



Grant Agreement no. 784988

Activity full name: Energy Conscious Consumers

Activity acronym: ECO2

DELIVERABLE 8.3

POLICY CO-CREATION REPORT

Due date of deliverable: 28.02.2021

Actual submission date: 31.07.2021

Start date of Activity: 01-03-2018

Duration: 3½ years

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

The pre-pandemic plans for the ECO2 project as described in the DoA included a collection of policy related barriers in Task8.3. Policy related barriers could be identified by the ECO2 Groups, and a “Policy action” intended to initialise deliberation in the ECO2 Groups about different sorts of barriers that they experienced when trying to change energy related behaviour. Such barriers could for example be about design of energy technologies/appliances or about inadequate, discouraging or counter-productive policies as seen from the point of view of the consumer. The ECO2 Groups would co-create descriptions of such barriers as well as – if possible – suggestions for new policies.

Design related barriers would be communicated to Task 8.1 in which design processes would try to provide new solutions.

The results related to policies would be communicated via the Policy Briefs of Task 8.2.

COVID-19 induced change of plans

The abolishment of all ECO2 Groups related activities because of pandemic restrictions called for a deep redrawing of these plans. First, the registration of barriers could not be done by the Groups, and secondly, the co-creation of policy suggestions would not work with a setting of non-grouped, not registered online users.

The choice became to make use of the Policy Action to try to identify the level and character of barriers, and the nature of wished policies, and then to have the co-creation of policies done in Task8.4 during the policy seminars. These seminars would then have a dual purpose – to communicate the challenges found in ECO2 and to co-create policy options with the participants.

This report describes the Policy Action and its outcomes in terms of policy measures called for by the consumers who took this action.

2. METHODOLOGY

An Action was produced, which made use of the EngageSuite, just as all other actions. The Policy Action is a brief questionnaire split into five sessions:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Questions about “Rules”
- 3) Questions about “Money”
- 4) Questions about “Knowledge”
- 5) An option to add any text and to volunteer for follow-up questions.

The Policy Action was posted on ACT4ECO concurrently with the Evaluation Survey of Task7.3 (see deliverable 7.3). This had the advantage that the email sent by Task7.3 to all registered users about the survey also could refer to the Policy Action, and that SoMe announcements of the survey or of the Policy Actions would mutually support each other because users would see both when they followed the link to ACT4ECO.eu.

2.1. PARTICIPATION

DBT was task leader and executed the development and analysis of the Policy Action. Other consortium partners:

- Took part in the decision about change of methodology.
- Gave feedback on the questions included in the Policy Action.
- Translated the action into the language of their country.
- Made use of especially SoMe to disseminate the Policy Action.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives were mostly focused on receiving signals about where policy as a barriers was mostly experienced by the respondents.

- To have indications about how comfortable and knowledgeable respondents are with rules and regulations regarding house building and renovation.
- To receive indications about how frequently and how deep the respondents experienced laws or other rules as barriers.
- To have indications on how important subsidies are for consumers' willingness and ability to energy renovate their house.
- To better understand the need for information policies.

The action was to provide indications only since it was not expected to have many respondents.

2.3. TIMELINE

The final timeline of the development of this activity was the following:

Task	Time Span
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Decision on change of methodology	October 2020
Brainstorms on questions	January-February 2021
Planning vis-à-vis Tasks 7.3 and 8.4	March 2021
Choice of questions	Early April 2021
Implementation of Action in EngageSuite	Mid-April 2021
Translation in EngageSuite	Late April 2021
Implementation into ACT4ECO	Late April 2021
SoMe texts sent to partners	Late April 2021
Closing the action	Late June 2021
Analysis of quantitative answers (no substantial qualitative answers received)	Early July 2021
Submission of the report	31st July 2021

2.4. REACHING USERS

The Policy Action was:

- Announced in the email in 9 languages sent to all 583 registered users by Task 7.3
- Announced via SoMe nationally by all partners
- Clearly visible at the landing page of ACT4ECO – side-by-side with the Task 7.3 questionnaire

To not having time consumption as a barrier for answering, the action was developed to be completed within 10 minutes or less.

48 valid responses were collected during the nearly two months the Policy Action was open.

2.5. THE POLICY ACTION

The Policy Action can be seen at the following link. The link on ACT4ECO has been unpublished, but this direct link is open for responses, but they will not be collected for analysis.

<https://engagesuite.org/en/eco2/actions/rH5gGSjDT3xM/e/YCZITrbPCmW6>

The following screen shot shows the introduction session, and the header bar to access the other sessions.

INTRODUCTION RULES MONEY KNOWLEDGE LAST TWO QUESTIONS


Your behaviour depends on many things
If you want to drive your car sustainably you will depend upon the availability of sustainable fuels. If you want to eat sustainably you will be limited by the way the food has been produced.

The same counts for energy conscious behaviour. We are not personally in control of everything. Rules are decided for us. Some technologies do not work as we think they should and we are all dependent upon proper information.

