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Flash project

Fighting energy poverty: Indicators for the evaluation of federal measures (ENIGME)

Information file for applicants

Submission deadline proposals
26/09/2025 @ 17h00

INTRODUCTION

This document provides specific information for research teams interested in submitting a research proposal in response to a Flash project call in the frame of the "Science4Policy (S4P) programme".

FLASH PROJECTS

FLASH projects are short-term projects with a maximum duration of 12 months. The Flash projects are designed to deliver a rapid response to a pressing policy demand for which scientific evidence is requested from the academic community. A call for a Flash project is issued by BELSPO whenever requested by a Federal public administration and its Minister in charge.

Flash projects are not intended to produce new knowledge but use sound existing knowledge to generate scientific grounded evidence for policy action.

CONTENT OF THE STUDY

Objective of the project:

1. **Background**

Energy is essential to our daily lives. We rely on it for adequate heating, cooling, and lighting to maintain a decent standard of living and safeguard our health. Energy poverty occurs when a household lacks access to essential energy services necessary for a decent standard of living and well-being, such as heating, hot water, cooling, lighting, and power for appliances. This is due to factors like low-income, high-energy costs, and poor energy efficiency in homes (EU 2023/1791 Art. 2).

Energy poverty is a complex and multifaceted issue that primarily affects households, making it challenging to address. In Belgium, 21.8% of households were affected by energy poverty in 2022, according to the 2024 Energy Poverty Barometer by the King Baudouin Foundation. The government actively implements social measures to help people overcome this challenge. However, escaping energy poverty is not easy, as it is influenced by several external factors. Therefore, it is vital to ensure that government interventions are targeted and effective.

The Belgian government has implemented following key measures to address energy poverty:

- The Social Tariff: This is a reduced energy rate granted automatically to eligible households. It aims to help vulnerable individuals and families manage their energy costs by offering a uniform tariff for electricity and gas across Belgium, regardless of the energy supplier. The automatic granting of the tariff significantly reduces issues related to non-take-up. [More information: Sociaal tarief voor energie | FOD Economie (fgov.be) – in Dutch – in French]

- The Social Heating Fund: This fund provides financial aid to households that heat their homes with heating oil, bulk propane, or lamp oil, and who have limited incomes. It helps them cover part of their heating expenses. Households can apply for this aid through their local OCMW energy office. [More information: Sociaal Verwarmingsfonds | Sociaal Verwarmingsfonds: toelagen of steun voor jouw energierekening – in Dutch – in French]

- The Social Energy Fund: Managed by local OCMWs, this fund is used to provide energy-related financial assistance and guidance to the most vulnerable. It supports services like debt mediation and budget management, helping people who struggle to pay their energy bills. [More information: Gas- en elektriciteitsfonds | POD Maatschappelijke Integratie (mi-is.be) – in Dutch - in French]

- The Social Tariff Premium: Effective from August 1, 2024, this premium provides financial support to residents of buildings with collective energy systems who do not benefit from the Social Tariff due to the collective nature of their energy connection. Eligible individuals will receive a quarterly premium. [More information: De sociaaltariefpremie voor collectieve installaties | FOD Economie (fgov.be) – in Dutch – in French]

The primary goal of this project is to establish a comprehensive evaluation framework to assess the effectiveness of these federal measures in reducing energy poverty in Belgium. The evaluation will focus on two main questions:

- Are people who are currently experiencing energy poverty and using federal measures being successfully lifted out of energy poverty?

- Which target groups are reached by the measures (take-up), what is their socio-economic profile, and to what extent are eligible individuals not accessing the measures (non-take-up)?

To achieve these objectives, the project will list all existing administrative data sources and assess their availability for evaluating federal measures. Here it will be important to also map how to access necessary data, especially for programs like the Social Heating Fund, where information may be held by OCMWs or regulators. The project will develop a methodology to address the two main questions within the scope of each of the four federal measures (Social Tariff, Social Heating Fund, Social Energy Fund, Social Tariff Premium). This methodology will

identify best and second-best approaches and utilize both administrative data and survey data (such as SILC), including methodologies to link these two types of data where necessary. The link between administrative and survey data will require the development of a specific methodology, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the measures' effectiveness.

This evaluation is critical for reporting to the minister and refining federal policies on energy poverty. The goal is to provide the FPS Economy with the scientific support needed to improve the targeting and efficiency of its measures, ensuring that vulnerable populations receive timely and effective assistance, and that energy poverty is meaningfully reduced across Belgium.

