



Energy poverty, bridging the gap between housing associations and tenants

What measures housing associations
can take to aid their tenants which
are struggling with energy poverty

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN ARE YOU CLASSIFIED AS ENERGY POOR?

- Unable to effectively cook, light or heat their house
 - lack of funds
 - (in)efficiency of the housing insulation and heating system.
 - They also suffer from mental and physical ailments
 - Including long-term health repercussions for children
- Individuals with low wages are more prone to slip into energy poverty
 - housing
 - rising energy prices
 - climatic conditions



INTRODUCTION.

WHEN ARE YOU CLASSIFIED AS ENERGY POOR?

- In 2022
 - 602.000 households
- 75% of the energy-poor households are living in housing association homes.
 - 1 in 6 tenants live in energy poverty



INTRODUCTION. RISING ENERGY PRICES

- Prices of gas and electricity in 2022 compared to 2020
 - Gas: increased by 526%
 - Electricity: increased by 540%
- Rise in energy prices consequence of Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- A price ceiling on energy applied from January first 2023.
 - € 1,45 per m³ of gas up to 1.200 m³.
 - €0,40 per kWh of electricity up to 2.900 kWh.



INTRODUCTION. WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- All houses cannot be renovated in the short term.
 - Construction costs are high.
 - Shortage of materials and manpower.
- Not only the responsibility of housing associations.
 - Tenants can also reduce their consumption, but this does not always go well.



INTRODUCTION. PROBLEM STATEMENT?

- What tenants want to happen regarding energy poverty might not be in line with what social housing associations can do for their tenants. So there may be a gap here.



INTRODUCTION.

MAIN AIM

- The potential gap between housing associations and tenants was examined.
 - Regarding their views on how to combat energy poverty
- The aim of this study:
 - Shed light on energy poverty from both sides.
 - Gain a better understanding of the gap
 - Possible ways to close the gap



RESEARCH QUESTIONS. MAIN QUESTION

- The main question of this thesis is: **What can housing associations do to close the gap between them and their tenants in the social housing sector regarding combating energy poverty?**

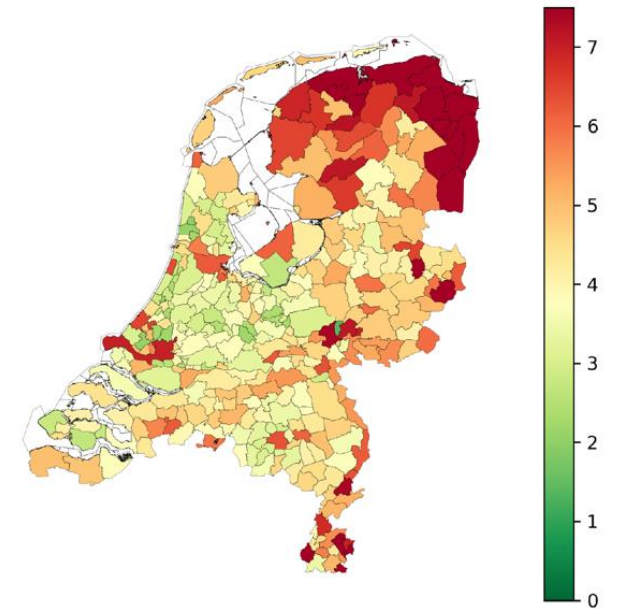


RESEARCH QUESTIONS. SUB-QUESTIONS

- The sub-questions of this thesis are:
 - **What role can social housing associations play regarding combatting energy poverty?**
 - **What role can tenants play regarding combatting energy poverty?**
 - **What is the gap between what tenants and housing associations are doing?**
 - **What recommendations can be given to housing associations regarding combatting energy poverty?**

RESEARCH METHOD. CASE STUDIES

- 2 social housing associations and 2 associated tenant organizations.
 - Randstad & northeast of the Netherlands.
- Focus groups:
 - Step 1: First exploration of energy poverty
 - Step 2: Measures against energy poverty
 - Step 3: Additional measures
 - Step 4: Reconnaissance Measures



Energy poverty per municipality.
Households with high energy bills and very badly insulated house



RESEARCH METHOD. CASE STUDIES

- Assignment & rent
 - More targeted moving options
 - Rent specific to the target group
 - Rent discount for houses with bad energy label (EFG)
- Home Improvement
 - Indoor sustainability improvement
 - Address houses of tenants with rent allowance first
 - Fix teams
 - Energy cooperatives in combination with solar panels
- Behaviour tenants
 - Energy coaches
 - Insight into energy use



RESEARCH METHOD.

