



EUROPEAN SOCIAL POLICY NETWORK (ESPN)

Access to essential services for low-income people

Slovenia

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European Social Policy Network (ESPN)

**ESPN Thematic Report on
Access to essential services for
low-income people**

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Summary

This report deals with national measures aimed at facilitating access to six essential services for low-income people. There is no national definition of essential services in Slovenia. There is also no definition of “low-income people” used in the context of access to water, sanitation and public transport. According to the Energy Act (2019), vulnerable households are those that – due to their property, income and other social circumstances, as well as their housing situation – cannot secure another energy source that would result in the same or lower costs for the most necessary household use. For a so-called “critical supply” of electricity, natural gas or distance heating, the required income-related proof is an application for cash social assistance dated prior to the day on which notice of disconnection is received. As regards digital public services and financial services, low-income users are those people who lack the means to meet basic needs at the subsistence level, and they are treated the same way as beneficiaries of cash social assistance or income supplement (both benefits being part of the minimum income scheme).

There are no measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to water, sanitation or public transport in Slovenia. A necessary (uninterrupted) supply of electricity, natural gas and distance heating is guaranteed to vulnerable customers. A vulnerable client is entitled to a critical supply for the period between the anticipated disconnection and the final decision of the Centre for Social Work granting him/her cash social assistance, provided the conditions regarding season/temperature and/or health status are met. In the case of electricity supply only, this supply is free of charge. In the case of natural gas and distance heating, a critical supply only means a delayed disconnection if the bill is not paid.

In the area of digital public services, there is a reduced tariff of €10.72 per month (regular price is €14) for people on low-income, applicable to voice telephony and data transmission at transfer speeds suitable for functional internet access (currently 4 Mbps). Low-income disabled persons are entitled to a 50% discount on connection to a public communications network at a fixed location and a 50% discount on a monthly subscription for publicly available telephone services at a fixed location (that is, a basic-access telephone subscription). They currently pay a subscription fee of €7 per month.

Lower bank charges are set for low-income people, with the aim of ensuring that as many as possible are included in the financial system and that they have the chance to open a basic payment account.

To the best of our knowledge, there are no ongoing or announced reforms regarding any of the six essential services.

There is no broader national policy framework for measures enabling low-income people’s access to essential services, except for access to energy. The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020 (2015) includes an energy-saving scheme for low-income households (with advice on steps to reduce energy consumption, the installation of energy-saving devices, and 100% financing for investments in the dwellings of low-income people). Energy poverty – that is, the inability to afford to heat the home adequately or to satisfy basic energy needs – is frequently associated with poor home energy efficiency (poor insulation, old and inefficient heating systems, etc.) and inadequate behaviour. The Energy Advisory Network (ENSVET) offers free visits by an energy consultant to help reduce energy and water usage. The consultant also provides a free package of simple devices to reduce energy and water consumption. By following the advice and installing the devices, there may be annual cost savings on energy and water of around €100.

1 Overview of national/subnational measures aimed at supporting low-income people in accessing essential services

According to Principle 20 of the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR), everyone should have “the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications”. Moreover, support for accessing such services should be available for those in need.¹ The importance of ensuring access to essential services is also well established globally in the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which was endorsed in 2015 by all UN countries including all EU countries.² This report investigates the extent to which Principle 20 of the EPSR has already been implemented in the six services under scrutiny in Slovenia. The group of “those in need” is restricted in the report to people on a low income and low-income households.

1.1 Definition of “essential services”

There is no national definition of essential services in Slovenia.

1.2 Definition of “low-income people” used in the context of access to services

There is no definition of “low-income people” in the context of access to water, sanitation or public transport.

The term “vulnerable customers” is used in the Energy Act (2019).³ Vulnerable households are those that are unable – due to their property, income and other social circumstances, as well as their housing situation – to provide them with another energy source leading to the same or lower costs for the most necessary household use (Energy Act, 2019, Articles 51 and 159). For a critical supply of electricity, natural gas or distance heating, the income-related proof required is the submission of an application for cash social assistance dated prior to the day on which notification of disconnection is received (Legal Act on the Criteria and Rules for Providing Emergency⁴ Supply of Electricity, 2016, Article 8). Once the cash social assistance is granted, these households are no longer entitled to a free critical supply of electricity.