2. **Research domain:** Energy Poverty, Social Policy, Social Equity in Energy Access, Public Policy Evaluation, Data Consolidation, Profiling of Vulnerable Populations, SDG Monitoring

3. **Keywords (5 maximum):** Energy poverty, Evaluation, Indicators, Data analysis, Belgium

4. **Specific research questions**

The proposal will address the following research questions:

a. What (administrative) data sources exist and which ones can be mobilized to create a comprehensive methodology for assessing the effectiveness of federal measures against energy poverty? Are these data in a format that is adequate for processing, and what adaptations are needed (such as consolidating into a single database or changing formats) to make them usable?

b. How can these data sources be linked to specific indicators monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of federal social measures against energy poverty?

5. **Duration and schedule:** The project will last **a maximum of 4 months**. **Deadlines for Deliverables 1 and 2**: 4 months after the beginning of the project.

6. **Deliverables**

Deliverable 1: Data Mobilization Report for the Monitoring and Evaluation of Federal Measures targeting Energy Poverty

This report will map out the available and potential data sources that can be used to assess the effectiveness of federal measures against energy poverty. It will:

- Provide a comprehensive inventory of available data sources relevant to the Social Tariff, Social Heating Fund, Social Energy Fund, and Social Tariff Premium.
- Identify data gaps and propose strategies to overcome these gaps by accessing alternative or new data sources.
- Explore the feasibility of data sharing and data accessibility, including any legal, technical, or administrative barriers that need to be addressed.
- Include recommendations on how these data sources can be integrated into a central database for more streamlined and effective analysis.

Deliverable 2: Indicator Framework and Methodology Guide

This guide will provide a detailed methodology for calculating the eight indicators to monitor both the effectiveness and take-up for each of the federal measures (Social Tariff, Social Heating Fund, Social Energy Fund, Social Tariff Premium). It will:

- Propose a set of key indicators to measure the effectiveness and take-up.
- Detail how the identified data sources can be used to calculate these indicators, ensuring that relevant variables are captured for analysis (e.g., income level, household composition, energy usage).
- Define the calculation methods for each indicator, ensuring reproducibility and consistency in the analysis.
- Offer a tiered approach to indicator calculation, suggesting primary data sources, alternative data sources, and proxies when ideal data are not available:
    I. Best Solution: The ideal data sources needed for accurately calculating each indicator, detailing the data's availability and how it aligns with the project's objectives.
    II. Second-Best Option: Alternative data sources that can be used if the best solution is not available. This section will discuss the strengths and limitations of these sources compared to the ideal data.
    III. Proxy Data: Data sources that are readily available and can be used as proxies when neither the best nor the second-best data is accessible. This section will also provide methodologies for how these proxies can be used to approximate the needed indicators and any potential biases or inaccuracies that may arise.

7. Impact, KPIs and objectives

KPI 1: Successful identification and access to all relevant administrative data sources, with clear recommendations on how to mobilize these for evaluating federal measures against energy poverty (Social Tariff, Social Heating Fund, Social Energy Fund, Social Tariff Premium).

KPI 2: Creation of a clear, reproducible framework for calculating the eight key indicators that can effectively monitor and evaluate both effectiveness (as defined above) and take-up of each of the four federal measures against energy poverty (Social Tariff, Social Heating Fund, Social Energy Fund, Social Tariff Premium), including the ideal data sources, alternative options, and potential proxy data when necessary for calculating those.

BUDGET

The budget allocated to a project is depending on its duration in months. This one **shall not exceed 4 months**. A maximum amount of 10.000€/month can be allocated for a Flash project.

The eligible costs are:

- Personnel costs: Staff costs include the (full) costs relating to staff recruited under employment contracts and to non-salaried staff (lump sum payment per Person/Month);

- Specific operating costs: This includes the cost of goods and services directly related to the implementation of the project and of which the list is included in the proposal.
- Indirect costs: Lump sum to cover the general operating costs set at 15% of personnel and specific operating costs.

APPLICATION

Flash proposals must be written in English and signed electronically. Proposals (in pdf format) should be sent to flash@belspo.be by mentioning the Flash proposal acronym in the subject line of the e-mail. Applicants are required to meet the conditions set forth in this information documents and to comply with the scope of the call for the Flash project. The template of the application form can be accessed via the BELSPO website, Documents for promoters | S4Policy | P4Science & S4Policy (belspo.be).

The closing date for this Call is **26/09/2025 at 5.00 p.m**.

EVALUATION AND SELECTION

The Flash proposals are evaluated and recommended for funding by a panel of independent foreign experts under the supervision of BELSPO, within 4 weeks after the submission deadline. The evaluation criteria are the adequacy of the budget and human resources, the skill(s) of the scientific team(s) and the methodological approach.

The evaluation form template can be consulted on the website: Documents for promoters | S4Policy | P4Science & S4Policy (belspo.be)

The final decision is taken by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of BELSPO upon the advice of the Inspector of finances, within the available budget.

CONTACT AND QUESTIONS

For any further questions about this call for Flash proposals, please get in touch with the Belspo Flash team via e-mail: flash@belspo.be.