Fuel Poverty.
A case study of low-income households in Vienna/Austria

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1. The Problem

- Low-income households often cannot afford basic energy needs
- Poor households disproportionately affected by rising energy prices
- Many low-income households suffer from fuel poverty
- Social and political awareness for the problem is relatively low in Austria



2. The Project

- NELA ("Sustainable Energy Consumption and Lifestyles in poor and at Risk-Of-Poverty-Households")
- Financed by Austrian Climate and Energy Fund
- Goal 1: investigation of energy consumption
- Goal 2: Development of policy measures in cooperation with stakeholders

2. The Project

- Social theory approach
- "Grounded-Theory"-Methodology
- 50 qualitative interviews in low-income households, 10 interviews in better-off households
- Energy expenses between 3.6 and 20 per cent of income

3. Selected results: „Energy burdens and coping strategies“

3.1. Habitus of modesty: Coping with living and housing conditions

- Modest lifestyle as necessary long-term strategy
- Economizing as a way of life
- Mostly energy-inefficient dwellings
- Household appliances as Greek Gifts

3. Selected results: „Energy burdens and coping strategies“

3.2. Affordable warmth: Coping with cold homes

- Different coping strategies regarding heating practices
- Efficiency and sufficiency strategies
- heating only one room, slipping under the covers, etc.
- Economizing in other areas of consumption

3. Selected results: „Energy burdens and coping strategies“

3.3. Modest illumination: Coping with low lights

- Sufficiency strategies regarding lighting (using sources of light only selectively, etc.)
- Limits to energy saving practices: e.g. visitors, loneliness
- Efficiency strategies: relatively high tendency towards saving energy through affordable investments

3. Selected results: „Energy burdens and coping strategies“

3.4. The looming energy bill: Coping with energy costs

- Energy expenses as burden
- Differences in financial management
- Disconnections as worst-case scenario
- Reluctance to change energy provider

4. Concluding remarks

- Households are characterized by number of energy burdens
- Scope of action is limited
- Fuel poverty in Austria: no official recognition so far
- Policies for reducing fuel poverty
- Integrated strategy necessary



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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Low income households				
Age	18-34	35-50	51-65	66-74
	14	18	14	4
Sex	Male	Female		Migrants
	22	28		12
Composition of households	One person	Two persons	Three and more persons	
	27	8	15	
Monthly household income	up to 769€	770-912€	from 913€	Median income
	24	10	16	782 €
Size of dwelling	up to 39m2	40-59 m2	from 60 m2	Mean size
	12	19	19	56