



50
thousand inhabitants

20
settlements

12
thousand inhabitants
in the main settlement

7%
unemployment rate
(national rate is 3.5%)

Challenges encountered

1. Moratorium on arrears

Due to the COVID pandemic, the Hungarian government introduced a moratorium on arrears. In the short term, this could have a negative impact on energy awareness, as these households do not have to pay attention to their bills. In the long-term, accumulating arrears will cause additional problems.

2. COVID-19

The COVID pandemic had a serious impact on daily life. 46% of the Hungarian Living Lab participants said that they spent more time at home. The average increase was around 3 hours. 50% of the households reported a more frequent usage of electricity appliances after the COVID breakout.

3. Households without access to energy

In some households, especially in segregated areas, due to arrears there is no access to electricity. In these cases, work together with the utility company (E.ON) provides safe and legal energy access. Arrear handling also has to be applied here with the help of Máltai.

4. Heating with rubbish

During the winter period the air pollution level is very high in this area as several households use waste and rubbish to heat. This is a serious problem from an environmental perspective, and also affects the health condition of the household (and wider area), as well as damages the heating system.

5. Heating with firewood

There are several parts of the area where piped-gas service is not available. These households could use gas tanks to heat water and for cooking, but for heating they have to use firewood (other heating methods are not used). Fireplace and tile-stove are the most usual heating methods in these dwellings, which are much harder to control. Firewood prices are not frozen, and the proper storage of firewood could also be challenging.

Methodology

Recruitment of Lab participants



Benchmarking



Market segmentation



Focus groups



Home energy advisor visits



Energy cafés



Information campaigns



Information centres



ICT tools



Impacts monitoring



Energy advisor home visits

- 602 home visits were carried out in the rural Lab. 36% of the visited households (212) took part in the impact assessment.
- 67% of the households did some refurbishment or bought new energy efficient appliances. Based on these actions, a 5.3% possible reduction in energy bills and 5.9% reduction of energy usage in kWh can be estimated. If this is projected to the full sample, it leads to an estimation of an annual 0.66 GWh energy saving.
- It was not possible to measure a short-term change in the consumption based on the energy bills. The assumption is that some of the above calculated estimated energy savings were turned back to improve the comfort level of these households. And the impact of COVID-19 on the results needs to be considered as well.
- 13.2% of the households had better conditions regarding housing problems (mould, damp, condensation on the wall, leaking roof, ideal temperature), 15.3 % noticed improvement in arrears, and 18.8% of the households had an improvement on the quality of life. 36.8% of those who took part in the impact assessment questionnaire noticed improvement in at least one area.
- Overall 45% of the respondents changed their behaviour as a result of counselling and 70% said that they understood better their energy expenses.



Energy cafés

- 7 energy cafés took place, involving a total of 149 people. They served as promotion events and as cooperation building opportunities where people, such as public worker group leaders, municipality and community house workers, could be involved and have a visible role in the settlements.
- In the long run, energy cafés helped to make our presence accepted and understood. It was a good start to engage with people, as most of the participants were involved in the surveys and advisory sessions.
- An important lesson learnt is that people prefer short, interactive events. Less relevant topics were skipped or shortened for the participants and the flow of discussion was changed in line with their questions and interest.



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