



Press Release

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Ashoka and the Schneider Electric Foundation, in partnership with Enel, announce the 15 winners of the 2017-2018 “Social Innovation to Tackle Fuel Poverty” programme in Europe during COP23 in Bonn, Germany.



In mid-June 2017, the Schneider Electric Foundation, under the aegis of the Fondation de France, and Ashoka, launched a new Call for Projects, in partnership with Enel, to select the 15 most innovative organisations that offer creative and systems-changing solutions to tackle fuel poverty and promote energy sustainability in Europe. Fuel poverty is a major issue in Europe, whereby tens of millions of people struggle every day to ensure adequate heating, light, and cooking power in their dwelling at an affordable price. This severely affects their health and wellbeing and ultimately has a negative impact on society.

After a successful Call for Projects, which has received interest from over 40 social innovators, they announced the **15 winners** of the 2017-2018 “Social Innovation to Tackle Fuel Poverty” programme during the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP23) to the UN Convention on Climate Change on 13th November 2017 in Bonn, Germany. The 15 winners represent a diverse cohort of social innovators from Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, all committed to tackling fuel poverty and promoting energy sustainability in their countries and in Europe.



in partnership with



Germany

The selected social innovators are (random order):

1. **Marlene Potthoff**, Project Coordinator of “Stromspar-Check” by *Deutsche Caritas* – an initiative in collaboration with the German Federation of Energy and Climate Protection Agencies (eaD), to offer an energy-saving check that provides cost-free support to low-income households in Germany. Formerly long-time unemployed people receive a specific training to advise low-income households on how to save energy and water. By raising awareness of energy-saving actions, Stromspar-Check helps prevent energy cut-offs.
2. **Marco Borghesi**, CEO of *OEEEX* – a platform that connects consumption and production facilities of renewable energies. Through hardware optimisation, consumers are enabled to consume the energy when it is naturally produced which reduces grid inefficiencies and re-dispatching costs. Consumers are reimbursed for the additional efficiency of the system and pay less for their energy while doing good for the environment.
3. **Stephanie Kosbab**, Project Leader of “NRW Against Fuel Poverty” by *Verbraucherzentrale NRW* – an initiative that offers budget and legal advice services free of charge in combination with energy saving consultation for consumers threatened by fuel poverty. It aims to prevent power cuts and to secure permanent energy supply for the households affected. It also attempts to improve the legal and economic situation of vulnerable consumers by means of continuous lobby work and public relations.

Greece

The selected social innovators are (random order):

1. **Apostolos Dimopoulos**, Chairman of *Sifnos Island (Energy & Development) Cooperative* – an organisation that attempts to ensure the energy autonomy of Sifnos Island from RES through the construction and implementation of a hybrid power plant. This will provide local communities with environmentally-friendly and low-cost energy, owned by the citizens themselves, and becoming a role model for other islands and marine territories.
2. **Argyro Stavroulaki**, Deputy Director of *EKPIZO* – a customers’ association “The quality of life” to protect consumers rights and improve their quality of life. Its lobbying efforts aim to encourage the government and the Energy Regulatory Authority to implement EU and national legislation. They also help their members with legal out-of-court actions to get back money that has been illegally withheld by companies.

Italy

The selected social innovators are (random order):

1. **Marina Varvesi**, Project Manager of “ASSIST” by *AISFOR* – a company working in the green sector focusing on the environment, agriculture, and energy. It is one of the partners leading the H2020 European project “ASSIST”, which aims to tackle the issue of fuel poverty by creating a professional figure (Vulnerable Consumer Energy Advisor) trained to assist vulnerable people with high quality and trustworthy advice.
2. **Alberto Gastaldo**, CEO of *Energia Positiva* – a cooperative enabling citizens to become *prosumers* of different clean energy production systems (e.g. photovoltaic, wind turbines, and hydroelectric power) and therefore decreasing the costs associated to meeting their energy needs. It aims to facilitate a change in the mindset of consumers to adopt green-behaviours and reach critical mass for the transition towards renewables in Italy.
3. **Giulia Detomati**, CEO of *InVento Lab* – a social enterprise registered as a B Corp that provides blended education and experiential training for young people in high schools on the topic of entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and fuel poverty with the purpose of supporting them to create green start-ups and become the future Green Leaders.



