



Press Release

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UK suffers worst fuel poverty in western Europe

The UK comes bottom of a fuel poverty league table for western Europe, according to new research released today.

Woeful levels of insulation in this country's homes are sending energy bills through the roof for people in the UK, according to the figures from the Association for the Conservation of Energy and the Energy Bill Revolution campaign.

Although most other European countries face higher energy prices than those of the UK, better quality home insulation means our European neighbours pay less to heat their homes.

The heat leaking from the UK's homes is condemning over five million households to fuel poverty this winter, and this number is predicted to rise to eight million within the next four years.

The UK scores poorly against other European countries on a range of measures, including the affordability of heating, the share of household expenditure going on heating, and the ability of homes to keep heat in.

Cold homes have dramatic impacts on health. The UK has one of the highest levels of excess winter deaths in Europe, with over 7,000 people dying from cold homes every year. Age UK warns that the long spell of freezing weather this winter is likely to have caused thousands more extra deaths among the elderly.

Campaigners today called on the Government to use Carbon Tax, which is paid by big companies for their carbon emissions, to fund a nationwide programme to make homes super energy-efficient to eliminate the scourge of fuel poverty.

Making homes highly insulated could cut the average annual heating bill by over £400, and end fuel poverty once and for all.

Ed Matthew, director of the Energy Bill Revolution, said:

"Insulating our housing stock to Scandinavian standards can help end the blight of fuel poverty once and for all. And we can afford to do so. The Treasury collects enough carbon tax to super-insulate over half a million homes a year. Eventually every UK home could benefit, slashing energy bills and weaning the UK off its addiction to gas."

Michelle Mitchell, Charity Director at Age UK, said:

"Living in a cold, poorly insulated home is not only miserable but has very serious health risks for older people – those living in cold homes are three times more likely to die prematurely from a heart-attack or stroke as those living in warmer ones. This report clearly shows that Britain is trailing behind our European counterparts when it comes to providing decent housing which people can afford to heat and it is the oldest and most vulnerable who suffer most. We must invest new carbon taxes in a programme of energy efficiency to bring Britain's housing stock into the 21st century and enable people to benefit from the heat they use."

The research released today found that the UK is at or near the bottom of the league on a host of measures relating to housing quality and fuel bills. These include:

- Proportion of households in fuel poverty (UK ranks 13th of 13)
- Affordability of heating : (UK ranks 14th of 15)
- Share of household expenditure going on energy: (UK ranks 11th of 13)
- Homes in a poor state of repair: (UK ranks 11th of 15)

A Netmums survey this winter found one in four families have had to make the grim choice between keeping the heating on or putting food on the table.

The Government has cut fuel poverty funding for families by 27% since coming to power. The only dedicated Exchequer-funded scheme to help make fuel poor homes energy efficient, the Warm Front programme, was axed earlier this year.

Fuel poverty exists where someone needs to spend more than 10% of their income on paying their energy bills.

The Energy Bill Revolution campaign proposes a programme of home improvements, insulating walls, floors, roofs, doors, and windows, funded by the Carbon Tax, which could save families on average over £400 every year on their fuel bills and end fuel poverty once and for all.

The full report is available to view on the Energy Bill Revolution website: www.energybillrevolution.org

Ends

Notes to editors:

The full findings of the report on fuel poverty in Europe are as follows. One in five UK households are in fuel poverty.

Country	Estimated share of households in energy poverty	Ranking
Netherlands	8.1%	1
Belgium	8.9%	2
Sweden	11.2%	3
Austria	11.9%	4
Slovenia	12.0%	5
Denmark	12.4%	6
Germany	12.6%	7
Finland	13.0%	8
Ireland	13.5%	9
Luxembourg	13.6%	10
Czech Republic	14.5%	11
France	16.2%	12
UK	19.2%	13