

## POWERTY PROJECT

### TRANSCRIPTION OF THE RADIO INTERVIEW

11/02/ 2020 - Joaquín Villar Rodríguez - Onda Local de Andalucía

Interview in Onda Local Andalucía about POWERTY project, 9 minutes ([Spanish](#))

Seven hundred thousand Andalusians, 9.2% of the population of our Autonomous Community, live in energy poverty. This percentage is higher than the Spanish average, which is 8.3%, according to the study "energy poverty in Spain: approach from an income perspective", prepared by the Chair of Energy Sustainability of the Barcelona Institute of Economics.

According to this analysis, Andalusians spend an average of 937 euros a year to pay for their energy consumption compared to an average income of 19,736 euros.

With this reality in the background, Andalusia leads the European project POWERTY, in pursuit of green solutions to tackle energy poverty. The Andalusian Energy Agency, an entity assigned to the Ministry of Finance, Industry and Energy, launches this European project under the Interreg Europe programme, and with a budget of over one million euros aims to facilitate that vulnerable groups affected by this situation can use renewable energy through the promotion of innovative and low-cost solutions.

Let's go deeper into what this project consists of at European level and how it is developed in our region. For this, we greet Joaquín Villar, who is Head of Internationalisation and Prospective of the Andalusian Energy Agency.

Good morning, Joaquín Villar and welcome to Onda Local de Andalucía.

Good morning.

What is POWERTY and how did it come about?

Yes, well, POWERTY is, as you have already mentioned, a project that comes from the European Commission under the Interreg Europe programme. Like other Interreg Europe programmes, what it seeks are interregional collaborations between the different European regions to address common problems such as energy poverty. We lead a consortium of six countries including France, Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania and the United Kingdom. The participation of the United Kingdom is important because they

lead the European Observatory on Energy Poverty at European level and therefore they are perfectly aware of the situation of energy poverty at European level.

Well, focusing on the project, as you have said, the objective of the POWER TY project is to seek solutions to reduce energy poverty based on renewable energies. It is a different approach to the one that has been traditionally undertaken, which is to reduce the energy bill through the social bonus, or through energy rehabilitation measures. What we want, what we pursue in the project, is to try to ensure a minimum amount of energy – that we could say is necessary to maintain the interior temperature of the home in conditions that are considered adequate - for this vulnerable group affected by energy poverty.

And how do you plan to achieve these objectives? With what mechanisms?

Well, as I said, since this is an Interreg Europe project we are looking for good practices that exist in other regions to address the problem of energy poverty. I have mentioned Lithuania and Bulgaria, which appear in the EUROSTAT statistics as the countries most affected by energy poverty. I have mentioned the European Observatory of Energy Poverty. What we are going to do is during a period of approximately 2 years is organise meetings, seminars, workshops, where we are going to approach the different solutions that have been proposed in the different regions to tackle energy poverty and where we are going to try to learn from these solutions to be able to implement them in Andalusia.

We are going to approach this study in 4 fundamental topics. The first one is related to new innovative technologies in renewable energies that will be applicable to vulnerable groups. We will also study innovative financing formulas for these groups. We are also aware that improvements in the regulatory framework are necessary. We will try to analyse what other improvements have been implemented in other regions in order to try to implement them in Andalusia. We also want to empower these vulnerable groups so that they can participate in the solutions themselves and we will also look for measures in the field of social innovation.

You also seek the participation of entities that are involved with these groups, right? And, also with the energy field?

Yes, it is an essential part of this project to involve regional stakeholders, which is an exercise that we have to do in Andalusia and in the rest of the regions that participate with us. In the case of Andalusia, we have already identified 30 key actors in this project. We recently held a meeting where we started to discuss this issue and there

are many groups, such as municipalities, consumer organisations, social services entities and agents, energy companies, entities also in the field of social economy, or even business associations linked to renewable energy.

Joaquín Villar, these technologies linked to renewable energies are said to be high-cost technologies. How are we going to use these good practices in renewable energies to improve the lives and quality of life of the most vulnerable people who are suffering from energy poverty?

Yes, as I mentioned before, the approach of the project is really innovative in the sense that it seeks the solution, not from the point of view of reducing the energy bill, of reducing costs, but of generating the minimum energy needed by these people to be able to live in adequate conditions. In this sense, we are going to involve these stakeholders in these solutions based fundamentally on the search for new lower-cost technologies aimed mainly at vulnerable groups. As well as new financing formulas, which are also suitable for these groups. We will look for good practices in these two topics, and as I mentioned earlier, an improvement in the regulatory framework that will allow these new financing formulas, or these new technologies, to be more widely used by these groups.

In addition, there is a clear double objective here, a double focus, that is, to improve the quality of life of these people and there is an important benefit for the environment.

Indeed, we see from other partners such as Bulgaria or Poland that energy poverty is also linked to the consumption of highly polluting fuels such as coal. The environmental impact of boilers consuming coal is impressive, and well, these regions face not only the problem of energy poverty but also the very serious problem of environmental pollution, which ultimately affects health. We are talking not only about energy but also about health. In this sense, the project aims to respond to this energy transition from highly polluting fuels to renewable fuels, which provide a clean, safe and quality solution.

So this is the trajectory of this pioneering European project POWERTY, framed in the Interreg Europe programme, which is being implemented here in Andalusia, thanks to the Andalusian Energy Agency, entity assigned to the Ministry of Finance, Industry and Energy. We have met today with Joaquín Villar, Head of Internationalisation and Energy Prospective of the Andalusian Energy Agency.

Thank you very much for joining us Joaquín. Have a good day.



Thank you very much. Thank you.