The Electronic Communications Act (2012) shifted the task of defining the category of customers on low income onto the implementing acts (Article 120). In both the Rules on the Categories of Consumers Entitled to Special Price Options or Packages (2013, Articles 3 and 5) and the Decree on Measures for Disabled End-Users (2014, Article 11), the term “persons without means for meeting the basic needs at the subsistence level” is

¹ The EPSR was jointly proclaimed by the European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission on 17 November 2017. For more information on the EPSR, see:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en.

² The SDGs and their targets seek to realise the human rights of all, by promoting an integrated notion of sustainable development aimed at creating synergies between economic, environmental and social policies and objectives. For more information on the SDGs, see: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

³ The Energy Act (2019) regulates the energy supply in Slovenia, including the supply of electricity, natural gas and district heating.

⁴ The term “emergency” used in the official translation of the title does not seem appropriate. We rather use the term “critical” in the text.

employed for low-income users, which equates them with beneficiaries of cash social assistance or income supplement (*varstveni dodatek*).⁵

Moreover, as regards access to financial services, a low-income person is in practice treated the same way as a beneficiary of cash social assistance or income supplement (*varstveni dodatek*).

1.3 Measures for facilitating access for low-income people to services

Apart from the measures listed in this section, it should be noted that low-income people in Slovenia are also supported through the minimum income scheme. A cash social assistance and an income supplement are granted to low-income people/households⁶ to cover basic living costs, including energy expenses. Exceptional cash social assistance is granted in exceptional circumstances, where the financial difficulties are due to reasons beyond the control of the person/household facing material difficulties or exceptional costs linked to subsistence which cannot be covered by their income (Social Assistance Benefits Act, Article 33). Exceptional cash social assistance takes into consideration the needs of a single person or household, and is granted either as a one-off payment or for a period of three⁷ or six⁸ months. The monthly amount of the exceptional cash social assistance cannot be higher than the minimum income for a single person or household; and in one calendar year, it may not exceed five times the respective monthly minimum income (out of this, an amount of three times the minimum income is granted only for exceptional costs arising from a natural disaster or *force majeure*). In any application for exceptional cash social assistance, the applicant must specify the purpose of the assistance and the amount needed (Article 34). Evidence of expenditure must be submitted to the relevant Centre for Social Work.

Along with Centres for Social Work, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also active in supporting low-income people's access to essential services. Karitas (2018)⁹ and the Red Cross¹⁰ provide financial assistance to persons/households that cannot pay for utilities – mainly water and energy. They also grant exceptional financial assistance. Some other NGOs assist people in need who are their members with cash assistance to pay the heating and energy bills.¹¹

1.3.1 Access to water

There are no measures in Slovenia aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to a water supply.

⁵ This is a social assistance benefit that complements cash social assistance. Those entitled are – following a means test – permanently unemployable persons and persons who are permanently incapable of work, women over 63 years of age and men over 65 years – unless in full-time institutional care.

⁶ Those with income below the basic income amount.

⁷ When granted for the first time.

⁸ After the first time, if the circumstances underlying the allocation and determination of the amount of extraordinary cash social assistance remains the same.

⁹ Also see: <https://karitascelje.wixsite.com/karitas-celje/placilo-poloznic> and [https://www.karitas.si/akcije/pomagajmo-preziveti/](https://www.karitas.si/akcije/pomagajmo-prezivet/) (accessed 20 December 2019). The second one is the fundraising project called "Let's help survive", aimed at helping low-income households afford such living costs as heating and other essential services, by paying the bills (EU Energy Poverty Observatory, 2019). According to Tkalec and Živčič (2014, pp. 8–9), among other kinds of assistance, these households are granted one-time cash assistance (up to €500) to pay the heating costs.

¹⁰ See: https://www.rdecikrizljubljana.si/sl/Socialna_in_humanitarna_dejavnost/ (accessed 20 December 2019).

¹¹ For instance, see: http://www.sent.si/index.php?m_id=program_socialna_pomoc (accessed 20 December 2019).

1.3.2 Access to sanitation

There are no measures in Slovenia aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to sanitation.

1.3.3 Access to energy

Directive 2009/72/EC concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity (2009)¹² and Directive 2009/73/EC concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas (2009)¹³ have been implemented in Slovenia through the Energy Act (2019).

There is an in-kind benefit, in the form of electricity consumed in the period of critical supply (see Section 3).

