

Press release: ENERGISE Living Labs in the UK: first results

When: 16th April, 2019

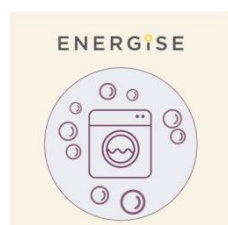
ENERGISE Living Labs in the UK: households reduce level of heating and laundry

In response to the increasingly urgent climate change challenge, the European Commission has made commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and decarbonise the economy. However, the current pace and scale of change is insufficient to achieve the necessary transition in energy systems; it is now realised that meeting energy targets is highly dependent on several interacting factors affecting final energy consumption patterns or energy demand. Increasingly, households are seen as playing a central role in energy transitions – which implies challenging social norms and habits around energy usage in the home.

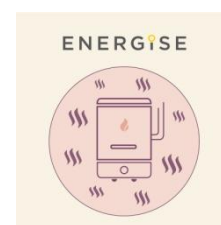
As part of an innovative pan-European research initiative to achieve a greater understanding of the social and cultural influences on energy consumption, the [ENERGISE](#) consortium – funded under the EU Horizon 2020 programme – launched living labs to develop, test and assess options for a bottom-up transformation of energy use in households and communities across Europe. Based on an assessment of over 1,000 European sustainable energy initiatives, two types of energy living lab were co-designed with stakeholders. One type of living lab involved individual households, whereas the other engaged households striving to reduce energy use in a collective setting, in which they could share experiences with and support other households taking part. Both types of living lab were implemented in eight countries¹.



Across the eight countries, over **300 households participated in the ENERGISE living labs that ran from September to December 2018, taking on two challenges²:**



- a laundry challenge to halve the number of laundry cycles they do (e.g. per week); and
- a heating challenge to reduce indoor temperature in their living-rooms to 18 °C.

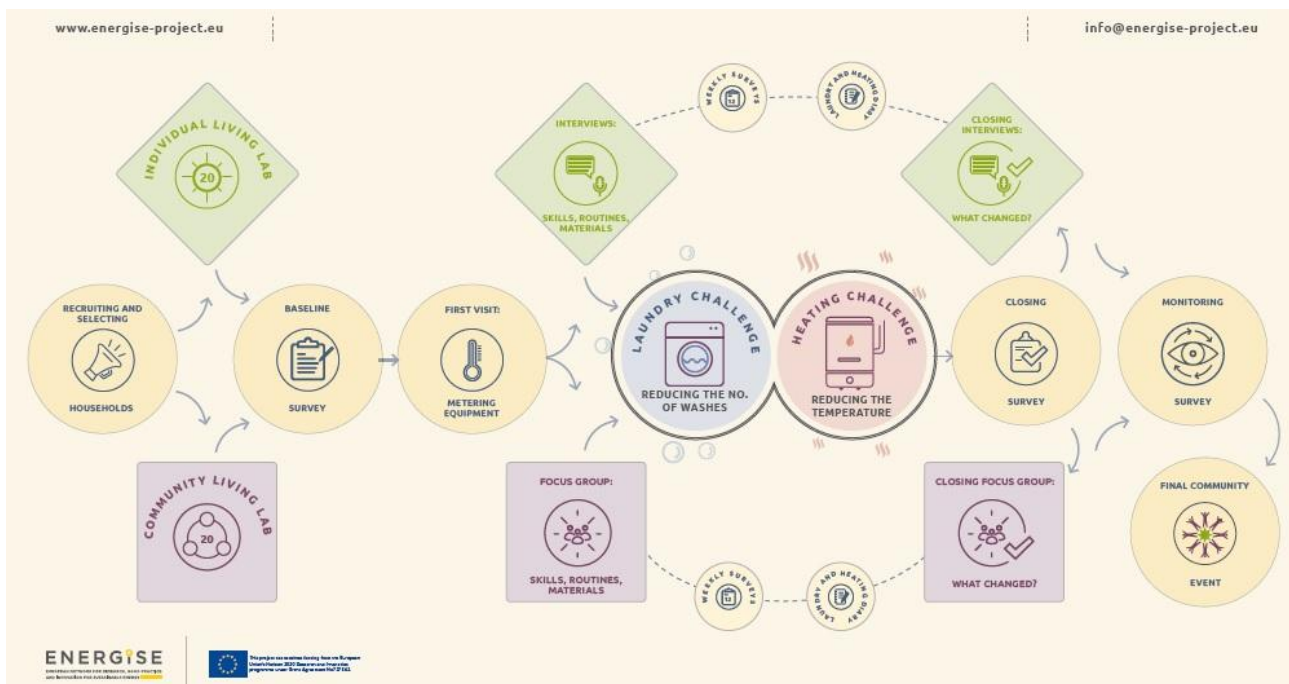


These challenges aimed to disrupt the everyday households laundry and heating practices and so help the research team and the participants themselves to understand the role of social norms, skills, competencies, materials and infrastructures in daily energy use.

¹ Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Netherlands, Republic of Ireland, Switzerland, United Kingdom

² Some households decided on more ambitious laundry and heating challenges

In the UK, researchers from Kingston University, assisted by staff from Energise Sussex Coast, worked with households in Hastings and St Leonards, in a multi-method living lab process, providing support where needed. The living labs were facilitated by the use of: energy monitors and thermometers; laundry and heating diaries; challenge kits including useful objects and tips to support practice change; interviews or focus group discussions to consider practices, social norms, skills and material infrastructures; and weekly surveys to provide an opportunity for reflection for participating households - as shown in the figure below.



The active challenge period of the ENERGISE Living Labs concluded in December 2018 with closing interviews and a focus group. Follow-up surveys were then conducted with households early in 2019. The main results will be available later in 2019 and will include comparative assessments across the 16 Living Labs that have taken place in eight countries. UK participants have reduced the number of washes they do, along with other changes, e.g. washing more at lower temperature, using shorter and/or eco cycles, reducing ironing. UK participants also revised their needs and expectations for indoor heating and lowered the temperature settings needed to keep warm at home by about one degree. The changes appear to have persisted over the period of the living labs.

To share further local results and outcomes, Kingston University is organising a closing event. It will take place on Thursday 25th April, in Hastings. The event provides an opportunity for householders and interested stakeholders to meet and exchange information, with a view to ensuring the longer-term impact and benefit of the project. Please contact us if you would like to attend or learn more about to transform how we use energy in the home. Email: a.genus@kingston.ac.uk



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IF YOU WISH TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ENERGISE LIVING LABS, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH!

- To learn more about the ENERGISE Living Labs, please visit: <http://energise-project.eu/node/1239>
- To learn more about the ENERGISE project, please go to: <http://energise-project.eu/>
- To get access to other outputs from the ENERGISE project, please go to: <http://energise-project.eu/deliverables>

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ENERGISE

- ENERGISE stands for the European Network for Research, Good Practice and Innovation for Sustainable Energy
- The project is coordinated by the National University of Ireland, Galway
- Funding comes from the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme
- Web: <http://www.energise-project.eu/>, Email: info@energise-project.eu



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