Here we will try to find the barriers you run into when you want to act in a sustainable and energy-conscious way.

We will use the answers you provide to inform decision-makers, industry, and designers, making them more aware of the problems you run into.

It only took us 10 minutes to answer the questions - we hope that you will take the time for this good cause.



3. RESULTS

3.1. RESPONDENTS

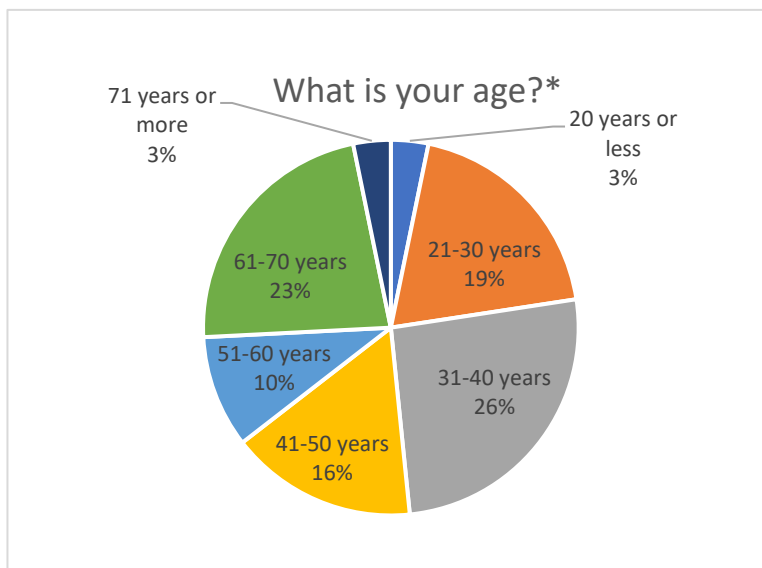
A total of **31 responses** were collected. It is clear from the pattern of answers that the respondents have answered those questions that seemed most relevant to them, since 19 respondents answered all questions and some of the remaining 12 respondents ignored some questions but answered other questions later in the action. The analysis is based upon these 31 respondents that seem to have completed the action.

AGE

[31 answers – mandatory question]

The age distribution is rather equal, but with a low representation of the youngest and the oldest segments, which is to be expected because of the lower relevance of changes to the household for these age groups.

Compared to the survey on evaluation of the ACT4ECO platform, the groups below 40 years have a slightly lower representation.



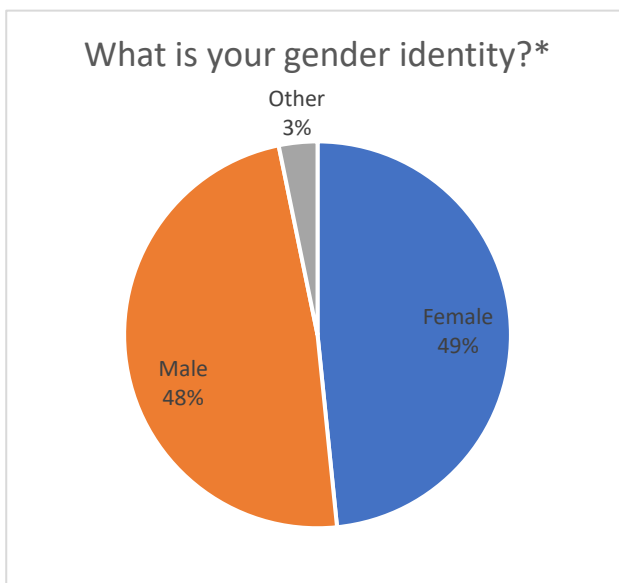
Those groups that are in life phases in which behaviour change for the households is relevant, are well represented in the respondent group.

GENDER

[31 answers – mandatory question]

There was an equal representation of men and women taking the Action.

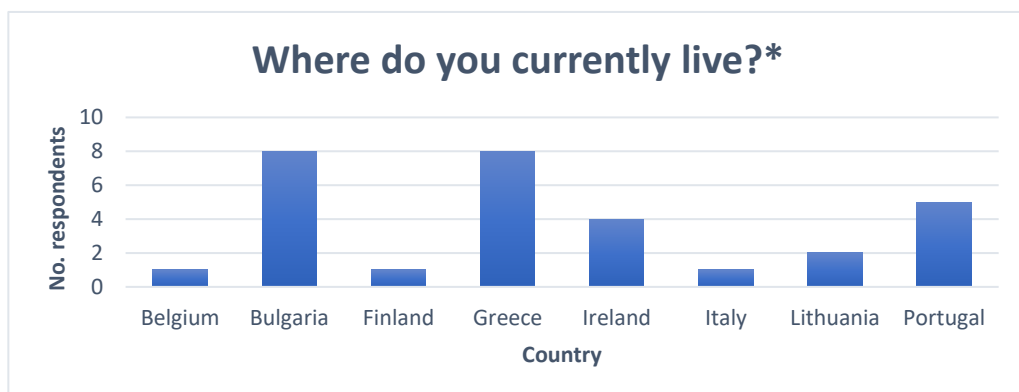
This differs from the survey on evaluation of ACT4ECO, in which there was a 33/66% distribution between men and women, which shows that the respondent group on the two consultations are not totally overlapping.



