



Community Energy for Energy Solidarity: Evaluation of the CEES pilot projects

Coopérnico chapter

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Introduction

The CEES project and the CEES evaluation

In the Community Energy for Energy Solidarity (CEES)¹ project, six energy communities implemented six pilot projects to alleviate energy poverty, including projects to diversify sources of funding for this work. Knowledge exchange and mutual support between the energy communities was a key component of the six pilots. Within CEES, such projects are referred to as a form of energy solidarity. Led by the University of Birmingham, the CEES team implemented a comprehensive evaluation of the six pilot projects.

Evaluation materials

The following evaluation materials are available at www.energysolidarity.eu/evaluation:

- A short summary of the evaluation findings
- The Full evaluation report (232pp)
- The Executive summary (15pp)
- Individual documents of each of the evaluations of the six CEES pilot projects, plus an additional project that was evaluated through CEES.
- The full Evaluation framework (60pp)

About this document

This document contains the evaluation of the pilot project that was implemented by Coopérnico. In the Full evaluation report, this is Chapter 6 and begins on p69.

Key terms in this document

Energy poverty

The situation in which households are unable to access affordable energy services (such as adequate warmth, cooling, lighting, and energy to power appliances), which underpin

¹ The CEES project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101026972. The project commenced in June 2021 and ran to the end of August 2024.



elements of human flourishing (such as health and wellbeing, relationships, social inclusion, employment, recreation and education). (Day et al.,2016)².

Energy communities

Local collectives of individuals that tend to share values and ambitions relating to: supporting equitable, democratic and fair transitions towards more local, sustainable and efficient energy systems; establishing renewable and decentralised energy systems; assisting local community members with energy efficiency, demand reduction and energy poverty; or economic activity on energy for social and community benefit. These organisations are diverse in structure, size and scope.

Energy solidarity

Actors willingly working in ways that align, on a shared goal of overcoming energy-related adversity that is experienced by one or more of the parties. Energy solidarity is inspired by empathy and / or a sense of justice, and may, but does not have to, involve reciprocal obligation. Stronger solidarity involves a more sustained commitment, and / or a willingness to incur a higher personal cost in pursuit of the shared goal. (Day and Burchell, 2023)³

Fund mechanism

Fund mechanisms are employed to raise funds or income to fund work on energy poverty alleviation.

Identify mechanism

Identify mechanisms aim to seek out and identify households in energy poverty, recruit them to projects and assess their eligibility for projects.

Alleviate ('soft' and 'hard') mechanism

Alleviate mechanisms aim to alleviate energy poverty. 'Soft' alleviation mechanisms do this through household engagement, provision of advice about energy poverty, energy efficiency measures, the provision of energy kits consisting of a variety of small energy efficiency measures (such as window insulation material) and support applying for financial support. 'Hard' alleviation mechanisms alleviate energy poverty through building renovation, retrofitting and refurbishment. In CEES, hard alleviation was undertaken in one pilot project. Several of the CEES pilot projects include recruitment and training for energy advisers. These activities have been included as part of the Alleviate mechanisms.

² Day, R. et al (2016) Conceptualising energy use and energy poverty using a capabilities framework, Energy Policy, 93: 255–264.

³ Day, R. and K. Burchell (2023) Energy solidarity in Energy Communities: alleviating energy poverty and supporting just energy transitions through solidarity approaches.: European Sociological Association RN12 mid-term and Energy and Society Network 6th international joint conference; Energy, Environment and Societies in Crises, 6-8 September 2023, Trento, Italy.



Coopérnico



1. Summary

The evaluation report addresses the following mechanisms.

The main new CEES mechanism

1. **Alleviate:**
 - a. Workshops (promoted by Coopérnico as Energy Cafes): The provision of information on energy efficiency and energy poverty (and the identification of a sub-set of individuals for home visits).
 - b. Home visits: As above, plus energy box⁴ delivery, small improvements (such as insulating windows) and accessing government support.

Additional new CEES mechanisms

2. **Identify:** Working with a network of local partners (energy agencies⁵, municipalities, civil parishes and 'senior universities'⁶) to identify suitable groups, mostly older people, for workshops and to set up Energy Café workshops. This was inspired by ALLenergy's referral network approach.
3. **Fund:** Co-funding of the energy boxes by the local partners.

⁴ 'Energy box' is Coopérnico's term for a box containing a range of easy to install energy efficiency items. The energy box is described in more detail later.

⁵ In Portugal, most energy agencies are private entities owned by municipalities or groups of municipalities, though not all municipalities have energy agencies. The objective of energy agencies is 'to promote the adoption of policies aimed at the rational use and conservation of energy, environmental management and the best use of energy resources' (see <http://www.rnae.pt>).

⁶ Senior universities in Portugal are 'socio-educational responses that aim to create and regularly promote activities in the social, cultural, knowledge, learning and social areas, from the age of 50, pursued by public or private entities, with or without profit' (<https://rutis.pt/universidades-seniores/>).



Evaluation summary

Identify

The first activity in Coopérnico's CEES pilot project was to set up a network of local partners (energy agencies, municipalities, 'senior universities' and others) in the greater Lisbon area. This activity was inspired by ALLenergy's referral network approach: seeking partners that can help to find people that may be in energy poverty. Coopérnico then worked with these partners to set up and implement a programme of energy poverty workshops (known within the project as Energy Cafes). Coopérnico and the partners decided to set up the workshops as part of programmes of weekly events that the partners were already running for *older people*. This decision was made on the basis of published data showing that older people in Portugal often experience energy poverty. This is significant because it meant that the workshops were 'open to all' of the older people and did not include any eligibility criteria. Coopérnico accepted this because the workshops were designed to be of value to all. It was very time-consuming to develop new relationships and set up the workshops. The plan was to then implement a programme of home visits, including the provision of an energy box, for a sub-set of workshop attendees. Coopérnico's objective was for the partners to fund the cost of the energy boxes. Coopérnico's project was publicly promoted as *Gastar Bem a Energia* (Spend Energy Well).

Alleviate

Although it was time-consuming to set up and implement the workshop programme, Coopérnico successfully ran a programme of 20 workshops for 374 people (made up of 266 older people and 108 people in a range of groups) to May 2024, with up to four more workshops planned in summer 2024. In addition, although not evaluated as part of CEES, Coopérnico was invited by the H2020 Sun4All project to deliver a programme of activities (workshops, home visits and trainings) in Braga in northern Portugal. This can be considered as a direct legacy of CEES.

