



HEA Training Follow-Up Report



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1. Presentation of ASSIST project

1.1 ASSIST overview and introduction

ASSIST is a 36-months European ‘market activation and policy orientation’ project to tackle fuel poverty and support vulnerable consumers. It intended to actively engage consumers in the energy market and positively change behaviour in relation to energy consumption and to influence design of policy at all levels to tackle fuel poverty issues.

Based on the conclusion of the Energy Citizens’ Forum and of the European Vulnerable Consumers Working Group, the project intended to combine activities addressing both energy and social dimensions as fuel poverty is not only an energy issue nor can it be tackled in isolation of the bigger issue of poverty. More specifically, ASSIST strategic objectives were to contribute to:

- tackle energy poverty both at grassroot level as well as through policy measures
- reduce the main barriers of the energy market faced by vulnerable consumers, and
- support vulnerable consumers to be more efficient with their domestic energy consumption (electricity and gas).

In order to fulfil its goals, the project drafted a plan for very diversified, but correlated, research, networking activities as well as in-field actions, that were consistent with the relevant national and European-wide scenarios.

ASSIST intended to create a network of innovative professional figure to support vulnerable consumers in their domestic energy consumption, the Home Energy Advisor (HEA). This report will now observe the success of these network-related activities.

1.2 “Home Energy Advisors (HEA) Network” activity

WP4 objective was to create the network of “Home Energy Advisors” which would gather all the trained HEA to use common practices, materials and organization tools in each country. The HEA networks wanted to guarantee to all consumers the fairness and non-commercial/tertiary activity of the trained HEA. An ICT platform was being developed to serve as the network management tool to:

- represent a virtual community platform where trained HEA may receive the latest advisory support materials, share their working experience as well as receive continuous training and relevant news
- be the main communication channel to the individual HEA, supporting their maintained interest, enthusiasm and encouraging good performance and
- represent a first contact point for vulnerable consumers/fuel poor to ask and receive support on their domestic energy efficiency issues and/or social economic issues.

The membership to the HEA network would only be possible after the completion of the ASSIST training course, therefore the above mentioned three bullet points represent a motivation for the interested persons in undertaking and finishing the ASSIST course. The criteria of passing the HEA training vary in each country according to the planned actions and level of expertise required to reach the set energy saving goals for vulnerable consumers.

The work package carried out the tasks to build and retain the European/National HEA networks, for this purpose a budget was maintained to provide each HEA with a small payment for their services. Partners, according to the national internal regulation of the ASSIST course/network, foresaw small payments to the HEA on completion of the engagement and action with the vulnerable consumers (each country had to define the timing and payment schedules, such as a prepayment after the end of the training course, and the final payment after the action addressing 10 vulnerable consumers). The network would also enable to follow and ensure its regular work in supporting vulnerable consumers/energy poor, in order to:

- Address at least 30.000 vulnerable consumers/fuel poor (5.000 in each of the 6 countries involved) through specific mailshots and also regular communication channels (social networks, newsletters, etc.) to inform them on the network, its aim as well as useful and practical information on energy efficient behaviours.
- Provide soft assistance and support to vulnerable consumers/fuel poor on domestic energy efficient to 12.000 vulnerable consumers (2.000 in each country) and assisting them in reducing their energy consumption of 2%.
- Provide specific assistance to 750 vulnerable consumers/energy poor within each National action

The vulnerable consumers to be addressed within the ASSIST action were identified through several activities as described below:

1) The umbrella organisations identified in WP2 and with which the partners have collaborated for the identification and selection of the training participants (WP3) will provide support also in the design of the action (so as to designing a feasible action able to address vulnerable consumers).

2) The most significant umbrella associations identified in WP2 will be invited to be part of the national steering committees and within the work and activity of the steering committees will be able to support the design of a feasible action plan and supervise also its implementation providing useful information in means to address vulnerable.

3) The national nodes of the EAPN will also be members of the national Vulnerable Consumers Steering Committee and will not only support the design of a feasible action plan, supervise its implementation but will also engage their network of social national associations in supporting addressing vulnerable consumers throughout the action. This will be done through their internal communication channels. A communication will be sent to

their national network of contacts at the beginning of the project to inform them of the launch of ASSIST; during the design of the action plan to inform them of the action and ask for feedback; and at the start of the action to trigger the process.

4) Partners will work also with municipalities to address vulnerable consumers in the action.

5) Participants of the ASSIST training course will also be used as a channel to reach and address the vulnerable consumers in the action (either those who can be considered as vulnerable consumers and those working in social structures) and in the same manner trainers of the course will also be activated in this stage.

6) Partners will also use their internal and the project communication channels (including the ICT platform) to spread the launch of the ASSIST action and to ensure that the message reaches the vulnerable consumers.

1.3 “HEA training follow-up report” overview and structure

The intention of this document is to evaluate the impact of ASSIST training, and its demonstrated and potential benefits for the trained HEAs and the assisted vulnerable consumers, and to reflect the future possibilities of the ASSIST training models. During the ASSIST project, over 500 Home Energy Advisors (HEAs) have been trained. It is relevant to understand their perception of the usefulness of the HEA training in the professional life and personally, several months after the training has been completed.

ASSIST training, in terms of detailed content and practical realization as such has already been evaluated by the trained HEAs in the deliverables of working package WP3. Therefore, the purpose of this training follow-up evaluation is not to assess training module details or contents as such, but to try to understand broader perspectives of the impact of ASSIST training, especially for the trained HEAs themselves, but also the vulnerable consumers assisted, and to offer insights and recommendations for future HEA training programmes.

In essence, feedback and information on ASSIST training follow-up was collected from HEAs, using structured interviews or online or telephone surveys carried out among all HEAs in every partner country. This document describes the structure and delivery of this survey and illustrates the evidence collected in order to describe best training practices and possible job market opportunities, to respond to Task 4.3 of ASSIST project. The intention was to prepare a comprehensive report that contains statistical follow-up information as well as personal options on the training course from the HEA network members.

A survey for all HEAs was carried out between December 2019 and February 2020, using a questionnaire in English that was common to all partner countries. The questions were translated to the national contexts and languages by partners in each country. Results were analysed by ASSIST project partners in February and March 2020, and summarizing analyses were made by the WP4 leader VaasaETT.

Feedback to the training follow-up was also collected from stakeholders, and in particular from the members of the national Vulnerable Consumers Steering Committees (VCSCs) during their third meeting in spring 2020. To address Milestone 6 of WP4, feedback was also collected from vulnerable consumers (VCs) in connection to WP6 activities.

2. Evaluation of ASSIST training impact by the HEA Network Members

2.1 Planning of the HEA survey

Task 4.3 of WP4 aims to collect information from all trained HEAs on how they perceive the usefulness of the HEA training in their professional life and personally. The aim was to find and validate European best practices related to the HEA training.

The approach to reach this goal was to conduct a follow-up survey for the HEAs with the intention to provide a comprehensive report that contains statistical follow-up information as well as personal options on the training course.

With this survey the purpose was not only to gather opinions of the active HEAs, carrying out various ASSIST actions, but also opinions of those HEAs who were less active or even those HEAs who started an ASSIST training program but did not complete the training. These groups could provide relevant insights, especially on the factors motivate to join and finish training programs.

The schedule for realizing the HEA survey was agreed in the ASSIST consortium meeting in Milan in October 2019. The following steps were agreed upon:

- Proposal for the method and survey questions in October 2019 by WP leader
- Discussion in the ASSIST telephone conference 7 November 2019
- Agreement upon the process and common survey questions per email in November 2019
- Questions translated to local languages and preparing the surveys/interviews in November 2019.
- Survey answering time 1.12.2019–31.1.2020.
- Analysis of the result in February 2020
- Writing HEA Training Follow-Up Report in February–March 2020.
- Finishing and publishing the document in April 2020.

The survey was to find out the best European practices related to HEA training and the questionnaire addressed this aim through six different topics:

- Profile of HEA types having delivered ASSIST actions
- Assessment on the usefulness of the training by HEAs
- ASSIST training material found most useful by HEAs

- Benefits from the training in the professional lives of HEAs
- Overall impact of the training
- Suggestions for improving the training

To see the full survey in English, see Annex 2.

2.2 The survey delivery and analysis

All partners could choose their preferred tools to collect feedback from the HEAs and from those who had registered in a training course but did not complete the training. Partners could choose a communication channel that would best fit the national context and national HEA networks members' availabilities. Partners could choose, for example, an online survey tool or to collect data using face-to-face or phone interviews.

Partners could modify the set of questions to their national context, but the overall structure should follow the survey structure agreed in the consortium meeting. The survey response time varied, but data was agreed to be collected by the end of January 2020. For specific details of delivery in each country, see Methods section in Annex 1.

The work package leader provided all partners with a common template for storing and analysing the results. The data storing template was a spreadsheet file, and the analysis template is in Annex 3. There were two possible data storing sheets partners could use depending whether they were doing quantitative (online survey) or qualitative (phone call or other interview type) surveys. The main idea of these data storing sheets was to collect all data in the same format, allowing common statistical analyses to be done.

For the quantitative survey, partners needed simply to copy and paste the answers from their data export solution into the common template. In the case of an open questions, partners were asked to identify three to five most frequently given answers given by their responders for each question. After defining these "typical answer" categories, partners needed to insert them into the template and then manually add the category that best matches the answer. Remaining open answers, that had not been identified as "typical answers", were used as complementary or descriptive information.

The qualitative sheet was used if the follow-up was done by phone, for example, or if data collected in online survey could not be transformed into the quantitative sheet. In the qualitative sheet, all options were pre-defined, and partners needed to manually insert all data collected. In this case, partners were asked to translate all the answers to the open questions into English. However, if the number of responses was high, partners could use the method for open answers categorization (described above for qualitative data) and use the quantitative sheet for open questions and qualitative sheet for defined questions.

In addition, a common analysis template was prepared (see Annex 3). All partners assessed the answers collected from their respective respondents themselves as partners' experience and understanding of national contexts was required. These national analyses served as the essential content on which this document was further elaborated. The survey deliveries from countries are included in Annex 1.

2.3 Response rate

The number of responses to the HEA surveys was 191. The survey was sent in total for 765 people in six countries, which results to a response rate of 25%. In most countries, those who answered questionnaires were trained HEAs and also actively supporting vulnerable consumers through ASSIST actions or engagement actions (as per WP5). Table 1 shows number of responders and response rates for every country. Figure 1 depicts the absolute values of responders in each country.

Table 1. Number of responders per HEA type. Active represents HEAs who are implementing ASSIST actions. Non-actives are fully-trained HEAs, but not implementing the ASSIST actions. Dropouts represents people who did not finish the course.

Country	Number of survey responders	Number of active HEAs in the country	Number of requests sent	Response rate (only active HEAs)	Response rate (all)
Belgium	55	44	76	61%	72%
	Active = 27 Non-active = 28		to 44 active and to 32 non-active		
Finland	44	67	203	48%	22%
	Active = 33 Dropouts = 11		to 67 active and to 136 dropouts		
Italy	33	22	132	82%	25%
	Active = 18 Non-active = 11 Dropouts = 4		to 122 HEA and to 10 dropouts		
Poland	19	53	185	32%	10%
	Active = 15 Non-active = 2 Dropouts = 2				
Spain	29	89	138	33%	21%
	Active = 28 Dropouts = 1				
UK	11	6	31	100%	35%
	Active = 6 Non-active=5				
TOTAL	191	282	765	45%	25%
	Active = 127 Non-active = 46 Dropouts = 18				

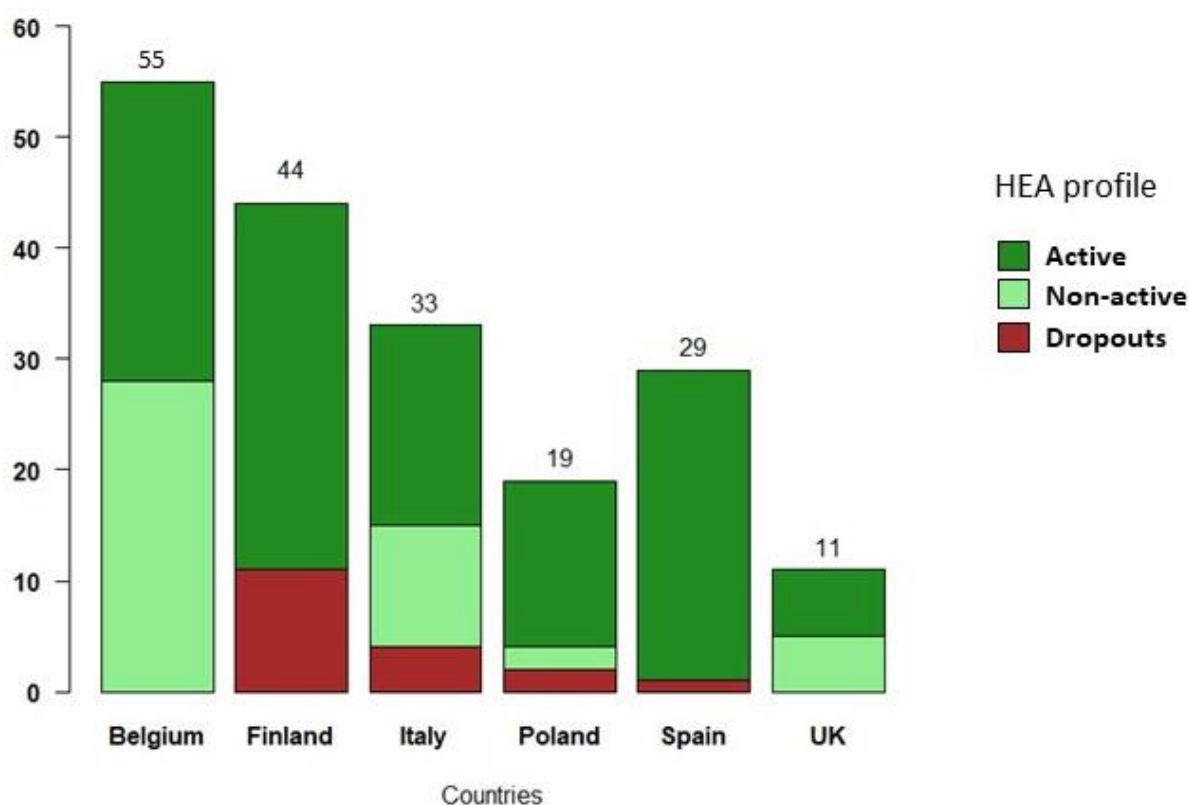


Figure 1. Total number of people who responded the survey or interviewed by their HEA coordinator (ASSIST partner) in each country (N=191). Most of the responders were active HEAs (N = 127). In addition, few non-active HEAs (N = 46) and few dropouts answered (N = 18).

As the questionnaire was sent in many countries widely for anybody who had demonstrated interest in ASSIST training, the category “response rate (all)” in Table 1 understandably has lower values. Exception for this was Belgium, where 2 surveys were sent out: a comprehensive survey (which was the basis for all countries) was sent to all active HEAs (44) and a short survey was sent at the moment a trained HEA stopped (32) to know the reason. Excluding this, response rates were low probably because people with less involvement with ASSIST activities were also being approached among other reasons. For example, in Italy the training course was delivered also to municipal operators who would be in charge of the city helpdesk to support citizens on energy issues within the SECAPs. For internal reasons, the helpdesk has not yet been launched but the operators are very motivated and answered the questionnaire providing useful information and insight for their specific case.

Among the questionnaire responders, most people had fully completed ASSIST training. In few cases a responder had not fully completed the training (e.g. the final exam was missing) but they were still actively assisting vulnerable consumers. Therefore, the responses of the “active” (Table 1) HEAs will be most interesting, as they can provide insights on the work with vulnerable consumers and the resulting impact. Figure 2 demonstrates the response rates of active HEAs in the HEA survey. UK could reach all 6 active HEAs whereas Italy could reach 82% and Belgium 61%. Finland response rate was 48% and in Spain and

Poland little over 30% among the active HEAs. In Belgium, for example, the rate was elevated probably thanks to frequent reminders (by mail and phone) to HEAs. Also, in Finland frequent reminders on behalf of the employers of HEAs were sent to the HEAs.