COUNTRY WHERE YOU LIVE

[31 answers – mandatory question]

The geographic representation is very far from being representative



for EU, having countries with lower incomes and with recognised energy poverty challenges dominating the respondent group.

This must be taken into account when considering the signals about subsidy schemes and ability to pay for energy renovation and installations. In other words, the policy challenges as seen through this consultation must be interpreted as challenges for countries that have a larger proportion of their populations needing help in order to pay for changes and investments – relative to the average of Europe.

TYPE OF HOUSING

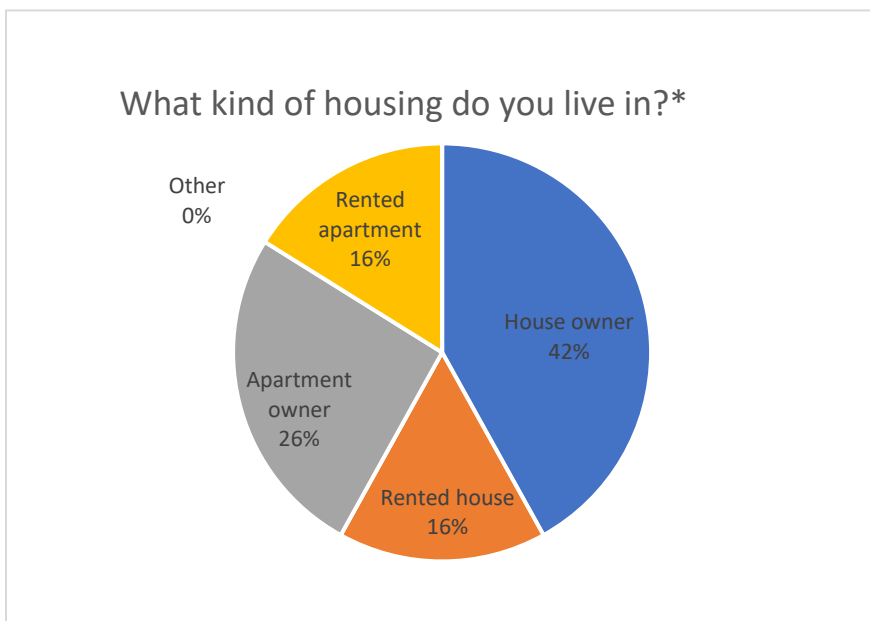
[31 answers – mandatory question]

Respondents living in owned housing as opposed to rented housing was 68% of the respondents. 42% lived in owned houses.

It is less than half of the respondents that live in a house in which they themselves can decide about the energy renovations.

This explains the relatively high proportion of the respondents that did not answer questions about renovation and investment in installations of renewable energy production (prosuming).

However, it also provides a frame for interpretation – if for example 2/3 of the respondents reflect a need for policies on help for investments, then it covers a very high proportion of those respondent that could make use of such help.



3.2. RULES AND REGULATIONS

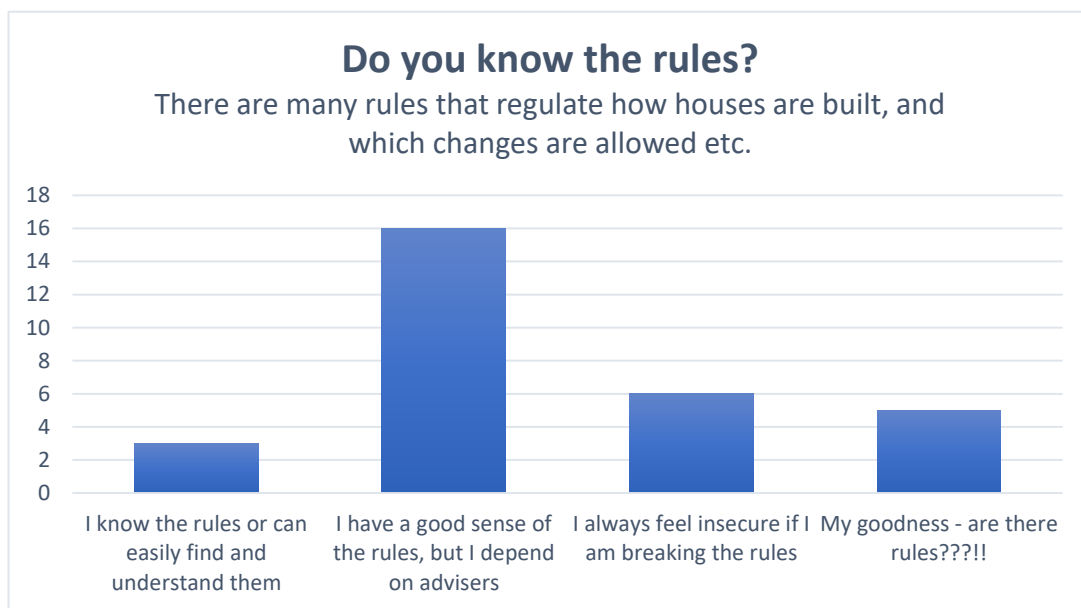
The session about this theme included two questions – one about knowledge on relevant rules and regulation, and one about how problematic rules have been experienced by the respondents.