SELECTING HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

- **Ymere**
 - 83,984 units.
 - Divided into 7 different districts in metropolitan region Amsterdam
 - The biggest housing association in the Netherlands.
 - The city with the 2nd highest income poverty in the Netherlands.
- **Lefier**
 - 33,744 units.
 - spread among different regions in Groningen & Drenthe
 - The biggest housing association in that region.
 - Contains 2 municipalities that are among the top 20 most energy-poor municipalities in the Netherlands.



SUB-QUESTION 1.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS

- Both housing associations have first set up an energy poverty team.
 - Ymere: The Energy Poverty Project Team.
 - Lefier: The E-Team (Energy Team).



SUB-QUESTION 1.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN

- The number of tenants who could no longer pay their bills remained the same.
 - Ymere even found itself at an all-time low.
- PV panels:
 - Lefier received over 2000 requests in 1,5 years.
 - Ymere saw the willingness increase from 10-20% to 50-60%.
- Mold became a bigger problem.
 - Ymere stated that they wanted to implement policies to address this.



SUB-QUESTION 1.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – MEASURES

- Ymere has drawn up a 14-point plan.
- Lefier focused more on arrangements with solar panels and double glazing.
 - Lefier has also started distributing energy-saving materials.
- Both associations focus on changing the behaviour of tenants
 - Ymere: the later a home is renovated, the earlier a fix team will come by.



SUB-QUESTION 1.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – BARRIERS

- Ymere
 - Money
 - Silent group
 - Capacity
- Lefier
 - Silent group
 - Contradictory measures
 - Capacity



SUB-QUESTION 1.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – ADDITIONAL MEASURES

- Ymere: Advocate at the government to maintain a price ceiling
 - At least for the lowest-income tenants.
- Lefier: Doing everything within their power that they believe is useful.



SUB-QUESTION 1.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – PRIORITISING MEASURES

- Ymere:
 - Indoor sustainability improvement
 - Deploy fix teams
 - Tackle homes with rent benefits first and rent specifically by target group
- Lefier:
 - Indoor sustainability improvement
 - Insight into energy bill and energy coaches
 - Rental price specific to target group



SUB-QUESTION 2.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN

- Tenants are quite self-reliant.
 - When it goes wrong, it really goes wrong.
- Tenants find other ways to keep themselves warm.
 - Putting on an extra coat or using petroleum and electric heaters.



SUB-QUESTION 2.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – MEASURES

- Communication does not always go well.
- Tenants are not aware of the measures.
 - They got other things on their mind.
 - Don't have the time to look up energy-saving measures.
 - Illiterate – integration doesn't always go well.
 - This problem lies more with the government.



SUB-QUESTION 2.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – BARRIERS

- Both organisations state the same:
 - Shame
 - Capacity



SUB-QUESTION 2.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – ADDITIONAL MEASURES

- Ymere
 - Implementing current measures better by improving houses energetically
- Lefier
 - Controlling the contractors better
 - Prioritising measures (double glazing before pv-panels)



SUB-QUESTION 2.

RESULTS FOCUS GROUPS – PRIORITISING MEASURES

- Ymere:
 - Rental discount for low labels
 - Use energy coaches
 - More targeted moving options
- Lefier:
 - Rental discount for low labels
 - Indoor sustainability improvement
 - More targeted moving options

SUB-QUESTION 3.

WHAT IS THE GAP BETWEEN WHAT TENANTS WANT AND WHAT HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS ARE DOING?

