



# Improved protection against discrimination of customers in need through the implementation of the legal and regulatory framework



## *STUDY ON*

*Current situation of “Customers in need” regarding the supply of electricity, social and economic effects caused by the lack of electricity or restrictions in receiving this service.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study is conducted by the non-profit organizations T'REJA Center, Egyptian and Roma Youth Movement, Center for Social Advocacy, Community Action Center, the Center "Albanian Consumer" and the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination. The purpose of this study is to explore and inquire the relationship of the most impossible stratum of society (or as it will be differently categorized in the role of the consumer as the customer in need), with a vital service like electricity. This study aims to measure both the solvency of the customer in need and the social and economic impact caused by the lack of electricity or the impracticability to benefit from this service. The data and analysis generated by this study will serve to public institutions such as the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and other institutions, as well as non-profit organizations which are involved in this initiative, the public and other interested parties, for a better recognition of the problem, in order to find an appropriate solution, in accordance with the real needs of these social groups of the Albanian society.

The main goal remains sharing these findings with the institutions charged by Law No. 43/2015 "On the electricity sector", as amended, so that they can be urged to fulfill their constitutional and legal obligation in adopting the legal act of the consumer known as the "customer in need".

The study is conceived as a reflection of the three main aspects affecting the status of the "customer in need", and more specifically the legal, social and economic aspects. Legal analysis sets out the acquaintance of the right provided in law, its non-guarantee and non-materialization due to non-approval of the necessary by laws. The social aspect reflects social groups deepening their impossibility, due to non-approval of the bylaws. The economic aspect aims to provide an overview of the economic cost of electricity in

the families of the aforementioned social groups, categorizing them on the basis of income in order to identify energy poverty.

In order to assess the impact of appropriate policies and instruments, and to understand the scale and depth of the problem, it is important to measure the energy poverty at a national level. The process of electing the appropriate indicators and approaches for application or development are factors that still are present in many debates, and are displayed in the following analysis. There is a specific chapter dedicated to the economic component, analysing it in details, due to the importance that this study has provided to the concept of energy poverty, based on the European standards, the economic aspect of the families and the economic impact of energy in these families. The purpose of this economic analysis, among others, is to determine the structure of family's electricity consumption, focusing on how much electricity is consumed by each family, for each electricity service provided to these families.

The project assessed the impact and public awareness of energy poverty in the participating cities, as well as researched strategies and financial mechanisms to support families in energy poverty. As conditions vary between cities, in different cities there are socio-economic factors that put some families more at risk of energy poverty and these include: low income (especially those who do not qualify for additional financial assistance), unemployed, retiree, the elderly, families with minor children, families with one parent, families with persons with disabilities or persons with chronic diseases, persons living alone, lower level of education, families of national minorities, mainly Roma and Egyptians, low-income of single adults, families living in inefficient energy homes.

One of the most important elements of the study for determining the minimum electricity

requirements of family in need is undoubtedly the analysis and consideration of government policies and strategies to support categories of family in need, so that they are able to financially afford to pay the electricity bill.

## 2. Methodology

As an initial support basis for the categorization of the consumer as a “customer in need” are taken the families categorized in Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 565/2006, Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 404/2012 and Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 8/2015. Currently these are the only acts that provide electricity compensation for some categories of households classified as in need.

According to public authorities, the number of beneficiaries is about 200,000 families. Referring to these Decisions, as beneficiary groups are included: families treated with economic assistance, disabled head of the families, blind, paraplegics, tetraplegics, retired heads of the family in the city and village and employees with salaries below 35 thousand ALL per month. These are the social groups that have served as a basis of the study, but in order to have a more comprehensive analysis, are taken into consideration other social groups who do not receive compensation due to the fact that they are not part of any of the categories of the above three DCMs.

In order to provide the socio-economic assessment of the target groups, it was prepared a questionnaire. The instrument used in the quantitative data collection was the survey in which closed-ended questions with semi-open-ended questions were integrated (see Annex at the end of the study).

The questionnaire consisted on 44 general questions. It intertwined open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions with predefined answers, giving respondents the opportunity to choose and rank between several options or the opportunity to rate on a “very low” to “very high” scale. There was given an optional space to elaborate the answer, in each question. This open section is considered of great importance for a

study of this kind as it contributes in improving the interpretation of its overall results and provides valuable additional information to the authorities.

The questionnaire used a sampling technique due to the small size of the population and collected data on the socio-economic status of the interviewed groups, as well as on energy practices focusing on the types of cooking fuels and appliances, as well as costs of electricity used every month for basic needs such as: cooking, heating, lighting.

The final instrument of the questionnaire consisted of questions related to the types of energy and household stoves, energy costs and consumption practices, and the factors that influence the source (fuel) choices of homes.

The tools used for the realization of the questionnaire were tablets and mobile phones equipped with google forms application, through which the data are automatically generated in the respective database.

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews, during the period September-October 2020. Considerable efforts were made to collect data from all households selected to be part of this study. The information gathered was useful to track these households and analyze their situation in the context of the energy poverty situation.

The study was based on the combined/mixed quantitative-qualitative method of data collection.

The study sample consists of about 1005 cases representing 4,713 family members. The study relied on two criteria regarding the geographical scope. The first criteria originated and, at the same time, was conditioned by the areas in which the organizations involved in this project operate. More specifically, given that the members of the organizations were engaged as interviewers for the implementation of the study, it was deemed necessary for the study to be extended to areas that are better known by the organizations and where more human resources are available. In determining the second criterion, it was assessed the necessity of including urban areas throughout Albania (South, North and Central Albania), in order to build a representative map

of the studied units. The municipalities where the study took place are: Tirana, Elbasan, Durrës, Korçë, Pogradec, Berat, Fier and Shkodër. As areas in which the survey will be applied were also identified neighbourhoods with the highest number or percentage of residents belonging to this social stratum. The method that was applied in the predetermined areas according to the above criteria was random sampling, through the technique of random selection of the subject to be interviewed.

The qualitative study was realized through focus groups and in-depth interviews. 16 focus groups were conducted, in a classification of two focus groups for each municipality. In each of the focus groups, participated 8 individuals classified by gender. The classification into two groups based on gender was conceived in order to examine the gender perspective in relation to the social and economic impact of the lack of electricity in the respective households. A questionnaire was developed for the focus groups that aimed to further explore the variables addressed through surveys as well as other elements that could not be fully identified through the quantitative data collection tool.

### 3. LEGAL COMPONENT

#### 3.1 Standard under International Human Rights Law

The right to adequate housing is a human right recognized in international human rights law as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. One of the first references to it is in Article 25 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, widely regarded as the main instrument for the protection of the right to adequate housing, refers to the right of everyone to a proper standard of living for himself and his family, including food, suitable clothing and housing, and for the continuous improvement of living conditions (Article 11).

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized that the right to adequate housing should not be

misinterpreted. Rather, it should be seen as a right to live in security, peace and dignity. The characteristics of the right to adequate housing are mainly explained in General Comment no. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing and no. 7 (1997) on compulsory evictions of this committee.

Proper housing should provide more than four walls and one roof. A number of special housing conditions must be met so that we can talk about “suitable housing”. In order to be considered an adequate housing, it must at the very least, meet the criteria related to: “Availability of services, materials, equipments and infrastructure”. According to this criteria, housing is not suitable if its inhabitants do not have guaranteed drinking water, adequate sewerage, and energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or waste disposal.

Human rights are indivisible, inalienable, and inviolable. In other words, violating the right to adequate housing can affect the enjoyment of many other human rights and vice versa. Access to adequate housing may be a precondition for the enjoyment of certain human rights, including the right to work, health, education, social security, the right to vote, as well as private and family life.

Electricity is a key and essential component of adequate housing, so living in the present day without electricity makes everyone’s life difficult or extremely impossible. Access to electricity is an unavoidable prerequisite for adequate housing and at the same time is essential to guaranteeing other rights, while also ensuring poverty reduction. Lack of access to electricity is both a consequence of poverty, but also one of its causes. As above mentioned, the right to have electricity is undoubtedly a fundamental human right.

As a fundamental human right, the government must provide but also fulfill this right by guaranteeing it. Obligation to fulfill this right means that the government must take positive measures to ensure and facilitate the possession of rights, especially for the most disadvantaged social groups, who otherwise, will not be able to access electricity and consequently they will

always be in conditions of inadequate housing.

The importance of the right to have electricity clearly results from the fact that it is one of the Global Sustainable Development Goals and specifically Goal 7: Calls for affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. This means that without access to electricity there is no development or guarantee of inclusion and equal opportunities.

### 3.2 Standard in the framework of the Council of Europe

In the framework of the Council of Europe, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter, do not directly refer to the right to adequate housing, but in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), its protection has come as a result of possession of other human rights, such as the right to privacy, the right to property and the peaceful possession of fortune and the right to the protection of the family.

The European Court of Human Rights in the case of Pocasovschi and Mihaila V. The Republic of Moldova And Russia (claim no. 1089/09) has ruled that the lack of electricity is a violation of human rights namely Articles 3 and 8, no one may be subject to degrading and inhuman treatment as well as the right to private and family life. In this case the court concluded that the men detained in prison without water, energy and heating were held in inhumane conditions..

### 3.3 Standard in the framework of the European Union

Directive 2009/72 / EC, adopted by the European Parliament and European Council concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity, provides in Article 7 that:

“Member States must take adequate measures to protect consumers and will ensure that adequate protection measures are taken to protect vulnerable consumers. In this context, each Member State will define the concept of vulnerable consumers, which will refer to poverty and, among other things, must stop the power outage for consumers in critical cases.

*Article 8 of this Directive provides:*

*“Member States should take adequate measures such as drafting the national energy action plans, which bring benefits to the social security system and provide the necessary energy supply to vulnerable consumers or provide support to improve energy efficiency”.*

### 3.4 Enforcement of the principle of non-discrimination

Discrimination is any, distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference, based on any cause protected by law, which has as its purpose or consequence the hindering or making impossible the exercise, in the same manner as with others, of the fundamental rights and freedoms recognized by the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, international acts ratified by the Republic of Albania, as well as with the laws in force.

Non-discrimination and equality are fundamental human rights principles and crucial elements of the right to adequate housing.

The principle of non-discrimination requires not only equal treatment of the same / similar situations but also different treatment of different situations. Discrimination is associated with the marginalization of vulnerable groups of the population and is generally at the root of structural inequalities within societies.

The overlap and interaction of some discriminatory causes, for example, based on gender and race, ethnicity or disability, economic status or social status, puts low-income people in a situation with even more serious consequences. Consequently, multiple discrimination must always be addressed and taken into account, as only in this way do we effectively address and ensure protection against discrimination and at the same time provide premises for the elimination of structured discrimination in society.

### 3.5 Albanian Legislation Provisions for the “customer in need”

The Constitution of Albania does not provide the right to housing in the catalogue of rights but in article 59 under the heading “Social Objectives”, is provided that the State, within its constitutional powers and the means at its disposal, and to supplement private initiative and responsibility, aims the “fulfilment of the housing needs of its citizens”, as well as “the highest possible

standard of physical and mental health.” Also, the same provision stipulates that “The law defines under what conditions and to what extent the realization of these objectives can be claimed”.

So, the social objectives to be achieved need the adoption of special laws, which in their provisions also recognize rights that become binding to implement. The Albanian Parliament has approved Law no. 22/2018 “On social housing”, which has defined the concept of “adequate housing”, which should guarantee a private, safe, peaceful and dignified life. One of the essential conditions for a suitable housing, according to this law is the access “to public services, such as: supply of drinking water and electricity, disposal of polluted water and waste management”.

In 2015, Albanian Parliament with proposal of the Council of Ministers, approved Law no. 43/2015 “On the Electricity Sector”<sup>1)</sup>, as amended. In this regard was provided for the first time, the regulation with the used term “customer in need”<sup>2)</sup>. This law is fully aligned with Directive 2009/72 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 “on common rules for the internal market in electricity”.

According to the Law, this term means “every household customer, who, due to his social status, possesses certain special rights related to the supply of electricity, provided in exceptional cases, according to the provisions of this law.” The law provides the obligation of the Council of Ministers to issue decisions regarding the aspects , criteria and procedures on how the categories included in the customer in need, will profit.

Law no. 43/2015 “On the Electricity Sector” has adjusted this relationship in its respective articles 95 and 96. According to the provisions of Article 95, the Ministry responsible for drafting the criteria, procedures of obtaining the status of

customer in need and their treatment, which are approved by decision of the Council of Ministers, is the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, as the responsible ministry for social issues. The law stipulates that the drafting of these criteria and procedures by this ministry should be completed in cooperation with the ministry responsible for energy (Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy) and the Ministry of Finance, as well as in discussion with the Energy Regulatory Entity (ERE) and stakeholders.

The essential criteria for obtaining this status are determined by law, and one of them, specifying who can benefit, is the low -income customers. But, in order to apply the right that the law guarantees for low-income persons, known as “customers in need”, it is provided the approval of a sub-legal act, which will determine the modalities and procedures. Within 15.06.2016, should have been approved the Decision of the Council of Ministers, which would enable individuals and low-income families to benefit from this legal right. Almost 5 years since the adoption of the law, this act has not been approved yet.

But what do the categories in need, considered as beneficiaries and possess the status of “customer in need” benefit?

The answer to this question can be given based on Article 96 of the law, which provides that family consumers who have received the status of “customers in need”, in accordance with the provisions of Article 95 of this law, have the right to benefit from the Universal Supply Service.

The law (Article 2, point 76) defines the “Universal Supply Service” as a public service for supplying consumers, which ensures their right to be supplied with electricity of a certain quality, throughout the territory of the Republic of Albania, at regulated prices, easily and clearly comparable, transparent and non-discriminatory. The Decision no. 246, dated 11.12.2018 of the Board of the Energy Regulatory Entity, approved the Regulation “On specific conditions for interruption of electricity supply to “customers in need”. Articles 95 and 96 of Law no. 43/2015 “On electricity sector”, regulate the situation of the customer in need. Based on the provisions of this regulation, the Universal Supply Service is in charge of the obligations, including:

The supplier must establish systems / processes

1) Law no. 43/2015 "On the electricity sector" has been amended by law no. 7/2018, dated 15.2.2018, changes which do not affect the forecasts regarding the client in need.