The overall conclusions are that there are indications that 1/3 of the consumers feel insecure about the rules surrounding the change of energy related behaviour for households. When confronted with the rules 1/3 indicates that these rules became barriers or annoyances in the process.

The set of rules across Europe is so diverse that it did not make sense to try to identify the specific rules that citizens had problems with. But the results indicate that it is important to review rules for how easily citizens can get information about them and for how much friction these rules introduce in the process of changing energy consumption behaviour.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT RULES AND REGULATIONS

[30 answers, 1 ignored]



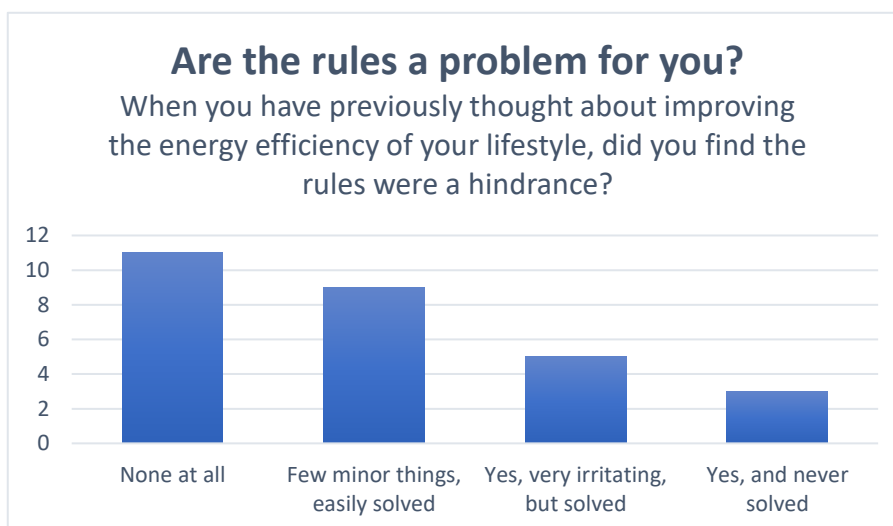
If the results about this question are representative for the general population, then there is a very big challenge of helping citizen get easy access to information about regulations and how to comply with them, and to ensure that citizens have easy access to affordable advisers (given that economy in the later questions is clearly pointed out as a major barrier for behaviour change).

Especially consumer with a more or less prominent problem of energy poverty are very much relying on their own ability to make the changes to the house/apartment, since they probably cannot afford to have it made by service providers. In this context it seems very important to provide concise guidelines for do-it-yourself consumers, which are in line with existing regulations.

PROBLEM ARISING FROM RULES AND REGULATIONS

[28 answers, 3 ignored]

The large majority of the respondents (90%) did not experience problems with regulations that could not be overcome. However, around 30% did experience annoyances that could stop these consumers in further energy related changes – either because they experienced very irritating problems or because such problems were never solved.



These are results that should certainly be considered, albeit the fact that there may have been a tendency for respondents to take this action, specifically if they had experienced such problems. So, the results must

not be regarded as representative, but they give an indication that finetuning of regulation and administrative practices is important, so that they on the one hand provide safe and correct handling of the energy transition for private households, but on the other hand do not themselves become barriers for that same energy transition.

3.3. ECONOMIC POLICY AND SUBSIDIES

In this session the respondents were asked three questions:

- 1) About their knowledge about grants and subsidies.
- 2) About if they themselves would be able to pay the needed investments.
- 3) If there are changes that the respondents would like to make but can't afford.

Together, the answers to these questions give a strong indication that there is a big need for policies that help citizens make the investments needed to gain the energy savings from renovation of private houses.

The results are not representative, but they match the composition of the respondent group, with house/apartment owners constituting 2/3, and with less resourceful countries dominating the respondent group. The results, thus, reflect the problems in these groups that are of high risk of not taking initiative to behaviour changes in the pace that the EU climate and energy policies demand.