Before connecting any customer to the system, the distribution operator must provide information regarding a critical supply (Energy Act, 2019, Article 39). This information is provided to the general public on-line at a single contact point (required by the Energy Act, 2019, Article 171), which is the Energy Agency website, with the relevant links.¹⁴ No specific information is provided to low-income people.

In line with the Energy Act (2019, Article 51), prior to electricity disconnection, the distribution operator must inform the customer of: 1) the possibility of a critical supply; 2) the evidence that the client must provide for the operator to approve necessary supply; and 3) the deadlines for providing such evidence.¹⁵ This information is provided to any member of the general public and not specifically low-income people.

The Energy Act (2019, Article 37) requires that a critical (uninterrupted) supply is guaranteed to vulnerable customers. Vulnerable customers have the right to an uninterrupted basic (critical) supply of electricity, natural gas, heat or other fuel gas, subject to certain conditions (Energy Act, 2019, Articles 51, 176 and 296; Energy Agency, 2019, p. 161). Vulnerable customers are deemed to be those household customers who – on account of their property and living conditions, their income and other social circumstances – cannot secure any other source of energy for their household use or heating that would cost the same or less for the most necessary household use or heating of residential premises (Energy Act, 2019, Articles 51, 159 and 296; Energy Agency, 2019, p. 161).

The distribution operator may not cut off the supply of electricity, natural gas or distance heating to a vulnerable customer or limit his consumption to a quantity of power deemed necessary, given the circumstances (season, temperature, place of residence, health status, etc.), to avoid endangering the life and health of the client and those persons residing with him/her (Energy Act, 2019, Articles 51, 176 and 296; Energy Agency, 2019,

¹² "Member States ... shall, in particular, ensure that there are adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable customers. In this context, each Member State shall define the concept of vulnerable customers which may refer to energy poverty and, inter alia, to the prohibition of disconnection of electricity to such customers in critical times ... Member States should take the necessary measures to protect vulnerable customers in the context of the internal market in electricity. Such measures may differ according to the particular circumstances in the Member States in question and may include specific measures relating to the payment of electricity bills, or more general measures taken in the social security system ... In any event, Member States should ensure the necessary energy supply for vulnerable customers" (Directive 2009/72/EC, 2009).

¹³ "Member States shall take appropriate measures to protect final customers, and shall, in particular, ensure that there are adequate safeguards to protect vulnerable customers. In this context, each Member State shall define the concept of vulnerable customers which may refer to energy poverty and, inter alia, to the prohibition of disconnection of gas to such customers in critical times" (Directive 2009/73/EC, 2009).

¹⁴ See: <https://www.agen-rs.si/web/en/my-rights> and <https://www.agen-rs.si/gospodinjski/elektrika/moje-pravice/pravica-do-nujne-oskrbe> for electricity; <https://www.agen-rs.si/gospodinjski/plin/moje-pravice/pravica-do-nujne-oskrbe> for gas; <https://www.agen-rs.si/gospodinjski/toplota/nujna-oskrba> for distance heating (accessed 20 December 2019).

¹⁵ See: <https://www.agen-rs.si/gospodinjski/elektrika/moje-pravice/pravica-do-nujne-oskrbe>; <https://www.agen-rs.si/gospodinjski/toplota/nujna-oskrba> (accessed 20 December 2019).

p. 161).¹⁶ Eligibility for a critical supply is judged by the distribution operator or the distribution system operator (Energy Act, 2019, Article 51; Energy Agency, 2019, p. 161). Detailed conditions and the cost of a critical supply, which covers the energy costs, are set out by the operator in the system operating instructions, in accordance with the rules and criteria prescribed by the Energy Agency (Energy Act, 2019, Articles 51, 268 and 297).¹⁷

Along with the proof(s) regarding heating and/or a health condition, the customer must provide a certificate from the Centre for Social Work to show that he/she had applied for cash social assistance before the notification of disconnection arrived (Legal Act on the Criteria and Rules for Providing Emergency Supply of Electricity, 2016).

If the distribution operator determines that the conditions for a **critical electricity supply** are fulfilled, it immediately informs the customer and provides him with a contract for critical supply, which must be duly signed. If the distribution operator determines that the conditions for critical supply are not met, it immediately informs the customer in writing and proceeds with the disconnection process (Energy Act, 2019, Article 51).