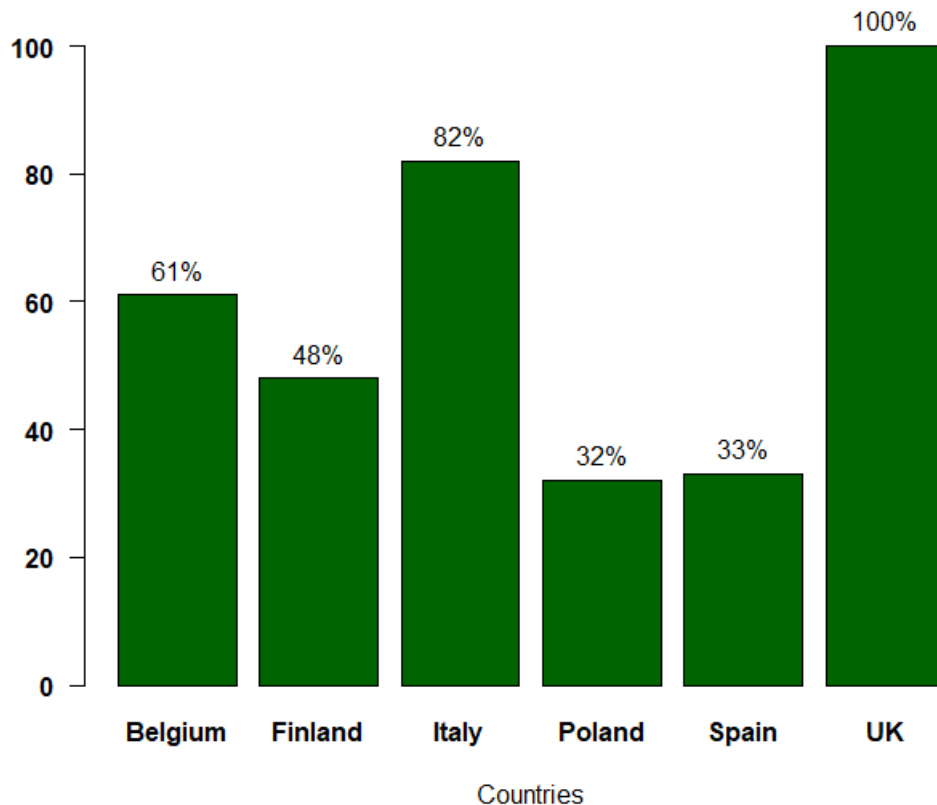


Figure 2. Survey response rates of the active HEAs in each country. There is almost 300 active HEAs and this survey could reach 45% of them.

In other countries the response rate was lower probably since the survey was not obligatory. In Poland, for example, a lot of responders said that the big problem of their working is bureaucracy and respond to question could be considered similarly. In Spain lower response rate was because the first pilot with ASSIST actions ended before having an ASSIST harmonized survey. The number of HEAs trained in the first pilot represent approximately half of all HEAs trained, so Spanish partner missed the opportunity to collect a large part of the survey responses with the harmonized versions. However, they circulated an evaluation survey too so, although without the exact parameters, surveys in all editions have been collected.

The survey did not only aim to reach trained and active HEAs but also inactive HEAs that completed the training and HEAs that dropped out and did not complete the training. However, their share in the total responses is small, so later in the document we focus mainly on the answers of active HEAs.



Figure 3. Lunch & Learn session in Melle, Belgium in 2019.

In addition to the questionnaires, some project partners collected feedback in more non-formal manners. In Belgium, Fluvius, for example, organized five Lunch & Learn sessions for the active HEAs in Melle (Figure 3) with an average attendance of 10 people. During these face-to-face sessions, information was provided to support the active HEAs in delivering ASSIST actions. In parallel, feedback was collected from the HEAs on the implementation of ASSIST actions. These sessions were also an opportunity for the HEAs to network and share experiences with other HEAs. Also, Fluvius had regular contacts with the HEAs by phone or email to follow up their activities, gather feedback and support them if needed. Finally, each trained HEA that stopped with his/her activities received a short survey to collect information about the main reason of discontinuation. The response rate to this survey was very high: only 4 inactive HEAs out of 32 did not respond to the survey. 47% of the HEAs stopped because of personal reasons (lack of time/interest, sickness etc.) and 27% because of lack of support (for discussion see Annex 1 Belgium, chapter 2.1). During the first weeks of implementation of the ASSIST action, the discontinuation of the activities was mainly due to "insufficient support". In response to survey results, corrective measures were taken by the Belgian partners to motivate the active HEAs to implement the ASSIST action, e.g. a communication plan was established to follow up the activities of the HEAs more closely and to provide them periodically with support.

In Italy, data was collected also before the time of the survey while regular contact with HEAs. Also, Poland received often feedback from HEAs about their everyday work when they were in contact with them during meetings, phone calls and e-mail contacts. In Spain, a survey was created to evaluate the training of the first pilot in Barcelona, before having

the HEA official harmonized survey. Furthermore, informal data was also collected during follow-up with HEA during the whole intervention. UK received feedback from consumers from case studies written up by the active HEA working within CCP (Caring for Communities and People).

3. Results of the HEA survey (all countries)

3.1 Motivations to join and complete HEA training

All HEAs were asked for their motivation to join the HEA training in the first place. Figure 4 demonstrates that in addition to professional motivation (32%), also a general interest in the topics covered in the training (29%) and ethical motivation to help vulnerable consumers (23%) drove people to join and complete an ASSIST training course. The question was answered by all the responders.

Table 2 shows numerically the most frequent reasons to participate in the training in each country. If one HEA had chosen several motivating reasons, his/her answer was given as many voices. Therefore, the number of responses appearing in Table 2 is higher than the number of survey responders.

There was some variation between countries according to the reported reasons for participating the training.

Poland, Belgium, and Italy were countries where professional motivation was the most significant reason to participate. Most of Belgium's volunteers were employees of the energy companies Fluvius and Vito, which explains the great professional interest. In Poland, employers' encouragement was the most significant driver (42%), and this share was the highest reported among all countries. However, a professional motivation was nearly as important in Poland. In Italy 45% participated because of professional motivation.

In Belgium, over 50% of responders reported they participated because of ethical motivation: they were motivated to help vulnerable consumers. However, professional motivation was nearly as important, so it appears that in Belgium these two reasons went hand in hand.

In Spain, in the 5 pilots there was an agreement with the employer and participating in ASSIST was paid work and motivations varied from personal interest to add value to the current job.

However, most often the reason to participate in ASSIST training was more personal or ethical than professional. 52% of reported reasons was either interesting topic or ethical motivation. In UK almost 50% stated that ethical reasons motivated them to participate the training. In Finland, the most common reason to participate was a general interest in the topic (41%).

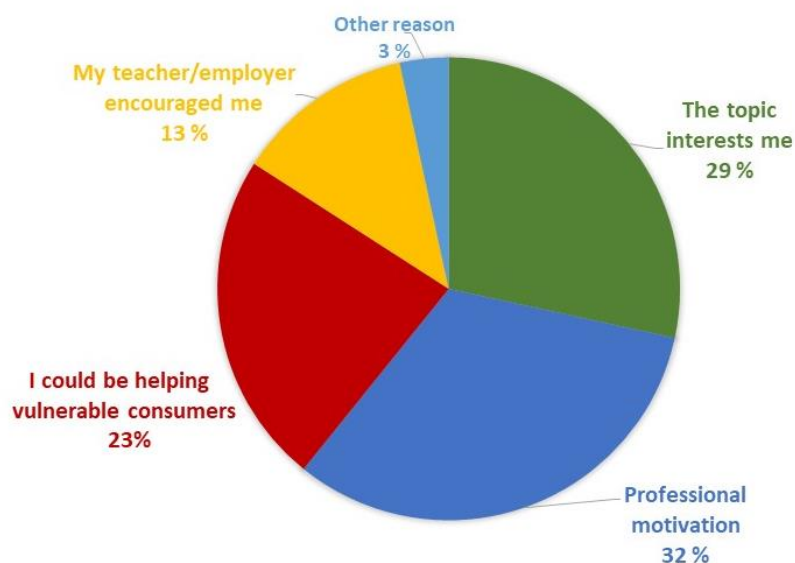


Figure 4. Reasons for participating the training (N=176). All reported reasons have same weight in the diagram, thus N here is higher than the total number of responders.

Table 2. Motivation of HEAs to participate the training per country. Total number of responders refers to the number of mentions per motivation

Country	Interesting topic	Professional motivation	Ethical motivation	Teacher/ employer encouraged	Other	Total number of reported reasons	Total number of responders
Belgium	13	14	18	2	1	48	27
Finland	18	11	9	6	0	44	25
Italy	7	15	4	2	5	33	33
Poland	6	8	2	9	0	25	18
Spain	6	6	3	1	0	16	16
UK	0	3	5	2	0	10	10
Total	50	57	41	22	6	176	129

3.1.1 The profile of HEAs

The reason to participate to the training in the first place somewhat indicated whether HEAs remained active HEAs after the training.

In Belgium, the most active HEA's were the employees of Fluvius and the employees of Samenlevingsopbouw. The former because they were extensively followed up by the coordinator, who herself is a volunteer and an employee of Fluvius. The latter because they can integrate ASSIST training and activities into their daily job.

In Finland, the most active HEAs are those who have professional connection either with vulnerable consumers or energy issues. These HEAs were active due to both ethical and professional interests. HEAs answers indicate that if the training course had been specifically designed to match their training interests, and thus allowing learning something that would benefit them in their professional life, HEAs were more likely to stay active.

In Italy, the most active HEAs in Italy were HEAs working in consumers associations (Federconsumatori Lombardia e Adiconsum Lombardia): they have already had a long-term relationship with these consumers associations and were very active people, involved in many activities supporting vulnerable consumers. They showed a great interest in the ASSIST project and both to be trained as HEAs and to be actively involved in the actions in the field. The motivation for these being active HEAs were further to the professional one also ethical and personal.

In Poland, the most active HEAs were Eco-managers, municipality workers who assist citizen in energy issues, with the focus on vulnerable consumers. Almost each Eco-manager should give advice for 10 household a year. That is why usually they were most active. However, Welfare System also usually gives advice to vulnerable consumers. Reason for being active for these HEAs were professional.

In Spain, the most active HEAs were the ones with more personal motivation and interest for the topic and more time assigned to the tasks on behalf of their employees. These HEAs become active because of ethical reasons.

In UK, the most active HEAs were staff from non-statutory services that were able to take time to sit with their clients. Also HEAs from organisations with related remits e.g. Citizens Advice offers debt advice and We Care offers home repairs were active. These HEAs are active because personal motivation and professional motivation. There was personal experience and interest in energy efficiency and environmental issues as well as overlapping with their work agendas. Most of the HEAs have said that the training itself was really valuable but weren't able to commit to the reporting and monitoring required. This is due mainly to the time constraints they are allocated to each client.

The survey aimed also to reach people who did not complete the ASSIST training. In total we were able to reach only 18 of these dropouts (See Table 1). Since only 18 dropouts answered we could not draw comprehensive conclusions why people in general had not completed the course. In Finland all reported reasons were due to personal reasons. From the training progress monitoring carried out in Italy the main reasons for not finishing the course were mainly lack of time.

3.2 Usefulness of training courses

Responders were asked also to evaluate the training qualities in this HEA survey, after the trainings have been completed. Training courses were also evaluated by HEAs right after each training and these evaluations by HEAs are presented in D3.3 and other WP3 deliverables. However, similar questions were asked from HEAs also in connection with this document because responders could now look back and assess to which extent the training had been useful from the content's perspective, now that they have experience with VC advisory activities. Tables 3 and 4 show voting result in each country and Figures 5 and 6 the same data in graphical representation.

Table 3. Perception of responders on the energy efficiency and energy saving related contents of ASSIST training

Country	1 (Poor)	2 (Satisfactory)	3 (Good)	4 (Very good)	5 (Excellent)	N Total
Belgium	0	1	4	13	9	27
Finland	0	0	7	7	4	18
Italy	1	1	2	17	7	28
Poland	1	0	3	11	4	19
Spain	0	0	4	4	8	16
UK	0	0	7	0	4	11
Total	2 1.9%	2 1.9%	26 25%	45 43.3%	30 28.8%	104 100%

Table 4. Perception of responders of ASSIST training: Course contents related to social aspects, including identifying and dealing with vulnerable consumers and communicating energy efficiency related issues

Country	1 (Poor)	2 (Satisfactory)	3 (Good)	4 (Very good)	5 (Excellent)	N
Belgium	1	3	4	13	6	27
Finland	0	1	6	9	2	18
Italy	1	1	8	9	9	28
Poland	1	1	4	9	4	19

Spain	0	1	4	7	4	16
UK	0	0	7	0	4	11
Total	3	7	33	47	29	119
	3%	6%	28%	40%	20%	100%

Responders were asked to evaluate training in two different aspects. First, they were asked to evaluate how useful the training was in terms of learning how to save energy and be energy efficient. Second, they were asked to evaluate how useful training was in terms of learning how to identify vulnerable consumers and dealing with them in energy related topics.

Mean values were nearly 4 (very good) which indicates that HEAs were very satisfied with the training and found the contents very useful. ASSIST training appears to be useful regarding the content offered for the HEAs. Next Section discusses how well the training provided ways to HEAs to implement these learning outcomes in their personal/ professional life.

Whether an HEA had earlier experience in VC energy advisory activities did not significantly affect their opinion of the usefulness of the training. In UK, for example, the background made no difference at all.

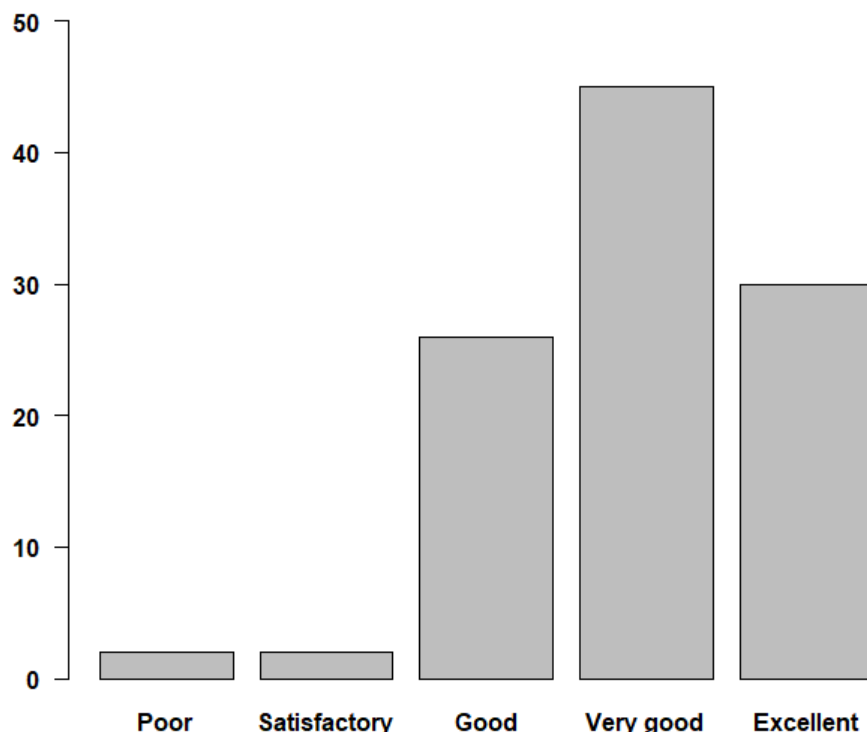


Figure 5. HEAs assessed the usefulness of their attended training course regarding energy efficiency and energy saving. Mean value was 3.9 (value “4” indicating a grading “very good”) which indicates that HEAs were satisfied with the training in this area.

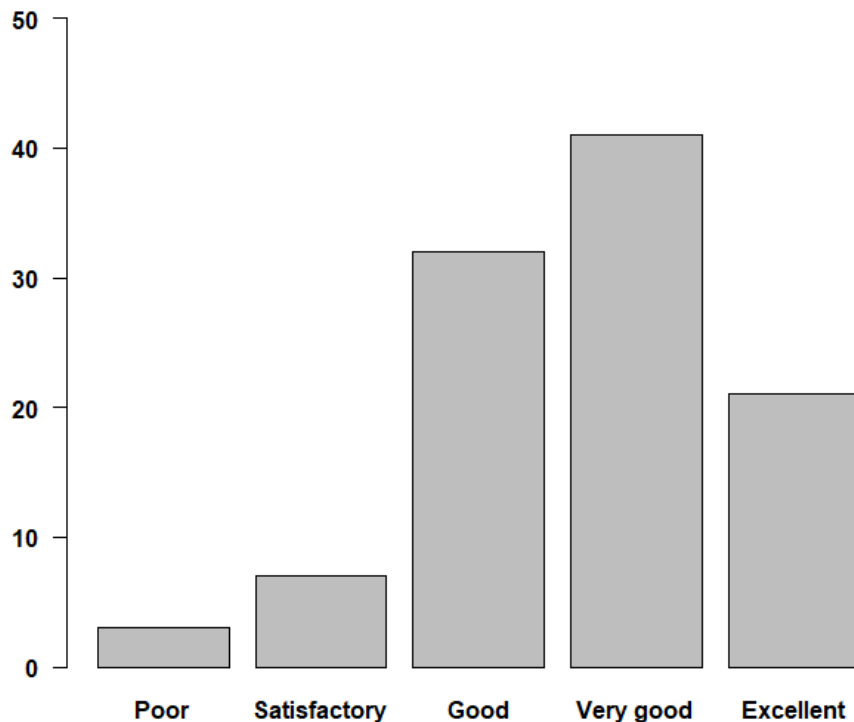


Figure 6. HEAs assessed the usefulness of the training regarding social aspects. Mean value was 3.7 (value “4” indicating a grading “very good”) which indicates that HEAs were satisfied with the training in this area.

In Belgium, the HEA's were very satisfied with the training; the average score is 4 out of 5. Everyone answers 4 or 5, there is only 1 bad score about the usefulness of the social module, but this came from a social worker who already knew everything about it.

The trained HEAs that became/were non-active, never mentioned the training itself as being the reason (but personal).