With respect to the CEES workshops in and around Lisbon, as a result of the workshops being 'open to all', there is evidence that around one third of the participants were not struggling with their energy bills. The workshops for older people were highly valued by participants and supported learning and increases in confidence with respect to energy issues. However, three-to-six months after the workshops, the somewhat limited data that was available did not clearly show evidence of longer-term impact on energy poverty among the participants.

Workshop participants were not willing to sign up for home visits due to a range of trust concerns about allowing 'strangers' in their home. Adapting to this, Coopérnico distributed energy boxes at later workshops. In addition, Coopérnico delivered energy boxes in 20 home visits that were implemented by the network of volunteers that had been established and trained in the POWERPOOR project. The evaluation shows that these home visits were also highly valued by the participants. It was not possible to evaluate the longer-term impacts of these sessions because they took place after the data collection

period in CEES. While some partners that Coopérnico worked with were able to fund energy boxes, others were not; as a result, Coopérnico funded some of the energy boxes itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the evaluation shows that it is possible to work with local partners to set up and implement a programme of energy poverty workshops for older people. The ‘open to all’ approach meant that the workshop programme was able to reach a large number of participants (374 to May 2024) relatively easily. At the same time, the evaluation raises questions about the extent to which the ‘open to all’ approach to recruiting participants can also focus on people in energy poverty. Further, the evaluation shows that successful and valued workshops do not necessarily translate into clearly measurable impacts on indicators of energy poverty in the medium term. The evaluation also shows that lack of trust can be a significant issue with respect to visiting the homes of older people. Nonetheless, the legacy of the Coopérnico CEES pilot project is that Coopérnico now has a model for action on energy poverty that can be further developed for use throughout Portugal.

2. Introduction

About Coopérnico (EO1)

[Coopérnico](#) is based in Lisbon, Portugal, and was founded in 2013. It is the only renewable energy cooperative in Portugal and has more than 6,000 members. Coopérnico promotes the involvement of citizens in the energy transition through cooperative investments in PV plants for organisations (charities and SMEs) and through supporting members and local energy communities to install individual and collective generation systems for their own consumption. Tackling energy poverty has been among Coopérnico’s aims for many years and it has been working directly on the issue since 2020. Several Coopérnico staff and members of the cooperative were trained as energy advisers as part of the EU Horizon 2020 POWERPOOR project (2020 to 2023).

The Coopérnico pilot

As mentioned above, the evaluation addresses three key mechanisms in the Coopérnico CEES pilot project: an Identify mechanism, a Funding mechanism and an Alleviate mechanism. In practice, these three mechanisms were integrated to some extent in the Coopérnico pilot. For instance, the work on the Fund mechanism was carried out as part of the Identify mechanism. For ease of presentation, in the sections that follow, the different mechanisms are separated out into different sections.

Timescales

The timescales for the activities in Coopérnico's pilot are shown in Table 6.1.

	2022			2023				2024	
	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4	Q 1	Q 2
Identify: Setting up a new network of local partners									
Alleviate: Workshop programme.									
Alleviate: Home visit programme.									

Table 6.1. Timescales for the Coopérnico pilot project.

Organisational structure

The Coopérnico pilot project was implemented mainly by two staff members, both of whom had been trained as energy advisors as part of the earlier Horizon 2020-funded [POWERPOOR](#) project (2020 to 2023). This core team was supported by a senior manager and by several other staff members, as required. The CEES project team was able to operate largely independently of approvals from other departments in Coopérnico.

3. Identify: workshops (EO3)

Introduction

The Coopérnico mechanism for identifying people to participate in the Energy Café workshops had two elements:

1. Developing relationships with regional and local partners (starting with energy agencies and municipalities) in the greater Lisbon area.
2. Working with the local partners to set up a series of Energy Café workshops for older people, as part of the programme of events that are already run by the partners.

These two elements are discussed below. It is important to note that the Coopérnico Fund mechanism (the co-funding of energy boxes by local partners) also took place as part of this Identify mechanism and had an impact upon it. This is discussed in section 6.5 below.



Developing local partnerships

Process

Inspired by ALLenergy's referral network approach, Coopérnico's Identify mechanism started by developing relationships with a network of relevant public and third sector organisations in the greater Lisbon area, such as energy agencies and municipalities. The purpose of the network was to set up opportunities for Coopérnico to implement a series of workshops and home visits. Coopérnico was not a familiar organisation to the households with whom it hoped to work. Therefore, the Coopérnico team noted that working in partnership with other organisations allowed Coopérnico to '*borrow some trust and legitimacy*', as the team put it, from the partners.

Challenges

Coopérnico was able to identify and contact relevant individuals in relevant regional partner organisations (such as energy agencies and municipalities) fairly easily. However, the key challenge for Coopérnico was that it took far longer than expected for the organisations to respond to Coopérnico's propositions. Part of the challenge here, Coopérnico reflected, was that energy poverty was not seen as a significant problem by the potential partners. Other challenges emerged within the context of setting up the Energy Café workshops. These are discussed below.

Setting up Energy Café workshops

Process

In 2022, Coopérnico and its partners jointly decided to focus on a workshop programme for older people for two reasons. First, this group is often more likely to experience energy poverty than the general population in Portugal (in the Portuguese context, this is often related to meagre incomes, old and big family houses, low levels of literacy, health issues)⁷. Second, because the network partners often have programmes of weekly events into which the Energy Cafes could be easily scheduled. This meant that participants were easily recruitable by the partner organisations. Thus, from late 2022 to the end of 2023, the workshop programme focused on older people.

⁷ This judgement was based on information from the [Energy Poverty Advisory Hub](#), the Portuguese national statistics authority (Instituto Nacional de Estatística) and the [Energy Poverty in Portugal: A municipal analysis](#) report (Portuguese only).



Later in the pilot, Coopernico and its local partners organised further workshops in 2024 that were aimed at other demographic groups. Participants were invited to these workshops without any consideration of whether they were in energy poverty or not.

In order to set up the workshops, the regional partners that Coopernico was in contact with themselves contacted other more local organisations. These were largely parish councils and 'senior universities'. A key characteristic of these local partners is that they all had existing programmes of regular meetings and events for older people, within which a Coopernico Energy Café could be easily scheduled.

An important aspect of the process of recruiting participants for the 2022-2023 Coopernico workshops was that the local partners invited *all of the older people* who usually attended their events. The significance of this is that, although the process focused on older people, it did not specifically focus on older people in energy poverty. The key reason for this approach is that it would have been inappropriate and impractical to try to differentiate between older people in energy poverty and those not in energy poverty. In addition, as one of Coopernico's partners pointed out, if there will be a workshop on energy poverty, the more people that attend the better. The implications of this approach are discussed later.