If the vulnerable customer fulfils the conditions for a critical electricity supply, the threat of disconnection is removed for the period of critical supply. Necessary supply is free of charge, as the costs are covered by the distribution operator (Energy Act, 2019, Article 51). Critical supply is provided by the distribution system operator, according to the procedure specified in the system operating instructions in the field of electricity, as well as in accordance with the rules and criteria defined by the Agency in the Legal Act on the Criteria and Rules for Providing Emergency Supply of Electricity (2016). A vulnerable client is entitled to a critical electricity supply for the period from the intended disconnection until the final decision of the Centre for Social Work on whether or not to grant cash social assistance, provided the conditions regarding season/temperature and/or health status are met. The cost of necessary electricity consumption by a vulnerable customer is borne by the system operator and is, in fact, an **in-kind benefit**. If the Centre for Social Work decides not to grant cash social assistance, the critical electricity supply ceases (Legal Act on the Criteria and Rules for Providing Emergency Supply of Electricity, 2016, Article 10), as the household is no longer considered vulnerable (cash social assistance is meant to cover basic living costs, including energy expenses).

A critical supply of **natural gas or district heating** only postpones disconnection for a specified period of critical supply. The procedure is the same as for a critical supply of electricity. The cost of the energy and the network charges is left to the vulnerable customer, who must pay the system operator after the critical supply ceases (Energy Act, 2019, Articles 176 and 296; Energy Agency, 2019, p. 161).

In 2018, 17 household customers were granted a critical supply of natural gas, while no household customer was granted a critical supply of electricity (Energy Agency, 2019, p. 161).

1.3.4 Access to public transport

There are no measures in Slovenia aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to public transport.¹⁸

¹⁶ See: <https://www.agen-rs.si/gospodinjski/elektrika/moje-pravice/pravica-do-nujne-oskrbe> (accessed 20 December 2019).

¹⁷ See: Legal Act on the Criteria and Rules for Providing Emergency Supply of Electricity (2016).

¹⁸ However, there are measures that focus on pupils and students (also those in adult education), pensioners, persons older than 65 years, persons with disabilities, war veterans, the unemployed, and persons in employment living more than two kilometres from their workplace.

1.3.5 Access to digital public services¹⁹

The Electronic Communications Act (2012) is harmonised with the EU regulatory framework in the area of electronic communications (i.e. Directive 2002/22/EC on universal service and users' rights relating to electronic communications networks and services). This Act (in Section X) regulates the universal service, which is defined as the minimum list of services of a certain quality that are available to all final users in Slovenia at affordable cost and regardless of their geographical location. In the framework of universal service, and in line with Article 120 of the Act, the Agency for Communications Networks and Services²⁰ may require the universal service provider to offer low-income consumers and those with special needs special pricing options or packages that differ from those otherwise provided under normal commercial conditions, to ensure access to the network and use of services within the universal service pool. The reduced tariffs for people on low income (or with special needs) apply to voice telephony and data transmission at transfer speeds suitable for functional internet access (currently 4 Mbps). Beneficiaries are defined in the Rules on the Categories of Consumers Entitled to Special Price Options or Packages (2013). Low-income users are defined as persons without the means to meet basic needs at the subsistence level and are equated to the cash social assistance²¹ or the income supplement (*varstveni dodatek*).²² They pay a reduced tariff of €10.72 for the universal service (regular price is €14). The current universal service provider (designated by the Agency) is Telekom Slovenije.

In accordance with the Decree on Measures for Disabled End-Users (2014), those disabled persons without the means to meet basic needs at the subsistence level are entitled to a 50% discount on connection to a public communications network at a fixed location and a 50% discount on a monthly subscription for publicly available telephone services at a fixed location (that is, a basic-access telephone subscription). They currently pay a subscription fee of €7 per month.

Information on eligibility for lower prices is available at the Telekom Slovenije website (<https://www.telekom.si/pomoc-in-podpora/ceniki/vsi-ceniki#3/1>).