In Finland, among the 16 replies to this question, the majority mentioned energy bill structures and contract tendering having been the most useful knowledge they learned in the training. Some considered specific energy saving tips (for example shutting down the standby mode of electrical equipment and why) the most useful thing they have learned. House renovation advisors found the provided material useful because they could deliver them to their customers. Some HEAs also replied that the most useful thing in the training was learning whom to contact for energy saving related topics.

In Italy, usefulness of the course and satisfaction with the materials provided by ASSIST to support energy poor consumers varied significantly according to the type of HEA. HEAs already working in the field providing support to people as social operators strongly appreciated the course, especially the technical lessons providing them with the necessary competencies and knowledge to answer technical questions from energy poor consumers. HEAs already working as technical operators and providing technical support for people appreciated the course when it could provide the full picture of energy poverty, including social aspects of the phenomenon and providing them “soft” competencies and knowledge to support vulnerable consumers. Lastly volunteers, pensioners and students strongly

appreciated the course but more on a personal level as they had not had so much earlier experience with supporting energy poor consumers.

In Poland, 15 out of 19 respondents said that the training increased their knowledge, facilitated work in helping vulnerable consumers or systematized their knowledge. (Most Polish HEAs were professional Eco-managers). The most important and useful observations or information that could be obtained from the training were: ways of reducing electricity bills, tools for self-energy audit, areas in which energy efficiency problems are the most difficult to implement, information on the protection of consumer rights and ways of reaching people from social exclusion.

In Spain, in terms of energy aspects (energy efficiency and energy saving) HEAs rated the usefulness of training with a score of 4,25 out of 5. In terms of social aspects, they rated the usefulness of training with a score of 3,9 out of 5. The most useful element in the training was to provide solutions to vulnerable consumers. In general, HEAs were most proud of being able to provide solutions for the vulnerable users.

In the UK HEAs rated both the social aspects and the energy advice aspects with the same rating (either 'excellent' 4 or 'good' 11) indicating that they benefited equally from the material. The most useful topics covered were; the energy consumption of different appliances; problems created through inefficient heating and a better understanding of different types of energy saving measures e.g. heating, insulation etc.

3.3 Impact of training

Based on the HEA survey results, ASSIST training had impact also beyond the actual ASSIST actions or other project activities during the ASSIST timeframe. This type of impact, where people were positive on going to use the skills, insights, way of thinking or information in their professional or personal life or in their free time is extremely valuable and expands the impact of ASSIST project far beyond the project end. In Italy, for example, the most common answer to the question "Are you going to use the skills achieved from the training in the future" was "Yes, thanks to the ASSIST training I am now competent on energy issues and can provide support also on this topic". These answers were mainly given by social operators (CARITAS and other associations) who already worked on the field providing support to consumers (such as food, medicines, school books, etc.) but were not able to support them on their energy consumption needs and bills as they did not have the necessary skills. Thanks to the ASSIST course they are now able to support consumers also on these issues providing a more complete and in-depth assistance.

Table 5 shows that nearly all HEAs, without any doubt, will use the knowledge, tools and skills in the future, either professionally or personally. Unfortunately, the survey setups differed from country-to-country, so the separation whether the impact was more professional type or personal type could not be made.

In Belgium, all HEAs had a very positive feeling about their participation. There has been a great accumulation of knowledge: HEAs have become more energy conscious themselves and took many tips into their own lives. Even the employees of Fluvius who had already

worked on energy-efficient behaviour have learned certain things e.g. about ventilation. The HEAs put things into perspective: they have become acquainted with a world they didn't know; they were especially shocked by the poor state of the rental properties. Also, some indicated that they not only gave energy advice, but that they also had a partly social role: the vulnerable customers appreciated the fact that they were not alone and that the HEAs offered a listening ear.

In UK, 50% of the trained HEAs said they will continue to help their clients (in the non-statutory services) including saving customers in their energy bills and stopping an illegal court order from going ahead. Other achievement was related to improving comfort levels; getting a new heating system installed and improving the heating controls. Also, 100% of responders said they are now using the tools gained in their everyday jobs including one person who said both professionally and personally. 70% said that they are involved in energy counselling after the training.

Table 5. Number of HEAs who reported going to use the knowledge, tools and skills in the future, either in their professional or personal life

Country	Yes	No	I don't know	Not asked/ No answers	N
Belgium	24	0	0	3	27
Finland	11	1	0	32	44
Italy	26	0	1	6	33
Poland	7	1	1	10	19
Spain	16	0	0	0	16
UK	10	0	0	1	11
Total	94	2	2	52	150

Similarly, in Finland the peer advisors will continue giving electricity-related advices for their peers even in the future. Energy advisors and professionals will also undoubtedly be using knowledge they gained since energy counselling is an integral part of their work. However, from the other groups of trained HEAs it seems that they benefited from the training mainly in a personal manner.

In Poland, respondents in 89% of cases use or plan to use the tools acquired during HEA training in their future professional or personal life. Tools developed in ASSIST for making energy audits at home were found particularly useful. In addition, 89% of respondents said that the training helped them broaden their knowledge, especially in the field of energy poverty and households (The one person not having finished the course gave this

evaluation). One person mentioned that as a result of the training he/she felt better while working with consumers.

In Spain, 100% were planning to use the tools gained in the training in the future. 31% reported that they have been involved in some energy counselling related activity. Feeling confident about giving energy advice to VCs contributed the most in deciding whether or not to start energy counselling.

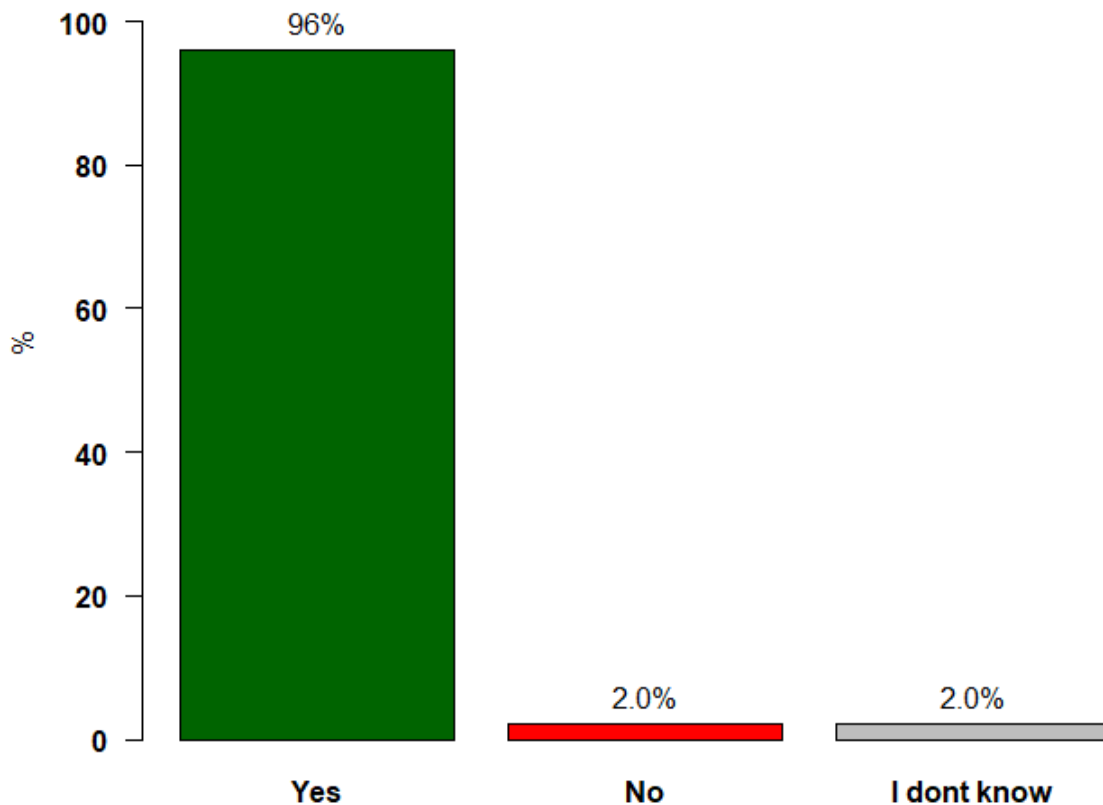


Figure 7. Are you going to use the knowledge, tools and skills gained in the training in the future? 96% of the HEAs are going to use the knowledge, tools and skills gained in the training in the future.

3.4 Professional advancement through ASSIST training

ASSIST training seemingly offered useful knowledge and skills for the trained HEAs, as shown in previous sections. In addition, the survey targeted also to understand whether ASSIST training had concretely improved the job market position of the trained HEAs, in addition to general knowledge competences. When looking at the position of ASSIST training offer in the professional careers of the trained HEAs, ASSIST training appears useful also from that perspective.

In UK, for example, 45% of responders stated without hesitation that the training helped their professional advancement. Benefits mentioned included improvement of work performance and energy advice-giving becoming part of their everyday advisory job. Some HEAs from

an organisation that helps VCs in poor communities mentioned he/she was now better able to understand their company's mission statement. This was through the training which helps identify vulnerable consumers and how they are affected by fuel poverty. Although the professional advancement wasn't a direct result, the HEA was better equipped to progress through the organisation with a clearer idea of its aims and vision. Also, the training element covering funding measures was cited as being very useful. In the UK, funding (financial instruments, or grants, available to consumers) for energy efficiency measures can be complex with calculations based on a number of factors including income, number of dependents, health issues and geographical location.

Table 6. Job market opportunities

Country	Yes	No	I don't know	No answer/ Not asked	N
Belgium	13	8	0	6	27
Finland	15	9	3	17	44
Italy	17	2	3	11	33
Poland	9	4	0	6	19
Spain	9	7	0	0	16
UK	5	2	0	4	11
Total	68	32	6	44	150

Although not all HEAs responded to this particular question in UK (55% no answer) 100% of HEAs replied that they would use the tools gained from the ASSIST training in their professional roles. For the 55% who did not respond it may have been due to a mis-reading of the question, and that they considered the energy advice to be 'outside of', or 'additional to' their main professional role and so didn't consider the training to have helped their professional advancement.

In Poland, almost 50% of respondents replied that they experienced professional advancement due to the ASSIST HEA training. There was not one single factor within ASSIST training that would make it more beneficial than another. People replied that both energy efficiency and social issues was very important to broaden their knowledge about energy poverty and giving advices to vulnerable consumers.

In Italy, 70% HEAs said that ASSIST training increased their overall competences in a broader term. However, it is noteworthy that in Italy they offered only one course, independently from the background of the HEA. So nearly everybody increased the competence despite their background.

Table 7. Professional advancement through ASSIST training in different HEA groups. All reported reasons have same weight in the table, thus N here is higher than the total number of responders who gained professional advancement

Reason to participate training	ASSIST training supported me to advance professionally (number responses)	ASSIST training did not support me to advance professionally (number responses)	No answer	Total
Interesting topic	18	11	21	50
Professional motivation	27	11	19	57
Ethical motivation	20	8	13	41
Teacher/employer encouraged	7	7	8	22
Other	2	0	4	6
Total	74	37	65	176

In Finland, HEAs who benefitted the most were already working with vulnerable consumers and could use tools gained in the training directly in their job. All house renovation advisors and social workers (8 responses) mentioned having benefitted professionally from the training either largely or at least somewhat. Half of the already professional energy advisors (10 responses) found ASSIST collaboration and training being professionally useful as it offered a new perspective for their work. The other half of these professionals did not report mentionable benefits, because they already had a strong professional confidence and/or tens of years advisory work experience both in industry and with consumers.

In Belgium, 48% of the active HEAs that completed the survey indicated that the ASSIST training was a professional enrichment. All other responders were doubtful. This can be explained by the fact that most of the respondents are HEAs from energy companies that already have a technical background on energy related topics. For these HEAs the ASSIST project was an enrichment but more on an emotional level. In Belgium, the HEAs who continue to work with vulnerable customers after the project mentioned that they will continue to provide energy advise. Employees of Samenlevingsopbouw already knew the tips on energy efficiency but lacked the technical background. Other HEAs, such as the Energy Masters of Kamp C, had a technical background but lacked the social context.

In Spain, in general, HEAs believe that more training implies more knowledge, and this is always good for professional progress. Specifically, they comment that ASSIST specific training has been useful to give advice to their users (vulnerable consumers). Furthermore, they considered having gained professional value after the training as they have complemented their work with this additional task.

There were many ways to benefit professionally from the training, and this mostly depended from HEAs background. Table 6 and table 7 describes the situation numerically. In general, the question had been asked in a variety of ways in countries and their full comparison is not possible so these number should be looked at with some caution. Naturally, formulation of the question may have affected the answers chosen. In Italy, the question had not been specifically asked from HEAs due to survey structure, but answers were collected more indirectly. In Poland the question was asked in a somewhat stricter manner (without the word “any” in front of “professional”, meaning that the “yes” answer was given only if the person had gained a concrete or a countable benefit, such as job offer). Nevertheless, the result also in Poland appears positive.

It should be also noted that there was many HEAs who did not answer this question. In some cases, answer missing could implicate that there was no professional benefit and there for the percentage of this answer is probably higher.

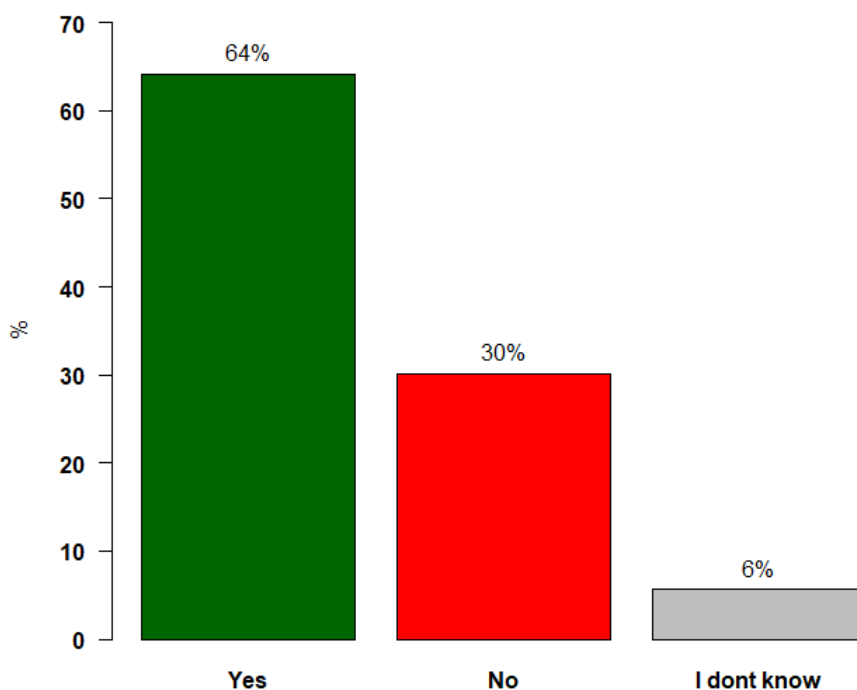


Figure 8. Did the ASSIST training support you to advance professionally in some manner?

3.5 Personal success stories from HEA network members

Qualitative surveys conducted by project partners allowed also to capture examples of personal advancements or impactful follow-up activities, as encouraged by their ASSIST involvement.

In Belgium the majority of the HEAs that completed the survey feel like they really made a difference and that their visits and advise was very much appreciated by the vulnerable consumers (“I've learned a lot here and it's gratifying to help others”, “voluntary work is

wonderful”, “people are grateful for your help”; “families feel helped/supported”). Some of them emphasize the social impact they had by offering “a listening ear” and (emotional) support to people in need (“I make vulnerable households feel like they are not alone”). Others stressed the economic impact they had by giving dedicated advice to vulnerable consumers. They experienced that their energy saving tips resulted in behavioural changes and higher consciousness about energy-efficiency (“I’ve been able to motivate several people to change their behaviour”).

In Finland, most HEAs were proud of their actions. House renovation advisors were particularly proud when they had been able to help their customers in heating renovations. These renovations are always quite expensive and professional knowledge about the heating system renovation can save a lot of money. Also replacing a wood-heated system might greatly facilitate the everyday life of the elderly. Energy students and peer advisors mentioned being proud when they could help people find a better electricity contract. In addition, HEAs were also proud that they got people to reflect on their own energy use and possibly to change their behaviour to more environmental-friendly.

In Italy four HEAs stand out with their actions. These HEAs sent project proposals and were very active in planning and implementing ASSIST actions. One HEA organized an event at the premises of a charity using some of the ASSIST material; this event was part of a propaedeutically training process for the people involved in the future opening of a shelter for vulnerable consumers. Using the ASSIST experience, these people will start to plan some activities with the vulnerable consumers, thus increasing the number of engaged ones. Moreover, the HEA will try to involve other charities and replicate the most successful activities.

In Italy, another HEA submitted a project proposal to a foundation (CARIPARMA) to financially support the take-up of the ASSIST model on behalf of a small municipality. The project foresees the training of a small group of HEAs to work at the helpdesk to inform 1,000 households, deliver Soft/engagement activities to 120 households and deliver specific action to 30 households. The third HEA, who has her own blog about energy, has implemented a webinar using some of ASSIST material whose number of visualizations after the live streaming is currently increasing at a fast pace. This webinar allowed the blogger to engage some vulnerable consumers and start to plan some activities with them. In addition, one HEA, who was responsible for the energy help desks of two small municipalities, has created a section specifically dedicated to the ASSIST project and the role of HEAs within the web site of the help desks. This will hopefully increase the number of engaged vulnerable consumers, with whom some activities will be planned in the next months.

