

## Energy poverty – from a global perspective to Austria



Data of Your Paper

**Topic**

- Resilience
- Lifestyle
- Building
- Resources
- Tourism
- Energy

**Title of the Paper**[Energy poverty – from a global perspective to Austria](#)**Form of Presentation**

- Poster
- Presentation

**Short Description** (maximum 2500 characters)

Energy consumption is one of the biggest challenges for the transformation of our societies toward a sustainable future. However, the consumption of energy on the private household level is not evenly spread throughout the world or within specific societies. Social inequality needs to be considered in the debate about strategies to increase the sustainability of lifestyles or the energy efficiency of private homes. Energy poverty (or fuel poverty) is an ever increasing problem in developing as well in industrialized countries. This paper will start with an overview on the different scales and faces of energy poverty around the globe and will then focus on energy poverty in Austria by discussing a case study in the province of Styria. I will conclude with a discussion of the global differences concerning energy poverty.

There is no official definition of energy poverty in Austria and specific data on the issue is scarce. The subject of energy poverty is still rarely discussed and cannot be characterized as a standalone social problem in public or political discourse. The latest study on household consumption shows a serious negative development for low income households. From 2004 till 2005 the lowest income quartile used 5,6% of its budget for energy. In the current study focusing on the period between 2009 and 2010 the lowest income quartile already used 8,3% of its budget for the same matter. Contrary to this development the monthly expenditure of the richest household quartile dropped from 3,8% to 3,3%.

The Styrian case study is explorative and qualitative and was conducted in 2011. It consists of an interview series with stakeholders (utilities, NGOs, social workers etc.). The analysis showed that the problem of low income, rising energy prices and increasing energy consumption is highly individualized. Energy poverty is not yet in the perception of public and private institutions and organizations in Styria, but the consequences can be observed in the daily business of social workers, utilities or social welfare NGOs.

Discussions about the change of energy consumption need to consider the fact that there are social vulnerable groups that lack the financial capabilities to participate in the change toward a sustainable energy future. Future energy systems must also include parts of the population that lack the individual ability to invest in energy efficiency or to participate in the shift towards more sustainable forms of energy

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