

## BRIEFING

# Best practices for reaching out to tenants in the Private Rented Sector



**Insights from the seminar:**  
*Reducing energy poverty in the Private  
Rented Sector: how to reach tenants*



To re-watch the seminar





**Split incentives, or landlord-tenant dilemma, can be defined as a situation in which “one party, the landlord, invests in energy efficiency, while the benefits produced are received by another, the tenant, who benefits from decreased utility costs and improved thermal comfort” (Papantonis et al., 2022).**

There are various methods in literature for addressing the split incentives, although countries have not formally adopted a methodology and there is still lack of understanding in public authorities on how to perform such activities. However, before quantifying split incentives, these need to be measured and in order to do so, the tenants in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) need to be reached, contacted, and questioned.

Only then will it be possible to quantify the split-incentive on a national level and formulate optimal policies. This is even more important in the case of energy poverty, where the split incentive is higher and, without appropriate subsidy rates, the investments will not take place. In the following compendium, four different methodologies for reaching out to tenants are illustrated and accompanied by the recording of the thematic seminar. The purpose of this compendium is to assist policymakers, energy agencies and practitioners to identify ways for reaching out to tenants, based on the national tenancy market circumstances, data availability and own capacity to perform this task.



### Methodology 1: How to reach tenants – Croatian approach; by Anamari Majdandžić

According to Eurostat data from 2019, 89.7% of the Croatian population lived in a household where they were the owners, while the remaining 10.3% lived in rented housing as tenants. Nonetheless, this data does not reflect reality, as it was found that of this 89.7%, around 30% to 40% lived with their parents or were sharing the house with other family members. Additionally, an unregulated market and unresolved property-legal relations contribute to the problem of lack of national data and the market operating in the shadow zone. In general, Croatia presents higher numbers of percentage of the population presenting arrears on utility bills compared to the European Union (EU), particularly in the social housing sector (Table 1).

		EU 27 [%]	Croatia [%]
<b>Average</b>	arrears on utility bills	7	21
	inability to keep their house warm in social housing	7,8	7,4
<b>Owners</b>	arrears on utility bills	5,6	20
	inability to keep their house warm in social housing	6,4	6,7
<b>Private rents</b>	arrears on utility bills	9	15,2
	inability to keep their house warm in social housing	10	17,1
<b>Social housing</b>	arrears on utility bills	13	33,6
	inability to keep their house warm in social housing	13,2	13,4

**Table 1:** Overview of energy poverty indicators per strait of society



To understand the ownership situation in Croatia and delineate which amount of people lived in their own property or in a rented one, a survey was conducted. To obtain a higher reach, synergies with four other projects were found (Bušeko, EmpowerMed, POWERPOOR and EPAH), and as such, a total of 997 households involving 990,886 citizens were interviewed. It must be noted that each project was focused in another city, meaning that both continental and mediterranean Croatia were considered, both richer and poorer areas and finally both rural and urban areas.