1.4 Access to financial services (Directive 2014/92/EU)²³

The Payment Services, Services for Issuing Electronic Money and Payment Systems Act (2018) introduced Directive 2014/92/EU (on the comparability of fees related to payment accounts, payment account switching and access to payment accounts with basic features) into Slovenian legislation. Based on Article 183 of this Act, the Bank of Slovenia determined a method for calculating an appropriate fee for the basic payment account (*Sklep o značilnostih osnovnega plačilnega računa...*, 2018). Lower bank charges are set for low-income persons, in order to include as many as possible in the financial system and to give them the chance to open a basic payment account. A low-income person is in practice equated to a beneficiary of cash social assistance or the income supplement (*varstveni dodatek*). The monthly banking fee may not exceed 0.6% of the basic minimum income (currently €2.41), compared to a maximum of 1.6% (€6.43) for other bank customers.

¹⁹ Information was kindly provided by the Ministry of Public Administration of the Republic of Slovenia and Telekom Slovenije.

²⁰ Agencija za komunikacijska omrežja in storitve, <https://www.akos-rs.si/o-agenciji> (accessed 13 January 2020).

²¹ Since August 2019, income must be lower than €402.18 per month for a single-person household, in order for it to be entitled to cash social assistance: <https://www.gov.si teme/denarna-socialna-pomoc/> (accessed 17 January 2020).

²² Since August 2019, income must be lower than €591.20 per month for a single person, in order for that person to be entitled to income supplement: <https://www.gov.si teme/druge-oblike-pomoci/> (accessed 17 January 2020).

²³ Information was kindly provided by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Slovenia.

2 National/subnational policy frameworks and reforms

2.1 National/subnational policy frameworks

There is no broader national policy framework for measures enabling low-income people to access essential services, except for access to energy. The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020 (2015) includes measures like the energy-saving scheme for low-income households, which provides advice on possible measures that could reduce energy consumption among socially deprived groups and energy-saving devices (see Section 3).

2.2 Ongoing or announced reforms

To the best of our knowledge, there are no ongoing or announced reforms regarding any of the six essential services.

3 A focus on access to energy

It is evident from Section 1.3.3 that there is only limited support for low-income people in gaining access to energy. Once granted the cash social assistance, their households are no longer entitled to a free critical electricity supply. As regards natural gas and distance heating, disconnection is only delayed for low-income households in Slovenia. This means that low-income people cannot be considered to be adequately supported in their access to energy.²⁴ However, there are measures that aim at increasing low-income households' access to energy in the long run. These measures tackle the energy wasted due to poor housing conditions.

Energy-poor households are defined as those households that face difficulty in affording – or that cannot afford – suitably warm housing or in satisfying their basic energy needs (Živčič and Tkalec, 2017). Low-income households – especially those with pensioners, the unemployed, cash social assistance beneficiaries and persons with low earnings – are most affected by energy poverty. They pay a higher proportion of their income to meet their energy needs than do more affluent households. Their economic status is often linked to poor home energy efficiency (poor insulation, old and inefficient heating systems, expensive energy) (Živčič and Tkalec, 2017; Eco Fund, 2019a). Both low income and poor home energy efficiency are often associated with poor health (particularly among the elderly). Energy-poor households are also often socially excluded. The main dangers they face include risks to their physical and mental health, deterioration of the home and excessive debt. All of these aspects need to be taken into account when planning the programmes that address energy poverty. Energy poverty is an ever-more pressing problem in Slovenia, as rising energy costs outpace the growth in individual income (Živčič and Tkalec, 2017).

Thermally inefficient dwellings are expensive to heat. Furthermore, people who spend more time in their homes (because of unemployment, old age, disability, chronic illness) must maintain a higher home temperature throughout the day, which makes their heating needs greater and the costs higher.

According to Tkalec and Živčič (2014), most of the housing stock in Slovenia was built before the appropriate standards for energy efficiency were adopted. In the early 2010s, almost 70% of apartments were over 30 years old, with the average age of an apartment being 38 years. Over 80% of energy consumed went on heating the dwellings and providing hot water.

Both Directive 2009/72/EC (2009) and Directive 2009/73/EC (2009) require Member States to take appropriate measures, such as the provision of “support for energy efficiency improvements, to address energy poverty where identified” and “develop national action plans or other appropriate frameworks to tackle energy poverty”. The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020 was adopted in Slovenia in 2015. Based on this Action Plan and the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy in the period 2014–2020, there are measures aimed at energy upgrading in households that face energy poverty. The measures are aimed at investment (a 100% financing of investment in the housing of eligible households, because they cannot afford their own co-financing; and the purchase of new combustion plants), as well as counselling and help in adapting behavioural habits (Živčič and Tkalec, 2017; Eco Fund, 2019b).^{25,26} For instance, €68,354 of non-repayable grants were paid in 2018 to low-income households for 15 investments to replace their old solid-fuel boilers with new wood

²⁴ This is particularly true for people on cash social assistance, who undoubtedly live on a low income (the basic amount of minimum income is lower than the minimum costs of living) but are not eligible for free critical energy supply.

