

DELIBERATION MEETING (FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION)

As per D3.5, household visits (ELL1) and group discussions (ELL2) are designed as ruptures, i.e., part of the active phase of the ELLs. They also serve to co-create knowledge about household practices.

This tool pertains to the focus group discussions to be organised for the ELL2 (community ELL)¹. The focus group discussion is designed to last 2-2½ hours. The results are to be summarised in the summary template which will be provided by UNIGE.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

The objectives of the focus group discussions are to

- Gain knowledge on existing practices, reflecting on different dimensions of laundry and heating practices: habits and routines, skills and competences, and (time allowing) material dimensions.
- Deliberate together on social norms around heating and washing clothes, in a participative discussion.
- Agree on challenges that the households will commit to, and next steps.
- Support the development of community spirit around the ELL2 and facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences among the group

The aim is not to conduct a serial interview, but rather start a discussion on the topics outlined below. Thus, the analysis will focus on issues where participants agree or have contrasting views, rather than on recording each participants' specific routines. We do want to hear from everyone, but not necessarily on every individual item.

2. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING THE FOCUS GROUP

Ideally, a focus group discussion involves about 6-8 persons from the ELL2 households sitting around a table, with two members of the research team serving one as moderator and the other as note-taker.

Since your ELL2 includes 20 households, you could organise the focus group discussion in the following way if you have sufficient human resources:

1. Invite all households to a common deliberation meeting. Make sure you offer something nice to eat and drink.
2. Present the introduction to the study (part A below) to all as a group, and the challenge to all as a group (part D below).
3. Divide the group into 3 smaller groups, with 6-8 persons in each (each group should have its own table and seats for everyone, preferably not too close to the other groups, as well as its own moderator and note-taker (**NB: with 3 groups, this requires 6 team members, plus perhaps someone to keep time and monitor progress**)).
4. Conduct the focus group discussions for parts B-C below.

¹ We use the term "focus group discussions" rather "focus group interviews." The choice of term reflects our emphasis on the active role of participants as knowledge-producers, and the importance of group interaction in creating knowledge (see Boddy, 2005). A focus group discussion in qualitative research usually entails a group of 4-12 people brought together to participate in the discussion of an area of interest (Boddy 2005). Trained moderators run the discussions, and records are made of the course of the discussions. Focus group discussions are used to create research data by generating social interaction. This is done by assembling a group of participants to discuss a topic and then observe how the ensuing discussion evolves (Boddy 2005). Interaction also allows participants to pose questions to each other and to redefine their own views as the discussion evolves (see Heiskanen et al. 2008). So the idea is not to conduct a serial interview asking each participant in turn, but rather to introduce a sequence of discussion topics and allow the discussion to flow freely, with guidance only when needed.



5. After step C you could organise for the groups to meet again. Since they might not finish at the exact same time, make sure there are e.g. seconds of food and drink and something to keep people interested while they are waiting.
6. Step D below involves setting targets. Since these are perhaps not the same for all participants, you might want to provide each participant with a challenge card where they write their target (common or other, see below). It is optional whether to enforce a common target or allow participants to set their own, but the ENERGISe common target must always be presented as our common goal and first option.
7. The plenary session then could involve the moderators giving a short (1-3 min.) summary of what was discussed, and one of the organisers telling about the next steps.

If it turns out to be impossible to get all 20 participants together at the same time, consider the following options:

- You may need to split up the ELL2 participants into several smaller groups for separate focus group discussions (this may be the case also due to human resource constraints). In that case, you could perhaps organise a separate more informal ELL2 event to make sure that as many participants have the chance to get to know each other in order to reinforce the community aspect and exchange ideas informally.
- If some participants are still not able to attend, organize to interview them individually (or as a small group). Please remember to at least try to invite these participants to the next focus group discussion (December) so they feel they are part of the group.
- In any case, make sure that all participants are involved in social media and other exchanges taking place through the course of the event. If possible, try to actively draw them in.

Tips for scheduling the meeting:

- Try to suggest times that are likely to be suitable for most participants (probably evenings) and a location that people know and feel comfortable in (community meeting centre, clubroom, restaurant private room).
- Discuss appropriate days of the week and times at the first meeting with households, when setting up the meters.
- Consider using a Doodle to find times that are suitable for as many people as possible (if everyone has access to email and is familiar with Doodle)
- Book the space for at least 60 minutes before and 30 minutes after the start and end times of the discussion (i.e., total booking should be for 4 hours).
- When sending out invitations, remind people to bring their laundry diaries and write down their meter readings before they come to the meeting. Or organize a separate collection of these data (questionnaire, phone/visit people who could not attend).
- Checklist for supplies for the focus group discussion
 - ✓ Name cards (pre-printed, or blank cards & markers to write everyone's names)
 - ✓ List of expected participants to check if everyone has shown up (could be a summary table where you can also record any meter readings and laundry diary photos received) - register that people sign
 - ✓ Printouts of this ELL2 Deliberation Tool (one for each moderator)
 - ✓ Visual materials (photo elicitation tools) to be used in the discussion (one set for each moderator, neatly printed out). You may develop your own on the basis of the general guidelines.
 - ✓ ELL Toolkits to hand out to participants with appropriate tags ("laundry challenge"/"heating challenge") + one extra one to show during the discussion
 - ✓ Recording materials (notepads, digital recorders): one set for each moderator
 - ✓ Food and drinks for all. Tablecloths on the tables can help to absorb some of the extra noise from dishes and cutlery.
 - ✓ Separate tables for each discussion group (about 2-3 tables, placed as far from each other as possible to facilitate recording).
 - ✓ ENERGISe roll-up (it's also useful as it helps show that the project is happening all over Europe)
 - ✓ ENERGISe challenge kits