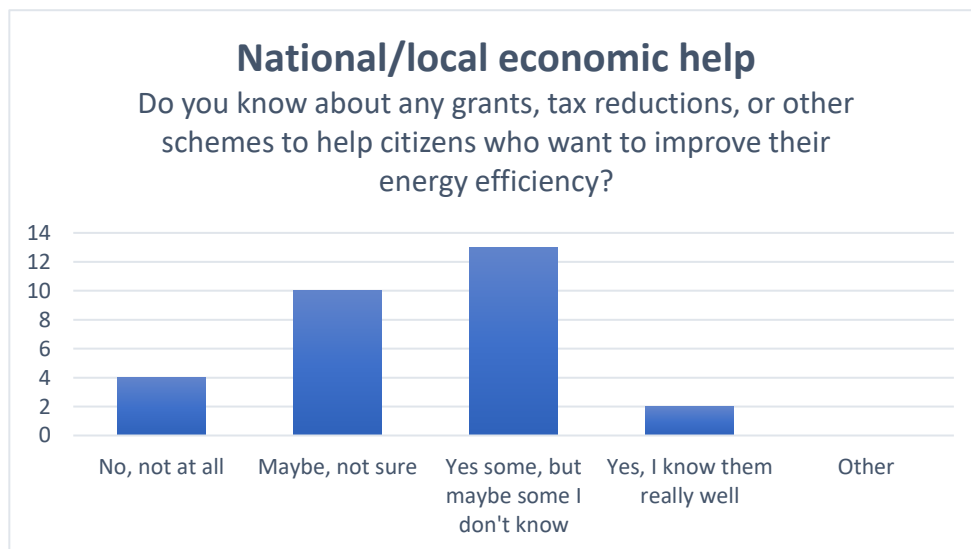
NATIONAL/LOCAL SUBSIDY SYSTEMS

[29 answers, 2 ignored]

The answers to the question about knowledge on different subsidy systems reflect high uncertainty about the existence of such systems and about the respondents' knowledge about them.

This, of course, constitutes a very concrete barrier to

those citizens that are motivated for changing behaviour but are not economically in a position to pay for the investments themselves.



ABILITY TO PAY FOR THE NEEDED INVESTMENTS

[24 answers, 7 ignored]

Only 4 out of the 24 respondents stated that they could pay for needed investments. Of the 20 that stated a need for economic support 13 stated that they would need support for nearly all improvements.

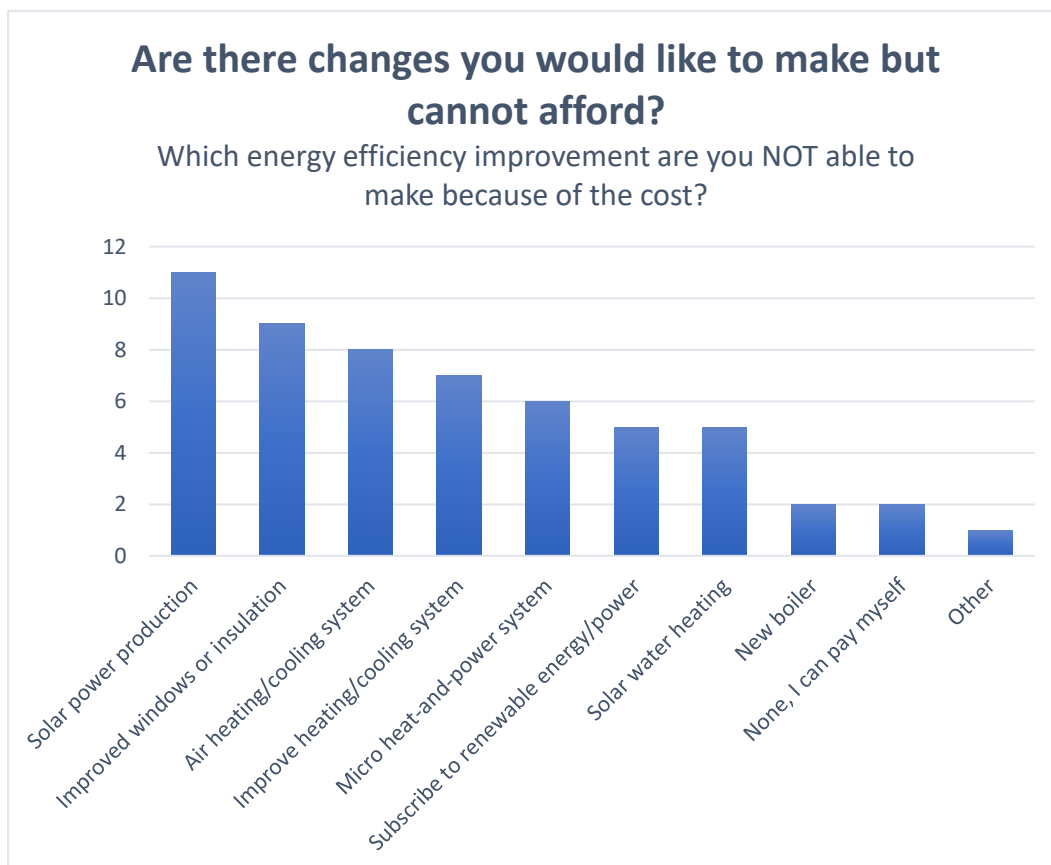
This result must be regarded as reflecting the composition of the respondent group, but maybe this even increases

the relevance of the results. It is very likely that citizens in the domination countries in this action represent the parts of the European population that probably will not be able to conform with the needed behaviour change if they do not receive some form of economic help.