- A total of 7 gaps were found, these gaps are:
 - Tenant involvement
 - Tenants not engaged with housing associations
 - Technology illiteracy
 - Tenants not understanding the technology
 - Communication
 - No clear communication from the housing association
 - Diversity and inclusion
 - Tenants do not integrate successfully
 - Trust
 - Tenants do not trust the housing associations
 - Shame
 - Tenants are ashamed of their situation, and don't seek help because of that
 - Measures
 - where the housing association wants to focus on targeted renovation, fix teams and energy coaches, the tenant organizations want to focus more on rental policy, fix teams and energy coaches



SUB-QUESTION 4.

WHAT RECCOMENDATIONS CAN BE GIVEN TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS REGARDING COMBATTING ENERGY POVERTY?

- **Tenant engagement**
 - Participation events
 - Recruiting neighbourhood ambassadors
- **Technology illiteracy**
 - Additional manuals
 - Information evenings
 - Individual support

SUB-QUESTION 4.

WHAT RECCOMENDATIONS CAN BE GIVEN TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS REGARDING COMBATTING ENERGY POVERTY?

- **Communication**

- Provide detailed info on plans and timelines
- Not only via letters but also via email, digital newsletters or mobile apps

- **Feedback on communication**

- Ymere: involvement of tenant organisation is needed
they are working hard to develop a “basic social plan”
- Lefier: they review all communication with the tenant organisation

- **Social inclusion**

- Signalling housing associations via Neighbourhood managers.
- Personally guide them through the neighbourhood.

SUB-QUESTION 4.

WHAT RECCOMENDATIONS CAN BE GIVEN TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS REGARDING COMBATTING ENERGY POVERTY?

- **Trust**

- Intermediaries can act as bridges.
- They can provide independent advice, addressing physical and emotional needs.
- Energy coaches.

- **Feedback on trust**

- Ymere: timing of the interventions is crucial
tenant organisations also play a role
the organisations should be (professionally) supported
- Lefier: they do not encounter this problem

SUB-QUESTION 4.

WHAT RECCOMENDATIONS CAN BE GIVEN TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS REGARDING COMBATTING ENERGY POVERTY?

- **Shame**

- Lowering the threshold.
- Support groups, creating a sense of community
 - Normalising struggles
- Trusted people can reach out, to encourage open conversation.

- **Feedback on shame**

- Ymere: this problem is less easily graspable
reaching the intended target group will be difficult
deploy own service technicians instead of unfamiliar contractors
- Lefier: could be better organised by tenant organisations
they question if the intended target group is open for such talking groups



SUB-QUESTION 4.

WHAT RECCOMENDATIONS CAN BE GIVEN TO HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS REGARDING COMBATTING ENERGY POVERTY?

- Measures
 - Indoor sustainability improvements are favoured by 3 of the 4 groups.
 - If challenging, energy coaches and fix teams can be considered, preferred by 3 of the 4 groups.
 - Combining approaches and mapping areas.
 - To enhance precision in providing support to households in need.



CONCLUSION.

- This research looked at what housing associations can do to close the gap between them and their tenants in the fight against energy poverty.
- The main findings of the study:
 - Classified as energy poor if you're unable to effectively heat your home
 - Tenants are creative in dealing with energy poverty
 - The biggest gaps that were found were communication, shame and trust
 - Cooperation with tenant organisations is crucial for implementing recommendations



DISCUSSION.

- The research questions have been answered completely
- Energy poverty has not yet received much attention
- Strengths:
 - More than 1 side of the problem
 - More than one area was investigated
- Weaknesses:
 - The recommendations aren't proven to work



DISCUSSION.

- Who can use this report?
 - Tenants who experience energy poverty
 - Housing associations
 - Tenant organisations



REFLECTION.

- A different approach at the beginning of my research
- Supervision was sometimes a bit overwhelming
- Communication is key
- Biggest challenge:
 - The workload between P2 and P4, but especially between P3 and P4.
- Project contributions future studies:
 - Finding out if the given recommendations really work



THANK YOU
ALL FOR
LISTENING.

