



EⁿR session 2 at BEHAVE conference

“The road to net zero: what can energy agencies learn from behavioural science?”

Date: 22nd April 2021

Time: 10.30-12.00 CET

Policy context and motivation

In light of the European Commission's plans to introduce the European Green Deal and a new target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, there has been a lot of discussion on how Europe can reach this historical milestone. Aside from the huge effort required on the part of governments and industry, all sectors of society will have a big role in the transition to climate-neutrality, including citizens.

The scale of the challenge cannot be underestimated and will require a sharp shift in how we, as energy users, view ourselves in this transition. If we are to meet the net-zero goal by 2050, energy users must shift from being passive consumers of energy, to being actively engaged with how we use energy and how it is produced.

People will need to become aware of the important role they will play in achieving net-zero and the need for this transition. Therefore, information and education about the steps needed to tackle climate change and the role our energy use has in this is crucial. This is so everyone understands why we need to make big changes in our energy system and get their buy-in. Energy agencies can play an important role in awareness raising and educating the public, so that these big changes are understood and accepted by citizens.

Energy agencies and social science

[European Energy Network \(EⁿR\)](#) is a voluntary network numbering 25 European energy agencies, with responsibility for the planning, management or review of national research, development, demonstration or dissemination programmes in the fields of energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate change abatement.

Energy agencies are already key players in engaging and supporting citizens in their countries on energy issues, and their role will be even more important during the energy transition. There will be a need for education and awareness raising to encourage buy-in, advice and information to encourage greener energy choices, as well as behaviour change programmes to encourage more sustainable habits.

Within this area, there is much that energy agencies can learn from behavioural and social sciences, to strengthen the work they do. However, there is a need for a more joined-up approach, so that energy agency programmes are as effective as they can be.

Session objectives

This [special session](#) will aim to:

- Bring together energy agencies and leading social scientists / networks
- Initiate a discussion between social scientists, policy makers and EⁿR members (energy agencies) with a view to continue the collaboration within the [EnR Behaviour Change Working Group](#)
- Discuss the insights that can be gained from behavioural science into energy policy making

Session programme

10.30-11.00 Introductory plenary (Chair – Antoinet Smits, RVO)

- 10.30-10.35 – Welcome speech (Antoinet Smits, RVO)
- 10.35-10.40 – WG Behaviour change presentation (Irmeli Mikkonen, Motiva)
- 10.40-10.50 – Opening of the session (Sea Rotmann, SEA)
- 10.50-11.00 – Pitch presentations from social scientists to introduce break-out sessions (3 min/each)
 1. Behavioural insights: Gerdien de Vries
 2. Sufficiency: Edouard Toulouse
 3. Vulnerable target groups: Sea Rotmann

11.00-11.40 – Break-out groups

1. Behavioural insights into energy policy making

Leader, social science side: Gerdien de Vries, TU Delft

Leader from EⁿR side: Rebecca van Leeuwen-Jones, RVO

Using psychology and behavioural insights in designing energy efficiency policies can contribute to their long-term success, however until now these insights have not been widely used in policy making in this sector. In this session we will present and discuss the psychological factors that influence behaviour and what needs to be taken into account when designing energy behaviour change programmes.

2. Energy sufficiency; the implications for attitudes and values

Leader, social science side: Edouard Toulouse, ENOUGH network

Leader from EⁿR side: Didier Bosseboeuf, ADEME

- “Activities of energy agency on energy sufficiency. The case of France” – Eric Vidalenc, ADEME
- “Sufficiency: infrastructure to support change” – Joanne Wade, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at Imperial College London

This session is dedicated to the concept of energy sufficiency. It is rather accepted that technological options and related policies on energy efficiency and climate in general will not be enough to reach the long-term objective of zero-carbon economy. Therefore, countries should also embark on sufficiency, a step beyond energy efficiency, which leads to adopt profound changes in behaviour and values. In this session, we will discuss the status of implementation of sufficiency concept both from an academic point of view and from a public authority point of view, such as an ecological transition agency.

3. Engaging with vulnerable target groups

Leader, social science side: Sea Rotmann, SEA - Sustainable Energy Advice Ltd

Leader from EnR side: Adrianna Threpsiadi, Energy Saving Trust

The life circumstances of some energy consumers make it difficult for them to access the benefits of energy efficiency. To help them overcome the barriers to getting support, it's important for energy agencies to define and disaggregate this part of the population. In this session, we will discuss some of the many terms used to describe vulnerable energy consumers; who might fall into each of these groups; and the implications for designing interventions.

11.40-12.00 – Closing plenary

- 11.40-11.55 - Conclusions from the breakout sessions (5 min/speaker)
- 11.55-12.00 - Closing remarks (Antoinet Smits)