



Supporting citizens' desire for climate-friendly behaviour

- *Citizens need independent, thorough, validated, and well-explained information so that they understand what they can do, why it is useful and so that they can act.*
- *There is a great lack of policy development that supports citizens in changing behaviour.*
- *Due to lack of policy measures supporting consumers in improving their behaviour, it is important to foster dialogue with citizens. Policies can be advantageously co-created through dialogue between citizens, officials, and experts, each of whom can bring important forms of knowledge to the table.*
- *ACT4ECO.eu is an example of how it is possible to give citizens access to knowledge about even the most complicated and technical changes they must make to live climate friendly.*
- *There is great potential in providing access to the same knowledge to all citizens in and beyond Europe on multilingual platforms such as ACT4ECO.eu, not least to citizens in economically weak countries.*

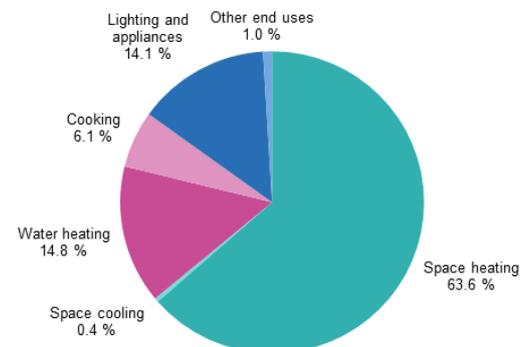
This Policy Brief describes the most important experiences from the EU project ECO2 (Energy Conscious Consumers), which from March 2018 to August 2021 has developed the e-learning platform ACT4ECO.eu that provides knowledge on how citizens can save energy, especially within households. ECO2 also conducted a series of workshops and seminars on how politics and design can help citizens change their behaviour.

According to Eurostat¹ Europe's households accounted for 26.3% of the EU's total final energy consumption in 2019, i.e. consumption at the final consumer.

The commitment of every citizen in reducing his/her own energy consumption will contribute to quickly achieve the ambitious goal of climate neutrality by 2050 all over the EU. This is because the less the energy consumption is, the more renewable energy proportionally contributes to the total energy production. Therefore, energy savings will result in reduced energy production based on fossil fuels. This raises the question of how to support citizens in changing the use of energy of the house and of the occupants' energy-

related behaviours. Not only reducing their use of fossil fuels, but generally reducing their use of energy.

Final energy consumption in the residential sector by use, EU, 2019



Source: Eurostat (online data code: nrg_bal_c)

eurostat

In 2019, heating of homes and water accounted for 78.4% of household consumption. Both are consumption areas for which there are effective solutions to reduce consumption and/or have it supplied with renewable energy.



This project has received funding from European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 784988.



Methods in the ECO2 project

The ECO2 project has carried out the following activities, which have contributed to the conclusions:

- 1) Developed the platform ACT4ECO.eu, which in 12 languages gives citizens insight into 23 different themes for changing behaviour and action.
- 2) Attracted a total of 13,000+ users of the platform between its launch in April 2020 and the issuing of this brief in August 2021. In August 2021, the number of users increased by approx. 1000 / month.
- 3) Conducted online seminars on policy development on behavioural change in 9 countries and at the EU level, with the participation of more than 80 experts.
- 4) Published 6 other Policy Briefs within 5 thematic areas and one concerning EU policy, all providing concrete suggestions for policy initiatives.
- 5) Conducted several pilot trials, surveys, and debates with citizens to learn about their needs and experience of a platform like ACT4ECO.eu.

Taken together, these activities have provided insight into the need to create the right opportunities for citizens to change their behaviour.

Main impressions in the ECO2 project

The main impressions from the project:

- Citizens who do not already know much about energy and climate get a lot out of using a platform like ACT4ECO.eu because it is

easy to understand and provides high quality and thorough information.

- A relatively large proportion of citizens (60%) thus visit ACT4ECO several times.
- As sources of knowledge, a large proportion of citizens mention "Public websites", "Platforms such as ACT4ECO" and "Experts among friends and colleagues", which reflects that trust in the information provider is of crucial importance.
- In the 9 seminars, many new policy proposals, which could support behavioural change, were developed in a very short time. This shows that there is a wealth of knowledge among experts, stakeholders and policymakers that could be used for co-creating a varied policy toolbox for behaviour change.
- There was agreement at the seminars that there is a great need to open the debates and establish co-creation about policy development, especially within the policy area of energy related behaviour change.

Recommendations

For specific recommendations within the 5 themes and EU policy, please refer to the "Documents" area of ACT4ECO.eu:

<https://act4eco.eu/about-us/>

At a more general level, the ECO2 project can provide the following recommendations:

- 1) Shift the political focus away from convincing and moralizing about the need for behaviour change, and towards concrete policies and actions that can easily be implemented on many fronts that help citizens change behaviour.





- 2) Take advantage of the fact that the largest energy consumption in households is within areas where there are good solutions. Make it easier for citizens to reduce energy consumption for heat and hot water.
- 3) Initiate broad information to the population about concrete actions and changes in behaviour. Provide easy access to free, validated, independent, well-communicated know-how.
- 4) Provide free access to energy and climate advice.
- 5) Support the development of citizen groups and local communities that can help each other make changes in behaviour and in changing their households.
- 6) Initiate thorough studies of where citizens face problems and barriers for changing their behaviour. Invest in changing the conditions and technologies so that thresholds are lowered.
- 7) Focus the public subsidy and loan schemes on the households/houses that use the most energy and have the most financial difficulty in financing the changes.

The ECO2 project in short

ECO2 (Energy Conscious Consumers) was a Horizon2020 funded project which main aim has been to help EU consumers increase awareness of their energy consumption and improve the energy efficiency of their households. Since consumers play a key role in the transition processes towards

sustainable energy, the project both engages and empowers them by enhancing knowledge on how to consume energy more consciously in their everyday lives.

The main outcome of the ECO2 project is **ACT4ECO**, an interactive online platform available at www.act4eco.eu, which is aimed at motivating energy consumers to explore various solutions in terms of household improvements and implementation of energy-saving best practices.

ECO2 created dialogue with policymakers and innovators at national and EU level through policy seminars, to discuss energy efficiency measures available to households and their impact on consumer behaviour.

Project partners

Fonden Teknologirådet – Danish Board of Technology Foundation (DBT), Denmark – Project coordinator

Hebes Intelligence Single Member Private Company (HEBES), Greece

Sinergie Società Consortile a Responsabilità Limitata (SINERGIE), Italy
Helsingin Yliopisto – University of Helsinki (UH), Finland

Associação Portuguesa para a Defesa do Consumidor (DECO), Portugal

Strategic Design Scenarios (SDS), Belgium
Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund), Bulgaria

Asociacija Žinių Ekonomikos Forumas (KEF), Lithuania

University College Cork, National University of Ireland, Cork (UCC), Ireland

ⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Energy_consumption_in_households