2) This law is fully aligned with the Directive 2009/72 / EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated 13 July 2009, "On common rules for the internal market in electricity, which repeals Directive 2003/54 / EC", number CELEX: 32009L0072, Official Journal of the European Union, Series L, Nr. 211, dated 14.8. 2009, pp. 55 - 93. In this sense, the customer in need fits the concept of vulnerable customer according to the directive.

that ensure that the - Electricity Supply Interruption (power outage) to customers, who possess the status of “customer in need” and are registered as such, will be possible based on the specific conditions for this category of customers. Electricity Supply Interruption (Power outage) cannot be possible to “customers in need” due to non-payment of electricity bills.

Electricity Supply Interruption cannot be possible in case of non-payment when a customer benefits from the status of “customer in need”, except when in the previous 12 months, the service provider (supplier) has twice offered a payment plan that is suited to the client’s income or payment assistance, within the status of “customer in need” and is rejected by this customer in need.

Electricity Supply Interruption cannot be possible in cases when the customer has submitted and is in the process of processing his request, to be classified as a “customer in need”.

When the customer or one of his family members uses life support devices which operate with electricity and has previously formally notified the Universal Supplier about this issue.

Electricity Supply Interruption cannot be possible on days when the Supplier does not provide customer service in Customer Care Centers (CCC), or: a) When the Customer is adhering to a formal payment plan. b) When the Customer has submitted a complaint, to the ICC or ERE offices, regarding the universal supply service.

- Despite the above, the supply of electricity to “customers in need”, can not be interrupted in the following cases:

When a Customer in need of electricity does not pay for the supply of electricity, whether fully or partially, as required in the electricity contract, but his total liability to the supplier charged to provide the public service, does not exceed the minimum level of income, or

On weekends or holidays, as well as in cases of atmospheric conditions with daily temperature - 15 degrees Celsius.

At the request of the customer in need, the Supplier is obliged to take measures to reactivate the electricity supply, within 48 hours from the payment of the constraints for electricity. - The Electricity Supply Interruption to “customers in need” can be done only under the conditions and according to the procedures provided by the ERE Regulation.

It should be noted that although this Regulation has been approved by the ERE, it remains ineffective as it requires as a precondition the approval of the sub legal act by the Council of Ministers for the “customer in need”.

Prior to the adoption of Law no. 43/2015 “On electricity sector”, the Albanian Government has taken some measures to reduce various categories in need such as: families with economic assistance, heads of families with disabilities, retiree, invalids and state employees with a salary below 35,000 ALL per month, who receive energy compensation in implementation of the following acts:

DCM no. 565 dated 09.08.2006 “On the protection of the people in need from the increase of the price of electricity”, amended;

DCM no. 404 dated 20.06.2012 “On determining the criteria and procedures for obtaining financial compensation, for persons with the status of blind and disabled, paraplegic and tetraplegic, for electricity bill and fixed telephony bill.”

DCM no. 8 dated 14.01.2015 “On the protection of the people in need for the removal of the band of electricity consumption up to 300 KWH per month”.

The sub legal acts provide support for categories in need, given as financial compensation for electricity. It should be noted that all these sub legal acts are acts that have emerged before the entry into force of the provisions of the Law “On the electricity sector”.

At the time of adoption of Law no. 43/2015 “On the Electricity Sector”, they are assessed as insufficient to protect the rights of people in need, as the law has provided other protective measures under Articles 95 and 96 of this law such as the benefit of universal supply service.

Articles 95 and 96 of Law no. 43/2015 “On electricity sector” offer protective measures such as guaranteeing the right of electricity supply. So, even in the conditions of non-payment of the electricity bill, the persons who will own the status of “customer in need”, will not be affected by the Electricity Supply Interruption. The protection measures provided by the by-laws are not only of a different nature, from the protection provided by the benefit of the “universal supply service”, by persons who could have the status of “customer in need”, but are also insufficient to guarantee an effective protection of the customer in need.

Point 1, of article 95 of Law no. 43/2015 “On

the Electricity Sector” has clearly defined that the Ministry of Health and Social Protection is the relevant structure responsible for drafting criteria, procedures for obtaining the status of customer in need and how to treat these customers, which are then approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers. Despite this legal obligation, this Ministry has not yet fulfilled such a task.

Based on Article 95/1 of Law no. 43/2015 “On electricity sector”, as well as DCM no. 508, dated 13.09.2017 “On determining the field of state responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection”, which stipulates that the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) is responsible for the development of policies aiming the protection, promotion, integration and continuous improvement of social welfare of individuals, families and communities in need. Based on the above mentioned, the scope of responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection for drafting the sub legal act on “customer in need” is explicit. In the present case article 95/1 of Law no. 43/2015 “On electricity sector” refers to a special regulation in the energy sector, but which aims precisely at protecting, integrating and improving the social welfare of individuals and families in need.

Law no. 43, dated 30.04.2015 “On the Electricity Sector” was published in the Official Gazette no. 87, dated 28.05.2015 and entered into force 15 days after the publication in the official gazette. The sublegal acts should have been approved by the Council of Ministers, within 12 months from the entry into force of the law, within 15.06.2016. The legal order is not an equivalent sequence of norms, but a hierarchical system, which consists on different levels of validity and in each of these levels stands a norm or set of norms, thus defining the respective legal force<sup>3)</sup>. The Constitution stands on top of this normative pyramid of acts and serves as a source for other legal acts<sup>4)</sup>. The Constitution, as the basic act of a state, provides the bodies and terms in which normative acts must be issued, aiming at their sustainability.

Since the Constitution is a set of certain norms set by the legislator, violating it means committing an action or omission that contradicts this set of

norms. The Constitutional provisions may not always be complete or exhaustive. Although some issues related to the state order can be foreseen in detail by it, there are still many aspects of the organization of institutional life but also the recognition of the rights to be provided by laws or other normative acts, based on each specific case. Thus, the Constitution does not aim to regulate in detail every issue of the organization of the social and political life of a country, but only of the basic principles and criteria on which it should be based.<sup>5)</sup> Often, the Constitution deliberately leaves room for regulation by the ordinary legislator, so as not to hinder the taking of political, economic, social and cultural initiatives by political parties or the government. Also, the laws stipulate the implementation and recognition of rights that provide to authorize the executive power and issue the necessary acts, based on Article 118 of the Constitution<sup>6)</sup>.

Thus, the recognition of many rights for citizens is done through the adoption of laws by the Parliament and the issuance of sub legal acts for the implementation and enforcement of these laws by the Government.

According to articles 95 and 96, of Law no. 43/2015 “On the Electricity Sector” provides that the benefit of the status of “customer in need” and consequently the possession of the right to benefit from the universal electricity supply service is conditioned by the adoption of sublegal acts. Sublegal acts would recognize the right of individuals to benefit from the universal supply service, guaranteed by Law no. 43/2015 “On electricity sector” have not been approved, and consequently the right guaranteed by law cannot be effectively possessed by individuals. So, by not acting, by not approving the sublegal acts as provided by law to be approved, the responsible

5) Konrad Hesse, *Gruendzuege des Verfassungsrechts in BRD* (1999), fq. 11

6) Article 118 of the Constitution, sanction: “1. Sub-legal acts are issued on the basis of and for implementation of the laws by the bodies provided for in the Constitution. 2. A law must authorize the issuance of sub-legal acts, designate the competent body, the issues that are to be regulated, as well as the principles on the basis of which these sub-legal acts are issued. 3. The body authorized by law to issue sub-legal acts as specified in paragraph 2 of this article may not delegate its power to another body

3) Hans Kelsen, *Reine Rechtslehre* (1960), fq. 228

4) Decision of the Constitutional Court no. 29, dated 09.11.2005. Summary of decisions, year 2005, p.242

institutions have denied the citizens the right to benefit from a right that is already recognized by law.

The Constitutional Court, in its jurisprudence, has stated that the principle of the rule of law obliges all public authorities to exercise their powers only within the framework and in accordance with constitutional norms. Legal acts issued by these bodies must be in accordance with the highest legal acts both in the formal and material perception. Respect for the hierarchy of normative acts is an obligation deriving from the principle of the rule of law and coherence in the legal system (see decisions no.2, dated 03.02.2010; no.1, dated 12.01.2011; no.23, dated 08.06.2011 of the Constitutional Court)<sup>7)</sup>.

As above, based on the principle of the rule of law, public authorities have the obligation to exercise their rights in compliance with the hierarchy of normative acts, not only when issuing legal acts, but also that the authorities are obliged to exercise their rights according to the orders of normative acts that are higher in the hierarchy of legal norms. Failure to exercise rights by the authorities is contrary to the principle of the rule of law and affects citizens to possess their rights.

The lack of taking measures to issue sublegal acts for drafting criteria, procedures for obtaining the status of customer in need and their treatment, which are approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers from 15.06.2016, seriously affects not only meeting the minimum needs of a normal life of this category of beneficiaries, but even their dignity. The category of persons, who according to the provisions of Law no. 43/2015 "On the Electricity Sector" could be beneficiaries of the status of "customer in need", have been placed in unfavourable positions in accordance with the provisions of this law; denying them the opportunity to benefit from the supply of electricity in certain periods during which they possess the status of customer in need as well as in cases where the customer has submitted and is in the process of processing the request, of being classified as a "customer in need". So, they are placed in exclusionary and discriminatory positions, precisely because of their social and economic status.

Based on the above mentioned, we are in the

conditions when, it is visible that the issuance of sub-legal acts is an unfulfilled obligation and that by not approving this sub-legal act, social groups in economic difficulties are placed in unfavourable conditions, violating the right to adequate living conditions which inherently infringe on human dignity.

### **3.6 Praktika e Komisionerit për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi**

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD), in exercising his powers, has brought to attention such an issue over the years. With the following decision-making, it was requested from the responsible authorities to draft the relevant sub-legal act, for determining the criteria and procedures for obtaining the status of customer in need and the way they must be treated, according to the provisions of Law no. 43/2015 "On the Electricity Sector", as amended.

Specifically, with decisions no. 92 and 97, dated 05.04.2018, the Commissioner has ascertained the discrimination due to the social and economic situation caused as a result of not issuing the sub-legal act in implementation of the provisions of Law no. 43/2015. These two decisions have become the subject of judicial control by the administrative court, which has stated that it assesses in accordance with the law the conclusion reached by the CPD, that the lack of sublegal acts pursuant to Article 95 of Law no. 43/2015 has violated the lives and dignity of the complainants, thus putting them in an unfavourable position precisely because of their economic situation.<sup>8)</sup>

During the administrative procedure conducted by the Commissioner, from the correspondence with the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy and the Energy Regulatory Entity it resulted that these actors expressed their willingness to cooperate in drafting the sublegal act, but that they were expected to receive the proposing initiative by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, as the responsible institution defined by article 95/1 of Law no. 43/2015 "On the Electricity Sector", as amended.

Meanwhile, the CPD has ascertained other

7) Decision of Constitutions no. 25 date 28.04.2014

8) Decision no. 4056, dated 08.11.2018 of the Administrative Court of First Instance Tirana.

aspects related to access to electricity supply.

To be more specific, the decisions no. 33 and 34, dated 07.04.2020, resulted that the CPD has ascertained the indirect discrimination, due to the “economic situation”, of the category of “*customers in need*”, by the Energy Regulatory Entity (ERE). The CPD requested from the ERE to take measures for amending the Regulation “*On New Connections in the Distribution System*”, for concluding the Electricity Supply Contract, relieving from the burden of paying the new connection fee, the applicants who enter the legal provisions of the “customer in need”, who are financially unable to accomplish it.

Due to the economic situation, results that persons are placed in a discriminatory situation facing the inability to secure electricity supply, as the contract is accompanied by the condition of paying a significant amount of money, which can not be afforded by families. The only economic source for this category is the economic assistance or other forms of state support such as: disability payment, receiving various pension payments, or even unemployment payment. These households, due to economic difficulties, either do not have access to electricity, or find it difficult and often impossible to effectively access electricity.

It has resulted in some cases that the mitigation measures taken for all customers supplied with electricity from the responsible authorities, have not addressed the special needs that the categories in need may have, placing them in unfavourable conditions in order to benefit from these facilities.

The problems identified by the CPD show that the responsible authorities in some cases, although *de jure* legislation has taken measures to eliminate discriminatory situations, in practice through omission place persons *de facto* in discriminatory positions. In other cases it turns out that the responsible authorities do not have the right approach to the need to implement positive measures and treat different cases differently in order to avoid discriminatory situations.

Based on the practice of the CPD, it is concluded that the lack of electricity supply disproportionately affects the Roma and Egyptian minorities as one of the poorest groups of the population. Lack of electricity also particularly affects families with members with disabilities other than the blind, paraplegics and tetraplegics, not only because they, the same as their families are also among the most

vulnerable categories living in difficult economic and social conditions, but also for the fact that the lack of electricity affects the deterioration even more in their condition and health<sup>9)</sup>. Undoubtedly, in every family the most affected category by the lack of electricity are children, both in terms of their physical care and mental health, as well as the right to education, the elderly, people with disabilities according to Law no. 93/2014 “On the inclusion and accessibility of persons with disabilities”, women, girls, young mothers.

In conclusion, regrettably it has resulted in:

- Failure to take measures by the responsible authority required by law to take the initiative to issue a sub-legal act;
- Non-cooperation between the institutions responsible for drafting the sub-legal act;
- Failure to issue a sub-legal act contrary to legal deadlines,

which continue to cause serious consequences for the right of access to electricity supply and the provision of adequate housing for the disadvantaged families, which has contributed to serious difficulties in meeting the basic needs related to lighting, heating, hygiene, access to information, maintaining health, education, guaranteeing private and family life, etc..