Challenges and responses

Working through two sets of partners led to delays in setting up the Energy Café workshops. In an attempt to overcome this challenge, Coopernico offered to liaise directly with the local partners, but this option was not supported by the energy agencies and municipalities. This comment by Coopernico summarises this challenge:

It's very weird, because we contacted one municipality and they really looked like they were going to advance and they were eager and they were, "Please send me this and that, so that we can proceed as quickly as possible." Then all of a sudden, they just muted. Well, I talked to them, and I actually asked if I could contact the local association directly and if we could help them with what they were doing, and they said, "It's not hard, what we are doing, and you would just do what we are already doing."

A further challenge in the process of setting up the Energy Café workshops was related to the funding of the energy boxes that would be used in the home visit element of the pilot. Coopernico's proposal to the energy agencies and municipalities was that the workshops and home visits would be funded by CEES and the 'energy boxes' would be funded by the energy agencies and municipalities. Coopernico reported that this financial commitment made it more challenging for these partner organisations to sign up to the energy box element of the Alleviate mechanism. Further, this was also a factor in the delays to the energy agencies' and municipalities' full commitment to the workshop element of the pilot:

'I think approvals for the workshops are easier for them because they wouldn't have to spend money on the workshops, but the energy box is a different story, I think still that's the most problematic bit.'



More generally, Coopérnico commented that everything in the Identify mechanism in their pilot project took longer than had been expected and planned:

'I would say, if you are planning a timeline for this kind of work, you should allow three times the amount of time you might expect.'

Outcomes

As a result of these efforts in its Identify mechanism, Coopérnico was able to set up a total of 20 Energy Café and energy box delivery workshops between December 2022 and May 2024, that reached a total of 374 participants. Due to the different groups of participants, it makes sense to examine the workshop programme in two parts. As shown in Table 6.2, in the workshops in 2022 and 2023, the programme reached 266 older people in 13 workshops. In early 2024 (January to May), Coopérnico ran 7 workshops for a range of different groups (students, young people, school children, the parents of the children and some older people); these workshops reached a further 108 participants. A full breakdown of all of the workshops – including dates, types of participants, location, partners and numbers of participants – is shown in Tables 6.3 (over the page) and 6.4. Up to four further workshops were planned between June and August 2024.

Timing	Participants	Number of workshops	Number of participants
Late 2022-2023	Older people	13	266
January to May 2024	A range of groups	7	108
Total		20	374

Table 6.2. Summary of workshops and participants in the Coopérnico Energy café workshops.



Date	Topic (participants)	Location	Local organiser	Other network partners	Number of participants
9/12/22	Spend Energy Well workshop	Sacavém, Loures	Academia dos Saberes (Universidade Sénior da Câmara Municipal de Loures) – Pólo de Sacavém	None	20
3/2/23	Spend Energy Well workshop	Alto Estanqueiro, Montijo	Academia Sénior de Atalaia e Alto Estanqueiro	Junta de Freguesia de Atalaia e Alto Estanqueiro; S.Energia	18
9/2/23	Spend Energy Well workshop	Montijo	Universidade Sénior do Montijo	Junta de Freguesia do Montijo; S.Energia	17
15/2/23	Spend Energy Well workshop	Pegões	Academia Sénior de Pegões	Junta de Freguesia de Pegões; S.Energia	40
17/2/23	Spend Energy Well workshop	Sarilhos Grandes, Montijo	Academia Sénior de Sarilhos Grandes	Junta de Freguesia de Sarilhos Grandes; S.Energia	34
17/3/23	Energy box workshop and delivery	Sarilhos Grandes, Montijo	Academia Sénior de Sarilhos Grandes	Junta de Freguesia de Sarilhos Grandes; S.Energia	17
12/4/23	Spend Energy Well workshop (older people)	Lavradio, Barreiro	AURPIL - Associação Unitária dos Reformados, Pensionistas e Idosos do Lavradio	Câmara Municipal do Barreiro; S.Energia	12
18/4/23	Spend Energy Well workshop (older people)	Bairro da Liberdade, Barreiro	Café - Centro Sócio Cultural do Bairro da Liberdade	Câmara Municipal do Barreiro; S.Energia	17
27/6/23	Spend Energy Well workshop (older people)	Alcochete	Junta de Freguesia de Alcochete	Câmara Municipal de Alcochete; S.Energia	42
29/6/23	Spend Energy Well workshop (older people)	Samouco, Alcochete	Junta de Freguesia do Samouco	Câmara Municipal de Alcochete; S.Energia	7
18/10/23	Energy box workshop and delivery (older people)	Passil, Alcochete	Centro Social do Passil	Câmara Municipal de Alcochete; S.Energia	5
18/10/23	Energy box workshop and delivery (older people)	Fonte da Senhora, Alcochete	Delegação da Junta de Freguesia de Alcochete de Fonte da Senhora	Câmara Municipal de Alcochete; S.Energia	8
18/10/23	Energy box workshop and delivery (older people)	Alcochete	Casa do Povo de Alcochete	Câmara Municipal de Alcochete; S.Energia	29
Total					266

Table 6.3. Details of the 2022-2023 Coopérnico workshop programme for older people.

Date	Topic (participants)	Location	Local organiser	Other network partners	Number of participants
28/2/24	Spend Energy Well workshop (children)	Alcabideche, Cascais	Ludoteca da Adroana	Câmara Municipal de Cascais	10
28/2/24	Spend Energy Well workshop (young people)	Alcabideche, Cascais	Ludoteca da Adroana	Câmara Municipal de Cascais	10
17/3/24	Spend Energy Well workshop (a mixed group, mostly older people)	Chelas, Lisboa	Casa dos Direitos Sociais	Grupo Comunitário da Flamenga; Câmara Municipal de Lisboa	21
15/3/24	Spend Energy Well workshop and energy box delivery (a mixed group, including the parents of some of the young people at earlier workshops)	Alcabideche, Cascais	Ludoteca da Adroana	Câmara Municipal de Cascais	17
21/3/24	Spend Energy Well workshop (students and residents)	Carcavelos, Cascais	NOVA School of Business and Economics	Câmara Municipal de Cascais	15
8/5/24	Mixed	Carcavelos, Cascais	Universidade Sénior de Sintra - Pólo Algueirão		20
14/5/24	Mixed	Carcavelos, Cascais	Ecoludoteca, São Domingos de Rana	Câmara Municipal de Cascais	15
Total					108

Table 6.4. Details of the 2024 Coopérnico workshop programme for a range of groups of people (January to May 2024).

