



Response to National Energy Consultation October 2018

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for to opportunity to comment on possible policy measures that could be implemented to support Ireland's security of supply framework.

As energy social scientists researching energy demand at the household and community level – we are responding primarily to Question 7 in the consultation document 'What measures should be considered on the demand side to support security of supply of electricity and gas?' The following policy advice in relation to energy savings is based on the outputs of the recently concluded European ENERGISE project (see: <http://www.energise-project.eu/>) which was led by University of Galway from 2017-2020:

1. **Focus on changing practices, not individual people or technologies.**

It has been shown that more efficient technology is not enough in itself to maximise energy savings. People need to be engaged and empowered to use this technology, and even more so, to challenge and adapt their existing energy use practices. For example, you can try out new eco-settings on your washing machine, measure your energy use using low-cost meters, wash spots and stains rather than the whole clothing item, put on extra layers or use blankets instead of turning up the thermostat and heat individual rooms rather than entire dwellings.

2. **Give people the space and means for experimentation.**

Creating opportunities to reflect, and inviting actors (e.g., households, experts, energy companies and policy makers) to discuss norms and standards around energy use can be very effective in challenging tacitly accepted assumptions around consumption practices. When people think about, and reflect on, their energy use, they can develop novel ways of saving energy that works for them.

3. **Place people and everyday practices at the centre of 'smart technology' approaches.**

Different people prefer different temperatures, and there is no one-size-fits-all 'ideal'. We must ensure that people can continue to have an influence on their thermal comfort, rather than counting on smart buildings or invisible heating systems that allow only limited human interventions. Similarly, washing machines and other household appliances need to be designed in a way to allow for transparency of energy and water use in programmes, and to allow users to navigate easily between them.

Overall, a key point when reflecting on this entire consultation document is the dominance of technical solutions within the discussion. Even the demand-side response section (p. 46) is ultimately about technical solutions (especially batteries).

There also appears to be very little connection to community-based / micro-generation of RE (this was just implemented this year: <https://www.seai.ie/news-and-media/micro-generation-support/>). Of course, the document is mainly about short-term demand and supply side risks and reactions to them, for which especially renewables for dispatchable generation are suitable (PV and wind are non-dispatchable). We feel that there should be room in this discussion on the potential of decentralised, community / household-based configurations that might integrate renewables, energy efficiency and sufficiency - and are also a way to start localised discussions about energy.

Kind regards,

██████████ and ██████████

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NOTE ON REFERENCES - a number of open access high ranked peer reviewed published publications are available to support this consultation response:

- Fahy, F., Goggins, G. and Jenson, C.L. (Eds.). (2019) *Energy demand challenges in Europe: implications for policy, planning and practice* London: Palgrave.
- Goggins, G., Rau, H., Moran, P. Fahy, F. and Goggins, J. (2022) The role of culture in advancing sustainable energy policy and practice, *Energy Policy*, Vol. 167, 113055 (Journal impact factor: 6.1)
- Matschoss, K., Fahy, F., Rau, H., et al. (2021) 'Challenging practices: experiences from community and individual living lab approaches'. *Sustainability, Science and Policy*, 17 (1):136-152.
- Sahakian, M., Rau, H., .. and Fahy F. (2021) 'Challenging social norms to recraft practices: A Living Lab approach to reducing household energy use in eight European countries'. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 72 (1) 101881.

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