In Poland 5 respondents replied that their greatest achievement was satisfaction and the ability to provide free advice to inhabitants, as well as increased awareness of the harmful effects of polluted air on people.

In Spain, most part of the HEAs valued positively the participation in the training and on ASSIST project. In general, they feel that their work has had a positive impact on vulnerable consumers and that their advice has been helpful at different levels: at social level,” helping

vulnerable consumers to improve their quality of life". At energy and economic level, the training ("give them useful tips on energy savings", "get them to pay less on their energy bills"). Lastly, they also highlighted that they have become empowered and that the knowledge has been useful to them in their own households and has been extensive to their family and friends ("now I have more capacity to search for information and understand it", "I have been able to apply the knowledge to my home and save energy")

In the UK, the HEAs felt proud of their work and felt they had made a difference to their clients lives. They had many positive responses from VCs and they were grateful for the support. The feedback from the VCs, (see 4.6 below) shows that where the VCs had felt overwhelmed by fuel debt anxiety, the HEAs were able to give practical and emotional support.

One HEA said that their highest achievement was to stop an illegal court action against a vulnerable customer with a pre-payment meter. Another one said it was being able to successfully refer a disabled couple to get a central heating system installed. Generally, the stories from the HEAs about their achievements revolved around saving their clients' money and making their homes more comfortable through improved heating.

Quotes below demonstrate impact of HEA activities:

- "I am proud, that during the home energy advisory visits, the people I met started thinking about their own energy consumption. Whether the habits will eventually change, is not under my control, but "the wheels are rolling". **(Finland, energy student HEA)**



- "I was very motivated from the start to work as an HEA. Being active as a volunteer in my neighbourhood school, I already came into contact with vulnerable families and saw the need to help them to save energy. I followed the training with great fascination and enthusiasm. Most of the families I visited were happy with the energy advice or were proud of the fact that they already knew something about energy-efficiency measures. In practice it is not always easy to find vulnerable families for which you can set up actions that make a big difference on their energy bill. Still, I consider the HEA network of great added value. After all, households' energy consumption represents a large share in our national CO₂ emissions." **(Belgium, Eva Joossen-Meyvis)**
- "I am satisfied with this project because my users, vulnerable people, have been able to improve their quality of life thanks to energy advice " **(Spain, home care professional HEA)**
- "I am satisfied over one case, where a household's oil heating system was replaced with geothermal heating. I helped with choosing the system and seeking for a grant,

and as a result there was a very functional and environment-friendly solution and a happy customer" **(Renovation advisor HEA, Finland)**

- "I am proud of having cancelled a contract with door-to-door salesperson who tried to sell a non-functional energy efficiency solution for a vulnerable customer. I am proud that, through my technical understanding, I am able to communicate consumers what would be the most reasonable way to act." **(Renovation adviser HEA, Finland)**

3.6 Suggestions for future training courses

Although training got good evaluations from HEAs, some improvements were proposed. One of the main critics was that sometimes courses could not take that trainees previous knowledge and competencies into account. This was considered a drawback since participants had to undertake lengthy lessons on topics with which they might already be competent.

This feedback came up especially in Italy. There, some HEAs suggested that the course should be structured differently according to the existing knowledge of the participants and to their training and professional needs. Some HEAs underlined that fundamentals of energy were less important than the ones on energy efficiency, retail markets and consumers' support.

Other feedback that came up quite frequently was the hope to include meetings with vulnerable consumers as part of a training course. In Belgium, some HEAs hoped that the training could have included more practical sessions in addition to the theoretical modules, e.g. overview of appliances that consume a lot of energy, demonstration of the use of energy consumption meter and the woonmeter, pilot home visit with a group of trainees. Also, in Italy some HEAs would have liked to take part in some practical actions to "experience" the daily work of the HEA in supporting consumers.

In addition, in some cases face-to-face lessons would have been desirable. For example, the Belgium project partners stated that: "Distance learning has the disadvantage that interactions with other trainees are often inexistent or very limited. If you organise group sessions (face-to-face or online) you allow for knowledge sharing between the trainees. Especially for the module on energy saving tips this would have been of added value."

Besides above suggestions, in many countries, attention was drawn to the fact that, without prior contact with vulnerable consumers, HEAs had difficulties with translating their learning outcome into practice and implementing activities after training. This was the case especially for those who had spontaneously enrolled in the training because of the general interest in the subject. In all countries it was noticeable that these HEA groups did not remain active after training. This fact could be taken into consideration in planning of future HEA training courses.

In addition to this, some other suggestions were made. In UK, HEAs proposed that environmental issues could be in bigger part of the course. As one of the UK's HEAs said:

“I think that energy saving for people should also be linked to climate change and the contribution their energy saving will make to the general good and environment. It's another incentive and makes people feel they can do their bit no matter what their circumstances. It is moving public awareness of the link with energy saving no matter how small to climate change.”

The HEA continues: “I think this is an important element to consider when thinking of future development of the ASSIST training programme. The big question is how social justice and fuel poverty eradication can also help reduce carbon emissions. Energy efficiency in homes is obviously an important element but many UK homes are still on oil and gas heating systems and moving into electricity-only heating would at this stage be an expensive option for many.”

In Belgium, one HEA hoped that the training would provide more information on energy poverty issues and the target group of energy poor households. The training should provide an extra module with information on e.g. social renting, budget meters, support measures for vulnerable consumers (minimum supply of gas and fuel, premiums, loans and so on).

In Spain HEAs reported different depending on their profile. On one hand, HEAs from the energy companies would have preferred more information on the psychological part of their work, that is, how to gain the trust of the end user, how to identify their vulnerability or how to help them empower, for instance. On the other hand, HEAs from social services would have preferred more face to face sessions and less online methodology.

In Poland and Finland HEAs noted that there is a need to repeat this type of training programmes also in the future, because markets are constantly changing.

Finally, partners also questioned the voluntary approach of the training. It could be stated that at least in some cases 40 hours voluntary training, to be conducted primarily during one's free time, was found too burdensome. In Finland, for example, more than 100 people registered to the online course but only 3 finished it independently in the virtual environment. In contrary, the tailored training seminars and programmes had a significantly better completion rate. Similarly, the substantial workload may also explain many leaving the training course unfinished in Belgium (out of the 150 registered, only 76 completed the ASSIST training).

3.7 Summary of the HEA survey

HEA survey demonstrated satisfaction, impact, and professional advancement among many HEAs who responded the questionnaire. Table 8 summarizes some key statistics.

Table 8. Summary of key results of the HEA survey

	Statistics	References

Number of trained HEAs	Over 500	Chapter 1.3
Response rate of active HEAs	45%	Table 1 and figure 2
Reasons to participate	32% professional motivation 29% interest for the topic 23% ethical reasons 13% teacher/employer encouraged	Figure 4
Satisfaction with the training	66% answered very good or excellent	Figure 5 and 6
Future utilization rate of the tools gained in the training	96%	Figure 7
Professional advancement	64%	Table 6 and figure 8

4. Feedback from vulnerable consumers

4.1 Belgium

The feedback from the vulnerable consumers was collected by three groups of people: the HEAs, the OCMWs (Public Center for Social Welfare) and the coordinator.

We collected the feedback from the HEAs in the survey, the Lunch & Learn sessions and bilateral communication of the coordinator with the HEAs. This way we reached 77 % of our 44 active HEAs. The only HEAs we did not reach for the feedback of the VCs are the energy masters of Camp C. However, there were only 10 active HEA's from Camp C that visited 25 of the 300 vulnerable households.

The vulnerable consumers were very satisfied with the dedicated advice of the HEA. They were all very pleased with the “woonmeter” that was considered as a very useful gift to monitor humidity and temperature and it was used very frequently. Some of the vulnerable consumers visited by the HEA were already energy-conscious (especially if they had a budget meter), but they were not aware of the problem of humidity and ventilation. The vulnerable families expressed their gratitude for the follow-up of our HEAs.

Many vulnerable consumers also have old appliances with high energy consumption, such as fridges and freezers. During the home visits the HEAs measured the energy consumption with the energy meter to make the vulnerable consumers more conscious about the impact

of these appliances on their energy bills. The vulnerable families were very happy with the discount voucher they got from the HEA to buy a new appliance.

The majority of the vulnerable consumers that were visited by the HEAs already have a social tariff (e.g. the lowest tariff on the market). However, some households were not entitled to it and for these households the HEA also explained the V-test (to compare suppliers). After the V-test these consumers decided to switch supplier.

We also asked the responsables of the OCMWs (or Public Center for Social Welfare) about the appreciation of the vulnerable clients that participated in the Energyfit workshops. These workshops on energy-efficient behaviour for vulnerable households are one of the soft/engagement activities and are co-organised with the OCMWs. This way we gathered the feedback of 83% of the households that participated in these workshops. The vulnerable consumers were very enthusiastic. Also in the Energyfit workshop, the participants were given a “woonmeter” to take home with them and this was very well received by the vulnerable consumers. The OCMWs are familiar with the woonmeter and are also very much in favour, but have no money of their own to provide this tool to their clients. The workshop was also very interactive and the participants themselves exchanged a lot of tips, which made it much more personal and practical. The VCs were also very satisfied with the accompanying flyer with energy saving tips. The OCMWs would like to continue organising the Energyfit workshops on a regular basis, also after the ASSIST project has ended, because they consider the workshop of great added value to vulnerable consumers.

Feedback of the Coordinator: For 10 weeks, we sent weekly energy saving tips, combined with a competition (to win a “woonmeter” to 40.000 vulnerable households by mail. Every week we had 6.000 – 7.000 participants. This is a very high response rate of 15 - 17%, which indicates that we reached our goal, namely: vulnerable consumers were enthusiastic to learn more about how to reduce their energy consumption and their energy bill. The coordinator was responsible for the functional mailbox and captured all questions and reactions of the vulnerable consumers; these were all very positive.

Some testimonials from the HEAs:

Tim Vase, meter reader, agrees: Tim: "As a meter reader I often end up in miserable situations. If you enter a social home with mould on the walls or where it rains inside, it's not so easy to give energy tips. Yet it's unbelievable how some people still try to live energy-consciously in such distressing situations. In these places I mainly listened to the story and felt more like a social worker than an energy consultant".

Anja Desaeveer, project manager, has a busy family life herself and regularly takes an afternoon off to do her home visits. She finds the encounters with people from another culture enriching: "I went to visit an African and his three children. In his house all the shutters were down during the day and all the lights were on. He was just cooking, and I noticed that he didn't put any lids on the pots. He told me that this is not the custom in Africa.

When I went over the action points at the end of my visit, he said laughing and in his best Dutch: "lids on the pots".



Enkele HEAs van het OCMW tijdens een lunch&learn. Gewapend met brochures, een woonmeter en veel enthousiasme werken ze hun huisbezoeken af. Links naast Annick: Tim Vase. Rechts naast Annick: Anja Desaevers.

Caroline Lambrecht, customer office employee, also brought home a catchy story. Caroline: I went on a home visit to a single mother of five children. She lost her husband last year. She just came home from the shop with six apples in her bag. After my visit she was so grateful for the help that she wanted to give me her own apple".

Annick Baert: "An African, who never ventilated his house, did so thanks to the woonmeter and the accompanying tips and was therefore relieved of his daily headache. And he now has fewer skin problems because he no longer takes a shower every day.

4.2 Finland

The feedback from VCs was collected during ex-post interviews, through one follow-up visit and from HEAs. In total we could reach about 30 vulnerable consumers.

During ex-post interviews (D4.7) we asked people to give feedback from home visits that HEAs had conducted. We got seven replies from persons assisted by House renovation advisors. Their feedback was positive and all people who had encountered a house renovation advisors had only positive things to say about their helpfulness and competence.

In addition to this, we conducted a follow-up visit to one of the elderly groups with whom an energy café was arranged. We informally interviewed all the participants (around 15). Vulnerable consumers perceived the topic important and felt that the event had a real benefit in helping understanding electricity contracts. They were very happy that few of the group members had become so interested in this topic and had discussed energy topics also after the event.

Lastly, we asked from HEAs in the HEA survey (D4.5) what kind of feedback they received from vulnerable consumers and how vulnerable consumers had perceived the material provided by ASSIST project. HEAs reported that people had liked the home visits and had found them useful. In addition, the provided material was found useful because it forced to think about the energy consumption.

4.3 Italy

The feedback from the VCs was collected mainly through the HEAs - HEAs collected the feedback either during the development of the action (both during the collection of the ex-ante and the ex-post) or during the organisation of consumers' events and energy cafés. Questions were added as guidelines to the questionnaires to support HEAs to collect the feedback from consumers during the action. The HEAs reported the comments of the VCs directly to the partners through direct contacts. During the organisation of events a specific evaluation questionnaire was prepared and handed to the participants to collect their feedback on the event, the information received, and the materials distributed during the event as well as on the support received by the HEAs.

Indicatively around 10% of the consumers supported by HEAs.

The consumers appreciated the material received – no negative comments were received on the material but only positive comments or suggestions on how to improve the material (mainly to prepare more material). The videos were the material mostly appreciated by consumers. Regarding the support received by the HEAs the comments were also positive, no complaints has ever been received (an email was set up to create also a direct dialogue with consumers especially for complaints, the email was widely disseminated through Facebook and the website. Another mechanism set up for direct contact with the partners bypassing the HEAs was the Facebook messenger)

The bridge between HEAs and VC needs to be strengthened in order to facilitate the contact between them – for the ASSIST project the VC assisted were mainly those in the operation range of work of the HEAs while it would be necessary to reach those consumers that are not inserted in any social – assistance programmes. The HEA network can be the means to reach these consumers but a lot of effort is needed to enforce and enlarge the bridge.

4.4 Poland

HEAs usually collected data mainly through an ex-ante survey in the form of a checklist. We did not have an additional database or special additional way of collecting HEA

observations. Only the information was provided by HEA during our conversations with them and meetings, when we also advised them on how to talk to HEA in different cases. Some of feedback we received from HEA during our meeting with them, phone calls or e-mails.

All HEA activities allowed to reach the largest group of VCs, in total 4205 vulnerable consumers. Number of consumers reached with ASSIST soft/engagement actions was 2330 and the number of consumers engaged with ASSIST actions was 1875. In addition to these numbers, a lot of people were reached also by social media etc. The scale of possibility of these actions we could see basing on the Life Małopolska Programme, which started in October 2015, and since this time Eco-managers gave 595 869 advices to residents. ASSIST Project helped HEA from Małopolska in their every-day work to solving problem of energy poor inhabitants of municipalities where they work.

Most of consumers (around 90-95%) found it very positive. They talked eagerly, inquired about the details, some of them bragged of the ways they knew to save energy. The gadgets distributed by HEA and explaining on their specific examples how they would save energy were particularly popular.

Some people (5-10%) unfortunately approached talks with HEA very uncertainly, sometimes with claims (commenting: "what do I need it for?", "You are not the first one who claims to help" or asking from at once the questions: "how will the municipality help me and when will I get the money for renovation"). Some people just wanted to "have a conversation" and get back to their daily duties.

In conclusion, people who have contact with social assistance usually respond positively to contact with advisers. They are very interested when they come with questions themselves during local events, where not only the poor benefit from counselling, but every resident can take part in.

4.5 Spain

The feedback from the VCs was collected through questionnaires but also through the HEAs, either directly talking to them at the front desks or through the questions and comments received during the energy cafes.

For those answering ex-post questionnaires, the question provided was: "Has the advice received through the ASSIST project been helpful to you? Why?" or, in other cases, through an observations section in the same ex-post questionnaire. In total, 71 assessments of vulnerable consumers have been collected.

Regarding the evaluations of VCs, many of them positively value that HEAs have helped them to obtain the electric social tariff, because although they fulfilled the requirements, they were not able to do it by themselves.

Furthermore, many VCs have noticed that they pay less on energy bills after making changes to their tariffs, thanks to HEA recommendations and support. In many cases, the

changes were not complicated to make (contractual issues, power reduction), but without a support vulnerable consumers cannot make the arrangements for themselves.

Also many VCs reported that the ASSIST project has helped them learn how to save energy at home. In some cases, they even comment that the actions to reduce energy use are obvious and easy to do, but without the help of the HEA they would not be aware of them and, therefore, would not have applied them.

Finally, in some cases, VCs have also improved the energy efficiency of their home by changing light bulbs or other electrical appliances more efficient than current ones, thanks to the advice of the HEA.

4.6 United Kingdom

Feedback from vulnerable consumers was collected in 4 ways; ex-poste interviews with the 10% sample), responses reported from HEA (as part of the HEA Training Follow-Up Report survey), informally during soft action engagements and individual case studies.

In this way we gathered feedback from VCs from different actions (home visits actions and soft engagements). From the ex-poste interviews and the case studies we collected 23 responses attributable to individual consumers (15% of 150 home visits. Action #1).

In the soft action engagements feedback was collected Informally through interactions with the consumers. A formal evaluation process was not felt to be the appropriate method for receiving feedback from these vulnerable consumer groups. Instead the HEA would check at the end of the sessions whether the VCs have understood the material and if they have any questions relating to their own situations. All 23 HEAs (active and non-active) took part in the soft action engagements.