The demographic characteristics of the older people who participated in the late 2022 and 2023 workshops and responded to the 'baseline' survey are shown in Table 6.5.

	Number of households (%)
Number of people in household	
1	39 (30%)
2	57 (44%)
3	23 (18%)
4/5	11 (8%)
Number of children (aged 17 or less) in household	
0	118 (91%)
1 to 3	12 (9%)
Number of older people (aged 65 and above) in household	
0	16 (12%)
1	54 (42%)
2	47 (36%)
3	2 (2%)
No answer	11 (9%)
One or more person with a disability or long-term illness	
Yes	27 (21%)
No	86 (66%)
No answer	17 (13%)
One or more person in paid employment	
Yes	74 (57%)
No	41 (32%)
No answer	15 (12%)
One or more adult male in the household	
Yes	78 (60%)
No	47 (36%)
No answer	5 (4%)
Type of property	
Purpose built flat or apartment	50 (39%)
House	68 (52%)
Other/no answer	12 (9%)
Tenure	
Owner occupier	93 (72%)
Private tenant	20 (15%)
Other/no answer	17 (13%)

Table 6.5. Demographic characteristics of older people who attended the late 2022 and 2023 Energy café workshops and completed the 'baseline' survey (n = 130).



A further outcome of this work was that, as the result of a Coopérnico CEES dissemination presentation, Coopérnico was invited to conduct a week-long programme of activities in September 2023, in Braga (northern Portugal). During this visit, Coopérnico conducted two workshops for older people, 20 home visits (with ‘energy box’ delivery) and several energy poverty training events for selected employees in the municipality and local schoolteachers. These activities can be regarded as a legacy of the CEES project. Although it was not possible to formally evaluate these workshops as part of the CEES evaluation, Coopérnico reported that these events were largely successful and drew on learning in CEES and POWERPOOR. That said, Coopérnico also reported that the home visits had been set up by a local social housing provider. Unfortunately, the Coopérnico team felt that the home visits had been set up with insufficient choice by the householders; thus, when they conducted the home visits, the Coopérnico team spoke of feeling somewhat unwelcome in some cases.

It is important to address the extent to which the Coopérnico Identify mechanism targeted people in energy poverty. As discussed above, Coopérnico’s Identify mechanism for the 2022/2023 Energy Café workshops largely relied upon the assumption that older people are more likely to be in energy poverty. This approach was certainly sensible in the circumstances because it would not have been feasible or appropriate to exclude some people who attended the partners’ programmes of events; in addition, it has the advantage of being straightforward to implement. However, Table 6.6 shows that 29% of respondents to the ‘baseline’ survey that was implemented at the workshops said that they had ‘no difficulty’ paying their energy bill (and a further 8% indicating that they have almost no difficulty). Meanwhile, 20% indicated that they have great difficulty paying their energy bills (and a further 12% indicated that they have some difficulty). Although we should remember that, based on the CEES definition, difficulty paying energy bills is just one indicator of energy poverty, it would appear that Coopérnico’s approach resulted in them working with higher than desired numbers of people who were less likely to be in energy poverty.

	Number (%)
1 - No difficulty	38 (29%)
2	10 (8%)
3	29 (22%)
4	15 (12%)
5 - Great difficulty	26 (20%)
No answer/Prefer not to say	12 (9%)

Table 6.6. ‘Baseline’ survey responses to the question, ‘Thinking about the past year, how much difficulty have you had with affording your energy bills?’ (n = 130)⁸.

⁸ These surveys were administered at the workshops in 2022 and 2023 for older people (and not at the ones in 2024 for young people and students).

With respect to the 2024 Energy Café workshops, which featured a variety of types of participants, these took place after the deadline for the collection of ‘baseline’ survey data (end of November 2023). Thus, ‘baseline’ survey data was not collected at these workshops and it is not possible to assess the extent to which this group had challenges paying their energy bills. However, in the view of the evaluators, since the 2024 workshops did not have any eligibility criteria and did not focus on a group that is assumed to face energy poverty, it seems unlikely that these workshops were focused on people in energy poverty. For future energy solidarity actions, it is important that Coopérnico considers this issue carefully.

On another note, Coopérnico observed that their 2023/2024 Energy Café workshops, for older people, were attended by more women than men. Coopérnico conjectured that this may be because women are ‘more sociable’ than men. At the same time, Coopérnico observed that the women often commented that the workshops were more relevant to their husbands because they deal with energy-related matters. The Coopérnico delivery team put it like this:

‘There’s another interesting thing that the public that we reach is mainly women, although many of them say, “My husband should have been here because he’s the one that deals with the energy part.” I believe they like these types of gathering more than men and maybe women are more eager to learn than men at this age. Maybe men are less open. ‘

Identify: Home visits

Process

Coopérnico’s original process for identifying households for the home visits was to recruit households at the Energy Café workshops, using the offer of an ‘energy box’ to further incentivise uptake.

Challenges

During the Energy Café workshops (which are discussed in more detail below), Coopérnico very quickly observed that householders were unwilling to sign up for home visits. There were a number of reasons:

- As older people, the workshops participants had often been warned about the need to protect their personal details (such as their phone numbers and addresses) and to take care of their security by not allowing ‘strangers’ in their homes.
- On the basis of past experiences with energy companies, this sometimes also took the form of concerns about being given the ‘hard sell’ in their own home. Despite the legitimacy and trust that Coopérnico ‘borrowed’ from its local partners, these concerns proved to be challenging.
- In addition, it is possible that the participants were concerned that allowing people to visit their home might in some way compromise them in terms of the benefits that they receive.



Responses

As the home visit recruitment challenge became clear, Coopérnico developed a new Identify mechanism for the home visits. In autumn 2023, Coopérnico began to promote home visits through its ‘follower’ communication channels (largely newsletters and social media). In these communications, households were invited to apply online for a home visit.

Further challenges and responses

Early challenges with this approach included requests from households that were clearly not in energy poverty (a request for information about how to cost-effectively heat a swimming pool was a conspicuous example of this). In response to this challenge, Coopérnico made the focus on people in energy poverty clearer and made the application process more stringent.