²⁵ See: <https://www.ekosklad.si/prebivalstvo/pridobite-spodbudo/zmanjsevanje-energetske-revscine> (accessed 15 April 2020).

²⁶ More information is available from the Eco Fund's Annual Reports (for instance, Eco Fund, 2019b).

biomass-fired furnaces (Eco Fund, 2019b). However, Tkalec and Živčič (2014, p. 24) point out that some programmes designed to reduce energy poverty do not adequately address low-income households, by insisting on administrative procedures for obtaining financial support that are too complex. The authors thus suggest the adaptation of programmes and mechanisms focused on energy poor households, "in a way to facilitate the application, to adjust the communication and to provide constant support and the necessary information".

The energy-saving scheme for low-income households,²⁷ which offers free energy advice to low-income, energy-poor households (households in the first income quintile), has been run by the Energy Advisory Network (ENSVET)²⁸ since October 2014, within the framework of the Eco Fund (Tkalec and Živčič, 2014; National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020, 2015).²⁹ Offices providing advice on energy currently operate at 56 locations across the country.³⁰ The advice programme – which targets households in receipt of cash social assistance that have requested free energy advice at the Centres for Social Work (Tkalec and Živčič, 2014; Živčič and Tkalec, 2017) – is called ZERO, which stands for "energy poverty reduction" (*zmanjševanje energetske revščine občanov* in Slovenian) (Eco Fund, 2019b).³¹ The role of the Centres for Social Work is to promote the free energy advice service and to collect households' applications. Energy advisers visited 282 low-income households in 2018. That same year, €65,313 was allocated to the ZERO programme from the central government budget (Eco Fund, 2019b).

The ENSVET network undertakes energy advice in households, based on the methodology developed in the ACHIEVE³² and REACH³³ projects (Tkalec and Živčič, 2014).³⁴ The starting point of the ACHIEVE project was how to help low-income households make significant savings on their energy consumption and bills. Energy advice and the installation of some free energy- and water-saving devices resulted in an average saving of €150 per year per household (Bajet et al., 2017; EC, 2019). The REACH project aimed to reduce energy poverty on a practical and structural level through empowering energy poor households that were social assistance beneficiaries to take actions to save energy and change their habits. These households received energy-saving and water-saving devices (worth €30–40) that helped to sustainably reduce energy and water consumption. The households could save approximately €108 per year in energy and water expenses" (Bajet et al., 2017).

Each household also receives a free package of devices to reduce energy and water use (LED lamps, power extension leads with an off switch, tap and shower accessories, window seals, etc.). The energy consultant also presents options for a variety of more demanding measures, for which grants or credit could be obtained (possibly in the future) from the Eco Fund (Eco Fund, 2019a). The primary purpose of the programme is that those who cannot afford so do not give up the overall energy efficient refurbishment of the entire building (Tkalec and Živčič, 2014).

²⁷ The scheme was set by the 2008 National Energy Efficiency Action Plan and has been implemented since 2010 (National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020, 2015). It started by public calls for investments in energy efficiency, where financial incentive grants to vulnerable households amounted to 100% of the investment costs.

²⁸ ENSVET is a network of energy advisory offices, which is coordinated and mainly financed by the Eco Fund. Independent energy advisers provide free-of-charge help to people (not only those on a low income) to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

²⁹ See: <https://www.ekosklad.si/prebivalstvo/ensvet> (accessed 15 January 2020) and the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2014–2020 (2015).

³⁰ See: <https://www.ekosklad.si/prebivalstvo/ensvet> and <https://www.ekosklad.si/prebivalstvo/ensvet/pisarna?stran=1> (accessed 15 January 2020).

³¹ See: <https://www.ekosklad.si/prebivalstvo/pridobite-spodbudo-zmanjsevanje-energetske-revscine> (accessed 15 April 2020).

³² See: <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/en/projects/achieve> (accessed 17 January 2020).

³³ See: <http://reach-energy.eu/> (accessed 17 January 2020).

