



## WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST FUEL POVERTY?

### SYNTHESIS

### For sustainable solutions, consistent with our commitments

Final publication – November 2016  
Report n°18

In our country, over 5 million households find it hard to pay their energy bills. Heating, lighting and transport are nevertheless essential needs, and one cannot lead a normal life if these needs are not met. Among these households, a certain number find themselves in a genuine situation of fuel poverty. They often rent their homes from the private sector and do not have the means to cover their expenses.

These situations present social, but also environmental challenges. In the fight against climate change, the priority must be to eliminate the waste resulting from situations of energy "leakage". If sustainable solutions are not found, rising energy prices, which are necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and our carbon footprint, will be unbearably high for a growing number of households and will therefore not be implemented.

The fight against fuel poverty has improved in recent years, and new measures formulated by the Energy Transition Law of 2015 are being implemented: energy cheques, energy-saving "poverty" certificates, etc. But these initiatives are not widely used, they are not well coordinated, and most often they are only calculated on the basis of income. Yet the situation of a household with a low income but living in well-isolated social housing is very different from that of a household living in a home with high energy loss.

It is now essential to introduce more clarity and coherence into this system, prioritising long-term solutions which are the only ones capable of reconciling social and environmental priorities. Urgent work needs to be done to tackle energy leakage, particularly in private-sector rental properties, and, as far as possible, we must avoid providing direct aid for fossil fuel use, since this is contrary to the aims of the Paris Climate Change Agreement.

Following on from a rigorous and exhaustive assessment, this brief proposes, within the framework of current reforms as well as beyond, to:

- 1) **Fully prioritise work on energy "leakage" within private-sector residential properties**, which mostly represent situations of genuine fuel poverty.

The *Fabrique Ecologique* has already proposed introducing a requirement to tackle these situations; but, even if implemented, this would not suffice. Here, in addition to what is being done, we propose:

- implementing a coordinated system to enable work on a moderate scale to be carried out rapidly, in order to make the dwelling heatable - a first step towards more extensive renovation;
- planning for new energy platforms to act as a coordinated single-access point to tackle these situations;
- creating the means to provide an almost full funding through methods such as energy-saving "poverty" certificates and micro credit.

- 2) **For heating methods which emit high levels of greenhouse gas, prioritise the use of energy cheques to cover the cost of thermal insulation or conversion towards more environmentally friendly heating methods.** This provision would be introduced while hydrocarbon prices are very low, as they are today, and in situations where an operational alternative heating method exists.