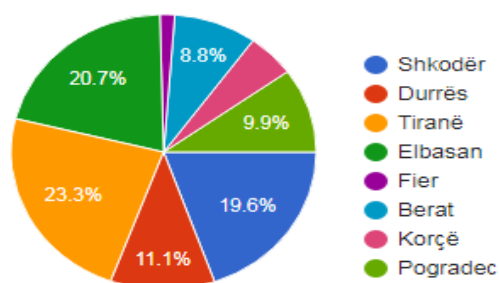
9) See: Decision no. 258, dated 20.12.2018, as well as Decision no. 115, dated 04.09.2019 of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination.

## 4. SOCIAL COMPONENT - ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

### 4.1 The profile of individuals participating in the study

1005 individuals participated in the survey, of whom 51.7% female and 48.3% male. The geographical distribution of the survey based on the number of respondents based on the predefined criteria, discussed in the methodology section, is reflected in Chart no. 1. About 80.6% of respondents are between the ages of 19-60.

**Chart no 1. The municipality**

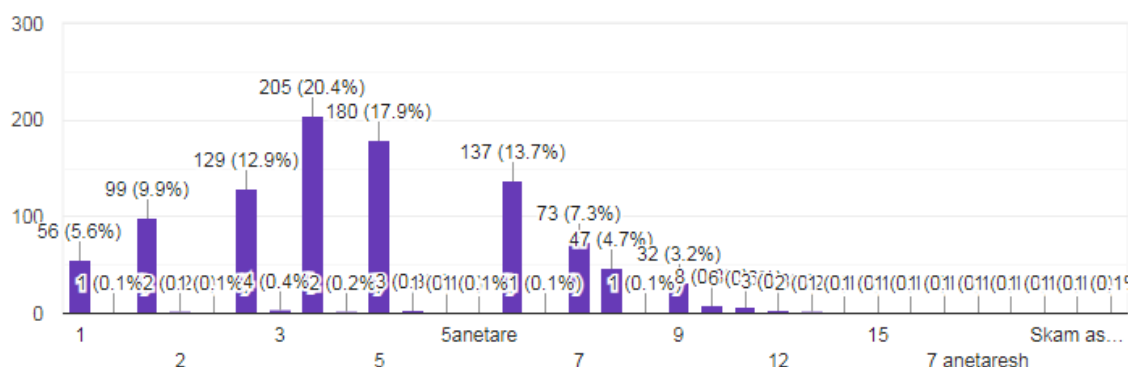


The structure of the profile of the group participating in the survey, generated by the collection of general data, acquires a special importance considering the phenomenon that is explored in this study. In other words, in order to interpret the relationship of this poor segment of society with a necessary service such as electricity, it is important to first understand the characteristics of this social formation. In this respect some data that expose some of the important features of this social group are; work, source and level of income; number of family members, ethnicity and level of education.

Mostly, the largest percentages of respondents are heads of households or members of a nuclear type family. In more specific terms, as can be seen in Chart no 2, about 60% of respondents' families consist of 4 to 7 members.

**Chart no 2.**

**How many members does your family consist of (family means a family economic unit, members of which have joint capital and share expenses together)?**

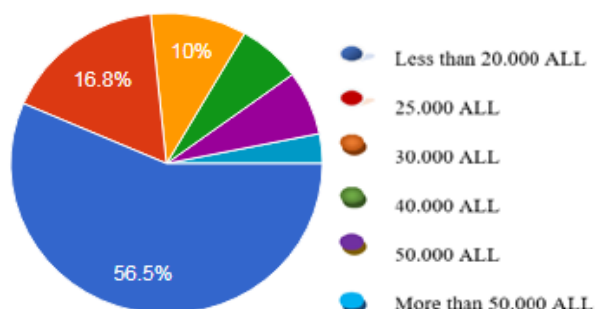


Based in the relationship between them, the variable of the number of family members with the variable of monthly family income (see Chart no 3) clearly indicates the level of poverty of this stratum of society. Based on the statements of the respondents, 56.5% state that their monthly income is less than 20,000 ALL, 16.8% 25,000 ALL and only 10% 30,000 ALL, it is easily understood that these families live in conditions

of poverty and economic impossibility. Based on these indicators, it can be emphasized since the beginning of the analysis (this argument is discussed more extensively further on in this document.) the inability of these families to benefit from this service based on their income and the lack of necessary support from other instances outside the family.

**Chart no 3.**

*What is your family's monthly income?*



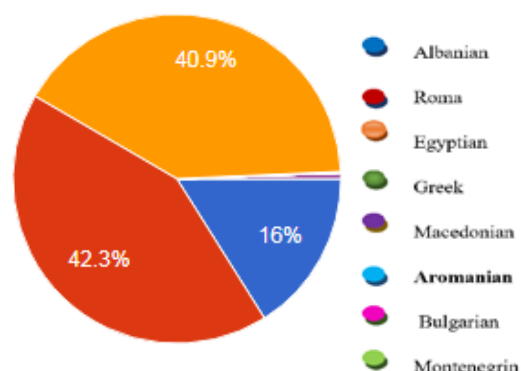
The extreme poverty conditions of the respondents are also analysed based on the typology of jobs and the possible sources of income provisions in general. The level of education and ethnicity are other data that help in examining the profile of this stratum of society that presents difficulties in providing a vital service such as electricity.

Most respondents, about 60% of them work informally, or in unstable and low-paid jobs. While the rest of the respondents are classified into three categories: 1) students and retirees; 2) families treated with economic assistance; 3) individuals unable to work, as a result of physiological conditions, who are or are not beneficiaries as persons with disabilities.

The Chart no 4 analyses that 42.3% of respondents are members of the Roma minority, 40.9% are members of the Egyptian minority and only 16% are adults. The extreme poverty conditions of many families and individuals from these two minorities, as two of the most marginalized social formations in Albania, is a known fact and treated in many reports and studies.<sup>10)</sup> Consequently, it is evident that these two minorities also constitute two of the social segments which are considered as the most affected by the inability to pay for electricity. In this context, it is of great importance to analyse the reason why these two minorities constitute the greatest weight of the sample of this study.

**Chart no 4.**

*Regarding your ethnicity, you are?*



The educational level of the respondents is another valuable indicator when analysing the profile of the population of this study. Based on the data generated it results that 58% of respondents have completed less than 8 years of education. This is one of the explanatory factors, both of unemployment and job typologies in which the members of these two minorities are engaged, estimating that the low level of education reduces the employment opportunities. In addition to current employment opportunities, the low educational level is a serious obstacle for this group of individuals, to provide the necessary sources of income and to overcome extreme poverty in the future. So, it is necessary to provide systemic solutions so that the service of electricity and other vital services can be enabled, as an individual or family is in the conditions of survival economy and it is impossible to get out of the cycle of poverty.

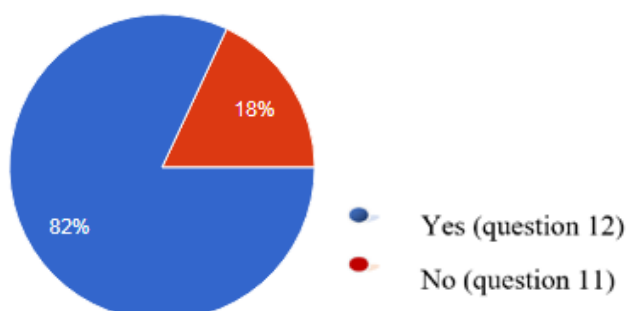
#### 4.2 Access to electricity service and social effects due to lack or limitations in electricity usage

At the time of the survey 18% of respondents (see Chart no 5) stated that they had no electricity. 44.3% of them state that at the time of the survey there was a power outage, and they accept the fact that the reason of this power outage is the inability to pay the bill in the last three months. Whereas, 41.2% claim that the reason of power outage relates with the inability to pay the next instalment of the debit, based on the agreement with Electricity Distribution Operator (EDO) (Chart no. 6).

10) See e.g. "Roma and Egyptians in Albania: socio-demographic and economic profile, based on the 2011 census". Prepared by: Patrick Simon, with Emira Galanxhi and Olgeta Dhono. UNDP, April 2015)

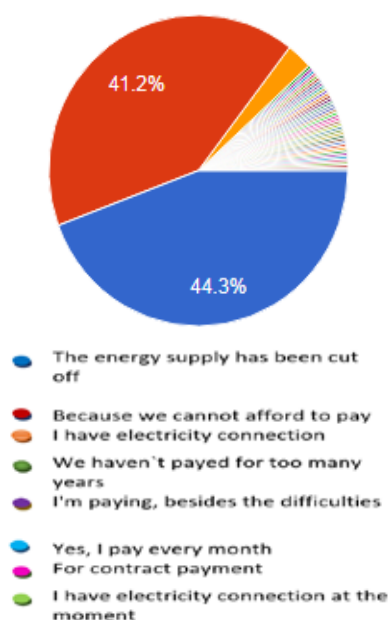
**Chart no 5.**

*Do you currently have electricity supply in your home?*



**Chart no 6.**

*Referring the table below, please tell us the reasons why you do not have electricity supply?*



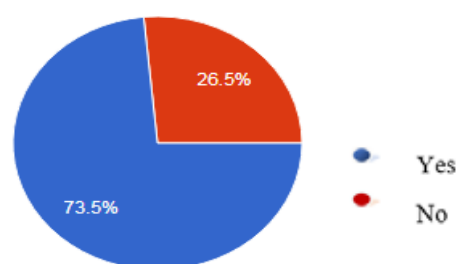
The respondents are also asked if they have ever had similar situations of power outage in the past. What is obvious and highlighted is the vulnerability of poor stratum which is constantly exposed to the inability to receive such essential services. Based on the data of Chart no 7, 73.5% of respondents claim that they have experienced power outage in the past, thus proving that the chances that they will repeatedly face this situation are high. 29.8% of individuals participating in the survey claim that the interruption lasted 1-2 months, 15.8% 3-4 months, and 31.2% 1-2 weeks (see Chart no 8). Even during the period of isolation / quarantine as a result of measures imposed by the government from the Covid-19 pandemic, 47% of respondents claim to have had problems with the lack of electricity.

On the one hand, this data further clarifies the possibilities of access to this service by this stratum of society based

on their family capital. It is important to understand how anomalies in receiving this service, such as the interruption of electricity for a considerable time, affect their quality of life, the future of their children or how these burdening conditions make the living conditions more than difficult, almost survival living conditions.

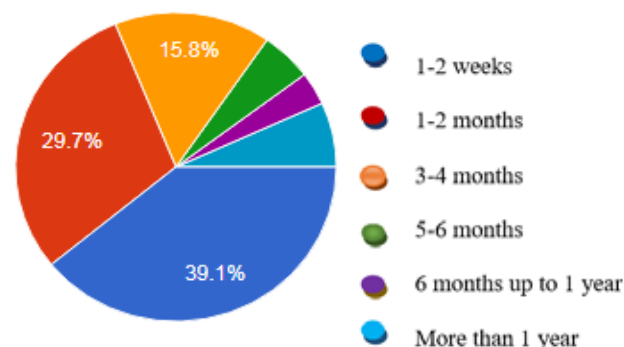
**Chart no 7.**

*Have you ever had a situation of Electricity Supply Interruption in the past?*



**Chart no 8.**

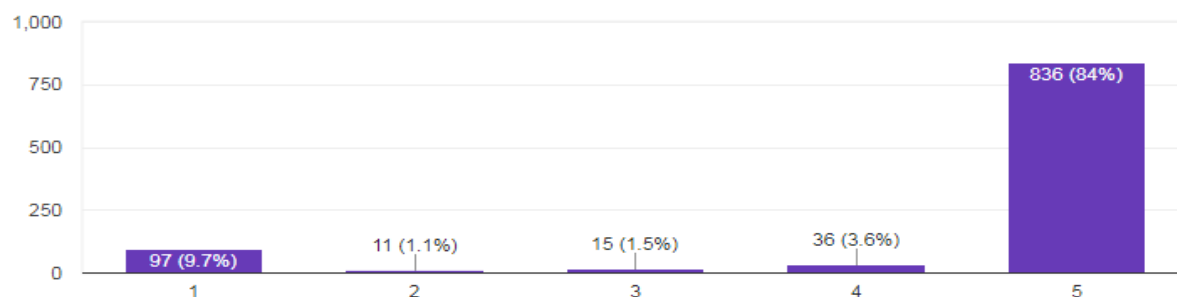
*For how long have you been forced to stay without electricity?*



Consequences caused by the lack of electricity are immense and the spectrum may be considered quite wide. The problems identified by the respondents range from lack of lighting, difficulties in providing the necessary hygiene in the absence of hot water, negative effects on their health and even not providing children the appropriate conditions to learn. More specifically, the consequences of the lack of electricity in their lives are assessed based on a scale of 1-5. 1 equals not at all important, while 5 equals very important. This assessment highlights the main problems that imply the lack of this service. 84% of respondents answer that the main problem is lack of hygiene due to lack of hot water and negative effects on health due to lack of hygiene and lack of heating. 83.5% rate with 5 the inability to use household appliances, 77.3% the difficulties of children to learn and do homework, 69.3% the

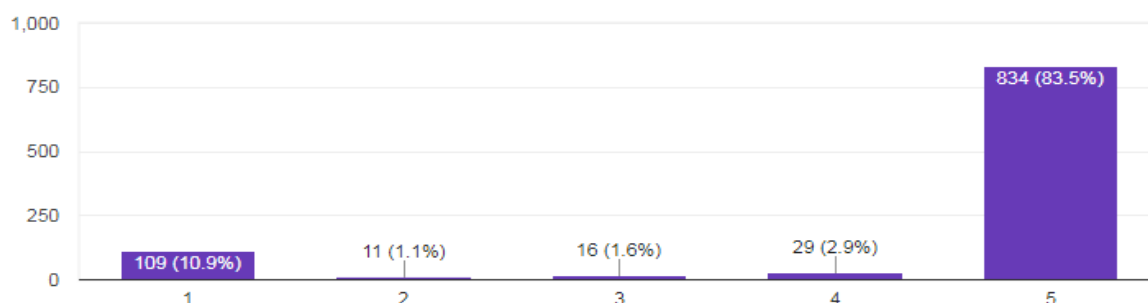
inability of children to have fun and 71.3% the lack of a TV to be informed (see charts no 9-13).

