the project. Addressing energy poverty brings long term financial benefits.	Accept	Corrective
05	Lack of public awareness and knowledge on energy poverty	50%	2	2	4 Medium	Strong communication	Develop strong communication materials to raise awareness regarding Energy Poverty	Accept	Corrective
06	If incentives are not attractive, trainees may look for other job opportunities.	50%	2	3	6 High	Attractive financial incentives for the Romanian context	Give financial incentives to each trainee who finishes the training.	Mitigate	Preventive

Impact – Probability matrix

Through the use of the impact- probability matrix, it will be possible to identify the existing priority risks throughout the project through Severity, which is calculated by multiplying the corresponding probability and impacts defined for each identified risk. This matrix allows having a more visual image of the identified risks, making it easier to have a special focus on the high severity risks.



Figure 2: Impact – Probability matrix



SUITE



CEEC
Clúster de l'Energia
Eficient de Catalunya



This project has been supported by the European Social Catalyst Fund which has been established and co-funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme, Genio, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and the King Baudouin Foundation