Outcomes

As a result of these efforts, Coopérnico was able to set up 20 home visits in the greater Lisbon area. These took place in December 2023 and early 2024. Since the Coopérnico home visits took place after the deadline for the collection of ‘baseline’ survey data (end of November 2023), this was not collected and it is not possible to provide a guide as to the extent to which this group had challenges paying their energy bills. The process by which the Coopérnico home visits were implemented is discussed and evaluated later in the chapter.

4. Fund (EO2)

Process

As described earlier, Coopérnico’s original plan was for the energy boxes to be funded by the partners and the implementation of the home visits to be funded by Coopérnico.

Challenges and responses

However, as was explained earlier, it was challenging for the partners to commit to funding the energy boxes. In response to this challenge, Coopérnico continued negotiations with the partners through 2023. In addition, towards the end of 2023, it became clear that Coopérnico would be able to fund some energy boxes itself.



Outcomes

Funding for energy boxes was ultimately secured from one of the energy agency partners (S.Energia, 37 energy boxes, €500) and one of the municipalities (Cascais, 26 energy boxes, €460 out of €3000 spent in Cascais). Further energy boxes were funded by Coopérnico (48 energy boxes, €650).

5. Alleviate: Energy Café workshop processes (EO4.1)

With minor variations and developments, the Coopérnico Energy Cafés had the following structure and characteristics. Relevant specific successes and challenges are included directly after each characteristic:



A Coopérnico workshop for older people.

- The workshops were delivered by two Coopérnico staff members. Both of these individuals had previously trained as energy advisors as part of the earlier EU Horizon 2020 POWERPOOR project.
- The energy advisors often travelled to the workshop locations by public transport as well as by car when there were energy boxes to take.

Challenges: Travelling to workshops by public transport was time-consuming and sometimes challenging with workshop materials. Finding the workshop venues was sometimes challenging.



'Energy boxes' ready to be transported to a workshop.

- The workshops were also attended by one or more of the local partners with whom Coopérnico set up the workshops.
- The workshops were referred to as Energy Cafes because Coopérnico brought refreshments for the participants. Respondents in different workshops responded to this in different ways. In most cases, the refreshments were appreciated.

Challenges: In one case, the refreshments were not touched because it was 'the wrong time of day', while in another case the team got the impression that some participants felt that the refreshments were inadequate.
- The workshops lasted approximately two hours and covered the following topics, usually in this order:
 1. Introduction of presenters, Coopérnico, CEES. Thanks to hosts.
 2. Understanding the energy bill, tariffs, and the social tariff.
 3. CEES 'baseline' survey, intermixed with the presentation (NB: only at the 2022-2023 workshops for older people).
 4. Energy efficiency in appliances and lighting.
 5. Energy efficiency in thermal comfort and insulation.
 6. Self-production or prosumption (e.g. solar PV) (not in all sessions)
 7. Provision of energy boxes (in second workshops and in later first workshops).
 8. Next steps (as appropriate): offer personalised help, offer energy boxes, offer support to funding applications.



A Coopérnico workshop for older people.

- The Coopérnico team ran the workshops in an informal, conversational way. As this quote illustrates, the Coopérnico team felt that this contributed to the success of the workshops: *'We wanted it to be like a conversation between friends, between people that know each other, so we made it very informal. I think we are likeable people, so it was easy for everyone to create some empathy, and that's a strong word, but I think it's the word that we have to use, because they didn't feel intimidated, they didn't feel restrained. They really felt that they could share their experience and that we were there to learn with them also, and that was an incredible experience.'*



Workshop participants with 'energy boxes'.

- Drawing on advice from Les 7 Vents, the team made sure to ask the participants to share their own tips as well as offering their own advice. The Coopérnico team felt that this was a successful approach, as they put it: *'The participants shared their knowledge. So, we asked them to tell us what they already do, and then we complemented the ideas – that's the tip that we had, to not show up like we know everything, but let people say first what they do and what is easier for them to do. And it was a very dynamic session. They were really engaged. It was fun. It was light. I think they definitely took the information with them, so they were really interested in knowing more, in knowing how to save energy. That was very great, yeah.'*

Challenges: Although this was a successful approach, the Coopérnico team also reflected that this can take up precious time in a relatively short workshop. Thus, the team reflected on the facilitation skills that they developed to manage this appropriately.

- The Coopérnico team administered the evaluation ‘baseline’ survey and ‘engagement’ survey on paper during the workshops.

Challenges and responses: It was very challenging and time-consuming for the team to support a large group of older people to complete the surveys all at once. This challenge was addressed in two ways in the later workshops: the Coopérnico team helped the participants to complete the survey in stages and a more straightforward version of the survey was used.



A Coopérnico workshop for older people.

6. Alleviate: short term household experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

Participant experiences of the Energy Café workshops

The CEES ‘engagement’ survey was designed to understand participants’ experiences and the immediate impacts of the engagement events at which energy advisors engaged with householders to provide support. In the case of the Coopérnico pilot, this is the Energy Café workshops and the home visits. This section addresses the Energy Café workshops.

The ‘engagement’ survey was completed by 49 (18%) of the 266 older people who attended the 2022/2023 workshops and by 36 (33%) of the 108 participants in the 2024 workshops. The findings from this survey are shown in Table 6.7. The table shows that levels of satisfaction with the two sets of workshops was high or very high (agreement with the positive statements ranging from 71% to 97%). These findings suggest that the Coopérnico workshops were well-run, suited the needs of participants and were run in a respectful way. Across the measures, it is noticeable that the level of agreement is

higher for the ‘other’ groups than it is for the older people, although disagreement is not different. This could be related to the fact that the ‘baseline’ survey, which was problematic to implement in the 2022/2023 workshops, was not implemented in the 2024 workshops. Alternatively, this might be related to the challenges of supporting older people in a workshop environment.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
The workshop was well-run			
Older people (2022/2023)	43 (88%)	5 (10%)	1 (2%)
Other groups (2024)	34 (94%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
The workshop suited my needs			
Older people (2022/2023)	35 (71%)	13 (27%)	1 (2%)
Other groups (2024)	31 (86%)	4 (11%)	1 (3%)
The workshop was conducted in a respectful way			
Older people (2022/2023)	45 (91%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
Other groups (2024)	35 (97%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)

Table 6.7. Household experiences of the Energy Café workshop programme (Older people: n = 48/49; Other groups: n = 36).