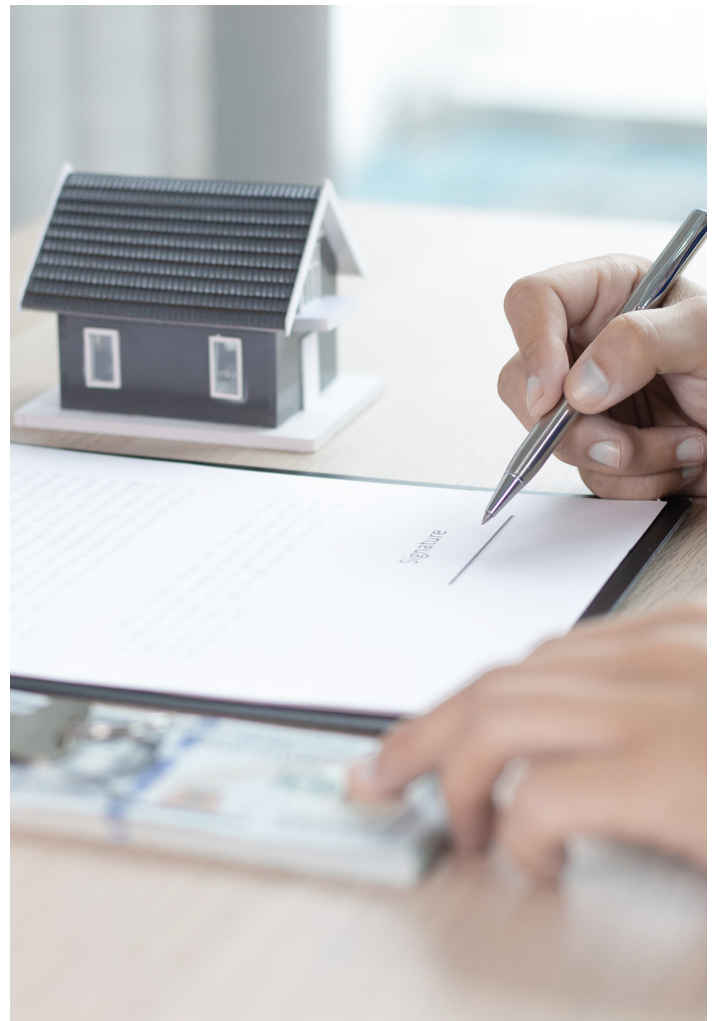
The results of the survey were differentiated based on the city being analysed. For example, in Buševac, a little rural city of less than 1,000 people, only 5 tenants were found out of the 304 citizens interviewed. The rest were either owners or sharing the household with other members. Thereafter, mediterranean Croatia was analysed and more specifically Zadar. Here, 200 households were surveyed and differentiated by type of household.

Whereas the majority of respondents were still owners, a bit more than a quarter of the surveyed households declared to be either living in a property they do not own without paying rent or paying rent for their household.

In the latter case, the majority of respondents were found to be male, whereas in the former it was the other way around. Similarly, the more energy poor city of Križevci was surveyed, and again it was found that out of the 275 households surveyed, only 8 were rented. Of these 8, 3 were found to be resided by people between 70 and 80 years of age. Lastly, 388 energy poor households in the capital city of Zagreb were interviewed and differentiated by type of household. Again, the majority of these were owners; however it was found that 118 households were either living in a property they do not own without paying or paying their rent.

Several conclusions were gathered from conducting the four different surveys. **The main problem was found to be a lack of motivation of volunteers, especially students, to set aside some of their time and volunteer. Hence, cooperation with the Red Cross and similar organizations proved to be very useful.**

The length of the survey was also an issue, as a half an hour survey can prove to be too long. Additionally, respondents can be rather reluctant to share their financial data. Lastly, respecting GDPR policies when performing the survey can also turn out to be demanding.





## Methodology 2: How to reach tenants in the Private Rented Sector in Greece; by Vicky Tzega

The consumer organization EKPISO operating in Greece was considered and insights on how it was operating and reaching tenants were developed.

EKPISO is a non-governmental, non-profit, independent association focusing on energy poverty and offering personalized information and services to over 550,000 consumers. Its main objective is to provide "energy for all". EKPISO has conducted several activities in the energy field, including 4 researches and a campaign for "clean energy bills".

Throughout their activities, the main conclusions EKPISO reached were the following:

- ✗ there is a **lack of trust** from consumers towards the Government and energy suppliers
- ✗ many people are affected with **significant economic damage**
- ✗ consumers **lack information and education** on energy consumption and their rights
- ✗ many residents have an **inability to pay electricity bills in due time** and thus result energy poor and/or excluded from energy services.