³⁴ ACHIEVE – Actions in Low Income Households to Improve Energy Efficiency through Visits and Energy Diagnosis (2011–2014) was followed by the REACH project (-2017) (Bajet et al., 2017).

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Annex

Table A1: Essential service – Water

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:³⁵

There is no definition of “low-income people” in the context of the delivery of water.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to water (for hygiene purposes, to cook...) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	No
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

³⁵ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A2: Essential service – Sanitation

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:³⁶

There is no definition of “low-income people” in the context of the delivery of sanitation.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to sanitation (i.e. systems for taking dirty water and other waste products away from dwellings in order to protect people’s health) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	No
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

³⁶ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A3: Essential service – Energy

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:³⁷

“Vulnerable households” are those that – due to their property, income and other social circumstances, as well as their housing situation – cannot secure another energy source that would result in the same or lower costs for the most necessary household use. The income-related proof required is an application for cash social assistance dated prior to the day on which notification of disconnection is received. Once the cash social assistance is granted, the households are no longer considered vulnerable.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to energy (to light dwellings, heat or cool dwellings, use home appliances) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	No
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	Yes (electricity)		
Advice/training or information services	Yes		
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	Yes (***)		

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

(***) Yes, but three additional conditions have to be met (season, thermal conditions and health).

³⁷ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A4: Essential service – Public transport

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:³⁸

There is no definition of “low-income people” in the context of the delivery of public transport.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to public transport in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	No	No	No
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

³⁸ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table A5: Essential service – Digital public services

1) Definition of “low income” used in the context of the delivery of the service in the country:³⁹

“Persons without the means to meet basic needs at the subsistence level” are equated to the cash social assistance or the income supplement beneficiaries.

2) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to digital public services (e.g. digital post, digital fiscal services, digital social security services, digital health care appointments...) in the country:

	National (*)	Subnational	
		Regional (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)	Local (only if <i>no</i> for national) (**)
Reduced tariffs	Yes (***)		
Cash benefits	No	No	No
In-kind benefits	No	No	No
Advice/training or information services	Yes		
Provision of a basic/uninterrupted supply	No	No	No

(*) For each measure: Does the measure exist in the country at national level (“Yes”/“No”)?

(**) **Only** if the measure does not exist at national level **and** if the service is organised at subnational level: Does the measure exist at regional level (Yes in all regions; Yes in most regions; Yes but only in a few regions; No)? And at local level (Yes in all local entities; Yes in most local entities; Yes but only in a few local entities; No)? Important: if a measure exists as a **general social support measure**, not specifically aimed at facilitating access for low-income people, the answer is “No”.

(***) Yes, but for one of the measures, disability is also a condition.

³⁹ **National definition** used in this context (most frequently used definition if there is more than one definition). **Only if** there is no national definition **and if** the service is organised at subnational level, most common definition used in this context at regional (if any) or local (if any) level.

Table B1: Essential services – Summary table

- 1) Measures aimed at facilitating access for low-income people to the different services that exist at national, regional and/or local level in the country
- 2) Broader policy framework under which all or some of these measures are organised in the country
- 3) Ongoing or announced reforms of the measures and/or related frameworks aimed at (further) enhancing effective access to the service for low-income people in the country

	1. Measures (NAT, SUBNAT, BOTH, NONE) (*)	2. Policy framework (**)		3. Ongoing or planned reforms (Yes/No)
		National (Yes/No)	Subnational (Yes/No)	
Access to water	NONE	No	No	No
Access to sanitation	NONE	No	No	No
Access to energy	NAT	Yes		No
Access to public transports	NONE	No	No	No
Access to digital public services	NAT	No	No	No
Access to basic financial services (***)	Not applicable	No	No	No

(*) This column summarises the response provided in Tables A1-A5 above. "NAT" means that all the measures that exist in favour of low-income people are national measures; "SUBNAT" means that there are no national measures but some of/all the measures that exist are subnational measures; BOTH means a mix of NAT and SUBNAT; "NONE" means that there are no measures, be it at national or subnational level.

(**) Is there a broader national policy framework under which all or some of these measures are organised in the country for some of/all the services under scrutiny ("Yes"/"No")? **Only if** there is no such national framework for one service **and if** the service is organised at subnational level: Is there a broader subnational policy framework under which all or some of these measures are organised for this service ("Yes"/"No")?

(***) Open and use payment accounts with basic features (Directive 2014/92/EU).

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