Although the feedback from ex-poste interviews (81 consumers) are not available the HEAs were able to report in a more general way in the HEA Training Follow-Up Report online survey. The VCs response to the ASSIST material and the HEAs action was positive and they 'were grateful'. The VCs response both to the ASSIST material and the HEAs action was positive and the VCs 'were grateful'.

A series of case studies have been created by CCP, SWEA's key ASSIST partner. These short studies illustrate the positive effect of the HEA intervention

Case Study 1 - Ms W suffered with extreme pain and mental health issues, which were being exasperated by her bills and an accumulating debt. Ms W was finding it difficult to get through to the energy companies and discuss her bills which were abnormally high. The HEA contacted her energy company and helped Ms W to apply for a trust grant with CCP to cover the debt and switch her onto a cheaper tariff.

*'I have really struggled of late but knowing (the HEA) is on the case makes me feel better'.
'(The HEA) has been able to do what I couldn't calling the company with patience, which I have lost'.*

Case Study 2 - Mr B has complex needs and receives a range of benefits. He struggled to manage his benefits and bills to such an extent that the bailiffs were threatening to visit. It took a while for the HEA to gain Mr B's trust but eventually the HEA was able to visit and discovered that he had a range of debt. The HEA helped him put together a payment plan to pay off his energy debt and educated him on how to manage his finances to avoid this debt accumulating again.

Mr B found the HEA service made him feel *'More comfortable and less worried.'* The debt management was *'a good weight of my mind'* and he was *'really happy with the service, I'd give it 5 stars!'*

Case Study 3 - Mrs R contacted the HEA for urgent help following a whopping £1354.72 debt on her energy bill. She had no idea where this amount had come from and had received threatening letters from a debt collection agency. Mrs R was distraught. *'I was left feeling frightened to use any appliances or heating and felt hounded and terrified that someone was going to come and take away my belongings.'*

The HEA called the energy company and started investigating. Through perseverance the HEA managed to establish that the bill was erroneous and in fact the consumer was in credit by £241. The HEA had helped the client find her feet and empowered her to complain to the company for undue stress and anxiety and eventually received some monetary compensation.

Case Study 4- Ms R contacted the HEA through the CCP drop-in centre. The client had energy debts accumulating and was struggling financially and using the food bank. She was also struggling mentally, suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder which the debts made worse. The vulnerable consumer was *'apprehensive but was made very easy and comfortable by [the HEA] who solved the issues I was having effectively.'*

During a home visit the HEA arranged a reasonable 12-month payment plan and agreed some debt write off (£138.54). The HEA also gave energy saving advice and added the client to the Priority Services Register. *'[The HEA] put me back in control, which has an impact on both my health and wellbeing.'*

Case study 5- The VC was a single mum of three who had just moved into a rented property, she had extortionate fuel bills that were accumulating debt, but she struggled to understand English over the phone and felt unable to remedy the debt which was at £250 and increasing. During the home visit the HEA discovered that she had been leaving her immersion heater all day, rather than programming it when she needed it. The advocate helped set-up a payment plan with the energy company, set the immersion heater to a timer (showing client how to use her controls) and switched the clients tariff - all of which led to a total saving of £713.75 a year on her fuel. This made a huge difference to the client who was feeling overwhelmed with her situation, *'It has changed my life for the better, having debt was very hard. I'm feeling very thankful.'*

5. Insights and suggestions of national steering committees

5.1 Belgium

During the 3rd national VCSC meeting the results of the different work packages were presented for Belgium, namely HEA training and HEA network (WP3&4), ASSIST soft/engagement activities and action (2%@2000 vulnerable consumers, 7%@750 consumers) (WP5) and information provision to vulnerable consumers (WP6).

The VCSC members that participated in the meeting did not provide any additional inputs (i.e. in addition to the results and lessons learned presented by the Belgian project partners and that are also described in the final deliverables of the ASSIST project) on the training network, future job opportunities and possible formal structuring of the HEA network in the national energy – social system. An in-depth assessment of the impact of the ASSIST-training and its significance in the long run is less relevant for Flanders as we already have an established, well-functioning network, namely the Energy cutters.

The participants of the 3rd national VCSC meeting agreed that the ASSIST project offered an opportunity to assess some specific issues that can reinforce the current network of Energy cutters and increase its impact (energy saved, number of vulnerable consumers engaged). By involving the existing network of energy cutters we were able to test the HEA training material extensively. We learned that modules on relational skills and protection were currently missing in the training program of the Energy cutters and were considered very valuable. As a result, the training material was extended with two modules on relational skills and protection. The “woonmeter” proved to be a very successful tool both to support HEAs in giving dedicated advice and, as such, increase the comfort level in the houses of vulnerable consumers, as well as for engaging vulnerable consumers in the soft/engagement activities and ASSIST action.

Based on the results of the ASSIST project, it was suggested to also integrate the woonmeter in the energy-scans of the Energy Cutters. It was recommended to “familiarize” the HEAs with the specific context of energy poverty and the target group of energy poor consumers. Some of the HEAs were disappointed in the magnitude of impact they had on the energy consumption of the energy poor households they visited. This can most likely be explained by the difference in frame of reference. Social workers are well aware of the fact that the majority of the energy poor people rent a small apartment/house and have limited financial means. The possibilities are limited in comparison to an average household in Flanders.

5.2 Finland

The VCSC were asked to assess the impact of ASSIST training in their third meeting in March 2020. They were also asked which types of training strategies and approaches they

considered fruitful and why; whether they have any contextual suggestions for the improvement of the training; or theoretical or practical suggestions for the future.

VCSC found that there would be a lot of potential for future development of carried-out activities. First, there are many social sector actors that are daily in contact with vulnerable consumers and they could be integrated in the HEA network in addition to the existing ones. As examples go home assistants of Omakotiliitto or the diacony actors of the church. Diacony workers, for example, are often contacted by VCs in economic problems.

A great benefit that was especially highlighted by the VCSC was that the completed WP3 training seminars and WP5 soft actions such as energy cafés have allowed **social learning and discussion**: situations where people can reflect energy issues that are context-dependent and personal. It is important to offer the possibility to pose questions and question things, for example through bringing one's own energy invoices and comparing them. A model where one teaches and the other receives information is outdated.

As a proposal for the future, the existing learning material could be re-structured and developed from the social learning perspective. In that model, participants and different groups could together find out and learn from different energy aspects that are relevant for them. The developed training and consumer materials could be organized in such a manner. However, all this should be done in a professional manner.

Regarding energy advisory in general, VCSC members pointed out that advisory should be considered as an ongoing activity because energy information and materials get outdated relatively quickly. Energy saving is also a topic that people needs to be reminded of.

VCSC members looked at the training requirements of ASSIST and found the structure strict. A 40-hours is exhaustive, considering that it is supposed to be completed on one's spare time. Encouragement and support from the side of an employer would be necessary to complete the course. VCSC members found it somewhat a pity that the project frameworks are defined strictly at the beginning, and away from the grassroots level. The forms of the actions and training programs could take many different forms depending on the actual audiences and the collaborative organisations.

One proposal was to offer the HEA training material for schools or universities who teach energy aspects. ASSIST offers new perspectives that may be lacking. In addition, some training organisations are constantly seeking for new course ideas, material and competent teachers to complement their service offers. VCSC suggests also to publish the energy tutor training material on a website instead behind a registration fence.

5.3 Italy

The ASSIST partners presented the results of the project, in particular with regard to WP4 and WP5: thus, most of the debate was focusing on the role of the HEA and the network. VCSC is concerned about HEA not having an official accreditation in the Italian system: among the proposals for the HEA accreditation, one was to include the HEA into the perimeter of the Italian National Energy and Climate Plan. The representative of the Ministry

of Economic Development told that this option will be evaluated, considering that the HEAs already have an expertise in the field. **The inclusion of the HEA network as a tool to tackle energy poverty in the NECP would be a very important step also for future developments.**

Another proposal - issued by Comune di Bari - for the **formalization of the HEA figure** into the Italian system would be to follow the voluntary qualification path provided for by law 4/2013, art. 6, who promotes voluntary self-regulation of unregulated professions and their associations. Thus, according to this proposal, the **HEA network could be set up as a voluntary association following the law 4/2013.**

As the link between energy poverty and climate change mitigation is strengthening, Comune di Bari also proposed to evaluate the connection with the **2030 Agenda** on sustainable development. In the Italian Action Plan of the Sustainable Development Strategy, the HEA network - consistent with the objective of the strategy "I.3. reduce housing problems" and the SDG number 7 - could be included as a tool for the reduction of energy poverty.

At the local level, each Region must draw up its own strategy and so it could be an idea to have a contact with the reference offices. With regard to other local entities and to their Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan, the JRC, which is based in Italy, elaborates the guidelines for the Municipalities. The Covenant of Mayors could include the topic of energy poverty and the good practice of the HEA network in the next guidelines or in the general indications or create a special webinar on the topic.

Partners presented their positive experiences with the municipalities during the project: many municipalities have shown a real interest in the ASSIST model for the set-up of municipal branch or help desk for the citizens. However, several barriers aroused, in particular the bureaucratic one – and the consequent waste of time.

In order to activate a HEA network in a municipality, the VCSC issued also the proposal to provide the local entity with a training package, in order to set up a dedicated branch with locally trained HEAs at the Public Relations Offices, which represent a focal point for citizens, providing specific advice and then eventually also home visits on request. Considering the complex bureaucracy such a project would face, a pilot project could be activated within a voluntary municipality.

The VCSC, in particular Università La Sapienza, stressed the importance of the green energy transition as a new driver of the energy poverty and vulnerability. Due to this, the HEA development should be more dynamic and also include a new specific training on the topic. Moreover, according to Università La Sapienza, it should be evaluated the importance of the connection between local entities and utilities, in order to better develop the HEA network. In this view, consumers association can support and promote, but not lead, the network development.

The Ministry of Economic Development emphasized the role of energy poverty in the Italian National Energy and Climate Plan, which has been recognized also by the European

Commission. Among the envisaged measures, there is also the institution of a National Energy Poverty Observatory. In stressing the new reinforced role of the existing tools for energy efficiency and vulnerability, the Ministry representative also considered there is plenty of room for improvements in efficiency.

5.4 Poland

During the 3rd VCSC meeting in April 2020, we have presented the results of project and proposed the meeting to answer the following questions:

- Can the use of the tools developed in the project provide real help to vulnerable consumers?
- Can the tools created during the project implementation become one of the permanent elements of support provided to consumers. particularly vulnerable or affected by energy poverty?

We proposed participants of the meeting far-reaching cooperation. Using project products to inform and take action to fight against energy poverty. We offer knowledge about the sensitive consumer, how and where to look for savings and how they do it in other European countries. We offer for use short advisory leaflets - each dedicated to the topic of energy from the perspective of an individual consumer. We offer also using 10 animated videos explaining to consumers issues related primarily to energy saving. As part of the ASSIST program, a computational tool was created in the form of a survey that organizes the methodology for the analysis of household energy consumption and the scope of data obtained from the consumer. And we offer this tool for using it.

A large group of representatives from the National Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management took part in the meeting. Some of them have been trained in the ASSIST project. They are professionally associated with energy consulting. Now they have expanded their knowledge and opportunities to help consumers affected by energy poverty. They want to make greater use of the products created under the ASSIST project. We sent all materials to participants (presentations, survey, press release, links to project's products – FS and videos). We are glad that we have first positive response - National Energy Conservation Agency – disseminated our results on their website and they join the action of the excel (calculated) tool promoting after end of the project.

5.5 Spain

The third VCSC in Spain was held online due to the COVID-19 crisis and the partners presented the project results focused on WP3, WP4 and WP5. The valuations and proposals for improvement of the members of the National Committee are detailed below.

In Spain, the ASSIST action has been carried out with two different profiles: social and technical. This is why several VCSC contributions were made regarding the complementarity of those profiles and how training was adapted to them. On the one hand, the potentiality of the modulation of ASSIST training as positively evaluated. On the other hand, it was also pointed that perhaps it was expected to achieve too many competences in

a single profile since it was detected that technical profile HEAs had deficiencies in the social part and the social HEAs showed limitations in the technical part. In this sense, it was proposed to complement the two profiles and take advantage of the specialization of each one, for example, working in HEA pairs (one technical and one social for each action with a vulnerable consumer).

Regarding the learning methodology, the fact of having developed a training prepared to be taught online was positively appreciated, especially now, that due to the COVID-19 crisis, much value is being given to online training.

With regard to collective training with vulnerable consumers, it was proposed to take advantage of the emotional bond created between the HEAs from Home Care Service and their users to avoid isolation and work in a group way. In this sense, it was pointed out that relational and communication skills should have more weight in training to carry out these activities successfully.

5.6 United Kingdom

In the UK, the VCSC was asked for comments, thoughts and feedback on all aspects of the ASSIST project, including the training. The situation in the UK is similar in many ways to that in Belgium, as both countries already have networks of professional energy advisors established. This history of energy advice provision has naturally led to training programmes being already in place in the UK, although there is a cost attached.

With regards specifically to the training element of the project, ASSIST has proved most beneficial in terms of learning, through the work done on training HEAs to advise the most hard-to-reach groups in society, including consumers who were blind, deaf or had learning difficulties. It was agreed by the VCSC members that there is certainly more that can and should be done for these groups.

The training created by Severn Wye for the ASSIST project, outlines how technology and different media can be useful, and sometimes essential tools when getting information and advice to the most vulnerable groups.

Looking forward to find new and innovative ways of helping the most vulnerable in society, the VCSC members discussed the idea of using technology to monitor and reduce consumers' energy use. Assistive Technology is already being trialled by the National Health Service in the UK, to monitor daily routines of people who might be suffering from health conditions, and who are also living alone, or to provide reminders to people to take medication for example.

With regards to energy usage, Assistive Technology could be used to monitor temperature, humidity and other environmental factors which influence the 'health' of a property, and if linked to a programme of insulation for older properties and newer forms of heating, then energy usage could be reduced. This will hopefully be one of the results of Smart meters being installed in every home in the UK over the coming years. The VCSC discussed also

that there are of course many barriers that need to be overcome before consumers will be willing to be 'monitored' in their own homes.

The discussion in the VCSC meeting on the training to help HEAs reach the most vulnerable in society, who might have a wide range of different needs, led to general approval of the approach to use technology where appropriate, but it was also highlighted that many of the most vulnerable in society will be those who do not have access to technology or who are most wary of the perceived intrusion into their home lives.

6. Conclusions

People that registered for or participated in the training had various backgrounds and various motivations. It seems that the training was primarily attended because of personal interest and motivation to help vulnerable consumers.

Generally, training programs got very good evaluations from the interviewed Home Energy Advisors (HEAs). Also, the assisted vulnerable consumers found the HEA network's advisory activities useful, including the material and energy efficiency tools provided.

Almost all responders reported that they are going to use the knowledge, skills and tools achieved also in the future which demonstrates ASSIST training will have an impact also after the project has ended. ASSIST training helped HEAs also to advance professionally especially if they were already supporting vulnerable consumers in their daily job.

In many countries, attention was drawn to the fact that without prior contact with vulnerable consumers, HEAs had difficulties with translating their learning outcome into practice. This was the case especially for those who had spontaneously enrolled in the training because of the interest in the subject.

Although training was well ranked by HEAs, some improvements were proposed. Most often proposed critic was that courses should better take previous knowledge and competencies into account. This was often considered a drawback since participants had to undertake lengthy lessons on topics on which they were already competent with. Besides this, other feedback that came up quite frequently was the hope for a more practical exercises in the training, such as practical testing of energy meter usage. Generally, face-to-face lessons were preferred over online learning methods.

The purpose of this document was to validate best European practices related to HEA training in the context of ASSIST project in six partner countries. Surveys and interviews suggest that a combination of previous contacts with vulnerable individuals, flexible HEA training program formulations that can be combined with one's existing responsibilities, brings about VC advisory activities that are effective, time-efficient and have an impact also beyond training programs.

Annex 1 HEA survey national reports: methods and results

Belgium

1. Methods

We collected feedback from our HEAs both qualitatively (Lunch & Learn sessions organized by coordinator, bilateral contact by phone or mail between coordinator and HEA) and quantitatively (survey).

Qualitative: we organized 5, face-to-face, lunch & learn sessions of about 2 hours, with an informative part, but also with the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences. There was an average attendance of 10 HEA's. In addition, the coordinator contacted the HEAs regularly by phone or mail to follow up their activities and to provide support if needed.

Quantitative: we launched 2 surveys.

A survey via Check market, with a total of 21 questions, of which 8 were pre-defined questions and 13 open questions. This survey was launched at the end of November, until mid-January. We sent this survey to all HEAs: 27 of them replied. We trained a total of 76 HEA's of which 44 trainees were also active as a HEA.

When an HEA stopped, a short survey was sent to him/her, to know the reason for this, so that adjustments could be made during the project.