*Lack of hygiene due to absence of hot water and the effects on health.*



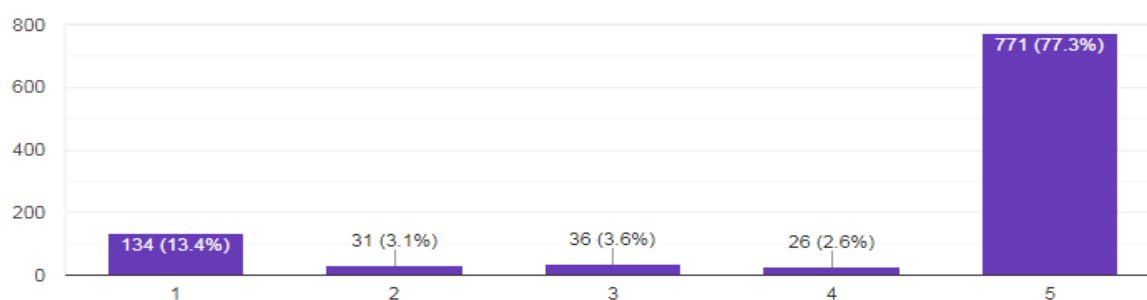
**Chart no 9.**

*Malfunction of household appliances.*



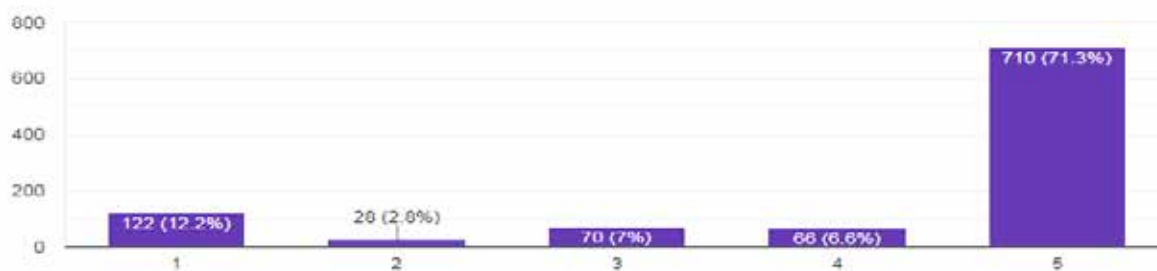
**Chart no 11.**

Difficulties of children to learn and do homework



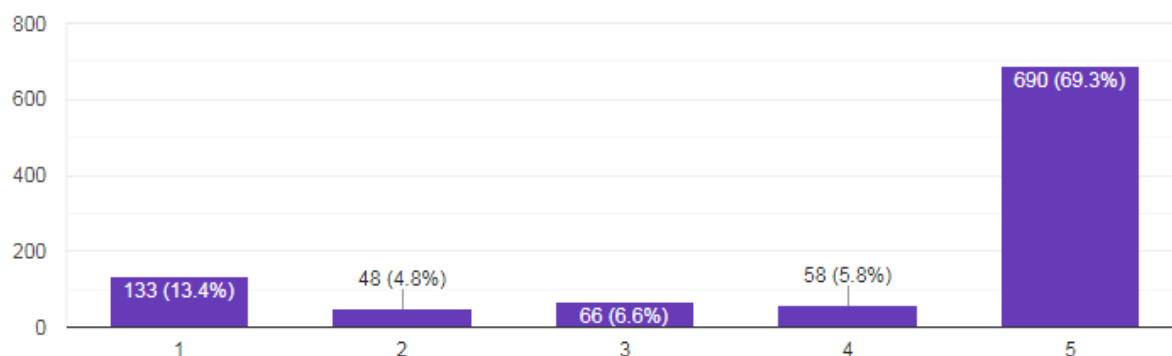
**Chart no 12.**

*Lack of TV in order to be informed.*



**Chart no 13.**

*Impossibility for children to have fun in the absence of lighting.*



Based on the statistics of the study, it results that the lack of electricity affects many living aspects and provides a significant importance in the range of factors that determine their well-being. This should be emphasized in order to highlight the importance of this service which should be classified in the category of fundamental human rights and not as a service whose vital importance can be relativized. The difficult situation, made by the lack of electricity, becomes even more unaffordable for families with members with disabilities, young children, the elderly, people with chronic diseases, etc.

The lack of this service, even temporarily, affects the lives of these families, in the present and in the future. Children who grow up in these conditions do not lead a healthy life, both socially and psychologically. It is important to take in consideration their inability to attend the lesson during the period of online learning, making them disadvantaged in relation to their peers. But this does not happen only in the circumstances of an emergency because their daily routine is generally accompanied by many structural anomalies creating dimensions of exclusion from infancy.

These children are discriminated and excluded since the latent stages of their life as far as there are provided no equal opportunities to develop their capacities. Basically, in other words, from the perspective of a social justice without being considered an excessive burden, the basic conditions should be met to increase the chances for children in order to escape from the cycle of poverty in the future.

62.5% of respondents state that the payment of electricity bills is 20% to 50% of their household

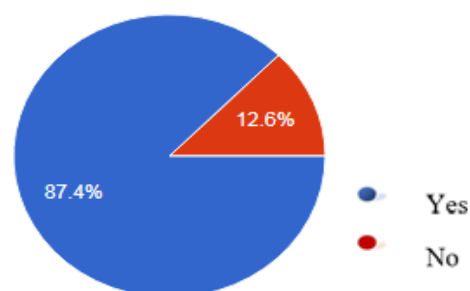
budget and consequently 87.4% of them state that they use electricity in a limited way (see Chart no 14). In these circumstances, in addition to periods of power outages and uncertainty and monthly anxiety if they will be able to pay for electricity, these households are obliged to limit its use as much as possible. This extreme rationalization of electricity use, conditioned by the inability to pay, also has consequences on life quality of these families.

Restrictions on the use of household appliances on water heating, space heating or cooling, and even lighting, based on their claims, also cause hygiene and health problems although when possible they use alternative energy sources such as gas or wood. Faced with this difficult situation, 50% of respondents state that they feel much discriminated while 20.5% less discriminated.

Although this variable is not sufficient to measure discrimination, the fact that about 70% of respondents claim to feel discriminated at an average level, it might be considered a significant indicator. In their perception, which is also confirmed by the findings addressed in the next section, the lack of this service makes them feel abandoned by society and government itself.

**Chart no 14.**

*Do you use limited electricity at home?*



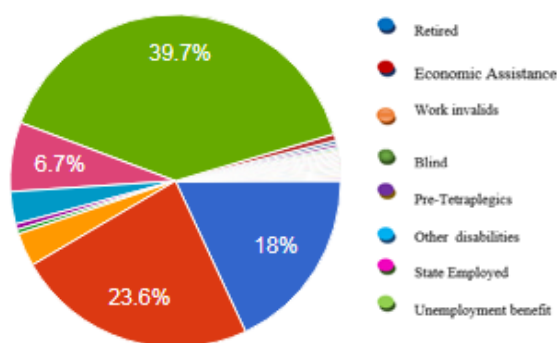
### 4.3 The institutional rapport and the level of information.

Asked in which categories of strata in need, benefiting from the subsidy, they belong to 23.6% declare themselves as beneficiaries of economic assistance, 18% retirees, 6.7% as pre-tetraplegics while 39.7% do not belong to any of the categories (see Chart no 15 ). 78.4% of individuals participating in the survey claim that they do not benefit from the payment of about 1200 ALL for electricity reimbursement (Chart no 16). This is an important data that reflects the low number of beneficiaries of the subsidy. Firstly, regarding the fact that even in this study, according to the self-declared categories, there should be at least 48.3% beneficiaries. Secondly, related to the needs of the respondents, in accordance with their level of poverty addressed above.

The reasons stated by the respondents for not receiving the subsidy vary. Anyway, as the most important among them can be listed the loss of economic assistance, an employed family member although with a minimum wage. It was denied as service by the employees, arguing that they do not form part in the beneficiary categories or they lack information on the procedures to be followed, in order to benefit.

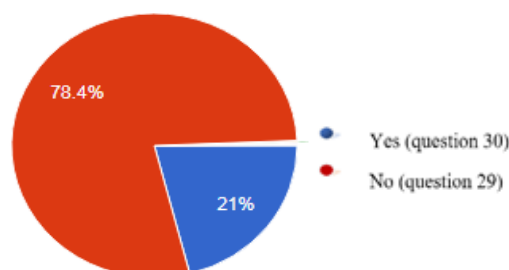
#### Chart no 15.

*Which categories of subsidy beneficiaries in need, do you belong to?*



#### Chart no 16.

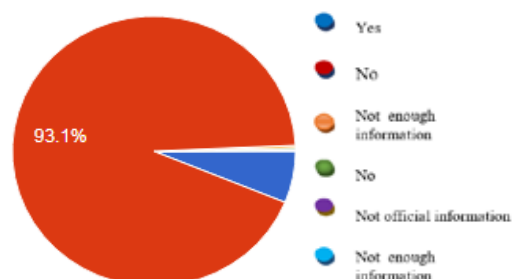
*Do you benefit from the monthly payment of 1200 ALL of electricity reimbursement?*



In addition to these findings proving how asymmetric government support is in relation to the needs of the poor, another data that reveals a significant obstacle to changing the situation is the lack of information. 93.1% of respondents state that they do not have information on laws or special policies for the protection of citizens in need regarding the benefits of electricity service (Chart no 17). We are considering an obstacle that negatively affects the maintenance of the status quo because this segment of society in the absence of information does not know where to go and what to look for in order to change the situation in systemic terms.

#### Chart no 17.

*Do you have information on special laws or policies for the protection of citizens in need, regarding the benefit of the electricity service and have the institutions been involved in any decision-making regarding the electricity policies?*



The data show that 40.5% of respondents have complained about power outages and have asked for help to reconnect to EDO offices, as well as in a few cases to the municipality and non-profit organizations but have not found a solution. They generally reacted to find an immediate solution to their problem but without being aware of the

policies or laws that are supposed to support these categories in the long and sustainable terms. Thus, most of them do not know where and how the subsidy of 1200 ALL per month can be benefited, provided in the framework of the removal of the protective band of 300 kWh based on Decision no. 8, dated 14.01.2015 of the Council of Ministers and other DCMs. They are also not aware of important legal changes such as Law no. 43/2015 “On the Electricity Sector”, as amended, for the status of “customer in need” and on the other hand they are not aware of the fact that this law must guarantee electricity in a reasonable amount in order to meet basic needs for these households. Although in principle the law can solve the problem of electricity lack for the strata in need, it has not yet been accompanied by the relevant DCM that would be approved legal provisions for the “customer in need”. This does not mean that every citizen should have legal knowledge, but the lack of information also reduces the bargaining power of this social group. Therefore, it is important, among other things, that everyone working with the strata in need inform the citizens and involve them in the

advocacy processes with public institutions in order to finally find an appropriate solution.

As a consequence, highlighting the attitude of the individual affected by the lack of this service as very important, at the end there are highlighted some of the recommendations provided by the interviewees. Asked what could be the best solution provided by the government for this issue, so that these households’ can be guaranteed electricity in an acceptable amount, the study provides the results as follows:

- Reduce the price of energy per kWh;
- Forgive arrears;
- Reduce the price of the agreement;
- The government must guarantee at least lighting supply in the house;
- Provide free kWh;
- Determine a quantity to meet basic needs;
- Reduce taxes paid within the electricity bill;
- Create a special group for the strata in need;
- Employ people;
- Increase economic assistance;
- Increase pensions.

## 5. ECONOMIC COMPONENT - ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

### 5.1 The concept of energy poverty and European standards

Energy supply plays a fundamental role in creating minimum living standards through the services it enables. According to the Insight energy Report (2016), energy provides good conditions in order to have warm homes, to ensure water supply, cooking, lighting, cooling and functioning of other electrical appliances. Due to the rising of energy price faster than a household budget, high number of poorly insulated buildings, inefficient household appliances leading to higher energy bills, EU Member States are implementing various policies, which aim to meet the basic needs of households for energy through socio-economic mechanisms.

In 2009, the European Commission adopted Directive 2009/72 / EC and Directive 2009/73 / EC, and Member States were required to draw

up national action plans in setting standards and implementing them in order not to fall below the Energy Poverty (EP). According to the report of Insight\_E (2015), when the environment where the families live is not heated / cooled according to the temperatures recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) at a reasonable cost, the families are considered in energy poverty. Recommended temperatures are 21 degrees Celsius in the living room and 18 degrees Celsius in the other rooms. The same report provides that, the key components that specify whether a household is determined to be in Energy Poverty (EP) are a combination of high energy costs, low household incomes, inefficient buildings and equipments, and specific household energy needs.

Energy poverty is evident when a household is not able to provide a necessary social and material level of energy services<sup>11)</sup>. The definition above is provided even based on critical gender perspectives according to which, [...] despite the numerous evidences of [...] women as agents of their lives and change, “discussions on energy poverty” [...] build and preserve a “gender myth” of women in energy poverty as endangered, powerless, virtuous, and oppressed” (Listo, 2018). European Union directives address issues of energy poverty and vulnerable consumers. Under EU Directive 2019/944 on energy poverty, Member States are obliged to define the term vulnerable consumer based on their specific conditions and context, as well as to consider these measures appropriate to address energy poverty.

