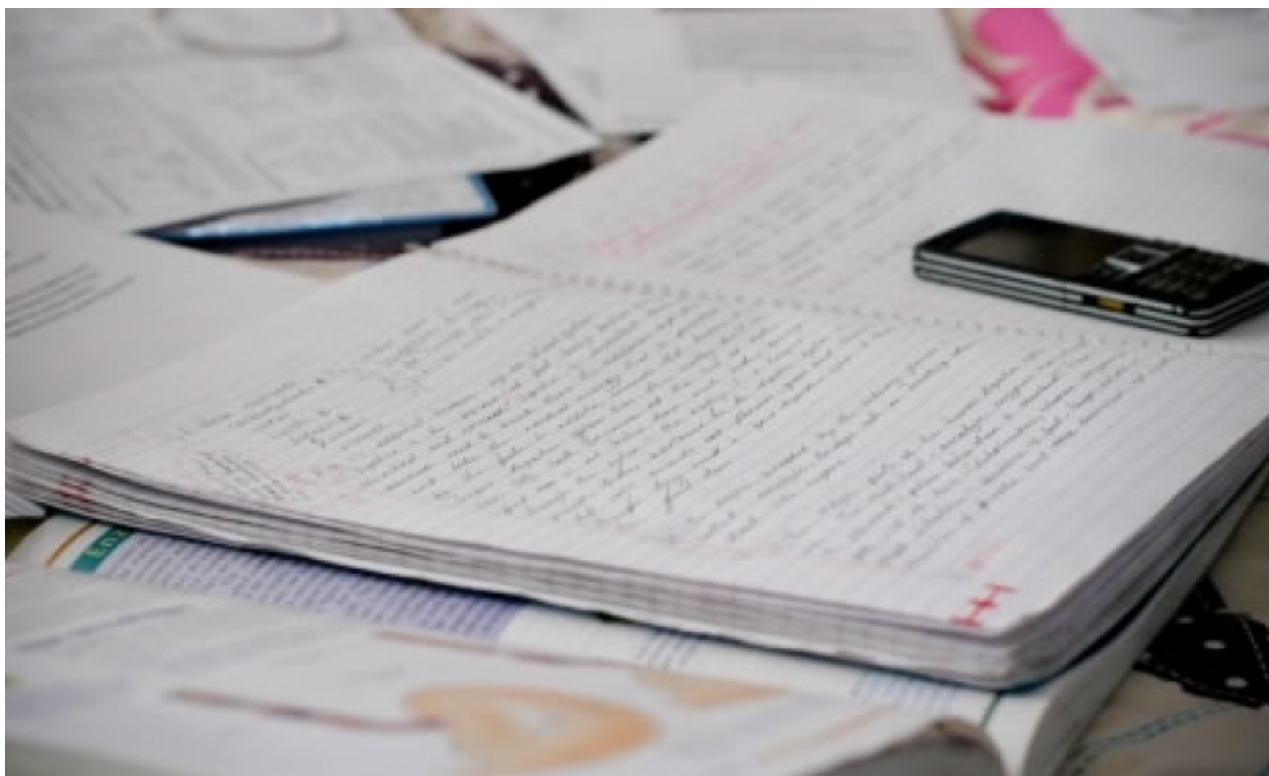


Energy poverty: causes and effects



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The director of Fundació La Vinya shares his thoughts on the causes and effects of the lack of access to energy in Spain.

Xavier Loza

Submitted by F Pere Tarrés on Fri, 12/30/2016 - 16:42

Description:

Director of [Fundació La Vinya](#).

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Energy poverty is a reality that originated from the effects of an ongoing economic and social crisis. This situation **stems from before the outbreak of the crisis**. In 1997, the Spanish energy sector was privatised. Currently, five large companies (Iberdrola, Gas Natural Fenosa, Endesa, EDP and Viesgo) control the market. All these companies have close ties to the political parties that have governed the country in recent years. These companies, which are generally energy producers and distributors, have the capacity to fix the prices, and these prices are always the highest possible.

It is true that the State has a certain capacity to intervene, but currently the rights of these companies are always protected ahead of the rights of consumers. At the same time, the current regulatory framework makes it **impossible for consumers to also become energy producers** and come together under an association to try and influence the system. This means that consumers have very little (or nothing) they can do, while facing growing difficulties to pay for their energy supply.

In light of this scenario, several initiatives have emerged to **facilitate the payment of energy bills** for those who are not able to do so. Some of these initiatives –the ones getting most attention– are when the administration pays the energy bills directly.

Meanwhile, **small associations** with a long tradition in the territory and that also facilitate the payment of energy bills, are organising collective advice workshops to promote a change in our consumption patterns and thus bring down the bill, while also looking for legal and administrative ways that will allow consumers to change the energy fees and adjust them to their needs (by reducing the power supplied or turning to night-time rates, etc)

A further option is to **reduce the energy costs in households**: by improving the isolation, by changing the household appliances... This option which is both positive and necessary, is out of reach for those who most need it because of the high price it entails.

If we consider access to electricity as a basic right –having a housing means more than four walls and a ceiling over your head– then the administration should have a greater will to serve its citizens. A change in model is urgent and **legislation should be revised** to provide rebates for self-production and subsidise the replacement of household appliances for families with fewer resources. **Municipalising** this service is also a possible alternative.

Unless this situation is resolved, we will continue to see the basic rights of our neighbours in our neighbourhoods being violated.

This article has been written with the collaboration of the Energy Advice team at [Fundació La Vinya](#).

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