2. Results

2.1 HEA profile

Trained social workers : 8 (active 7)	These people drop out the least, they can combine this with their job
Trained energy companies (Fluvius+ VITO) : 42 (active 27)	this large group has a great affinity with the energy sector and can be followed up more closely because they belong to the same company as the coordinator. If the follow-up and involvement is greater, fewer people will drop out.
Trained Energy masters Kamp C : 21 (active 10)	energy masters are already volunteers, but do not normally visit vulnerable customers. In this group of HEAs you can find the most dropouts, there is less involvement with this type of HEAs and with the coordinator Kamp C
Trained others : retired people : 5 (active 0)	They all stopped, but 2 because of illness

The most active HEA's were the employees of Fluvius and the employees of Samenlevingsopbouw. The former because their activities were extensively followed up by the coordinator, who herself is a volunteer and an employee of Fluvius. The latter because they can combine the home visits with their regular job.

The least active HEAs were the energy masters of Camp C. Originally 75 volunteers from Camp C had registered for the training, but in the end 21 followed the training and only 10 active HEAs remained. Given the physical distance between the HEAs and the ASSIST

coordinator, it was agreed that the coordinator of Camp C would follow up the activities of “his” HEAs. Unfortunately, only 25 home visits were made by 10 HEAs in total, of which the administration was also insufficient; only a very brief empowerment document was delivered to the ASSIST coordinator.

There are 32 trained HEA's that have never been active. When an HEA stopped, a short survey was sent to him/her, to know the reason for this. The response rate to this short survey was very high: only 4 persons out of 32 did not respond.

The reasons HEAs dropped out after the training and became inactive

- Because they got limited support (esp. in the beginning)
- Because there was a large time span between the HEA training and the start of the home visits
- Because it was not clear for the HEA what exactly was expected from him/her.
- Because the HEA became discouraged because the vulnerable customer did not always want to cooperate during a first contact and the HEA had the feeling that he/she should sell himself/herself.
- Because the private situation of the HEA changed: illness, change of job, more things to do in their spare time (e.g. children were building an house)

Below are the results of this survey:

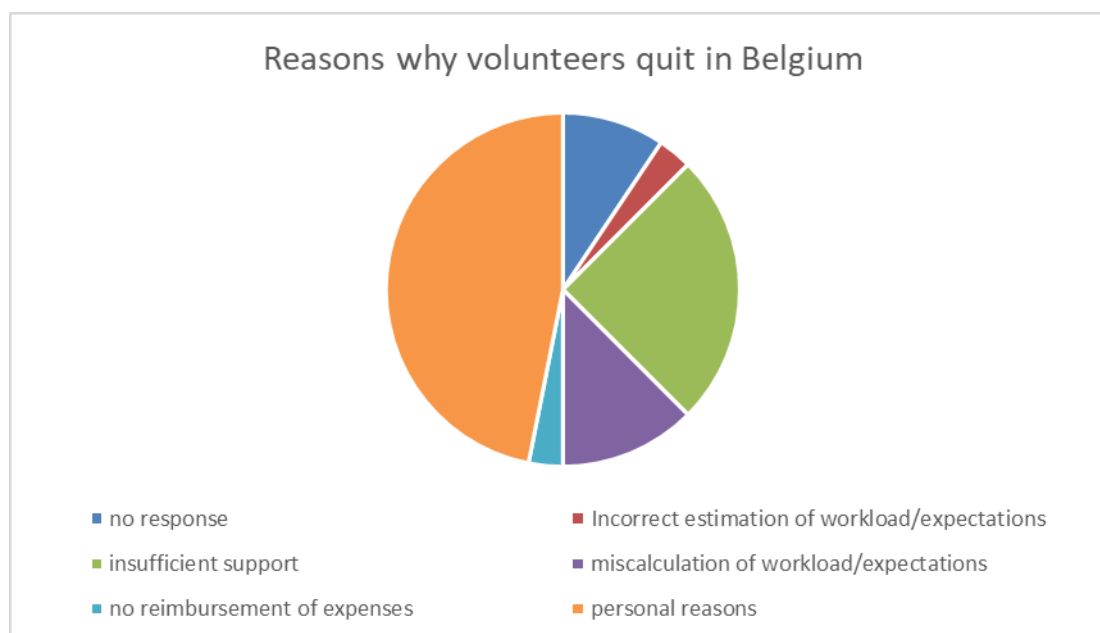


Figure 1. Reasons for quitting the training

Factors that contributed to the fact that the HEAs remained in the network and remained active:

- Work package with woonmeter: we provided a work package for every HEA; with follow-up documents, brochures for the vulnerable customer, brochure for the HEA with a nice visual overview of all energy saving tips, an electricity consumption meter and, most important the Woonmeter, a very handy and useful gift. This tool measures the temperature and humidity; the

HEA feels welcome because he/she can give a gift and it is a very useful tool for giving dedicated advice to the vulnerable consumer. Most vulnerable customers rent a house with a humidity problem (the fungus causes health problems and the humidity also increases the heating bill). Thanks to this meter vulnerable consumers can monitor humidity and ventilate their homes better.

- Support in engaging vulnerable consumers. The social workers had their own "customer database", but for the other types of HEA we supported them actively in engaging vulnerable consumers near their own place of residence.
- Show commitment and gratitude:
 - call the HEA at regular intervals to ask how the home visits went and state explicitly that you greatly appreciate what they do.
 - sending a word of gratitude on the "Day of the Volunteer".
 - more than half of the volunteers are Fluvius employees: an article appeared in the staff magazine and a video of the volunteers was shown on all screens throughout the company on volunteer's day. We also posted a message on Fluvius' Facebook and the CEO responded positively to it. The video was also shared on the national ASSIST website, twitter and Facebook account.
- Single point of contact: the Coordinator was also a volunteer; she could give practical tips and also coach and boost volunteers based on her own experience. This person was also responsible for the "helpdesk" for the volunteers
- Support with extra knowledge and new material:
 - video message via Soapbox : because the volunteers are geographically dispersed, face-to-face communication is not always evident, so we worked with a video, with all kinds of tips and calls to action (<https://Soapbox.nl>: you see a video and at the same time you can show your screen with a presentation).
 - organization of Lunch & Learns : this is a face-to-face meeting between the coordinator and the HEAs where information is provided by the coordinator, but above all a networking opportunity for the HEA to exchange experiences and practical tips.
- Communication plan: bi-monthly newsletter, phone calls, mails,... The communication plan was very important to keep an overview and to keep the volunteers committed.

2.2 Usefulness of the training

The HEAs were very satisfied with the energy-efficiency and energy saving aspects as well as the social aspects in the ASSIST training; the average score was 4 out of 5. Everyone answered 4 or 5, there was only 1 very low score about the usefulness of the social module, but this score came from a social worker who already knew everything about it. The people who dropped out never gave the content of the training as a reason.

2.3 Materials provided by the training

The HEAs were very satisfied with the energy-efficiency and energy saving aspects as well as the social aspects in the ASSIST training; the average score was 4 out of 5. Everyone answered 4 or 5, there was only 1 very low score about the usefulness of the social module, but this score came from a social worker who already knew everything about it. The people who dropped out never gave the content of the training as a reason.

2.3 Materials provided by the training

In Belgium, we prepared a **work package for each HEA** with:

- 1 woonmeter for each vulnerable household.
- 1 energy consumption meter for the HEA to measure the energy consumption of old electrical appliances.
- Information for the HEA: a comprehensive brochure with an overview of all the energy savings you can achieve by monitoring your behaviour; these were all energy saving tips from the training module "saving energy (the HEA can use this overview to show to the client), a booklet with tips for the HEA on how the woonmeter works, how the V-test works (to compare suppliers), follow-up documents (questionnaire, action list, consent form per customer).
- Information for the vulnerable client : a brief brochure and flyer with energy saving tips, a document on which the HEA indicates the energy-efficiency measures the vulnerable consumer will implement, a map to follow the meter readings.
- Only HEAs from the social sector already had addresses of vulnerable customers they could engage for the ASSIST action. For all the other HEAs, Fluvius provided contacts via its own database.

All the HEAs used the abovementioned materials and tools to support them in delivering the ASSIST action. They were in particular satisfied with the woonmeters. This was a very useful tool that allow the HEA to have in impact in 2 major areas: on the one hand heating (which represents the largest share in the energy costs of households) and on the other hand humidity. Humidity problems can result in mould (bad for your health) and higher energy costs as you have to heat more. The woonmeter proved to be a very useful instrument for engaging vulnerable consumers for the home visits. It is difficult to find vulnerable customers willing to cooperate and the fact that they received a gift was the reason for many to join this project. The vulnerable customers were very happy with this useful gift. For the vulnerable consumers it is an indispensable instrument to monitor humidity in their homes, increase comfort and reduce heating costs.

Moodle platform:

In Belgium, 150 people registered for the ASSIST training, of which 76 completed their training on the Moodle platform.

The HEAs were very satisfied with the Moodle platform, they found it clear and straightforward. It was also an ideal reference work if you had any questions afterwards.

For some of the retirees that registered but dropped out in advance, the online training and Moodle platform was a barrier to start with the training.

2.4 Professional confidence

48% of the active HEAs that completed the survey indicate that the ASSIST training is a direct enrichment on a professional level.

The HEAs that are **Fluvius employees** you can be divided into 2 groups:

- Employees working in the REC department (rational energy consumption). The HEAs already have a very large technical background in the field of energy-efficiency. They indicated that they learned a lot about the social context and aspects.
- Employees from other departments within Fluvius: the HEAs learned a lot about rational energy use and the social context.

Fluvius is an energy company, so it was an indirect professional enrichment for everyone, even if they cannot use this knowledge or experience immediately in their job.

All HEA's indicated that it is certainly an emotional/social/personal enrichment. They also appreciated networking (e.g. Lunch & Learn sessions).

The volunteers from the social sector (e.g. Samenlevingsopbouw) indicated that it was certainly a professional enrichment for them and that they would continue to use this information/experience in their contacts with vulnerable clients.



Figure 2. Quotes from HEAs.

2.5 Impact of the training

All active HEAs that completed the survey have a very positive feeling about their participation:

- There has been a great accumulation of knowledge. The HEAs of Fluvius have all become more energy-conscious and applied the energy saving tips in their own lives. Even the employees of Fluvius who already worked on energy-efficiency (REC) have learned about e.g. correct ventilation.

- The HEA activities put things into perspective: they have become acquainted with a world they did not know they were in particular shocked by the poor state of the rental properties.
- It gave them a good feeling that they could help people in need.
- Some indicated that they not only gave energy related advice, but that they also had a social role; the vulnerable customers appreciated the fact that they were not alone and that they offered a listening ear.
- Some of them indicated that the technical modules of the training were very interesting for them
- Three HEAs said they would have liked to do more.

All HEAs indicated that they learned a lot and apply the energy tips also at home; even those HEAs who were already very energy-conscious, indicated that they have learned e.g. the correct way of ventilation.

Most of the HEAs also give energy advice to others (neighbours, family):

- 5% of the respondents indicated that they did not start as HEA and therefore do not give energy advice.
- 65% of the respondents already gave advice before the training
- 30% of the respondents gives advice after the training

2.6 Feedback

More attention for the energy poverty problem (in the Lunch & Learn sessions we gave additional information about this: energy poverty report of Flanders, information about digital budget meters, explanation about the existing network of energycutters, ...).

Add practical experience: the course was very theoretical, visit accompanied by energycutter would have been interesting.

Bring the 2 most important modules in class, not via e-learning, so that questions can also be asked, and experiences shared between trainees.

Less technical: certain modules, e.g. basic knowledge on the energy sector and technical installations, were very difficult.

The choice was made for e-learning and this worked but is not always evident.

The modules "basic knowledge of the energy sector" and "basic knowledge of energy consumers" were too technical and difficult for most trainees.

They found the modules "energy behaviour and energy scan" the most important and interesting modules. These modules might have been better brought in class.

The Social Security module could have been even more extensive, e.g. more information on the energy poverty problem.

Homevisits Feedback	
Motivation	• help vulnerable consumers • interested in the subject, even environmentally conscious • professional (social sector)
Education	• OK, very extensive • Note: more attention needed for practice
Material Woonmeter	• very valuable instrument, guidance built around • "entrance ticket" with vulnerable customer
Satisfied participation result	• Enrichment for oneself: more energy efficient, a different way of living • Satisfied with results with families: money/comfort • Note : some expectation higher
FB vulnerable consumer	• very satisfied with woonmeter • very grateful

Figure 3. Feedback from home visits in Belgium

Finland

1. Methods

In order to collect the feedback from HEAs, we used both online surveys and phone interviews. Online surveys were available from 15th of December until the end of February. Phone interviews were carried out in January 2020 with professional energy advisor HEAs. In total, we collected 44 survey answers. Among those, 33 came from active HEAs, which stands for 75% of responses from Finland representing fully trained and active HEAs.

The structure of the online questionnaires was almost the same as the one proposed to all partners (see Annex 1). In addition, we added questions to cover aspects relevant and interesting for each HEA group. This increased the response rate, because in Finland every HEA group had been designed their own HEA training programme. We sent a tailored online questionnaires to different HEA groups (in brackets the number of responses): 107 (11) people registered in Moodle; 11 (7) house renovation advisors; 24 (11) energy students; 19 village advisors and 7 (1) social workers.

Phone interviews were held with 11 energy consultant HEAs. Interviews were free-form and questions focused on the practical use of ASSIST collaboration in their daily job. Not all questions from the common survey template were relevant for them because they are already energy professionals: especially the questions regarding technical energy efficiency aspects were left out, as ASSIST training seminars could not have provided any new information for them. We asked how they generally perceive the concept of energy poverty in Finland and on how energy vulnerability appears in their daily work. Such questions were meaningful for HEAs because some of these HEAs had heard about “energy poverty” term for the first time in some ASSIST training seminar. However, most advisors confront energy

poverty frequently in their work. They described cases where homes are in urgent need of an energy efficiency repair; buildings with outdated heating systems and families who cannot keep their homes adequately warm.

2. Results (online surveys)

2.1 Profile of HEAs

The most common reason for participating in the training was personal interest (39%). 26% reported that reason behind participation was professional motivation, 20% wanted to help vulnerable consumers and 15% participated because their employer or teacher had encouraged them. Since only 12 people having not completed the course answered, we could not draw comprehensive conclusions for discontinuing a training, however, all reported reasons were personal (e.g. lack of motivation, illness, busy schedule).

The most active HEAs in Finland were those who had a professional connection either with vulnerable consumers or energy issues. Figure below demonstrates the motivations of responders.

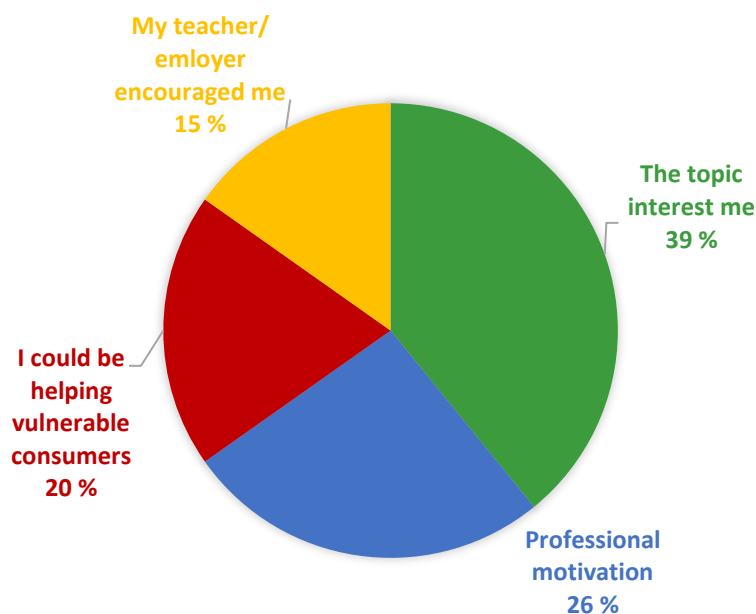


Figure. Motivation to participate in the training (energy students, Moodle platform users, social workers and village advisors), N= 30.

2.2 Usefulness of training

HEAs assessed the usefulness of the training modules on energy efficiency and energy saving quite high, with an average grading being 3.8 (on the scale 1 to 5). Also, the usefulness of the training modules on social aspects (identifying and dealing with vulnerable consumers and communicating energy efficiency related issues) was assessed quite high (3.7 on average).

There was no single most useful element of the training that would stand out based on the survey feedback. There were 16 replies to this question, and the majority found knowledge on the energy bill structure and contract tendering the most useful thing they had learned. Some considered specific energy saving tips (for example switching off the standby mode of electrical equipment) the most useful thing they have learned. House renovation advisors found the provided material useful because they could give them to their customers. Some HEAs also mentioned as the most useful piece of knowledge the compilation and overview of different agents, offices, governmental offices, NGOs, companies, and financial institutions who could be contacted in Finland when an energy vulnerable citizen is seeking for help in his/her various problems.

In general, HEAs were proud of their actions. House renovation advisors were particularly proud when they had been able to help their customers in heating renovations. These renovations are always quite expensive and professional knowledge about the heating system renovation can save a lot of money. Also replacing a wood-heated system might greatly facilitate the everyday life of the elderly. Energy students and peer advisors mentioned being proud when they could help people finding a better electricity contract. In addition, HEAs were also proud that they got people reflect on their own energy use and possibly to change their behaviour.