Regulation 1999/2018 obliges member states to collect data on energy poverty and to implement measures to improve it. So far only 7 countries have officially defined energy poverty: Belgium, Cyprus, Spain, France, Great Britain, Ireland and Romania.<sup>12)</sup> Article 7 of Directive 2012/27 / EU (Energy Efficiency) obliges Member States to set up an energy efficiency scheme. Article 7 (7) (a) states that the scheme sets out social requirements for efficiency obligations, including the requirement that part of the energy efficiency measures be applied with priority to households affected by the Third Energy Package Directives. There is also the presumption that vulnerable consumers are currently affected by concerns about unaffordable energy costs. Member States in the definitions they give to vulnerable consumers mainly relate it to “socio-economic” vulnerability, based on personal characteristics such as: age, health conditions, etc. While, other countries focus on energy vulnerability based on criteria such as: status of duty, heating system, fuel cost, thermal requirements winter / summer, etc. Despite the definitions of vulnerability, the measures that states must take are aimed at energy efficiency and households that do not fall into energy poverty. Typically, the Energy Poverty affects vulnerable households based on specific or a combination of effects resulting in

lower incomes, higher energy bills, inefficient buildings and equipment (Pye et al. 2015). In this context, according to the official definition proposed by the legislator in Italy, a household is vulnerable when more than 5% of income is spent on electricity and 10% on gas.<sup>13)</sup>

Although definitions of energy poverty are inconsistent across countries, they all consider key elements such as income and affordability for vital energy services, at home. European Union Member States offer two types of energy poverty situations: 1) households that spend a high share of energy income; and 2) households with insufficient energy expenditure. In this context, the research is focused on these types of energy poverty situations. According to E-Control (2013) in Austria, a household is considered energy poor if its income is below the threshold poverty risk and at the same time, it must cover above average energy costs. In this sense, the threshold/ of at-risk-of-poverty is 60% or less of the average household income. According to Bouzarovski (2014) the energy poverty is possible when there is an inability of a family to provide a necessary social level as well as other materials used for energy services at home. Albania, as a Member of the Energy Committee and at the same time a candidate for membership in the European Union (EU), is committed to respecting the same standards regarding the level of Energy Poverty. Electricity is a basic product for the vital activity of society, therefore its use is conditioned by the rationality of electricity consumption, where the maximization of living conditions is limited by the household.

Energy poverty is different from poverty itself and moreover is associated with a number of consequences regarding human health and well-being - respiratory and heart disease, mental health, which due to low temperatures is associated with stress present regarding the unaffordability of energy bills. Energy poverty has an indirect effect on many policy areas - health, environment and productivity. Addressing energy poverty has multiple potential benefits, such as: less money spent by the government on health, reduced air pollution, better comfort and well-being, improved family budgets and

11) Bouzarovski and S. Petrova, November 2015

12) ACER/CEER, 2019

13) Schweizer-Ries, P. 2009

increased social inclusion.<sup>14)</sup>

One of the most effective instruments for this purpose is state control over electricity prices and fees. Adjusted prices are based on real costs and the equilibrium price is set against the requirements of the supplier, guaranteeing cost recovery, as well as a reasonable profit for the continuity of the activity and the realization of a successful investment program. On the other hand, electricity prices are directly related to the social effects that are caused on different strata of the population. The Energy Regulatory Entity (ERE), as an independent institution, has a legal obligation to protect consumers supplied with electricity from the negative effect of a monopoly system of electricity supply service.

Energy poverty can be caused by several factors, or a combination of them:

- Low income often associated with poverty in general;
- High energy prices, including the use of respectively high energy sources (which depending on the country can be electricity, domestic fuel)
- Low energy efficiency in the house, e.g. low isolation and old and inefficient heating systems or appliances.

Decision no. 8, dated 14.1.2015 of the Council of Ministers, "On the protection of the people in need , for the effect of removing the band of electricity consumption up to 300 kWh per month", determines that benefit from the compensation the categories such as: families with economic assistance, heads of households who are retired due to old age and disability, families consisting of persons with disabilities, the blind, paraplegics and tetraplegics and budget employees with a salary below 35 thousand ALL per month. Currently, according to public authorities, there are 203,928 households receiving compensation because of the increase of the price of electricity. Despite the policies and instruments used by Public Institutions, the energy poverty measurement remains a key element in determining the scale and depth of the problem at the national level. Due to the aforementioned, there is a need for legal changes because of the

increase in household energy expenditures, the lack of average household income as well as the increase of energy costs, where low-income households are the most endangered category.

A wide range of issues related to energy costs and poverty are explored in the questionnaire, the focus of which was answering questions such as: *Who are the "energy poor"? What are the impacts of low-income families facing unaffordable energy bills? What are the opportunities of developing policies and practices to alleviate the energy poverty of this target group by public institutions?*

Referring the concept of energy poverty, low-income households, the use of alternative energy sources by these households increasing the costs of home heating, lack of a common home, and inefficient use of energy, are considered as the vulnerable consumers in the energy sector.

The most vulnerable group affected by the raise of energy prices are these households. In absence of income and due to high costs, they are not able to adapt to more efficient technology. These groups of households face the inability to pay energy bills, becoming this way debtors and then facing power outages.

Moreover, the study highlighted the structure of household electricity consumption, related with the amount of the electricity consumed by each household, each service received from energy, as well as what percentage of monthly household income goes to the consumption of electricity, as a basic indicator of Energy Poverty.

The project assessed the impact and public acknowledgment of energy poverty in the cities like: Tirana, Durres, Shkodra, Elbasan, Pogradec, Fier, Berat and Korca. Strategies and financial mechanisms to support families in energy poverty were also analysed. The sample for this study was 924 respondents, representing 4,620 family members, as some of the respondents did not answer economic questions. The data collection was able through face-to-face interviews, during the period September - October 2020. The information collected served to analyze the situation of these families in the context of energy poverty.

Despite structural socio-economic changes in targeted cities, the most at risk households from energy poverty also include: Low-income households (especially those not benefiting from

14) <https://www.empowermed.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Varferia-Energjitike.pdf>

the economic assistance scheme), unemployed or retired, the elderly living alone, single-parent families (divorced or widowed), persons with disabilities or chronic illnesses, low level of education, ethnic minority families and families using inefficient household appliances. This part of the study aims to determine and assess the financial burden placed on the state budget by the families included in the questionnaire as well as the expansion of the group of clients in need.

## 5.2 Method

The economic component of this study relies on a mixed qualitative and quantitative method, as well as literature review on the concept of Energy Poverty and strata in need.

In determining the minimum electricity requirements of households in need, the study analyses and considers current national policies and strategies to support categories of households in need, meeting the minimum living standards and afford to pay the electricity bills..

Decision no. 8, dated 14.1.2015 of the Council of Ministers, “On the protection of the people in need , for the effect of removing the band of electricity consumption up to 300kWh per month”, as amended, categories which benefit from the “customer in need” classification, receive compensation up to 648 ALL per month. Also, the same categories included in this DCM 8/2015 benefit from compensation based on DCM no. 565, dated 9.8.2006, “On the protection of the people in need, from the increase of the price of electricity”, amended, in the amount of 500 ALL In the framework of this study, the compensation provided by the Albanian state for the categories predicted in these Decisions is calculated in the amount of 1,148 ALL per month.

This study provides also the concept of energy poverty addressed by the member states of the European Union.

The information used to implement the energy poverty assessment and measures is based on the study methodology developed by the project experts. The sample of the study, related to this component, consists of 924 respondents, representing 4,620 family members from eight Municipalities: Tirana, Elbasan, Berat, Fier, Pogradec, Durres, Shkodra and Korca. The main indicators and supported reasons for choosing the sample are as follows:

- Population age - the lowest or equal age group 18 years or 65 years and above is more vulnerable to lack of quality of life, for a heated environment, as well as health and hygiene standards according to the WHO due to their low adaptive ability.
- Average monthly income per person - refers to the financial capacity to implement measures which help in the improvement of living conditions, respectively through the purchase and use of efficient household heating and cooling appliances.
- Level of education - this indicator refers specifically to the percentage of the population with a university degree. The assumption is that a person with a university degree is potentially more aware and has better access to information on energy efficiency measures, including funding opportunities, social stimulus, and other supportive actions regarding the purchase and installation of heating and cooling technology.
- Unemployment rate - assumes that unemployed people generally have financial difficulties, less motivation to implement measures to improve energy poverty and living standards below the subsistence level.
- Socio-cultural factors - assumes that different vulnerable groups, in their families, have different approaches to socio-material conditions regarding energy services. For example: Roma groups, can stay for long periods of time with power outage, leading to lack of education or lack of health care for children.

The study used a sampling technique due to the small size of the population and also gathered data on energy practices focusing on the types of cooking fuels and appliances, as well as the costs of electricity used each month for basic needs such as: cooking, heating, lighting, personal hygiene.

The questionnaire consists of 44 general questions that reflect some of the main dimensions of the Energy Poverty Situation for the needy. The questionnaire consists on open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions with predefined answers, giving respondents the opportunity to choose and rank between several options or the opportunity to rate from a “very low” to a very high rating”. For these questions, there was an optional space to further elaborate the answer. This open section is considered of great importance for a study of this kind as it contributes to improving the interpretation of the overall results and provides

valuable additional information to public authorities.

The final instrument of the questionnaire consists of questions related to the types of energy and household appliances, energy costs and consumer practices, as well as the factors that influence the choices of other energy sources for household use.

**The limitations of the methodology are as follows:**

- Target group of respondents, is a vulnerable

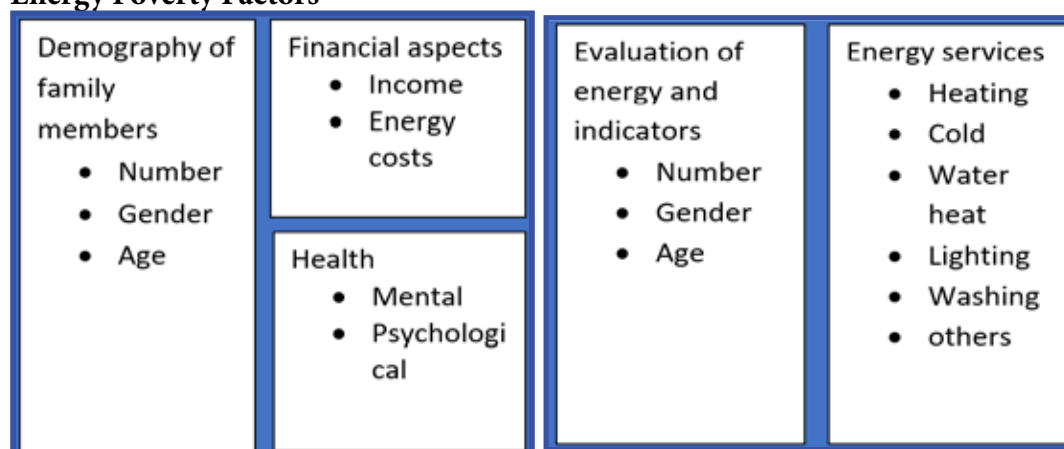
group which significantly lacks education;

- Information on monthly household income and energy consumption based on statements and personal perceptions of respondents, in many cases indicates a discrepancy between the real life and what is reflected in their answers, such as: over 30% of energy revenues.

- Difficulty in responding, despite the presence and assistance of the working group;

These limitations will also condition some of the findings of this study.

### Energy Poverty Factors



### 5.3 Data and analysis

The questionnaire presents the demographics and socio-economic characteristics of the population targeted in the study. About 65% of respondents receive economic assistance, retired, unemployment or disability and only 18% of them were self-employed, including in this category even the informal work. Most families lived in extremely poor conditions.

The households which form part in the study responded that they use different types of energy sources to fulfill basic family activities. It is concluded that 55% of households mainly use wood as an energy source for heating. In

addition to wood, about 19% of the interviewed households use electric heating appliances, 11% use gas heating appliances and about 8% in total use gas, wood, or wood and electricity, to heat the house.

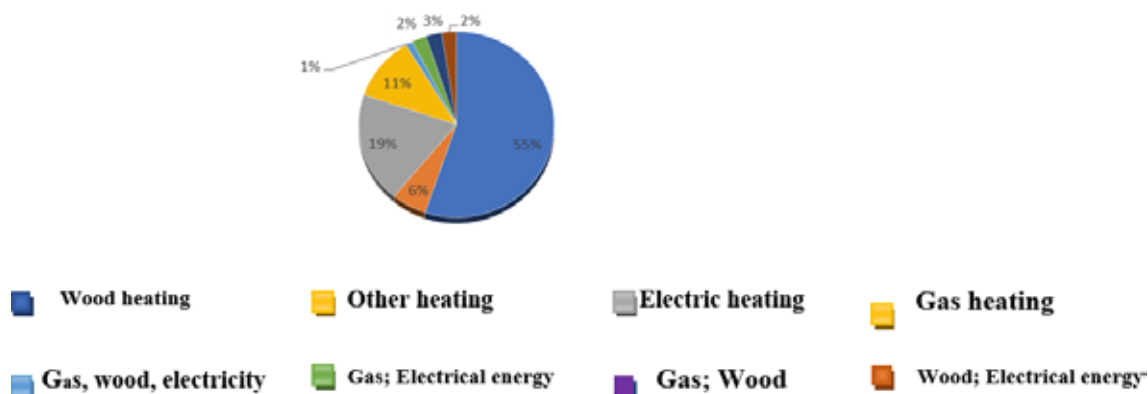
Meanwhile, the World Bank study on Biomass Heating for the Western Balkans shows that in Albania heating of homes is able by electricity in a rate of 62%; firewood (and pellets) in a rate of 20% and gas in a rate of 8%. This indicates that the selected respondents belong to the outside average band of the above study.<sup>15)</sup>

As shown in the Chart no 18 below, the most widely used fuel from households is wood.

<sup>15)</sup> World Bank (2017) Biomass-Based Heating in the Western Balkans.