The ‘engagement’ survey also contained three open text questions. The responses to these questions further emphasise the positive experiences of householders and were common to both sets of workshops:

- In response to the question, ‘What was the best aspect of today’s workshop?’, participants offered a wide variety of positive responses. Common themes in these comments focused on the value of ‘tips’ and ‘information’, as well as the clarity and the highly personable style of the presentations.
- In response to the question, ‘Was there anything you didn’t like or didn’t work for you?’, very few participants offered a response. One respondent commented on the explanation of solar PV options while several commented on the complexity of the survey.
- In response to the question, ‘Is there anything further you would like to add?’, further positive comments – similar to those above – were provided by a few participants.

Immediate impacts of the Energy Café workshops

The CEES ‘engagement’ survey also contained two questions about the immediate impacts of the two sets of Energy Café workshops. Table 6.8 shows that the responses to these questions were also positive. More than 70% of the respondents agreed that they had ‘learned practical information and skills’ and ‘feel more confident’ about reducing energy consumption and costs. Once again, across the measures, it is noticeable that the level of agreement is higher for the ‘other’ groups than it is for the older people.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I learned practical information and skills to help me reduce my energy consumption and costs.			
Older people (2022/2023)	28 (79%)	9 (19%)	1 (2%)
Other groups (2024)	36 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I feel more confident than before that I can reduce my energy consumption and costs.			
Older people (2022/2023)	35 (73%)	11 (23%)	2 (4%)
Other groups (2024)	35 (97%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)

Table 6.8. Immediate impacts on households in the Energy Café workshop programme (Older people: n = 49; Other groups: n = 36).

7. Longer term experiences and impacts of the Energy Café workshops

Introduction

In Coopérnico’s pilot, the ‘baseline’ survey was administered at the 2022/2023 workshops for older people. However, the ‘baseline’ survey was not administered at the 2024 workshops, for other groups; this was because they took place after the November 2023 deadline for the collection of ‘baseline’ survey data. The ‘follow-up’ survey was conducted between three and six months after the 2022/2023 workshops. This was sometimes done by the Coopérnico team and sometimes by the partners at later meetings of the groups. The ‘follow up’ survey was not implemented for the 2024 workshops. This means that the following analysis applies only to the 2022/2023 workshops for older people.



Longer term experiences

The Coopérnico ‘follow-up’ survey contained four retrospective questions about longer term experiences of the programme. The survey was completed by 49 older people (18% of the total number of participants), three to six months after the workshops that were discussed above. The findings from this survey are shown in Table 6.9. These results provide further evidence that Coopérnico Energy café workshop programme was successful in terms of its process. Across these four questions, the level of agreement with the statements is 75% or above. Three to six months after their participation, responding households in the programme clearly felt that the programme was well-run (80%) and that the energy advisors listened and were respectful (92%). The slightly lower level of agreement that the programme was adaptable to suit their needs (75%) can be explained by the fact that, from the perspective of the participants, the Energy Café workshop was part of a longer term programme of events; thus, participants might have attended for reasons other than an interest in energy. Finally, an impressive 94% of participants agreed that they would recommend the programme to others.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I think that the programme was well run.	39 (80%)	9 (18%)	1 (2%)
I felt listened to and respected by the people who were delivering the programme.	45 (92%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
I feel that the programme was adaptable to suit my needs.	37 (76%)	9 (18%)	3(6%)
I would recommend the programme to other people who struggle to pay their energy bills.	46 (94%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)

Table 6.9. Longer-term household experiences of the Coopérnico Energy café workshop programme (n = 49).

Longer term impacts: ‘baseline’ and ‘follow up’ surveys

Introduction

As described in more detail in Chapter 2, longer term impacts of the pilot projects were examined by comparing each household’s responses to a ‘baseline’ survey to their responses to an identical ‘follow-up’ survey. Once the Coopérnico ‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’ data had been cleaned and integrated, 43 matched pairs of households were available for analysis; this is 16% of the 266



participants at the 2022/2023 older person workshops. Differences between the 'baseline' survey data and the 'follow-up' survey data were examined using the Related-samples Wilcoxon signed-rank test, with a confidence level of 90% required to establish significant changes. As discussed earlier, 90% was used due to the relatively small sample sizes. It is important to note that any changes between the 'baseline' and 'follow-up' surveys cannot be straightforwardly attributed to participation in the Energy Café workshop programme. This is because changes might be the result of other factors, such as seasonality, which could not be controlled for.

The results of this analysis are presented in the tables below. These tables show all of the items from the 'baseline' and 'follow-up' surveys that relate to energy poverty. Items where a statistically significant change was identified, with a 90% level of confidence, are highlighted in green. The tables also show the means for the variables in the 'baseline' and 'follow up' surveys, as well as the difference between the means. Finally, the tables offer a description of the statistically significant changes.

Findings

The findings in Table 6.10 and Table 6.11 suggests that there was only limited statistically significant change in householders' responses between the 'baseline' survey and the 'follow-up' survey. Although the mean score for ability to pay the energy bill declined, indicating that paying the bill became easier, this was not a statistically significant finding (at 90% confidence).

It is interesting to observe that the three survey items where change appears to have taken place all indicate increased self-restriction of access to energy services. Although it is difficult to be sure, this may suggest that, as a result of the Energy Café workshops, householders were thinking about and restricting their energy use more than they had been before the workshops. Noticeably, difficulty paying bills had decreased a little, although not to a statistically significant level. However, other explanations are also possible. There do not appear to be changes with respect to the negative impacts of energy poverty. It is important to note that these findings are based upon relatively small sample sizes (between 24 and 37 for different items). Nonetheless, given that the experiences of the workshop participants was very positive, both immediately after the workshops and between three and six months later, these findings illustrate how challenging it can be to translate these positive experiences into measurable change.

There was a further set of items in the 'baseline' and 'follow up' surveys, addressing issues relating to energy know-how and understanding, that was not used in the Coopérnico surveys. The reason for this is that Coopérnico decided that it would be too challenging to try to gather this additional data within the older person workshop context.

Survey items	'Baseline' survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
Difficulty affording energy bills. 1: No difficulty; 5 = Great difficulty (n = 39).	3.46	3.16	-0.30	-
Self-restriction of access to energy services in order to be able to afford energy bills. 1: Not restricted at all; 5: Restricted to a great extent.				
Heating (n = 37)	3.16	3.12	-0.04	
Cooking (n = 30)	1.59	2.68	1.09	Increased self-restriction
Refrigeration (switching off fridge or freezer) (n = 28)	1.89	2.42	0.53	-
Cooling the home (n = 26)	3.07	3.33	0.26	-
Doing laundry (n = 36)	1.97	2.65	0.68	-
Heating hot water (n = 32)	2.35	2.85	0.50	-
Lighting (n = 33)	2.30	3.14	0.84	Increased self-restriction
Running electronic devices (for example, TVs, computers and phones) (n = 33)	2.06	2.90	0.84	Increased self-restriction

Table 6.10. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the Coopérnico Energy Café workshop programme (paying bills and self-restriction of access to energy services). The green shading indicates variables where statistically significant findings were observed at 90% confidence.

Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
Negative impacts on household of challenges paying for energy: 1: No impact at all; 5: A lot of impact				
Physical health or well-being (n = 32)	2.33	2.55	0.22	-
Mental health (n = 31)	2.19	2.52	0.33	-
Ability to study at home (n = 24)	2.14	2.08	-0.06	-
Ability to work at home (n = 28)	2.06	2.15	0.09	-
Ability to have visitors in the home (n = 31)	2.30	2.34	0.04	-
Feeling of pride in the home (n = 31)	2.28	2.24	-0.04	-
Feeling comfortable in the home (n = 30)	2.42	2.38	-0.04	-
Feeling safe and secure in the home (n = 31)	2.09	2.31	0.22	-
Ability to access online/digital communication services ... (n = 27)	2.19	2.19	0.00	-
Ability to enjoy recreational activities in the home (n = 26)	2.10	2.14	0.04	-

Table 6.11. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the Coopérnico Energy café workshop programme (negative impacts of problems affording energy).

Longer term impacts: the follow-up survey

The Coopérnico ‘follow-up’ survey contained five questions that retrospectively asked households about changes during the period since their participation in the Energy Café programme. The results are shown in Table 6.12. The findings from these questions indicate that the Energy café workshop programme produced impacts for participants in some respects. For instance, more than 80% agreed that they had learned about using less energy and reducing costs. In addition, a smaller proportion (around half) agreed that they thought their energy bills would be lower, and that the physical and mental health of their household had improved since the workshops.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I have learned more about how to use less energy through participation in the project.	43 (88%)	4 (8%)	2 (4%)
I have learned more about how to save on the cost of energy through participation in the project.	39 (80%)	5 (10%)	2 (4%)
I think my energy bills will be lower through participation in the project.	27 (55%)	11 (22%)	11 (22%)
Participating in the project has improved the physical health of my household.	23 (47%)	15 (31)	11 (22%)
Participating in the project has improved the mental health of my household.	26 (53%)	12 (25%)	11 (22%)

Table 6.12. Longer-term household impacts of the Energy Café workshop programme (n = 49).

8. Alleviate: Home visits process (EO4.1)

Introduction

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Coopérnico experienced challenges recruiting participants for home visits at the Energy Café workshops. In response, Coopérnico then employed an approach in which it identified potential recipients of home visits through its communications with its social media ‘followers’ and newsletter subscribers to an online application process in its website (which was tightened over time). The purpose of this section is to examine the Alleviate mechanism through which the home visits were implemented.



Process

As part of the POWERPOOR project (which ended in August 2023), Coopérnico developed and trained a network of 165 volunteer energy advisors in the greater Lisbon area. During the autumn of 2023, the core of this network (around 8-10 volunteers) was briefed to undertake home visits and other individual energy advice sessions (and later to also deliver 'energy boxes'). The volunteers were given access to basic information about the households that had applied for support, why they wanted a home visit and their location. On this basis, the volunteers themselves selected households that they were able to visit. Coopérnico reported that the home visits consisted of the following elements:

'The home visit is done through normal conversation, talking about energy supply, thermal comfort, humidity and mould, the building itself, windows and doors etc. Then the role of the volunteers is to give some tips and knowledge to increase the energy know-how and literacy of the beneficiaries

Through the 2023-2024 winter, the volunteer energy advisor network was then supported and motivated through monthly online meetings through sharing experiences, successes and challenges. In some meetings, specific energy and energy poverty issues, such as the impact of humidity on health, were discussed.

Challenges

Coopérnico reported that the group of 8-10 volunteers needed considerable support to keep them motivated and active. In addition, the volunteers often complained about having to complete the 'engagement' survey with householders. Coopérnico addressed this issue by explaining the value of evaluation in terms of securing further funding for the work.

Outcomes

As a result of these efforts, the team of Coopérnico volunteers completed 20 home visits during late 2023 and early 2024.



9. Alleviate: home visits - household experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

The 'engagement' survey was completed by households at 13 home visits. This represents 65% of the 20 home visits. The results from these surveys are shown in Table 6.13.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
The home visit was well-run	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
The home visit suited my needs	12 (92%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
The home visit was conducted in a respectful way	12 (92%)	1 (8%)	0 (0%)
I learned practical information and skills to help me reduce my energy consumption and costs.	12 (92%)	0 (0%)	1 (8%)
I feel more confident than before that I can reduce my energy consumption and costs.	11 (85%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)

Table 6.13. Household experiences of the Coopérnico home visit programme (n = 13).

The findings in Table 6.13 show that respondents' experiences of the Coopérnico home visits were typically very positive; respondents felt that the home visits were well run, respectful and suitable for them. In addition, the table shows that the home visits were impactful in terms of learning and confidence.



10. Alleviate: energy boxes (EO4.1)

Processes

The Coopérnico energy boxes contained: a power socket with a timer; draught exclusion strip for windows; power extension with switch; LED bulb; draft exclusion strip for doors (in some cases). In addition to the items themselves, Coopérnico also created a leaflet to explain how to use each item in the energy box.

Coopérnico undertook the entire process of compiling the energy boxes. This included: ordering items, collecting or taking delivery of items, assembling the energy boxes, and transporting/ delivering the energy boxes to workshops or to volunteers.

Challenges and responses

As might be expected, purchasing and compiling the energy boxes was a challenging and time-consuming process. This was often because preferred items were advertised by suppliers as 'available for order' but were in fact out of stock. This led to changes to the contents of the energy boxes and additional time seeking items from other suppliers. Importantly, Coopérnico also commented on the need for storage space and private transport to undertake the task of transporting the energy boxes to various locations.

As was discussed earlier, the original plan for the energy boxes was for them to be delivered in home visits to a sub-section of households that would be recruited at the workshops. However, this was not possible due to the concerns of the workshop attendees. Coopérnico responded to this challenge in three ways:

- Some energy boxes were delivered in the home visits by the volunteer energy advisors.
- Some energy boxes were taken to the later Energy Café workshops and were given to the workshop participants, along with an explanation of how to use the various items.
- With respect to the earlier workshops, some of the energy boxes were given to the participants at second workshops (with the same participants) that were organised for this purpose.