2.3 Material provided

Printed training material got positive feedback. HEAs used the material while visiting vulnerable consumers and reported that also consumers had perceived the material quite useful. Four out of eleven energy students used the provided material during the home visits. They had used the ex-ante survey for guiding the conversation and the slides provided from the training. Three of them reported that vulnerable consumers did find the material useful, however, many did not respond to this question. All house renovation advisors had used the materials (Energy saving guide) while visiting consumers. They had disseminated ex-antes and filled them up with vulnerable consumers. Some of them had read the materials with the customers and checked some questions from them.

There were only three responses from Moodle users and therefore we cannot draw a comprehensive conclusion about how the online platform was perceived. Among the three responses, one HEA was very satisfied with the platform but the other two found it confusing and visually not appealing. However, it should be noted that more than 100 people registered the online course. The reason that only three people formally completed all modules may be due to the platform itself but also because the course was heavy and time-consuming.

2.4 Professional benefit and impact of training

In total, among the active HEAs who filled an online survey, 48% reported having gained some professional benefit from the training. HEAs that benefitted the most were already working with vulnerable consumers and could use the new tools directly in their job. All house renovation advisors reported having gained at least “slightly”, most of them a good

deal. Among the seven students who answered this question only one expected to have gained some professional benefit from the training. For most it had been a personal reason to join.

Seems that HEA activity is primarily determined through an existing connection with vulnerable consumers. 69% of responders reported that they are planning to use the tools gained also in the future (16 out of 24 trained/non-trained replied directly to this question). Those HEAs who reported using the knowledge and skills of ASSIST training are in such a position through their work. For example, one very active HEA who advises young people with housing issues in her work, said that ASSIST training offered concrete and useful tools. As her customers are youth moving to their first home, she can help them with electricity contracts and give energy efficiency advice. Such cases guarantee that ASSIST training has a long-lasting impact.

2.6 Improvements for the training

There were not many written feedbacks from HEAs to suggest concrete improvements. The few who answered, hoped for a more interactive or practical approaches to the learning sessions, or more networking with other HEAs. Energy students wished for a longer training seminar.

Italy

1. Methods

In order to collect feedbacks from the HEAs, several methods were used in order to have both quantitative or qualitative inputs:

- 1) The questionnaire **was published on the HEA working area of the Italian ASSIST network platform as “Valutazione modello ASSIST”** (<https://assist2020.eu/mod/questionnaire/view.php?id=2169>) and a communication was sent to all the network members asking to fill in the questionnaire (always through the network working area);
- 2) The **questionnaire was sent via email to some selected HEAs** asking them to fill it in;
- 3) The **questionnaire was discussed with HEAs during telephone calls** (or other direct meetings, both online and in person).

For each of the 3 above mentioned methodologies, the survey was structured in a specific manner and collected different (quantitative or qualitative) feedbacks, as detailed below:

- 1) **Published on the HEA working area of the Italian ASSIST network platform as “Valutazione modello ASSIST”** (<https://assist2020.eu/mod/questionnaire/view.php?id=2169>)

The online questionnaire mainly followed the structure proposed by VaasaETT up to question 10. The questions from 11 to 17 in the VaasaETT template were not included in the online questionnaire as specific questions. They were inserted in the open questions to enable the HEA to answer in a more open manner and also because the Moodle statistics enable to track the logs on the ICT working area and the use of materials made available on the working area.

The online survey was open in December 2019 and is still open. However, the answers of the HEAs to the survey is directly linked to the survey communication on behalf of the partners. AISFOR (as responsible of the Italian network) sent an internal communication to all the network members to fill in the survey, as soon as the survey was published on the online working area in the Moodle platform. The answers of the HEAs was immediate: 15 HEAs filled in the survey in the following weeks. Following the Christmas holiday, no further communication was sent to the HEAs, therefore there were no further questionnaires filled in.

The survey and the relative communication were targeted to all the members of the Italian network (i.e. 135 HEAs). It can be stated that those who filled in the online questionnaire are those most familiar with the ASSIST ICT working area on the Moodle platform and also those who have been more active in delivering the ASSIST action.

- 2) The **questionnaire was sent via email to some selected HEAs** asking them to fill it in.

RSE, as responsible of the action, has had more direct contacts with several very active HEAs in the city and in the neighbourhood of Milan. It was decided to select the 2 most active HEAs and have a more direct approach to collect also qualitative inputs: the former was young, while the latter was older, in order to cover two different HEAs categories. RSE sent the questionnaire directly via email to 2 very active HEAs asking them to fill it in adding also comments and feedback and then send it back. The questionnaire used was the template prepared by VaasaETT translated in Italian. Both the HEAs contacted positively replied to the request and sent back the filled in questionnaire in a very short time.

- 3) The **questionnaire was discussed with HEAs during telephone calls** (or other direct meetings).

In parallel with the two above quantitative methodological approaches, a qualitative approach was also used as partners were regularly contacting the HEAs for the ASSIST action. It allowed discussing with them what actions could be implemented and what barriers they were facing in defining and implementing the actions and pushing them to implement or report actions and discussing with.

The qualitative approach was less systematic but based on a more colloquial and experience-sharing approach. During the regular and constant contacts with HEAs, partners

would insert also questions on the HEA training follow-up survey. More than 20 HEAs were contacted in this manner, including HEAs with different backgrounds. However mainly those less active in implementing the actions were addressed in this way as the partners were discussing with them the implementation of the action and because the most active were already addressed through the online questionnaire.

2. Results

2.1 HEA profile

No general correlation emerged between the questions related to the reason of taking the ASSIST training and the professional advance. This can be justified because the course, in Italy, was open to all interested people independently from their professional backgrounds and existing knowledge, therefore the Italian HEA network is composed by different HEA groups.

240 people registered in the ASSIST course, but approximately 50% fully completed it. This can be justified as it was a course taken on a voluntary basis and there are no legislative/professional obligations in taking it. Moreover, as mentioned above, the course, in Italy, was offered for free to all interested people without specific pre-agreements with stakeholders to train their staff (there was one market actor who promoted the course amongst its staff but there was no formal agreement with the project). Taking into account the length and in-depth of the course and the fact that there was no obligation to take it, the final result of 135 people finishing the course can be considered a big success and the proof that a similar course is needed in the Italian context.

The most active HEAs in Italy are HEAs from consumers associations (Federconsumatori Lombardia e Adiconsum Lomrbardia): they are volunteers who already had a long-term relationship with the previously mentioned consumers associations and were very active people, involved in many activities supporting vulnerable consumers. They showed a great interest in the ASSIST2gether project and, in particular, both to be trained as HEAs and to be actively involved in the actions in the field. The motivation for these being HEAs were active was ethical and personal.

Factors which contributed that the HEAs remained in the network and active was their long term relationship with the consumer associations made them aware of all the issues connected to vulnerable consumers: they saw the ASSIST2gether project as a powerful tool to strengthen their skills about such issue and thus be more effective in providing a practical help and concrete support to all the vulnerable consumers. Also, the feeling of being part of a bigger network with other people willing to support vulnerable/poor consumers – collaborating on a social objective contributed HEAs to stay active.

Problems faced:

- We first contacted the above mentioned consumers associations, which were happy to collaborate with us on the ASSIST2gether project; we asked them to introduce us to their members and volunteers, who underwent a sort of

preliminary selection by the consumer association (who choose the more suitable ones to be involved in the activities related with the ASSIST2gether project), and thus were all enthusiastic to be involved in the training to become HEAs.

- Almost all the involved people completed the training and became HEAs, although some of them were slower to complete the training with respect to other ones, who were very quick to follow the course and immediately start the actions with vulnerable consumers.
- They have been very active since the beginning of their involvement, although, not all the trained HEAs showed the same enthusiasm or capability to carry out practical actions with vulnerable consumers.
- Most HEAs registered spontaneously in the course and about half of them finished the course even if there was no existing collaboration agreement. Speaking with them, it is clear that the reason for undertaking such a long and difficult course is to integrate and empower their competencies and to help. However even if most HEAs participated spontaneously they found it difficult to actually implement an action and be active HEAs. Those HEAs that were acting spontaneously without the structure and support of a working context/background faced difficulties in translating into practice what they had learned.

2.2 Usefulness of the training

As mentioned above, the ASSIST training course was fully taken by HEAs coming from different professional backgrounds and with different professional needs and expertise as well as by people taking the course for personal reasons. The usefulness of the course and of the materials provided by ASSIST to implement the actions (i.e. support energy poor consumers) varies significantly according to the type of HEA.

The table below shows for the 3 main type of HEAs the correlation between the usefulness of the course and their professional progress.

Type of HEA	Professional progress
HEAs already working on the field providing support to people as social operators	Strongly appreciated the course especially the more technical lessons providing them with the necessary competencies and knowledge to answer the technical questions of energy poor consumers.
HEAs already working on the field providing support to people as technical operators	Appreciated the course providing the full picture of energy poverty, including the social aspects of the phenomenon and providing them the “soft” competencies and knowledge to support vulnerable consumers.
HEAs volunteers, pensioners, students	Strongly appreciated the course but on a personal level not having the opportunities to implement actions on the field to support energy poor consumers.

Speaking with HEAs, either for those most active for professional reasons or those most interested for personal reasons, some very interesting conclusions can be drawn:

- 1) The ASSIST course and model can be of great interest for municipality interested in setting up energy-environmental-climate helpdesks for citizens (within the SECAPs Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans). The Italian network includes more than 20 HEAs (who have successfully finished the course, more than 40 had started the course without finishing it) coming from the municipality of Rome with this scope. The comments/experience of the single HEAs and of the municipality are very positive and set the basis for the take-up of the ASSIST model by other municipalities (this potential follow-up of ASSIST is currently being evaluated in Italy).

Some HEAs (less than 5), who are working with municipalities, are external experts and are planning to insert the ASSIST model (training – network – action) within the drafting of the next SECAPs or have applied to funding of foundations for similar activities.

- 2) HEAs in the social sector have been able to provide to people who they generally assist advice/information/support also on energy related problems by building on the existing trustworthy relationship and bypassing the problem faced by more technical HEAs who have expressed the barrier of creating trustworthy contacts and dialogue with people.
- 3) An HEA, following the ASSIST course, has expressed her intention to launch a web-radio on energy efficiency providing tips and useful information. For technical problems, she has not been able to launch the service within the project duration but she is working to implement it soon.
- 4) A Networking exchange event was organized after the end of the training and during the action implementation to enable HEAs to share their experiences and barriers faced. The event was attended by a low number of HEAs (around 15) which all expressed a positive evaluation of the event in terms of contents of the experience exchanged between participating HEAs and usefulness of those experience and have treasured the suggestions and experience of other HEAs.

2.3 Materials provided by the training

The training material was made available to the HEAs only on the platform and it was not possible neither to download nor to receive the training material. The partners decided not to give the training resources in order to push the HEAs to constantly refer to the ASSIST platform for the training and get acquainted with the platform also for the action. During the course of the project, several HEAs asked for the training material but it was never provided to them and it will not be provided in the future.

The informative resources to be used by the HEAs in implementing the actions were also provided in the working area but in some cases they were provided also through different

channels (for example some videos are also published on the Italian ASSIST YouTube channel).

All the HEAs who implemented an action on the field used the informative material provided by the project and found it very useful. All the material was used by the HEAs (videos, factsheets and templates to prepare events and to prepare presentations).

A couple of HEAs prepared their own slides for the energy café and sent it to the partners for verification. Once approved by the partners, the presentation were made available to other HEAs for other events. Self-production of informative material will be evaluated as a follow-up of ASSIST.

All respondents of the online questionnaire stated that they had used or will use the resources provided by the project when implementing the action.

2.4 Professional confidence

In average 76% and 72% positively evaluated the increase in their knowledge on technical and social issues with positive consequences on their work.

2.5 Impact of the training

Analysing the statistics of the online course: 20% of the respondents had carried some type of action before taking the ASSIST course, 13% had not implemented any action yet, 40% of the respondents replied that they carried out an action following the ASSIST course.

The 2 active HEAs addressed individually had carried out actions to support consumers but not specifically on energy poverty.

While the HEAs, directly addressed through telephone or meetings, expressed their interest and willingness to carry out actions but had difficulties in organizing and carrying out such actions. The main problem was related to the fact that they were not in contact with vulnerable/poor consumers and did not know how to contact them in order to support them. This problem emerged especially for those HEAs who had taken the course more for personal/volunteer reasons and did not have a working context to facilitate the contact with the consumers. To support such HEAs, the Italian partners will evaluate the usefulness of the network as exchange of experience and common learning between HEAs and organize in the future more network and sharing events between HEAs.

2.6 Feedback

In Italy a single course was built and delivered to all HEAs. Due to the wide audience of the participants, it was not possible to differentiate the course taking into account previous knowledge and competencies. This can be considered a drawback of the course as participants have had to undertake lengthy lessons on topics on which they were already competent. In fact this negative comment has come up several times during the evaluation and assessment of the course. Other issues regard the wide range of subjects, and the inner complexity of a course on energy topics. Thus, in a possible follow-up of ASSIST the need

to tailor the course(s) in a different manner has to be the starting point. AISFOR is, in fact, evaluating the possibility of grouping the modules/lessons of the full ASSIST course using more specific target-needs criteria. AISFOR is building a matrix, tailoring the most interesting lessons and modules for selected market and target groups.

However in more general terms, the HEAs appreciated the course and mostly agreed on the importance of the ASSIST course independently from the background and working contexts of the HEAs. Answers to the question on how the ASSIST course supported the HEA in his/her work include:

“It provided a lot of useful material”

“It helped me because it provided important information which I shared with clients in my shop”

“It helped me to deepen aspects I only superficially knew, especially related to energy efficiency. I can now apply them in my household and then help consumers in energy poverty”

The HEAs appreciated the course and the suggestions on how to improve it are related to:

- 1) Length and in-depth of the lessons: some HEAs suggested that the course be structured differently according to the existing knowledge of the participants and to their training and professional needs. Some HEAs underlined that themes regarding the fundamentals of energy were less important than the ones on efficiency, retail markets and consumers' support.
- 2) Include also practical sessions: some HEAs would have liked to take part also in some practical actions to “experience” the daily work of the HEA in supporting consumers. This will surely be taken into account in the follow-up of ASSIST (unfortunately due to the geographical coverage and to the willingness to open the course to all HEAs, in the ASSIST editions of the course it was not possible to insert practical sessions).

Poland

1. Methods

The survey was conducted in a mixed manner (partly quantitative and partly qualitative). However, most of the questions were created in such a way to obtain answer determines the quality of the HEA trainings.

The structure of the questionnaire was almost the same as the one proposed by the Coordinator of Workshop, agreed during the Assembly Meeting and subsequent consultations between the partners. Some of the questions were divided from one to two questions, because of the fact that the tool, which we used made it impossible to transfer the questions in the same way.

The survey was distributed using the Moodle platform. Nevertheless, due to the fact that HEA is not willing to use the platform, the survey was sent to them by using an e-mail.

The direct tool with which the survey was carried out was the online "INTERANKIETY". This is the well-known tool which KAPE uses in other projects.

The survey was sent 15th of December 2019. The time to fill the survey was predicted to 15th of January 2020, however, it was possible to fill the survey till 17th of February 2020.

The survey was sent to whole group of HEA, those who finished the course, and those, who only started it (185 people). We received only 19 answers, what gives about 11%. From this group 1 person did not finished the course, 1 do not know about that and 17 finished the course. 17/53 Active HEAs answered.

2. Results

2.1 HEA profile

HEA, who answered the questions, in most cases replied that they took part in the training because they were encouraged by the employer (50% of respondents). 44% of people said that the reason was professional motivation, 33% interesting topics and 11%, i.e. two people were in favour of helping vulnerable consumers.

On the other hand, answering the question to what extent ASSIST training helped them develop, 89% of respondents said that the training helped them broaden their knowledge, especially in the field of energy poverty and households (in this group there is a person who did not finish the course). One of those people also said that the most interesting were consumer issues. One person of the remaining 11%, stated that as a result of the training he/she felt better while working with consumers. One person did not feel any changes resulting from the training (this person do not know if finish the course).

Respondents in 78% of cases use or plan to use the tools acquired during HEA training in their future professional or personal life. One person does not plan, one is not sure yet. Both of them have completed the HEA course.

Moreover 68% of respondents stated that they took part in activities related to energy consulting to consumers before the training, 21% gave such advice after the training. One person did not participate, and one responded that he did not know or did not apply to her. People who have not completed the course are among the majority, so they are in a group of people who advise consumers.

The most active HEAs in our country were Eco-managers. Almost every Eco-manager should give advice for 10 household a year. That is why usually they are most active. However, Welfare System also usually gives advice to vulnerable consumers. Reason for being active for these HEAs were professional.

The biggest success to engage HEA in collecting the questionnaires was the gadgets for vulnerable consumers. This low-cost "surprises" was a good way to help vulnerable

consumers. They not only give poor people the gadgets but also, they have a possibility to give advices about it what they can do optimize their energy usage.

Problems faced:

- Having HEAs to stay in the network, participate in meetups, answer emails or requests, conduct house visits etc.
- Assisting HEA in Moodle platform. Most of them had technical problems with e-learning.

2.2 Usefulness of the training

58% of respondents (11 people) rated the training in terms of energy efficiency and energy saving at 4, 21% at 5, 16% at 3. One person rated the training at 1.