INVESTMENTS THAT CONSUMERS CAN'T AFFORD

[56 multiple choice entries, 11 ignored the question]



20 respondents answered this question, which reasonably well translates into those respondents that own their own living place and thus are able to invest in improving it.

Out of the 20 respondents answering this question 11 of them (appr. the same number as all those 13 owning their own house) want to install photovoltaics but cannot afford it. 9 reports not to be able to invest in improved windows or insulation, which is a very serious message if it reflects the situation in the countries represented in the respondent group.

In general, there is great interest in changing the heating/cooling system for air and water. Together with house insulation this is the very big energy consumers in a house, so it reflects that the consumers know what they ought to focus on.

Relatively speaking it seems that “Subscribe to renewable energy/power” is not seen as a major obstacle based on economy (chosen by 1/4th of respondents), which is a signal that the price differences between sustainable and fossil-based energy in itself is not regarded as a serious barrier to the majority of consumers, even with the seen geographic composition of the respondents.

3.4. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION POLICIES

The session about “Knowledge” asked three questions:

- Most important public information?
- What is it important to receive knowledge about?
- Which information sources are the most important?

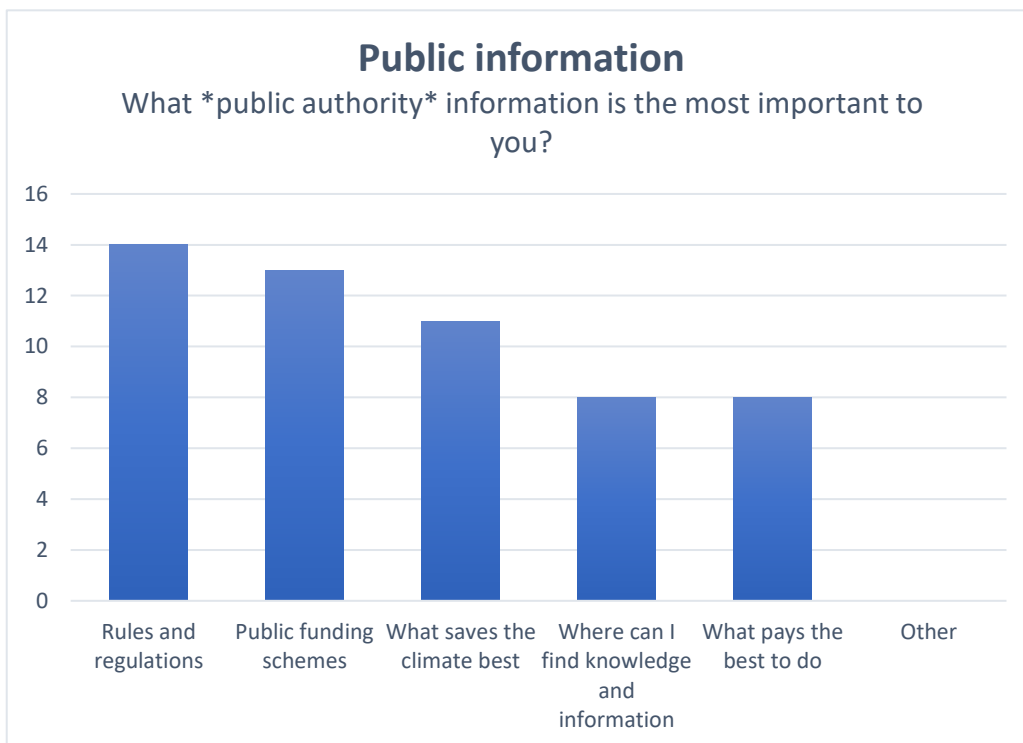
In combination these three questions provide insight into the role of the public sector in providing knowledge, what this knowledge should be about and which gateways should be used for the knowledge distribution.

Together this lays the foundation for considerations about public investments in distribution of knowledge/know-how to the populations in order to support self-initiated change of behaviour.

WHAT SHOULD PUBLIC INFORMATION FOCUS ON?

[54 multiple choice entries - 6 ignored]

It is not surprising that the most chosen option is the *information duty* that the public sector has concerning provision of understandable and easily accessible information about rules and regulations. However, as described earlier in this report, many



respondents do feel very uncertain about if they are well informed and have access to the needed information concerning rules and regulations. So, there is still improvements to make in this area.

Nor is it surprising that “Public funding schemes” comes in at second place with half of the respondents choosing this option. As seen from the other questions, economy is seen as the biggest barrier for transition, so not missing the chance of receiving subsidies is of course important for the respondents.

But it is interesting that the solidarity of contributing to climate crisis mitigation comes in valued higher than the economic pay-back, which shows that a quite high proportion of the respondents see economy as a barrier, but not as an important motivator – climate crisis constitutes a more motivating factor.

