

Energy poverty in pandemic times: fine-tuning emergency measures for better future responses to extreme events in Spain

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Abstract-

Energy poverty has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis it triggered. Spain, one of the first countries affected by the outbreak, introduced several measures to protect energy consumers during the initial lockdown and to provide them with economic relief (including a disconnection ban and the introduction of new categories of beneficiaries for its energy assistance programmes). This article presents a critical assessment of these interventions, based on the regulatory theory and a review of international experiences. It shows how emergency measures should rely on a robust but flexible targeting strategy and be supported by appropriate financing; it also sheds light on the importance of information campaigns that allow the aid to reach more households, improving the effectiveness of the intervention. The reflections and recommendations presented in this article may help improve the design of emergency measures during future health crises or extreme weather events.

Index Terms- COVID-19; Energy poverty; Energy insecurity; Emergency measures; Consumer protection; Disconnection ban

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Citation:

Mastropietro, P. "Energy poverty in pandemic times: fine-tuning emergency measures for better future responses to extreme events in Spain", Energy Research & Social Science, vol.84, pp.102364-1-102364-8, February, 2022.