

Dominique Le Roux

## **Stream : 5. Social Work and Social Policy: Control or Empowerment?**

**Author** : Dominique Le Roux, Head of Project, Sociologist  
EDF-Electricite de France, Research & Development  
1 avenue du General de Gaulle  
92141 Clamart Cedex  
France  
Dominique.le-roux @[edf.fr](mailto:edf.fr)  
(33)1 47 65 52 87

**Title** : *Cooperation between Social Workers and Social Mediation Actors : analysis of a paradox*

**Abstract** : The financial and economical crisis and its consequences on the augmentation of fuel poors in France, the creation of an open and competitive energy market in Europe leading to the privatization of the French energy companies such as EDF (Electricite de France), all these factors have contributed to modify the relationship between EDF poor customers and their energy use.

A reglementation has been developped in order to promote the energy access of excluded populations : a specific tarification and different kinds of aids are available in order to help them to get electricity according to their financial possibilities. But these kinds of rights are not immediately obtained. Customers having financial difficulties must interact with social workers for that purpose.

Statistics show that a large amount of people do not ask for these energy aids in spite of their rights : the phenomenon of non-take-up in this domain is quite important and could be explained by different causes. One is the difficulty for these people to approach the social workers for asking for energy special tarification or specific aids.

A new kind of social actor is emerging at the present : the "social mediator" belonging to social mediation structures depending on public utilities and public infrastructures such as "Pimms".

We will analyse how and in what conditions the new kind of interaction between these emergent actors, the professional social workers and the service users may improve the capacity of fuel poors to access to these energy aids. This study will be presented from the practical sociology point of view on the basis of a case study in a western town in France.

**Dominique LE-ROUX**  
Chef de projet  
EDF - EDF R&D  
ICAME  
1 avenue Général de Gaulle  
92141 Clamart

[dominique.le-roux@edf.fr](mailto:dominique.le-roux@edf.fr)  
Tél. : 01 47 65 52 87  
Tél. mobile : 06 30 07 63 54  
Fax : 01 47 65 57 00