WHICH KNOWLEDGE IS NEEDED?

[23 answers, 8 ignored]

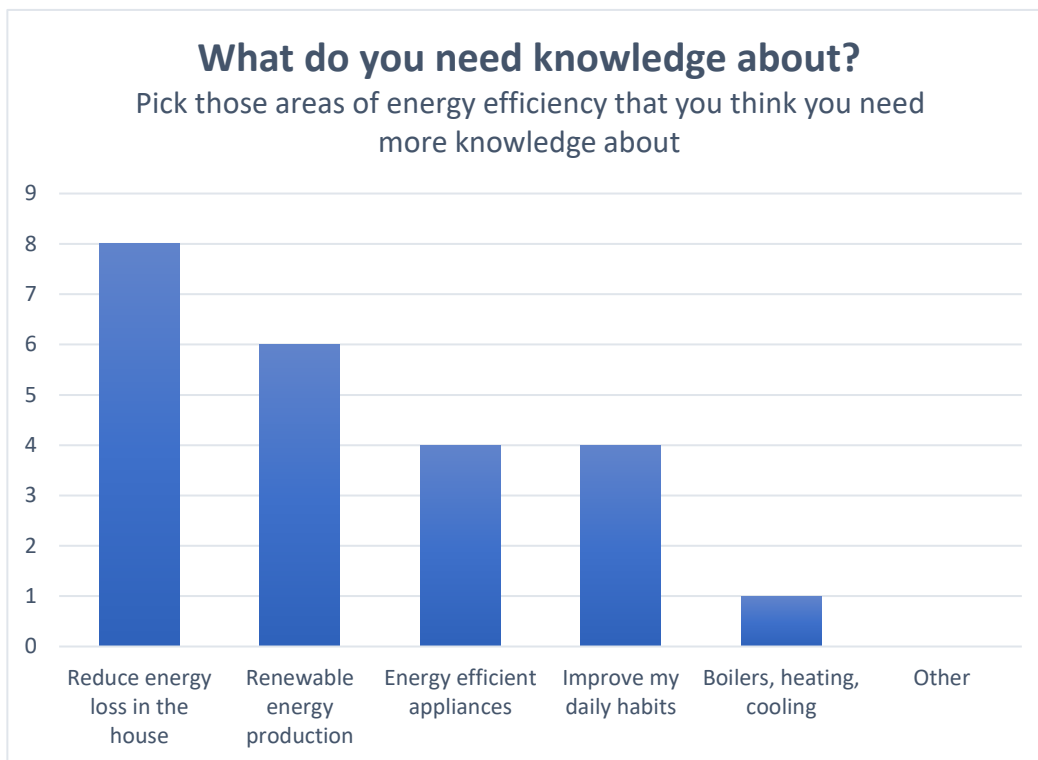
The users of the platform were asked how many times they had used the platform to complete the available actions.

P25 - HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU USED ACT4ECO TO COMPLETE LEARNING ACTIONS?

[46 answers, 16 ignored]

The results seem to reflect an understanding about the a combination of importance and ease of success of the suggested options for action.

Energy loss from houses is by far the most important initiative in terms of energy savings.



For many, prosuming is a relatively easy action to initiate, but of course also a large investment and thus important to gain knowledge about.