4. **Fabio Gerosa**, President of *Fratello Sole* – the first non-profit energy saving company that provides non-profit organisations (with a focus on helping the poor) with independent energy audits and financial investments to turn their premises into energy efficient buildings that have a lower energy consumption, therefore decreasing their negative environmental impact. These organisations also benefit from reduced spending and more financial resources to fulfil their social mission.

Portugal

The selected social innovators are (random order):

1. **António Bello**, CEO of *Just a Change* – a volunteer-based organisation that rehabilitates the homes of poor families and individuals. Besides tackling several problems related to housing poverty, it works to improve the thermal insulation of the premises to improve their energy efficiency. It works with local institutions to gather volunteers and resources to rebuild and renovate the homes of vulnerable families identified by the local community.
2. **Nuno Brito Jorge**, Board President of *Coopérnico* – a green energy cooperative that combines sustainability, ethical investment, and social support. Its members collectively invest in solar power projects that are owned by the cooperative and installed on the roofs of social support organisations that often struggle to cover their own energy costs.
3. **João Pedro Gouveia**, Researcher at *CENSE* – the Centre for Environmental and Sustainability Research within FCT NOVA, the Engineering College of Universidade NOVA in Lisbon. It gathers researchers to provide Portuguese government bodies, companies, and business associations with knowledge and analytics on climate mitigation, neutral carbon futures, and renewables and energy efficiency competitiveness.

Spain

The selected social innovators are (random order):

1. **Cecilia Foronda**, Climate Change and Energy Manager at *ECODES* – an organisation that runs the project “No home without energy”, which offers a technological solution to overcome fuel poverty. Its website offers a questionnaire that manages to gather social, household, and energy contract data from vulnerable people and returns a personalised report with advice on how to reduce energy consumption and energy costs. It also offers an interactive map that allows anyone to find initiatives and subsidies to tackle fuel poverty in their city of region.
2. **José Luis López Fernández**, Director of *Asociación de Ciencias Ambientales* – an organisation working on PICE networks to empower people in the use of domestic energy and reduce the risk to fall into fuel poverty. It is a network of information points composed by heterogeneous organisations that provide information to their population from their own premises.
3. **Juan Sancristan Antoni**, General of *AEIOLUZ* – an energy-service provider cooperative that aims to end energy poverty and serve as a tool to change the current model towards a more sustainable one. It focuses on energy counselling and training for schools, municipalities, NGOs, and private companies to learn about energy efficiency, renewable energies, active energy management, and intelligent energy networks.

The Schneider Electric Foundation, Ashoka, and Enel also selected **five social innovators** (one per country) who will receive a 2000-euro grant to support their work. The receivers of the grants are: **Stephanie Kosbab** (*Verbraucherzentrale NRW*), **Argyro Stavroulaki**, (*EKPIZO*), **Giulia Detomati** (*InVento Lab*), **António Bello** (*Just a Change*), and **Cecilia Foronda** (*ECODES*).



All 15 social entrepreneurs will now engage in an intensive 12-week advisory process to help them craft an effective strategy to scale up their impact. They will be supported by qualified consultants and advisors for a total of around 300 hours of dedicated mentoring sessions. A final two-day European summit at the end of April 2018 will give them the opportunity to present their strategy for scaling up and receive feedback from expert thought-partners.

The Schneider Electric Foundation, Ashoka, and Enel would like to thank all their partners across the five countries that have played a key role in the promotion of the Call for Projects.

Network Partners

Aephoria, AISA, APREN, Aster, BCSD Portugal, Beyond CSR, Bologna Startup, BI-AKT Leading Sustainable Strategies & Paragon Communication, Renewable Energies Chair, Clean Tech Energy Innovation Hub, Elpedison, EPIS, EIT Climate-KIC, Global Energy Transition, Global Shapers Milan, Global Sustain, Gridmates, IACACT, IES Social Business School, Impact Hub Lisbon, International Center for Climate Governance, IPES, Kilowatt, Kyoto Club, La Città Verde, Mazinnov, Orange Grove, Patras Science Park, Sustainability Intelligence in Action, SectorB, Social Innovation Exchange, Social Entrepreneurship Akademie, Social Impact, Socialidarity, Solidarity Mission, Source International, and Sympraxis.

Media Partners

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Ambassadors

Angelos Souridakis, Audrey Dobbins, George Koutitas, Gloria Pignatta, Manuel Collares-Pereira, Luisa Schmidt, Paola Valbonesi, and Roberto Carella.

Should you have any questions, feel free to contact Greta Rossi at italy@tacklefuelpoverty.com.