**Chart no 18**

*Home heating sources*

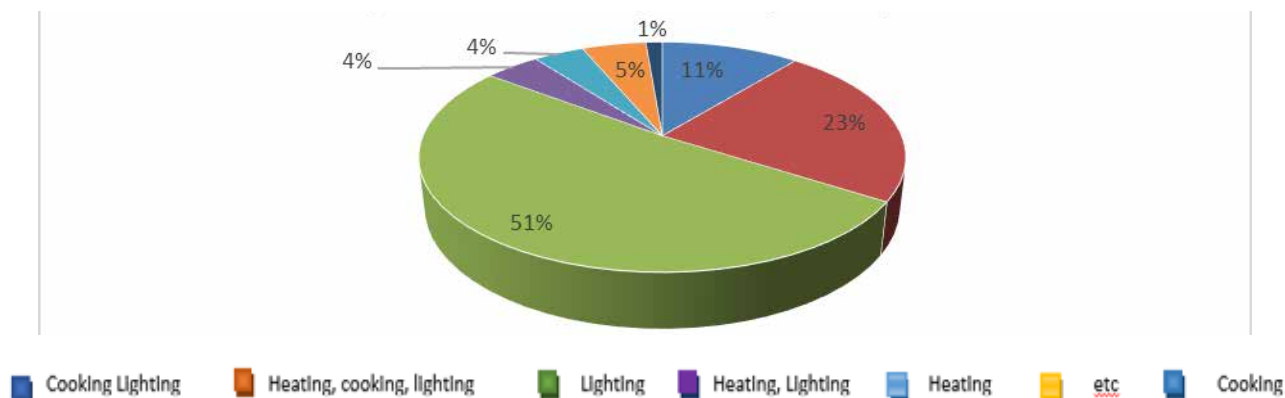


About 51% of households in these municipalities use electricity for lighting, 23% of households use electricity for heating, cooking and lighting, 4% use electricity for heating or lighting, while 11% of them use electricity for cooking or for lighting. All of these households use electricity

for a basic service such as lighting. The need to have access to electricity, at least a light, is one of the fundamental human rights provided in United Nations policy. This research highlights the fact that the high price of electricity limits its use from vulnerable consumers.

**Chart no 19**

*Consumer units for household needs*

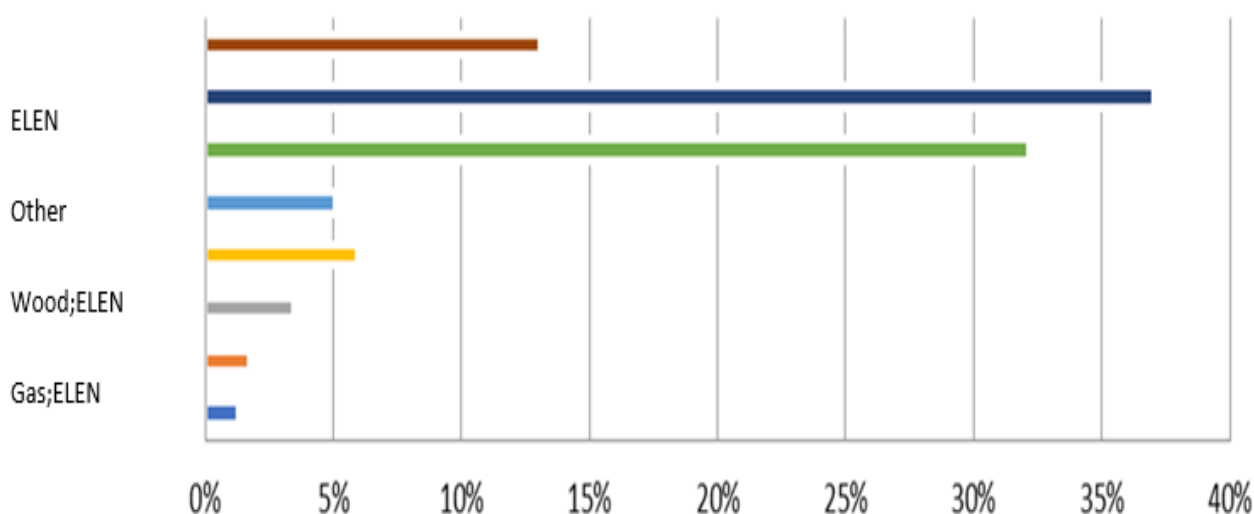


The situation is also reflected in the data that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires when households were asked about different forms they use to heat water. As shown in the Chart below, 37% of household's use wood to heat water, 32% use electricity to heat water, 13% use gas and wood to heat water, and about 17% in total

use wood, electricity, gas and more to heat water. The results show that, the people interviewed are vulnerable groups, which referring to the concept of energy poverty, do not meet the minimum living conditions to keep warm houses as well as the ways of heating water.

**Chart no 20**

*Ways of heating water*



	Gas:ELEN	Gas:Wood	Wood:ELEN	Gas:Wood	Other	Wood	ELEN	Gas
Series	1%	2%	3%	6%	5%	32%	37%	13%

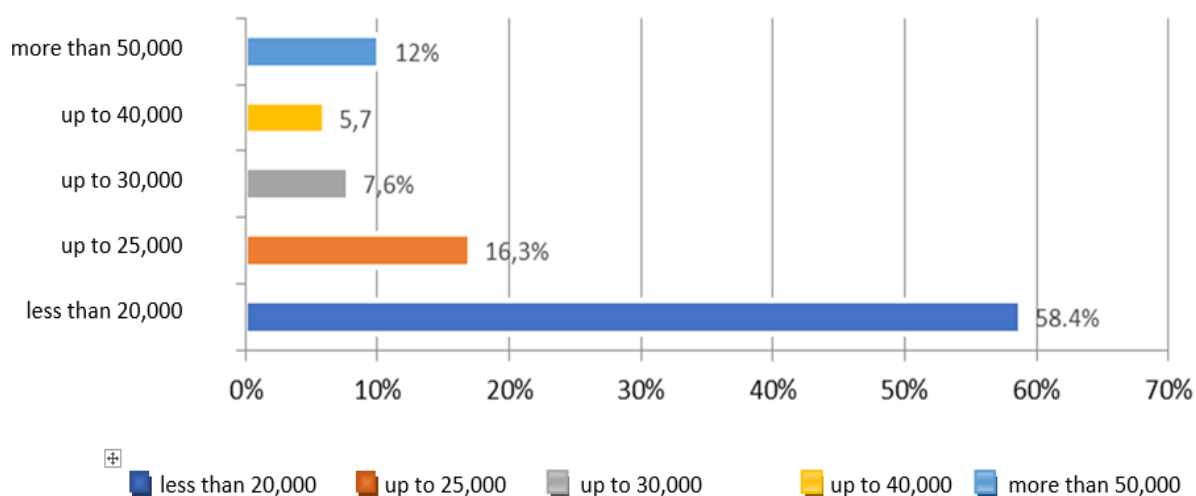
In this context, this can be explained by the high and unaffordable price of electricity by these households. Currently, the set price of electricity for households is 9.5 ALL / kWh. The interviewed households declared that, their total average cost is 6,246 ALL per month, equivalent to an average electricity consumption of 657 kWh per month. According to the study, 79% do not benefit from the energy reimbursement scheme. This is due to the non- fulfilment of one or several legal conditions to become part of the reimbursement scheme: a) accumulated debt from unpaid electricity bills or b) lack of energy meter. The interviewed families claimed that they lack information and communication with the supply company. Some of the respondents say: “To be able to pay in instalments the power connection. Establish a monitoring group. Half of the bill is to be paid by the government. 2 thousand ALL per month, am I able to pay for the price of energy. Lower the price and forgive us the areas. Free light, etc”

Although in terms of minimal use, electricity is not affordable to be paid by the households interviewed. Their comments clearly express the need to be supported in various forms by the government, in order to access and benefit to

energy supply, as a key element to live in normal conditions.

Chart no 21 provides the distribution of the percentage of households according to their monthly income. Households with incomes below 20,000 ALL, the minimum income, make up about 59% of the sample of this study. Regardless of the source of income (i.e. part-time employment, part of economic assistance schemes, pension, informal work or disability), households declared average incomes ranging between ALL 20,000 and 50,000 per month. The highest monthly income recorded was 50,000 ALL and represent 12% of the households interviewed.

The following chapter reflects the monthly income distribution of the families involved the study, where it is worth noting that 58.4% of families have a monthly income below 20,000 ALL lek, 16.3% of them have an income of 20,000 - 25,000 ALL, 7.7% of them have an income of 25,000 - 30,000 ALL, 5.7% have a monthly income of 30,000 - 40,000 ALL and 12% have an income of over 50,000 ALL. These data are based on personal statements and on the basis of respondents' perceptions

**Chart no 21***Distribution of monthly income of families*

#### 5.4 Modelet e shpenzimeve të energjisë – Konsumi

In general, the households included in the study, use two or more energy sources to organize and manage vital activities in their daily lives. The average monthly costs for firewood are relatively lower compared to other fuels (1m<sup>3</sup> = 5000 ALL) this is why wood was reported as the most used fuel for cooking, heating and water heating, from these households. However, in most households, the budget of the energy increases with the additional expenses used instead of using electricity. Some households are not part of the main electricity supply network because they are unable to pay the electricity service. This is the reason why, households that do not have access to a power supply network, depend on other cheaper fuels to meet their monthly energy needs as well as vital needs. Lack of energy supply is closely related to other basic rights, such as the right to education, the right to mental health and personal hygiene. The respondents of the study state that: *“They face difficulties in teaching the grandchildren. There is no other device from which we can have information from, rather than TV, we lack clear water to do the laundry or have a shower, etc. We are sick and need energy. Children cannot do the homework in darkness. We face psychological problems sometimes. We face hygiene problems, can not afford to send our children at school, we lack running water; malfunction of washing machine, etc.”*

The energy costs are divided by the price of electricity which is 9.5 ALL / kWh, in order to calculate electricity consumption. To calculate electricity consumption, energy costs are divided by the price of electricity which is 9.5 ALL / kWh. Furthermore, two revenue groups related to energy consumption on average have been considered. The research results that household incomes range from less than 20,000 ALL minimum income and over 50,000 ALL maximum income. Table 1 provides an overview of families' minimum income. From the table, it is understood that from the analysed sample there are 540 families with minimum income, under 20,000 ALL of which: 445 households use 10% of their income for electricity, 51 households use 15% of their income for electricity, 24 households use 20% of their income for electricity, 16 households use 30% of their income for electricity and 4 households use 40% of the income for electricity. From these data it is concluded that these households are considered energy poor, because more than 10% of income goes to electricity consumption.

Energy consumption (KW)	The percentage of revenues used for consumption	Number of families
211	10%	445
315	15%	51
421	20%	24
631	30%	16
842	40%	4

**Tabela 1: Families with under 20,000ALL revenues**

According to the World Bank Biomass Heating study for the Western Balkans in 2017, the average annual expenditure on heating and energy at the household level is around EUR 829, or 10.4% of the annual income expenditure in the Western Balkans region, data that confirms the energy poverty (defined in the report as “energy expenditure representing at least 10% of household income”) in Albania, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Serbia. Based on this report it can be said that the entire sample of the study are considered to be in the energy poverty conditions as they spend more than 10% of revenues to meet reduced needs for energy services.

Chart no 22 provides the share of income versus electricity consumption for households with incomes below 20,000 ALL. The chart below provides data that, from 540 households with incomes below 20,000 ALL, only 445 of them,

ie 82.4% of them spend 10% of their income on electricity. This result is closely related with the fact that these families live in extreme poverty, making it economically impossible for them to have electricity supply and other similar services. These families make up about 59% of the study sample. The data consider them as vulnerable consumers or “customers in need” and being in Energy Poverty, in the sense of Law no. 43/2015. Despite the fact that no 300 kWh band is achieved, where according to the legal framework in force these families must be included in the reimbursement scheme, they continue and are obliged to pay for the energy they consume. Lacking to achieve this limit of use, results in the reduction of energy service from these families to a minimum and they still do not benefit from the financial mechanisms established by the Albanian government.

### Chart no 22

*Families with an income of 20,000 ALL*

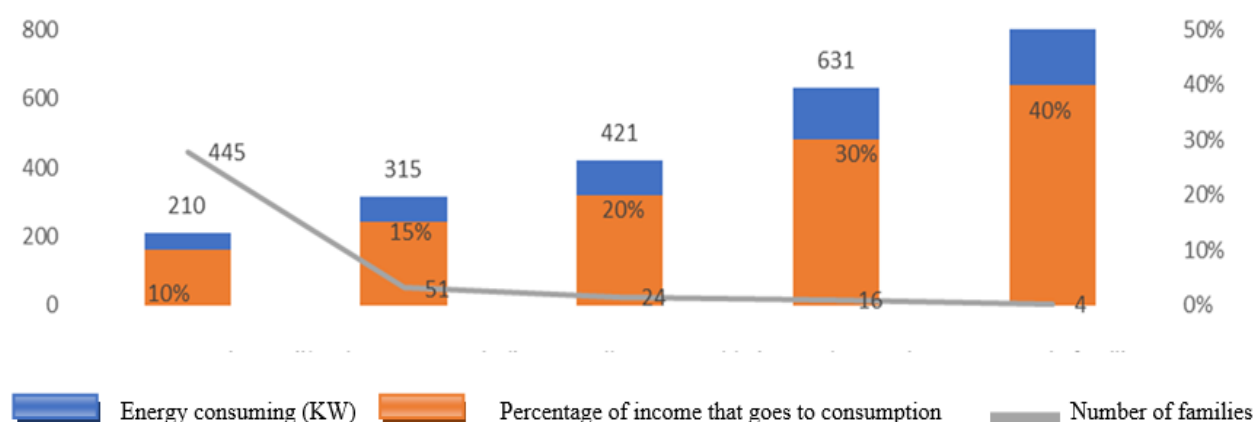


Chart no 23 provides the share of income versus electricity consumption for households with incomes from 20,000 ALL - 25,000 ALL. The data of the chart below results that, out of 151 households with incomes below 25,000 ALL, 16.3% of the study sample, only 101 of them, ie 66.9% of them spend 10% of their income on electricity, 13 households i.e. 8.6% of them spend 20% of their income on electricity, 32 households i.e. 21.2% of them spend 30% of their income on electricity and only 5 households i.e. 3.3% of them spend 40% of their income on electricity. Based on the data of the chart no 22, related with households with incomes below 20,000

ALL and households with incomes from ALL 20,000 ALL - 25,000 ALL, the main share is occupied by households that spend 10% of their income on electricity. These families face a power consumption of 263 kWh. Despite the fact that no 300 kWh limit is achieved, where according to the legal framework in force these families must be included in the reimbursement scheme, they continue and are obliged to pay for the energy they consume. This result is closely related with the fact that these families live in extreme poverty, making it economically impossible for them to have electricity supply and other similar services.