To combat and solve these issues, EKPISO proposes to:

-  Communicate the availability of financial schemes for the renovation of residential and commercial buildings;
-  Promote the cooperation with consumer organizations;
-  Ensure the consumers' support from a local team of people (municipalities, NGOs, etc.);
-  Foster the role of energy suppliers as to provide more flexible arrangements with consumers and to identify specific solutions (e.g., change of tariffs, existing and new debts in installments, green tariffs).





### Methodology 3: How to reach tenants – experiences from the energy box programme; by Martijn Rietbergen

The energy box programme was carried out in the province of Utrecht, the Netherlands, with a total of more than 44,637 residents in 17 different municipalities reached since 2014. The programme consists in providing residents with a box of energy-saving products, after having had a consultation with them performed by energy coaches (trained local job-seekers). Thereafter, an advisory report with tips and savings amount is done. A focus on energy-poor residents was taken since 2022. The programme was promoted through flyers, local meetings and leaflets sent by the municipalities. Figure 1 summarises all the means of communications employed to reach interested tenants. Several analyses of which promotion strategies performed best were done, analysing the response rate per investor/owner depending on the employed strategy.

It was found that large differences among response rates were present; new tenants and those living in energetically-better homes provided higher response rates; and a higher response rate was found in neighbourhoods presenting higher migrant proportions when the promotion was done in English. Additionally, an experiment was performed in three identical buildings to see which means of promotion yielded the best response rates and the door-to-door visit was found to be the most effective one. Students were also contacted to provide insights on the energy box. The latter proposed to add tools to the energy box that would be more useful in student houses and performing an online form to substitute the traditional “call to have more information”.

The main conclusions gathered were that there is no “one size fits all” approach, even though the door-to-door approach seemed to be the most effective one; target group specific engagement strategies are necessary (e.g., for migrants and people with financial problems, cooperation with social organisations is needed); and that more research is needed to understand differences in response rates and promotion strategies.



Individual	Letter in mailbox (in C2 Dutch)	Letter in mailbox (in A2 Dutch)	Letter in mailbox (in another language)	E-mail
Recruitment card	Personal	Door to door during the day	Door to door during the evening	Not-at-home card
Contact via resident association	Meetings nearby	Flyer	Posters	Local newspaper
TV displays (in flats, town hall, etc.)	Social media, digital banners	Header for website	Ads	Radio commercial

Figure 1: Summary of all promotion strategies employed.



## Methodology 4: Crowdfunding energy communities in Croatia; by Paula Damaška

Hereby, the Croatian pilot of the Community Energy for Energy Solidarity project is analysed, carried out by the ZEZ Green Energy Cooperative. Whereas energy poverty is defined in Croatia, energy communities are not, and are thus seen as collectives that support fair, democratic and equitable transitions towards local, more sustainable and efficient energy systems. Microdonations were gathered mostly from individuals, but also social organisations and energy providers (in a very small number). The money gathered was used to buy energy efficiency packages that included: LED lights, an extension cable with a switch, a door brush and seals, radiator reflective foils, window seals, and a faucet aerator. It is estimated that such kit can save annually up to 1,300 kWh of heat energy and up to 370 kWh of electricity, amounting to up to 200 euros. The energy poor households were delineated by analysing material and social poverty (as no indicators are present for energy poverty specifically in Croatia). As such, those most prone to be energy poor were: residents over 65 years old, that are beneficiaries of either the national allowance for the elderly, the minimum guaranteed compensation, the compensation for the vulnerable buyer of energy products, or



having a pension up to 3,000 HRK/400 EUR. In total, 250 households were found in Zagreb and Zagreb County.

The end goal was to provide the elderly with small savings on water, electricity, and other energy resources needed for everyday life. Other organisations were contacted to gather energy poor residents, such as: the Red Cross initiative collaboration, the Centre for Social Welfare, the Retirees' Union of the Republic of Croatia, local boards and counties, and public institutions such as libraries, clinics, pharmacies, public kitchens. To conclude, **word of mouth was found to be the most effective way of promoting the project and engaging more residents.**



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