

ENERGISE

EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RESEARCH, GOOD PRACTICE
AND INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

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POLICY BRIEFING 2: GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING NATIONAL AND LOCAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION INTERVENTIONS



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KEY MESSAGES

- Sustainable energy consumption initiatives need to be based more on sufficiency and practices and cultures of energy use
- There is a need to strengthen evaluation of, and peer-to-to peer learning from, initiatives
- The creative and policy learning potential of context-sensitive initiatives, such as energy living labs, is high and warrants further investigation and development
- New problem framings and imaginaries can enhance the design and implementation of effective sustainable energy consumption initiatives in the EU. These need support from policy-makers and funders for their further development and application

Context

BACKGROUND

The backdrop to this report is the need for reflection on the policy implications of the ENERGISE project in relation to the following: 1) improving policy-making for sustainable energy consumption; 2) the design and 3) the implementation, evaluation and scaling up of living labs that have the potential to contribute to EU energy consumption reduction goals.

The briefing outlines the policy-relevant findings from work packages so far conducted on the ENERGISE project. It summaries lessons learned about developing and implementing sustainable energy consumption initiatives in the EU and discusses the policy framing of different types of sustainable energy consumption initiatives. The report reflects on the design and implementation of ENERGISE Living Labs, taking into account the analysis of cross-country data on energy use practices in eight countries.

Analysis

APPROACH AND ANALYSIS

The approach taken is based on reflection and synthesis of materials produced for ENERGISE Work Packages (WPs) 2, 3, 4 and 5. WP2 reviewed 1067 sustainable energy consumption initiatives (SECIs). This showed that about 75% of SECIs framed energy demand reduction as a matter of efficiency, technological innovation or individual behaviour change (Jensen et al, 2017).

WP3 reviewed the design of two types of energy living labs (ELLS),

one version being based on individual households and the other on collective households (Heiskanen et al, 2018). WP4 set out how these two types of energy living lab were to be implemented in 8 European countries for ENERGISE (and known as ENERGISE Living Labs – ELLs).

WP5 is ongoing work that involves comparative analysis of the two different types of energy living labs across countries as well as within participating countries.

The WP-based reflection was supplemented by findings from an exercise undertaken with members of the ENERGISE policy and decision-making forum (PDF). This aimed to explore the policy significance of the project's activities. Further reflection was facilitated by an online workshop held with the PDF and discussion at a workshop session with consortium members that took place at an ENERGISE project meeting held in Budapest. Both workshops took place in January 2019 (Genus and Iskandarova, 2019).

Results

FINDINGS

The ENERGISE Living Labs have the benefit of focusing on energy use in households, rather than by individual consumers, to gain access to and analyse factors which enable or inhibit changes in energy practices and cultures. They provide insights into the responsiveness of different demographic groups and households with different heating or laundry systems to proposed intervention measures. Further, they inform our understanding of the effectiveness of incentives or measures on different types of household and their motivation to reduce in-home energy use. The inclusion and timing of living lab elements, such as challenges to change home heating and laundry practices, raises awareness of core issues and affords opportunities for householders to experiment, for example with new heating practices in more clement conditions, so that the changed practices are embedded by the time cold weather arrives.

It is acknowledged that ENERGISE-style energy living labs are highly demanding of resources, time and knowledge and require effective collaboration with expert and local partners. Results from such initiatives might be considered difficult to generalise or scale up in the conventional policy-making sense. However, there is evidence of the 'viral' effect of initiatives beyond lab participants. With further support, local living lab participants could conduct activities to ensure post-project legacy and the durability of beneficial outcomes. It may be advisable to commission and to

conduct longer practice-focused initiatives.

There is a need to reflect on the purpose and wider impact of projects such as ENERGISE and not merely on specific pragmatic design and implementation issues. We can transcend instrumental thinking about matters such as the breadth and number of domains to investigate, the choice of sites to include in initiatives and the problem of replicating or scaling up from relatively small or short term initiatives. Doing so brings into focus questions about the role of social scientific research and energy users in energy policy-making and possible new policy framings and 'imaginaries' thereof (Genus et al, 2018; Jasanoff and Kim, 2009).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Measures required

- Base sustainable energy consumption initiatives on different theories of change, emphasising energy use practices and sufficiency of consumption, rather than efficiency and changing individual behaviour or technologies.
- Increase and improve the evaluation of SECIs and criteria employed for doing so.
- Investigate and develop measures to enhance peer-to-peer learning from SECIs.
- Fund more research to assess energy living labs as experimental, possibly transformative spaces that may enable testing and feedback on policies still in their developmental phase, or comparison of different approaches and methods.
- Policy and other actors need to reflect on the purposes, foci and processes of energy demand reduction initiatives and related social sciences and humanities energy research.

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WHO WE ARE

The ENERGISE consortium includes ten research partners (universities, research institutes, enterprises and NGOs) from Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Slovenia, Switzerland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.



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