## Chart no 23

Families with an income of 25,000 ALL

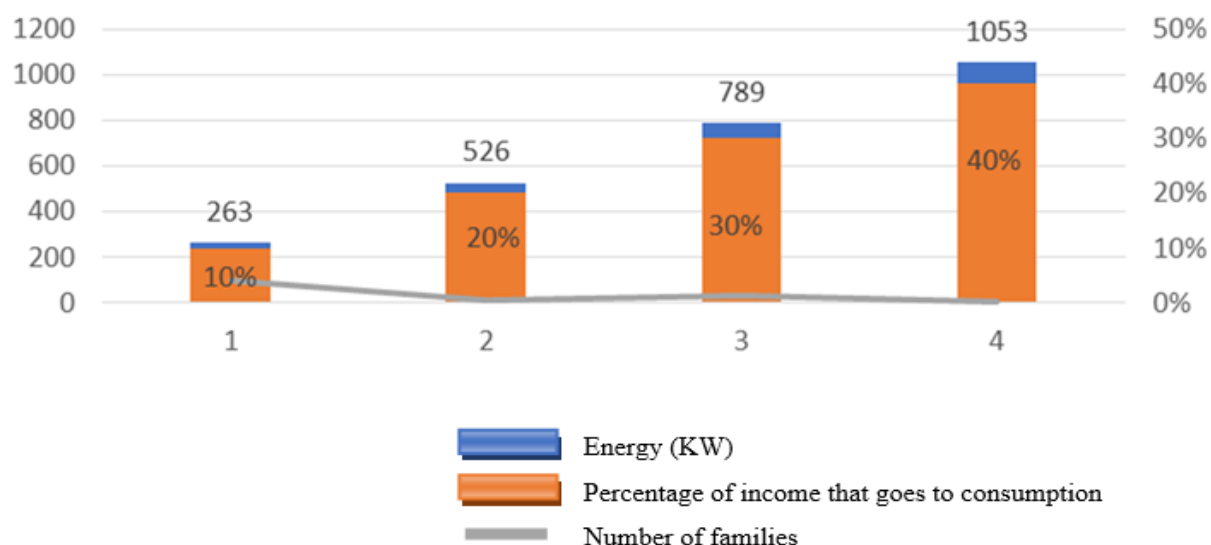


Chart no 24 presents an overview of households with incomes from 25,000 ALL - 30,000 ALL where in total there are 71 households with these incomes under observation. 11 households, or 15.5% of them, spend 10% of energy revenues, calculated into a consumption of 316 kWh, 31 households, or 43% of them, spend 30% of energy revenues, calculated into a consumption of 947

kWh, and the rest spends 40 - 50% of energy revenues. Households with incomes 25,000 - 30,000 ALL represent 7.7% of the study sample. This way, the margin of error reflected in the percentage of income in electricity consumption (40 - 50%) does not affect the final findings of the Energy Poverty definition.

## Chart no 24

Families with an income of 30,000 ALL

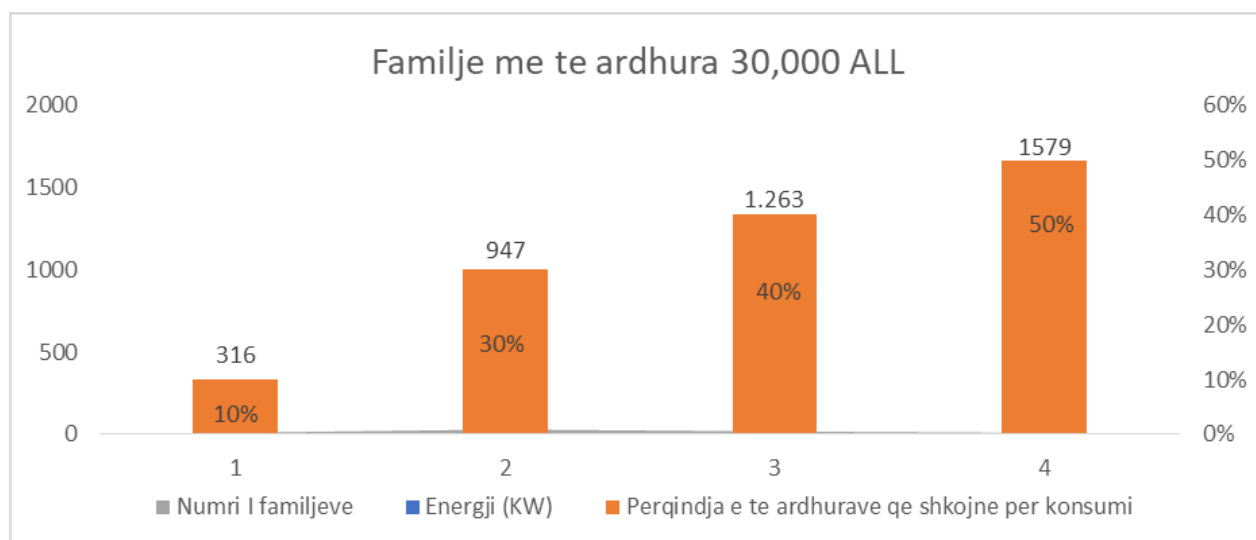


Chart no 25 presents an overview of households with incomes from 30,000 ALL - 40,000 ALL where in total there are 53 households with these incomes, or 5.7% of the sample. 19 households, or 35% of them, spend 10% of energy revenues, calculated into a consumption of 421 kWh, 14 households, or 26% of them, spend 15% of energy revenues, 16 households, or 30% of them, spend 30% of energy income and the rest, 4

families left spend 40 - 50% of energy income. As previously mentioned, the families that reach this limit, consume 421 kWh. The application of the reimbursement scheme, even in this limit, occupies a significant cost in the budget of these families, which might be used in improving the quality of life and receiving other essential life services.

### Chart no 25

*Families with an income of 40,000 ALL*

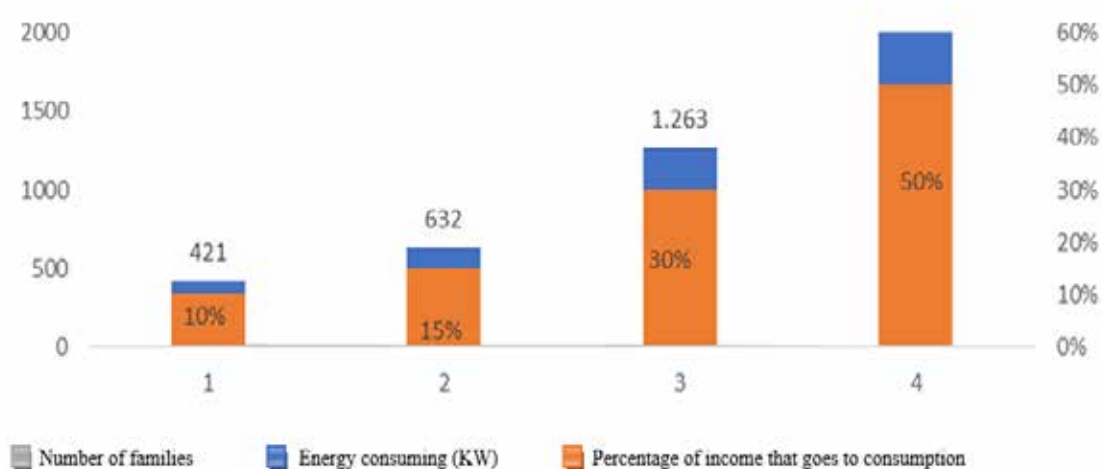
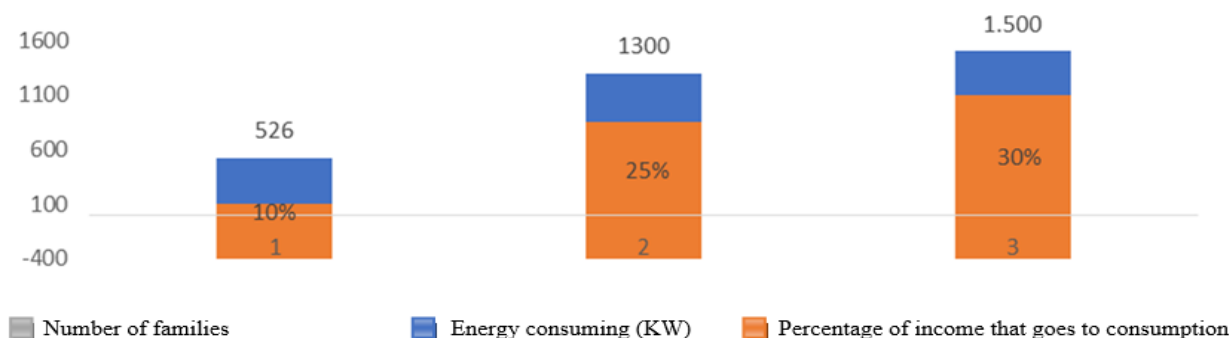


Chart no 26 presents an overview of households with incomes over 50,000 ALL where there is a total of 112 households that reach these incomes, or 12% of the sample. 50 households, or 45% of them, spend 10% of their income on energy, estimated into a consumption of 526 kWh. These families can be considered as an exception from the study sample, due to the high level of income. Energy Poverty, as a concept was based on two main factors: the level of income for energy consumption, which should be greater than or equal to 10%; and inefficiency in electricity consumption. Governmental support consists ensuring and using electricity efficiently, like even in the above families. For example: These households use electricity for heating, but with appliances such as resistors or radiators, which require high energy consumption in kWh.

### Chart no 26

*Families with an income of 50,000 ALL*



The DEC Report, 2013 set the Monitoring Poverty Threshold Unit. This is a simple indicator, which was adopted in the UK and measures an absolute value for energy poverty. In this context, the value of energy expenditures with more than 10% of households was the main indicator of energy poverty. The study concludes that households cross the energy poverty threshold as they use more than 10% of their income on electricity consumption. To determine the degree of energy poverty in the targeted cities, and to in order to determine that a household is energetically poor when 10% or more of its income is spent on energy alone, was used a household expenditure-based approach.

The table below presents an overview of the average monthly income of households and the percentage of electricity consumption in monthly income, which averages in 18%. In this context, according to empirical theories based on the concept of energy poverty, it is accepted that electricity consumption has a significant role on monthly income expenditures, exceeding the energy poverty threshold. The data on the table below, lead in the results that the average electricity consumption for all households in the study is 657 kWh.

Average monthly income (ALL)	Average monthly cost on energy consumption (ALL)	The percentage of revenue expended on energy consumption (%)	The percentage of households (%)
<i>less than 20,000</i>	2.507	13%	58.4%
<i>up to 25000</i>	4.073	16%	16.3%
<i>up to 30000</i>	6.733	22%	7.6%
<i>up to 40000</i>	8.150	20%	5.7%
<i>more than 50000</i>	9.763	20%	12%
<b>Total Average</b>	<b>6.246</b>	<b>18%</b>	

**Table 2 Results of the sample with average variables.**

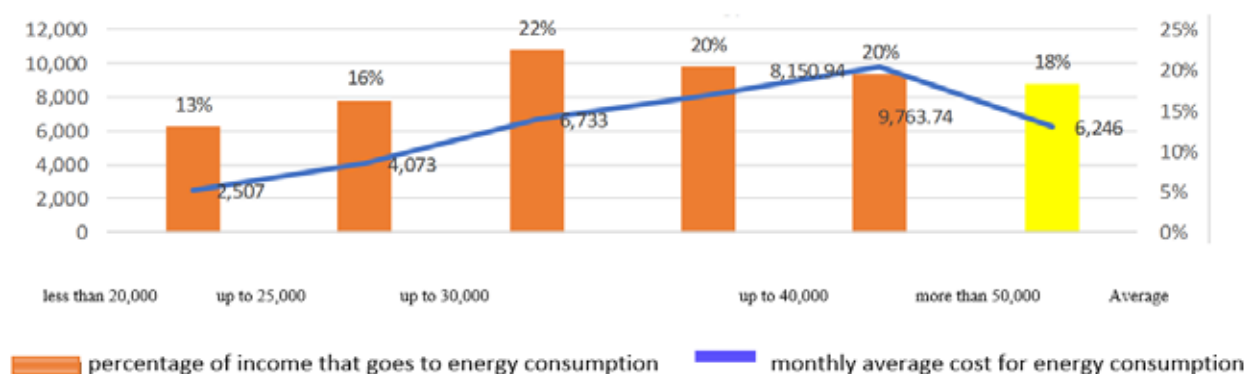
Average monthly income (ALL)	The percentage of revenue expended on energy consumption (%)	The average monthly income expended on energy consumption (ALL)	The average energy consumption (kWh)
34,700	18%	6.246	657

**Table 3 The average of main variables in determining energy poverty.**

Despite the margin of error and limitations of this research, it is concluded that the percentage of income expended on energy consumption from the sample of the study is 18%, ie above the 10% threshold of energy poverty. This result highlights the needs and demands for support of these families from the government, and it should take the necessary actions: - whether to compensate or – invest in efficiency.