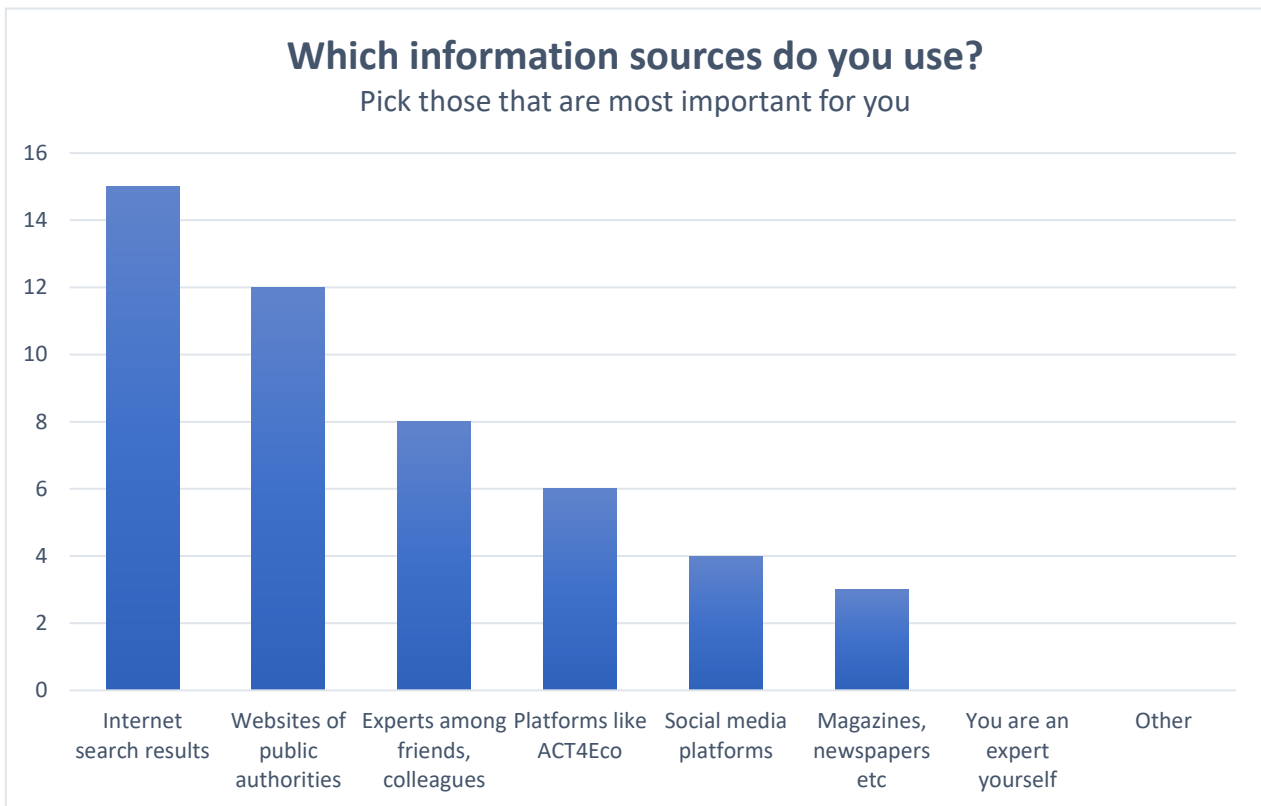
For those not having the option of changing the house, appliances and daily habits are the main options that they can act on.

Only receiving 1 vote, change of boilers, heating and cooling comes in at a last place, which may reflect that this is seen as standard household maintenance, which for most households are being taken care of by service providers, that provide information and advice as well. However, this is the onlyt answer which does not really reflect the importance of the action, since hot water and heating/cooling make up the second largest energy consumer in most households.

Evaluating these answers vis-à-vis the information that ACT4ECO provides a nearby conclusion must be that ACT4ECO provides information about all the issues that the respondents call for, and that the lack of supplementary asks for knowledge through th “Other” option reflects that the five other topics covers the needs of the respondents. This observation is consistent with the results of the ACT4ECO evaluation survey, in which the content of ACT4ECO was deemed satisfactory. A cautious conclusion could be that platforms such as ACT4ECO could play an important role in the public communication strategies, if the public authorities decided to make use of it and directed the citizens to such platforms.

THE USE OF INFORMATION SOURCES

[48 multiple choice entries, 9 ignored]



22 respondents answered this question. The distribution of multiple-choice selections seems to reflect three points for further consideration:

- 1) Despite the very large amount of non-validated and often erroneous information to be found on the internet the respondents have internet searches as their main information source. This may reflect that most authorised and trusted information sources do not cover the whole array of topics that consumers need knowledge about, so consumers are more or less forced to make use of the internet.
- 2) This first point is supported by the fact that on the 2-4th place comes what could be termed as “trusted sources”. These may be of very high value to consumers, but probably cannot cover the whole need for knowledge – especially if knowledge is sought on the whole field of sustainability issues – not only on energy renovation and habits in households.
- 3) Social media and traditional media both score low as sources of knowledge. These media are strong on provision of attendance to contemporary news and opinions, but weak when it comes to provision of a constant and reliable stream of knowledge.

In combination these three observations call for development of policies for provision of constant access to reliable, validated know-how. Platforms like ACT4ECO can play a role in such policies, as can local advisors, public library platforms and other mechanisms that can be trusted and together can cover the whole of the need for know-how.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The findings of task 8.3 “Policy development action” described in this report will be provided for use in the second EU policy seminar of Task 8.4 in August 2021 to facilitate co-creation of policy options that answers the identified challenges. This is a consequence of the COVID-19 adaptation of the planned work, mostly connected to the fact that the planned ECO2 Groups have been impossible to implement.

However, the Policy Action has, despite the low number of respondents, provided a needed insight into some important barriers for especially European countries that face energy poverty challenges for their populations. In the light of the quite clear differences across Europe regarding the ability of nations to cope with the high demands for effective climate related policies, such insights are highly relevant and can form a basis for new policies that more efficiently take care of the need for know-how and learning among the populations that makes them able to change behaviour and transform their households towards becoming energy and climate compliant.

The Policy Action has, together with the evaluation of ACT4ECO executed by task 7.3, in addition provided documentation of the need for platforms such as ACT4ECO. Such platforms cannot solve all issues and will not be attractive to all consumers, but they play a very important role by providing trustworthy, non-commercial, easily accessible, constant and highly relevant knowledge for consumers and classes/groups of citizens.