# PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGO: 1st September 2027, 09:00 CEST
Madrid (Spain), 31st August 2026

## The EU-funded project IRENE helps vulnerable households access fair and affordable energy renovations

*The LIFE-funded IRENE project brings together ten organisations from four European countries to tackle energy poverty through inclusive renovation of multi-apartment buildings*

Energy poverty affects millions of people across the EU, impacting their health, social inclusion and overall quality of life. The project works to tackle energy poverty through fair, community-centred energy renovations in multi-apartment buildings, improving living conditions while supporting a just energy transition. IRENE responds to this challenge by prioritising vulnerable households and neighbourhoods, ensuring that energy efficiency improvements do not lead to displacement or gentrification.

Launched in September 2025 and running until August 2028, IRENE (Catalysing Inclusive, Representative, Equitable Energy reNovation wavE) is coordinated by Global Factor International Consulting SL and brings together a multidisciplinary consortium of 10 organisations from Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Spain, including municipalities, universities, research centres, consumer organisations and energy efficiency experts.

https://youtu.be/qDoEr2HKwgU
Discover how IRENE is helping vulnerable households carry out energy efficiency renovations

Co-funded by the European Union under the LIFE Clean Energy Transition Programme, IRENE contributes to the implementation of EU policies supporting the European Green Deal, the Energy Union's 2030 energy and climate targets, the Renovation Wave strategy and the EU's 2050 climate neutrality objectives.

*"IRENE is about putting people at the heart of the energy transition. By combining building renovation with community empowerment, we aim to ensure that vulnerable households can actively benefit from a greener, healthier, and more inclusive future,"* said Global Factor, Project Coordinator of IRENE.

## A Participatory Approach to Renovation

IRENE applies a participatory methodology that includes a local diagnosis to identify potential barriers to renovation, mapping energy poverty indicators, co-designing



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renovation strategies, developing policy recommendations, exploring financing solutions, and building capacity among residents and authorities. This approach ensures that renovation programmes are inclusive, representative and tailored to local needs.

By 2028, the project is expected to deliver substantial environmental, social, and economic impacts. Through large-scale building renovations, community engagement, and the development of inclusive energy services, it will contribute to significant reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions, improve living conditions for vulnerable households, strengthen local governance, mobilise major investments, and support the transition towards more sustainable, healthy, and socially inclusive communities. The project will also generate replicable approaches that can be scaled across Europe to accelerate fair and inclusive energy renovation.

## Four Pilot Cities

IRENE is being implemented in four urban pilots, representing diverse socio-economic, climatic and regulatory contexts. All pilots are mapping energy poverty indicators, conducting interviews with vulnerable residents and establishing Energy Justice Hubs to foster long-term community participation. These hubs bring together researchers, public authorities, civil society organisations and industry stakeholders, creating a collaborative network that promotes knowledge exchange, shares good practices and supports inclusive renovation approaches across Europe.

In Vilnius and Vilvoorde—where One-Stop Shops are already operating—the project is enhancing existing services by strengthening outreach to vulnerable households. In Leuven and Madrid, new approaches are being developed to provide residents with technical, financial, and legal support throughout the renovation process. Vilvoorde has already reached more than 200 residents through information sessions and home visits, offering tailored guidance to over 50 households. In Madrid, the Puerto Chico neighbourhood has mobilised a similar number of residents through workshops and community events, where households can now apply for grants under Plan Rehabilita 2026, Plan Transforma tu Barrio 2026, and the National Housing Plan 2026–2030. CSIC is also conducting environmental and thermo-optical analyses, deploying comfort sensors, and characterising urban materials to assess the impact of upcoming renovations.

## Disclaimer

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