#### Chart no 27

*Average monthly cost for energy and percentage of income in energy consumption*



## 6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study managed to provide some indicators on the socio-economic situation of many vulnerable families and the impact that electricity exerts on their socio-economic situation, despite its limitations. Based on the findings in the study, it is concluded that electricity as an important component of the well-being of citizens and the possession their rights, is a necessary condition for the inclusion of the most vulnerable groups in society, focusing on different aspects like; cultural, social and economic life.

The right to adequate housing and electricity are living conditions for guaranteeing some other basic rights such as: the right to physical and mental health, the right to education, the right to information, the right to have a family and a respectful private life, and moreover the right to a dignity life .

There are some excessive aspects that necessarily require the issuance of the sub-legal act on the status of “customer in need”, such as; depriving citizens from possessing the rights of electric power, or facing difficulties in providing it, continuously facing problems in guaranteeing it, possessing an excessive economic burden based on their income, having uncertainty in accessing the service, having ambiguity and insufficiency of compensatory acts or lack of necessary information.

Energy poverty is a current problem in the European Union, as well as in the Balkans, including Albania, brining consequences and damages of on health, education, welfare and the quality of life of the population.

Living in a home that meets the minimum standards is a fundamental right, foreseen in the UN Objectives.

Families experiencing energy poverty have high possibilities to be affected by physical illness, mental and physical health problems.

One of the key elements of the study to determine the minimum electricity supply requirements of households in need is undoubtedly the analysis and review of government policies and strategies to support categories of “customers in need”, so that they are able to pay the electricity bill.

Based on the financial income and the services the target group interviewed receive from the

electricity supply, resulted that they live in extremely poor economic conditions.

The electricity cost of these households reaches 18% of their average monthly income, considering that electricity is the primary source for meeting their basic needs.

According to the legislation in force, there are two schemes in support of “customers in need” that help in the reduction of their electricity bill, and from which benefit 203,928 households. The first Group benefits from the reduction of the price regarding the consumption of the first 300 kWh and from the price increase of energy consumption up to 200kWh, and by paying a monthly amount of 1,120 ALL; The second Group benefits from the monthly reimbursement of 2000 ALL or 1400 ALL and is provided only to blind and paraplegic and tetraplegic persons, whether they have a guardian or not. So, the financial mechanisms to address Energy Poverty in Albania are reimbursement, or direct financing (although this is at a very low value and limited due to the criteria).

The sample of the study lives in worse living conditions compared to the existing beneficiaries of the subsidy scheme. In terms of the legal framework, the interviewed group must have the attention of the relevant public institutions so that they can be included in the subsidy scheme and the category of customer in need. Moreover for other citizens, might be suggested various mechanisms such as: (i) investment support for energy efficiency measures; (ii) information and support with other funding schemes.

The Power Supply Distribution Company (PSDC Group) has significantly improved its performance in recent years, where financial and technical losses have decreased from 45.3% to 21.79%, and collecting electricity payments has reached the level of 98.4% in 2019. Taking into account the financial and technical performance of PSDC Group, is worth mentioning the PSDC receipts. The Level of Receipts in PSDC during 2020 reached 58.87 Million ALL. In the general government budget a special item can be foreseen for further expansion of “customers in need” category.

It is essential and of high importance to provide

extra care for vulnerable groups as the difficulties created by the economic situation as well as the Covid 19 pandemic situation which have negatively impacted the economy chain for employment and income by increasing the risk of energy poverty for these vulnerable consumers. On the other hand, especially at the time of the pandemic but also in normal situations, families face difficulties in guaranteeing the right to education of their children, due to energy problems and power outage. So, the economic inequalities, social and cultural differentiations are deepened, providing this way unequal opportunities. Based on the findings of this study, some of the recommendations that can be given as precautions are:

- Preliminarily, launching an information campaign of citizens who are beneficiaries of the compensation of the DCMs in force, in order to benefit from the current compensations.
- Preliminarily, the benefit of the compensations foreseen by the Decision of the Council of Ministers in force from the concept of the Head of the Household must be separated.
- Preliminarily, the type of disability for compensation benefit provided in the Decision of the Council of Ministers in force must not be differential. Compensation should be made possible for all those families, members of which according to the provisions of Law no. 93/2014 “On the inclusion and accessibility of persons with disabilities”, are considered as persons with disabilities.
- Involvement in the beneficiary compensation of all families, which live in rented apartments (without a notary contract) and which are not registered in Power Supply Distribution Company (PSDC) schemes, as foreseen in the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM). Preliminarily, involving in beneficiaries compensation schemes not only state employees but all families with incomes less than 35,000 ALL per month.
- Preliminarily involving in these Decision of the Council of Ministers the unemployed persons registered as

unemployed jobseekers in employment offices, in order to benefit from the compensation.

Regarding the implementation of Law no. 43/2015 “On the Electricity Sector”, as amended, it is recommended:

- ❖ Issue a sub-legal act that will determine the criteria and procedures on gaining the status of customer in need and regulating the special treatment;
- ❖ In the framework of issuing this act, might be considered that the status of the customer in need must have essential aspects guaranteeing equality for all beneficiaries, but also to establish some flexible criteria to better suit the peculiarities of the different categories involved;
- ❖ Due to the essential aspect of the status of the customer in need, it is recommended not to be active the power outage for economic reasons (the ERE Regulation is a good starting point);
- ❖ To be provided facilities in installing electrical appliances for persons gaining the status of customer in need, especially for households with incomes below the national minimum wage;
- ❖ To be provided from the government a total support of the payment of electricity bills to a level of kWh consumption for households gaining the status of “customers in need” and the incomes of whom are lower than the national minimum wage;
- ❖ To be provided by the government the possibility of total repayment of the energy debt, to persons gaining the status of customer in need and families with incomes lower than the national minimum wage;
- ❖ To be foreseen by the status of the customer in need the possibility of the lowest price per kWh for the families that benefit from this status;
- ❖ The economic situation and the determination of a maximum level of income must serve as a criterion for determining the status of the customer in

need;

In the framework of the above mentioned, as beneficiaries of the status of customer in need it is recommended to be:

- Households with an income level lower than the ceiling income which is set for gaining customer status in need;
- Families beneficiaries of economic assistance;
- Families with members who according to the provisions of Law no. 93/2014 “On the inclusion and accessibility of persons with disabilities” have gained the status of disability;
- Families who benefit from all types of pensions provided by applicable law;
- Families, whose source of income is only the benefit received from the government;
- Families composed of two Heads of households and in which the two of them are unemployed and registered as unemployed jobseekers;
- Families with one Head of Household who is unemployed and registered as an unemployed jobseeker;

#### Eventually it is recommended:

- Launching an information campaign for citizens on electricity, its guarantee, and categories involved in the status of customer in need, procedures for benefits.
- Informing citizens about the efficiency of electricity use and the risk of using alternative means such as wood, gas and various combustible materials;
- Seeking state funding opportunities on providing electricity through renewable energy;
- Maintaining regular data in the form of the Register, through a detailed and an ease searching system;
- Organizing regular controls on abuses and abusers;
- Providing the necessary infrastructure for inter-institutional communication as well as the exchange of information between them;

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## ANNEX

### Questionnaire

Questionnaire on: Improved protection of “Customer in Need” against discrimination by strengthening the implementation of the relevant legal and regulatory framework.

Number of the Questionnaire \_\_\_\_\_

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for the Organisation \_\_\_\_\_. This study is developed by several organisations in collaboration with the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, and it aims to provide your ability to pay for electricity and the effects it has on your life and that of your family, restrictions on receiving this service or the lack of this service. The aim of this conversation is to assess the needs and challenges you face in this regard and to create clearer ideas on the possibilities of improving your situation in the near future.

Each answer is very valuable to this study so we would ask you to be honest by guaranteeing you that your name will not be mentioned in the final report of this data.

#### I. General Information

##### 1. Gender

Male ☐ 1

Female ☐ 2

##### 2. Age

Under 18 year's ☐ 1

19-30 ☐ 2

31-40 ☐ 3

41-50 ☐ 4

51-60 ☐ 5

61-70 ☐ 6

Over 71 year's ☐ 7

##### 3. Civil Status:

Single ☐ 1

Married ☐ 2

Divorced ☐ 3

Widow ☐ 4

##### 4. Type of Residence:

Urban ☐ 1

Rural ☐ 2

5. How many years of education do you have?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (completed school years, mark with number)

6. How many members does your family consist of? \_\_\_\_\_ (specify the number of members)

##### 7. In terms of your ethnicity, you are?

Albanian ☐ 1

Roma ☐ 2

Egyptian ☐ 3

Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 4

8. What is your main job, or main source of income? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)

##### 9. If you do not work, please specify the reason.

Retired ☐ 1

Student ☐ 2

Unable to work ☐ 3

Other, specify \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 4

##### 10. What is your family's monthly income?

Less than 20.000 ALL ☐ 1

25.000 ALL ☐ 2

30.000 ALL ☐ 3

40.000 ALL ☐ 4

50.000 ALL ☐ 5

More than 50.000 ALL ☐ 6

## II. Access to electricity service

11. Do you currently have electricity at home?

1. Yes (question 13)

2. No (question 12)

12. Referring to the table below please tell us the reasons why you do not have electricity?

The power outage has been cut off because I have not paid in the last three months ☐ 1

The power outage has been cut off because we are not able to pay the next installment of the debit under the agreement ☐ 2

Other \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ 3

13. Have you ever had a power outage in the past?

1. Yes

2. No

14. How long have you stayed without electricity??

1-2 weeks ☐ 1

1 -2 months ☐ 2

3-4 months ☐ 3

5-6 months ☐ 4

6 months - up to 1 year ☐ 5

More than 1 year ☐ 6

## III. Social effects of lack of electricity or limited use

15. Please tell us, what problems are you currently facing or what problems has the lack of electricity caused you and your family in the past??

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

16. Did you had problems related with the lack of electricity during the Pandemic period?

1. Yes

2. No

17. How does a lack of electricity affect your health?

Extremely Vmuch ☐ 1

Much ☐ 2

Not much ☐ 3

18. Please rate from 1-5 where 1 = not important at all and 5 = very important each of the problems that can be caused by the lack of electricity, listed in the table below?

☐ 1 Malfunction of electrical appliances

☐ 2 Lack of hygiene in the absence of hot water, and the effect on your health

☐ 3 Lack of TV to be informed

☐ 4 Difficulties of children in learning and doing homework

☐ 5 Impossibility for children to have fun in the absence of lighting

☐ 6 Other \_\_\_\_\_

19. Do you use limited electricity in your home?

1. Yes

2. No

20. Please list the problems or conditions that the limited use of electricity causes in your family's quality of life?

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

21. How discriminated do you feel in relation to other citizens who are able to pay the monthly electricity bill and have more quantities per kw-hour?

Very discriminated ☐ 1

Discriminated ☐ 2

Not very discriminated ☐ 3

Not discriminated ☐ 4

#### IV. Institutional support and scale of information

22. Do you benefit from the monthly payment of 1200 ALL for the reimbursement for electricity?

1. Yes (question 20)
2. No (question 19)

23. Please tell us the reason why you do not benefit?

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24. Do you have information on special laws or policies for the protection of citizens in need, regarding the benefit of the electricity service and have the institutions been involved in any decision-making regarding the electricity?

1. Yes
2. No

25. Have you complained or sought help from any institution or organization to solve the problem you had with power outages or inability to pay monthly installments?

1. Yes (question 26)
2. No (question 27)

26. Please tell us where you sought help and what was the response you received?

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27. Based on the table below, what do you think are the institutions that could help you and which ones would you refer to solve any problems related to electricity in the future?

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Non-profit organizations                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Municipality                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| Prime Minister                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| District Deputy                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| Other _____                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 |

28. What do you think would be the best support the state could provide for your family in order to be able to pay the electricity bill and have an acceptable amount of electricity in a month?

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#### V. Economic effects of electricity shortage or limited use of electricity

29. What are the consumption units for your family needs?

- |          |                            |
|----------|----------------------------|
| Heating  | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Cooking  | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| Other    | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |

30. What are the ways of heating water?

- |             |                            |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| Gas         | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Wood        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Electricity | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| Other       | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |

31. What appliance do you use for heating at home?

- |             |                            |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| Wood        | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Gas         | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Electricity | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |

32. What percentage of your household income goes to the monthly electricity bill?

- |               |                            |
|---------------|----------------------------|
| 10%           | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| 20-30%        | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| 31-40%        | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| 40-50%        | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| More than 50% | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |

33. Do you know the price of electricity?

- Yes (question 34)
- No

34. What is your opinion on the price of electricity?

- |                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| High              | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 |
| Medium            | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 |
| Low               | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| I have no opinion | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |

35. Which categories of beneficiaries in need subsidy do you belong to?

- ☐ 1 Retired
- ☐ 2 Economic Assistance
- ☐ 3 Work invalids
- ☐ 4 Blind
- ☐ 5 Pre-Tetraplegics
- ☐ 6 Other disabilities
- ☐ 7 State Employed
- ☐ 8 Unemployment benefit

36. How informed are you about the legislation on the specific conditions for the interruption of electricity to “customers in need” and its pricing.

- Very Informed ☐ 1
- Not very informed ☐ 2
- I have no information ☐ 3

## **VI. Support schemes for the protection of customer in need**

37. Is there a specific support scheme for customers in need within the energy sector?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

38. Does the general social welfare system protect vulnerable customers in relation to energy?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

39. Which categories of customers receive economic support within the energy sector?

39. What does the system of economic support within the energy sector consist of?

40. How are the costs of providing financial support to clients in need covered?

41. What is the percentage of families that are qualified to benefit from economic assistance?

42. Non-economic support within the energy sector, which usually refers to protection against power outages, in most cases is provided to customers with poor health, but also to some other categories.

43. Is the assistance scheme for vulnerable clients seasonal?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

44. Is the economic assistance scheme for clients in need based on a quantity threshold?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