Outcomes

Coopérnico made a total of 111 energy boxes up to March 2024. These were used in a combination of: home visits by the volunteer energy advisors (9 energy boxes); at the later Energy Café workshops (47 energy boxes); and at the repeated workshops from earlier in the Energy Café workshop programme (55 energy boxes).

Coopérnico reported that the workshop participants' reactions to receiving the energy boxes was generally positive. Many of the workshop participants told the Coopérnico team the items were very



useful, and some said that they were not previously aware that power sockets with a timer were available. Some commented these power sockets would enable them to better plan their energy usage and save money.

11. Impacts and experiences for local partners (E07)

The purpose of the CEES 'local partner' survey was to understand, where appropriate, the experiences of local partners in the CEES pilot projects. In the case of Coopérnico, this refers to all of the local partners who were involved in setting up the workshops. Some of the local partners also attended one or more workshop. Coopérnico sent the local partner survey to eight of the local partners with whom they set up the Energy Café workshops. Seven of the local partners responded to the survey. The responses to the quantitative questions in the 'local partner' survey are shown in Table 6.14. The table suggests that the views of the local partners are somewhat mixed: this is indicated by the relatively high levels of neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the statements and by the observation that the highest level of agreement with the positive statements is 4 people (57%). That said, it is positive that 57% of respondents said that the Coopérnico project was well-run and that they would be keen to collaborate further with Coopérnico. In addition, there is relatively little disagreement with the statements.

The qualitative responses offer some clues as to the reasons behind these mixed findings. Among the positive comments, local partners highlighted they were able to reach audiences that they had not reached before, the role in this of the network that Coopérnico set up and the tips and information that Coopérnico provided in the workshops. Somewhat surprisingly, given the positive responses of the participants themselves, one local partner suggested that the information provided in the workshops amounted to 'very little'. Other more negative comments focused on the challenges – that have been discussed earlier – that the Coopérnico team experienced with securing home visits at the workshops and with implementing the 'household' surveys in the workshops.

These mixed findings suggest that it would be useful for Coopérnico to undertake activities designed to consolidate and develop the local network of organisations. This could be achieved in a co-creation workshop for the local partners (in person or online) at which the following activities could be undertaken: review of the 2022-2024 Energy Café programme and the evaluation findings; giving local partners opportunities to describe their own objectives for the Energy Cafes and their experiences of the 2022-2024 programme; and the co-design of developments to the programme for the future.



	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I think that the project has had a positive impact on energy poverty in participating households.	1 (14%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)
I think that the project has had a positive impact on my own or my organisation's ability to work on energy poverty.	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	1 (14%)
I think that the project has enhanced my own or my organisation's appreciation of and respect for the challenges faced by households in energy poverty.	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	1 (14%)
I think the project was well-run by Coopérnico.	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)
I think the project has created and/or supported local networks of organisations and individuals working on energy poverty.	2 (29%)	3 (43%)	2 (29%)
I would be keen to collaborate on future energy poverty work with Coopérnico.	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)

Table 6.14. Feedback from Coopérnico's local partners (n = 7).

12. Impacts on Coopérnico: the legacy of the pilot (EO6)

Participation in the CEES project has produced the following impacts and legacies for Coopérnico:

1. At the start of the CEES project, key Coopérnico staff had been trained as energy advisors (in the POWERPOOR project) but did not have direct practical experience of running projects designed to alleviate energy poverty. During the CEES project, Coopérnico has developed and refined the knowledge, skills and processes to implement energy solidarity projects, particularly through workshops and home visits, and particularly in collaboration with local partners. That said, it is important for Coopérnico to consider ways in which its processes would allow it to more effectively focus on people in energy poverty.
2. Coopérnico has developed a group of local partners in the greater Lisbon area to work together on energy solidarity. With the network review work proposed in the previous section, this network can be consolidated and developed to support future work in the Lisbon area. This network is now being extended into other regions in Portugal (see below).



3. As a result of work in its CEES pilot project, Coopérnico had the opportunity to implement a programme of two Energy Café workshops, 20 home visits and several training workshops in Braga in the north of Portugal (following the approach that was established in CEES). This suggests that Coopérnico is now in a position to develop further partnerships and implement further workshops across Portugal.
4. Participation in CEES has also inspired Coopérnico to consider future plans for fund-raising (in addition to the co-funding work that it did in CEES). In particular, Coopérnico is considering the implementation of a microdonations scheme for its electricity customers, along the lines of the Energie Solidaire model.

13. Key learning from the Coopérnico pilot

Preparing for energy solidarity work

1. The Coopérnico pilot illustrates the value of comprehensive training for energy advisors (in the Coopérnico case, this was undertaken as part of the earlier POWERPOOR project).
2. The Coopérnico pilot demonstrates the value of an organisational structure that allows work on energy poverty to be planned and implemented independently of the need for approvals from other internal departments. The pilot also highlights the value of a small core energy solidarity team that can draw on the input of others as appropriate.
3. The Coopérnico pilot project also emphasises that it takes a long time to set up and implement energy solidarity actions; this is important when planning this work.

Fund

1. The Coopérnico pilot highlights the potential benefits of asking local partners to co-fund energy solidarity work.
2. At the same time, the pilot shows how this approach might present challenges for local partners and thus slow down or jeopardise the development of productive relationships with local partners.

Identify

1. The Coopérnico pilot demonstrates that working with local partners to set up energy solidarity workshops, as part of already-existing programmes of regular events, can be highly productive in terms of reaching relatively high numbers of people relatively straightforwardly.
2. At the same time, despite a focus on older people, the pilot shows that this 'open to all' approach, with no eligibility criteria, is likely to weaken the emphasis on people in energy poverty.

Alleviate

1. The Coopérnico pilot illustrates that a lack of trust among householders can have a significant impact on the potential for home visits to be implemented. The pilot also shows that inviting applications for home visits can overcome this challenge to some extent (although it should be noted that it was Coopérnico's social media 'followers' and newsletter subscribers that were invited, which is likely to be a very small proportion of those in need of support).
2. The evaluation shows that the workshop approach taken by Coopérnico has the potential to increase knowledge and understanding of energy-related matters among participants.
3. However, the pilot suggests that it can be challenging to convert this learning into consistently measurable impacts on energy poverty. This was within a workshop context, which is less household specific than a home visit, for example.