47% rated the usefulness of training in social aspects, including identifying and dealing with sensitive recipients and communicating problems related to energy efficiency at 4 (9 people), 21% of respondents (4 people) at 5 and at 3. One person gave a rating 2 and 1.

When the results of these two questions are compared to the question about the future use of ASSIST tools, it can be concluded that respondents are consistent in their statements. A person who does not intend to use ASSIST tools rated the knowledge transferred on the course in both areas at 5.

15 of the respondents said that the training increased their knowledge, facilitated work in helping vulnerable consumers or systematized their knowledge. Three people said that the training did not affect their work. One person did not answer.

Among the elements indicated as the most important and useful observations or information that could be obtained during the training were indicated: ways of reducing electricity bills, tools for self-energy audit, areas in which energy efficiency problems are the most difficult to implement, information on the protection of consumer rights and ways of reaching people from social exclusion. 9 people did not notice the valuable elements of training and one mentioned that it is necessary to develop constantly.

5 respondents replied that their greatest achievement was satisfaction and the ability to provide free advice to inhabitants, as well as increased awareness of the harmful effects of polluted air on people. Other people did not respond.

Based on the HEA answers it is hard to describe how the tailoring of training for specific HEA groups impacted on and how the participants experienced the long-term usefulness of the training.

Despite of the 2 people who are clearly not satisfied with the fact that they took part in the course, it can be stated that advisors can use knowledge and acquired skills in tackling energy poverty.

2.3 Materials provided by the training

47% of respondents replied that they used the materials provided by ASSIST training, 7 people (37%) replied that not and 3 people replied that they do not know.

Among the listed materials that were particularly useful include: leaflets and newsletters (implicitly Factsheets), printed lecture materials, presentations with statistical data, Checklist and spreadsheet, used as questionnaire ex-ante and ex-post and a self-tool energy audit.

In the question about using the Moodle platform, 50% answered yes and completed the test. 11% said they tested online learning material (online course but did not complete it). 5 people (28%) said they didn't use the Moodle platform and 2 people said they didn't know.

What is interesting, when we compared results of these question to question 1 regarding the completion of the course, only 1 person who at the beginning stated that they had not completed the course is among the persons who stated that they did not use the Moodle platform, they do not know about it, but did not complete the course.

This may indicate that HEAs have a problem with perceiving and understanding the functioning of the Moodle educational platform.

2.4 Professional confidence

Basing on previous statements it could be said that almost 50% of respondents replied that they did experience professional advancement due to the ASSIST HEA training. There is nothing that would make one factor that made these HEAs benefit the ASSIST training the most. People replied that both energy efficiency and social issues was very important to broaden their knowledge about energy poverty and giving advices to vulnerable consumers.

2.5 Impact of the training

78% of people are going to use the tools gained in the training in the future. What was the most surprised in the result of our survey was the numbers of being involved in some energy counselling related activity. 53% replied that they took part in more than 100 activities about energy efficiency and energy poverty. 24% people said that took part in 5-20 activities, 12% - from 20 to 50 activities. 1 person said that took part in 50-100 activities and 1 person – in less than 5 activities. 2 people did not answer on the question. Respondents said that advices to consumers must be personalized to the individual cases. In general, the matter should be approached comprehensively, considering all areas, both energetic and social.

2.6 Feedback

HEA who took part in the survey had the biggest complaint about inadequate adjustment of the scope of training to their professional profile. Based on other questions, it can be deduced that their knowledge and experience in the field of energy efficiency is large, so part of the training associated with it was not developing for them (3 answers, which can suggest it). Another suggestion that appeared in the answers was the need to repeat this type of training in connection with the developing and changing market. In the case of Poland, the issue of changes in external financial resources, as well as recognition and the fight against energy poverty are probably particularly important.

Last but not least, factsheets, leaflets, surveys with tips (checklists) and excel: self energy audits, which appeared with the greatest satisfaction among the materials used during and after the training, also used for conducting ex-ante and ex-post surveys. There is therefore a need to prepare these types of tools.

Spain

1. Methods

The feedback from HEAS was collected through the survey but also informally, during follow ups. The survey was executed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The questions used were the ones provided by VaasaETT from second pilot onwards. On the first pilot, while ASSIST survey was still not created, Ecoserveis circulated an own evaluation survey. The platform used was the Google Drive tool for surveys and were sent to professionals through the HEA WhatsApp groups. The survey was opened during two months. 16 HEA responded to the harmonized survey, while 13 HEAs from the first pilot replied to the survey.

2. Results

2.1 HEA profile

In general, HEAs were very satisfied and gave value to the training.

There was not a correlation between the HEA type and how active have they stayed after the training. Also, there was not a correlation between the HEA type and whether they finished the training.

The most active HEA are the ones with more personal motivation and interest for the topic and more time assigned to the tasks for their employees. These HEAs become active because of ethical reasons. However, they were not really active on the network. Some of the HEAs have been active during the process tutorised by ASSIST (pre and post questionnaire) but they haven't showed interest on the Moodle HEA forum.

From our experience doing this HEA tasks on a voluntary basis does not work so this is why our pilot were negotiated with employers as part of their daily work.

Problem faced:

- HEAs answered emails, requests and participate in the show up meetings but didn't find interest in participate in the virtual network. They say they have enough networks and that they don't find this useful as if they have a specific doubt they will ask us directly.

2.2 Usefulness of the training

In terms of energy aspects (energy efficiency and energy saving) HEAs rated the usefulness of training with a score of 4,25 out of 5. In terms of social aspects, they rate the usefulness of training with a score of 3,9 out of 5.

There was a correlation between how useful did HEAs assess the training and whether they are going to use the tools in the future. There was also a correlation between how useful did HEAs assess the training and whether they became active.

The most useful element in the training was to provide solutions to vulnerable consumers and in general the thing HEAs were most proud of was being able to give solutions to users.

2.3 Materials provided by the training

88% used the materials provided by ASSIST training. HEAs did find Assist guide for professionals particularly useful. 25% did try the Moodle platform but did not complete the course. HEAs commented that it was difficult to download materials with the mobile phone.

2.4 Professional confidence

56% did experience professional advancement due to the ASSIST HEA training. Everyone benefit equally from the training regardless of background.

2.5 Impact of the training

100% were planning to use the tools gained in the training in the future. 31% reported that they have been involved in some energy counselling related activity. Feeling confident about giving energy advice to VCs contributed the most in whether the participants started doing energy counselling.

2.6 Feedback

- HEAs want to work more on strategies for transmitting knowledge to vulnerable consumers and also doing the training more extensive and practical.
- In conclusion, we think that this profile of HEA (home care professionals) need more face-to-face support, online tools are difficult for them to use and the course contents are very technical compared to their previous knowledge.

United Kingdom

1. Methods

The survey of the HEAs training was carried out from 17th December 2019 and was open until January 15th 2020. It was decided that the easiest way for the HEAs to complete the survey was via the online platform Survey Monkey which is in common use in the UK. As well as the HEAs being familiar with the platform, Survey Monkey also automatically collates the results for ease of reporting. The questions used were the ones provided by ASSIST's Finnish partner VaasaETT.

The survey was emailed out to the 31 HEAs who registered on the course (23 of whom completed the course) and we had 11 responses (30%). All of those that replied did so in

the first week evidencing a keenness to contribute and share their experience. An email reminder sent later within the survey time period did not result in any more responses.

2. Results

2.1 HEA profile

The 11 responders did represent the three types of HEAs; social /charity worker/energy company and consumer association.

Only 2 of the responders reported carrying out the training for professional reasons, the majority cited helping vulnerable consumers and also employer's encouragement. There does not seem to be any link between why HEA participated and if they had any previous experience in giving energy advice.

All of the 11 HEAs that responded had completed the ASSIST training, so we are unable to assess any correlation between those that did and did not complete the training.

The most active HEAs in our network are staff from non statutory services that were able to take time to sit with their clients. Also HEAs from organisations with related remits eg- Citizens Advice offers debt advice and We Care offers home repairs were active. These HEAs are active because of personal motivation and professional motivation. There was personal experience and interest in energy efficiency and environmental issues as well as overlapping with their work agendas.

Personal contact following on from the training was important as well as finding a reporting method that worked for them. It was not time heavy.

Problem faced:

- Most of the HEAs have said that the training itself was really valuable but weren't able to commit to the reporting and monitoring required. This is due mainly to the time constraints they are allocated to each client

2.2 Usefulness of the training

The HEAs training was promoted to Severn Wye's partnership network of public and third sector organisations. The HEAs were either contacted by personal email as a known contact or indirectly through their line manager. Two responders (22%) cited employer encouragement as the reason for participating.

2.3 Materials provided by the training

Overall the HEAs found the training material very useful with 80% of HEAs using the knowledge gained in the training at each subsequent home visit. Most found the energy factsheets the most useful tool as they can leave them with the client to read in their own time and keep for reference.

None of the HEAs used the Moodle platform- the UK's training was delivered with face to face sessions and subsequent communication by direct emails and phone calls.

2.4 Professional confidence

45% said the training helped their professional advancement. The reasons included the following;

- Improving their work performance;
- Energy advice is now part of their everyday job
- Specific training element regarding funding for measures
- Better able understand their company's mission statement (an organisation that helps VCs in poor communities)

From the answers given it showed that everyone benefited equally from the training both the HEAs with previous energy advice experience and those who had less experience.

2.5 Impact of the training

100% of responders said they are now using the tools gained in their everyday jobs including one person who said both professionally **and** personally. 70% said that they are involved in energy counselling after the training.

I think the key success of the ASSiST energy efficiency training is that it is practically based so everyone can relate to it -after all, we all live in homes that need energy. Some of the energy advice is 'common sense' and consumers might just need encouragement to change their behaviour but the training also highlights best practice and can counteract hearsay and rumours about energy efficiency. For example; the correct way run a hot water immersion tank.

2.6 Feedback

A lot of the HEAs used the training to help their clients financially (50%) which was clear from the list their achievements including; saving a customer over £100 of their energy bill and stopping an illegal court order from going ahead.

30% said their achievement was related to improving comfort levels; getting a new heating system installed and improving the heating controls.

There were no comments on how the course could be improved with the exception of one HEA who said there should be more of a link to climate change;

HEA quote 'I think that energy saving for people should also be linked to climate change and the contribution their energy saving will make to the general good and environment. It's another incentive and makes people feel they can do their bit no matter what their circumstances. It is moving public awareness of the link with energy saving no matter how small to climate change.'

I think this is an important element to consider when thinking of future development of the ASSiST training programme. The big question is how social justice and fuel poverty eradication can also help reduce carbon emissions. Energy efficiency in homes is obviously an important element but many UK homes are still on oil and gas heating systems and moving into electric- only heating would at this stage be an expensive option for many.

Annex 2 HEA survey questions

1 Did you finish the HEA training?

☐ NO

>> Why not?

☐ Personal reasons (e.g. illness, change of job/function)

☐ Higher workload than anticipated (i.e. due to amount of reporting required)

☐ Lack of support by coordinator (e.g. to identify/find addresses of vulnerable consumers; to convince vulnerable consumers to participate in the home visit)

☐ Lack of reimbursement

☐ Other reasons

>> Please explain _____

☐ YES

>> When did you participate on the training (approximately)?

☐ I don't know

2 Why did you choose to participate in the HEA training? (You may choose one or several)

☐ The topics interest me

☐ Professional motivation

☐ My employer/teacher encouraged me to participate

☐ I could be helping vulnerable consumers

☐ Other

☐ Please describe _____

3 How would you assess the usefulness of the training: energy efficiency and energy saving.
(Scale 1 = Poor, 5 = excellent)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ I don't know/ does not concern me

4 How would you assess the usefulness of the training: social aspects, including identifying and dealing with vulnerable consumers and communicating energy efficiency related issues? (Scale 1 = Poor, 5 = excellent)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ I don't know/ does not concern me

5 In which way did the training course support you in the above? _____

6 What were the most relevant and useful insights or pieces of information for you personally that you gained from the ASSIST training activity? _____

7 How would you improve the course? Other comments? _____

8 Are you going to use the tools you have gained in the HEA training in your future professional or personal life? How? _____

9 Have you been involved in some energy counselling related activity? (giving energy advises, doing household visits, organizing energy efficiency related events, disseminating energy efficiency material or advice etc.?)

☐ No

☐ Yes, already before the training course

☐ Yes, after the training course

☐ I don't know/does not concern me

10 As an energy advisor, how many energy efficiency and energy saving advices would be appropriate to give during a household visit? How do you assess the situation?

11 Did you use the energy efficiency/energy saving material provided by ASSIST during these activities?

☐ No

☐ Yes

☐ I don't know/does not concern me

12 What kind of material was particularly useful and why? _____

13 How did the consumers perceive the provided material? _____

14 Did the ASSIST training support you to advance professionally in some manner? How? _____

15 Did you use the online learning platform Moodle?

☐ No

☐ Yes, I tested the online learning material (online course) but I did not complete the course

>> How did you like the online platform and the provided content? _____

☐ Yes, I completed the online course

>> How did you like the online platform and the provided content? _____

() I don't know

16 What is your biggest achievement as an HEA? What are you proud of? _____

17 Other comments or feedback _____

Notations

() Choose either – or

[] Multiple choices possible

_____ Open field

>> This question shows only if the person had answered “Yes” to the previous question

(*) Compulsory question

Annex 3 HEA survey report template

ASSIST Task 4.3

HEA SURVEY: REPORT TEMPLATE FOR PARTNERS for understanding the national contexts of the provided answers by HEAs

Please analyse the answers given by your national HEAs by answering the below questions. Your answers will help to understand the national contexts. Your analysis provided here will be directly used in D4.5. The question numbering (Q1... Q17) follows the survey questions provided by VaasaETT on 3 November 2019. Please deliver this analysis, and also all the answers given by the HEAs by 21 February 2020 for VaasaETT. Thank you!

2. Methods

Survey structure and delivery. Please write an introductory chapter on how the data was gathered in your country from the HEAs and how actively did HEAs answer to the survey. Please also describe here the methods you used while collecting the data.

- How did you execute the survey (quantitative or qualitative)?
- What was the structure of the survey (questions used)?
- Which platform did you use?
- What time period the survey was open?
- What was the target group, how large was the target group and how did you approach them?
- How many HEAs replied? How does the pool of answers represent the HEAs trained in your country?

Your answer: _____

3. Results

What was your general feeling on the HEA survey? Are we able to say something significant basing on the answers given by HEAs?

Your answer: _____

Please report and analyse the results of the survey here under six different topics:

3.1 Profile of HEAs (Q1, Q2, Q9, Q14)

(Profile of the most active HEAs (answers to this have already been collected for consortium meeting in Milano and can be used here))

- Was there a correlation between the HEA type (Q2 and Q14) and how active have they stayed after the training (Q8 and Q9)? What does this mean?
- Was there a correlation between the HEA type (Q2 and Q14) and whether they finished the training (Q1)?

Your answers: _____

3.2 Usefulness of training (Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q12)

- How did HEAs find the training? What were the means of the answers given to questions 3 and 4?
- Was there a correlation between how useful did HEAs assess the training (Q3 and Q4) and whether they are going to use the tools in the future (Q8)? Was there a correlation between how useful the training was assessed and whether they became active (Q9)? If not, have you any thoughts on what could explain the gap?
- What was the most useful element in the training (Q5) and in general what was the thing HEAs were most proud of (Q16)?
- Regarding Q16, did something surprising come up? What kind of activities were HEAs especially proud of? Does it seem that HEAs adopted some particular practices especially from ASSIST training (in their work supporting VCs)?
- Based on the HEAs answers, does it seem that the tailoring of training for specific HEA groups impacted on how the participants experienced the long-term usefulness of the training?

Your answer: _____

3.3 Material provided by the training (Q11, Q12, Q13, Q15)

- What was the percentage of replies who used the materials provided by ASSIST training (Q11)?
- What kind of material did HEAs find particularly useful (Q12)?
- What was the percentage of those who did try the Moodle platform but did not complete the course (Q15)? What kind of feedback did the platform receive?

Your answer: _____

3.4 Professional confidence (Q8, Q14)

- What was the percentage of those who did experience professional advancement due to the ASSIST HEA training (Q14)?
- Analyse the answers given to Q8 and Q14. What were the factors that made these HEAs (regarding questions 5, 6, 8) benefit the ASSIST training the most? Was there a general trend accruing or did everyone benefit equally from the training?

Your answer: _____

3.5 Impact of the training (Q5, Q6, Q8, Q9, Q16)

- What was the percentage of those who were planning to use the tools gained in the training in the future?
- What was the percentage of those who reported that they have been involved in some energy counselling related activity (Q9)?
- What were the factors in the training that contributed the most in whether the participants started do energy counselling?

In your opinion, what is the best practice related to the HEA network (based on the answers of the survey and on the previous experience received from the training)?

Your answer: _____

3.6 Feedback (Q7, Q17)

- Based on the answers given to Q7 and Q17, does it appear that some theme covered in training was more important than the others?
- How would the HEAs have improved the course?
- And on the other hand, are you able to draw some conclusions about the approach used in the topics people experienced most important?
- In general, what would be the best approach to train people to be supporters of Vulnerable consumers?
- Based on the feedback did some challenges or some good development ideas come up regarding this kind of training?

Your answer: _____



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