- ✓ Stationary supplies: pens, flipchart paper, etc.
- ✓ Cameras to take photos of the meetings

3. GUIDELINES FOR MODERATING THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

Before the focus groups:

- Familiarize yourself with the recruitment and benchmarking survey responses for the participating households (at least on a general level).
- Familiarize yourself with the focus group discussion guide and the different visual tools you plan to use. The group discussion will be efficient only if you are very familiar with the guide and questions, and if you manage to steer the discussion along in the allotted amount of time (see suggestions for how much time to allocate per section).
- Remember to bring with you everything you need (see checklist above)
- Consider photographing the diaries when people check in, at the latest when they check out.

Establishing relations of trust and empathy:

- Be neither judgmental nor intrusive:
 - There is no right or wrong answer
 - All viewpoints are welcome and people do not have to agree with each other
 - Tread carefully: energy can be an intimate affair, when related to hygiene for example
 - You are not an expert here to impart a lesson, but here to listen and understand; empathy as a research posture
- Show respect for the discussants' time, space, etc.
- Balance politeness and informality.

Tips for the focus group discussion process

- Know your questions. Try not to be overly reliant on the discussion guide.
- Be aware in advance of the topics you want to cover before meeting your participant, as well as the key message; be very familiar with how questions are organized topically; prepare any support materials (photo elicitation tools).
- Avoid locking the interview into rigid sequences of topics or questions. Rather, use the discussion guide as a checklist to check if each topic has been discussed.
- Keep in mind that WP5 is interested in direct citations: if the interviewee has a particularly interesting comment of insight, make a note of this and record the time when it was voiced if possible (to facilitate finding the verbatim citation in your recording).
- Make note of any major agreements or disagreements, points of particular interest, etc.

Starting the focus group:

- Welcome participants warmly and thank them for being there.
- Explain the study: see key messages below.
- Explain that the focus group interview will take approximately two hours. Give a very brief overview of the overall topics to be covered (this will help in keeping the time).

- Explain the format. An informal discussion, with no right or wrong answers. Explain that the aim is not to reach consensus, but to find as many new viewpoints as possible: “Everyone’s contribution is important”.
- Explain that you will discuss the challenges at the end, and brainstorm fun ways to achieve the goals.
- Ask permission to record the interview and to take pictures; ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Before the group discussions:

Each moderator should spend few minutes of open chat at the beginning of the discussions:

- Plan your first sentence so you can focus immediately on putting the participants at ease.
- Tell the respondents what the study is about in more detail than at the first visit.
- Inform them of their rights (to not answer, to leave the ELL), and make sure you have their consent to be recorded
- Explain that they can choose not respond to any question if they don’t want to.
- Explain again that all data will be rendered anonymous and will not be shared outside the research team.
- Explain that for more technical questions about saving energy in the home, an energy expert can be made available to visit them.

Starting the discussion

- You might ask people to write their names on a folded piece of cardboard so you and they can easily see everyone’s name. Or you can consider having name cards prepared and ready on the tables, then everyone can find their place and keep the card in front of them.
- Start with a round of introductions. Each person could be asked to tell one fun thing, like “why I love/hate doing the laundry”.

During the discussion:

- Make sure everyone gets to speak. Draw in the silent people by asking them their opinion. Or: “does someone do this differently/have a different experience?” You can usually refocus the discussion by avoiding looking at the most talkative person. Or you can address your next question explicitly to someone who hasn’t been speaking so much. If nothing else helps, you can just say: “It is important that we hear from everyone, so let’s give the word now to X”.
- Bring people back to a topic smoothly (“Let’s come back to the question of laundry...”)
- Defuse debates by saying: “It is very good to have different viewpoints: we have made a note of everything you said.” And then move on to the next topic.
- Avoid hijacking the interview by talking too much or being directive
- Avoid anticipating answers or interrupting the flow of the narration
- Taking notes during the interview is useful (failure of the recording device, loss of data, reminder to look for a direct quote, noting a future question, etc.), but should not be overly distracting

After the discussion:

A big “thank you” for their time! But your work is not over yet:

- Take photographs or copies of the weekly diary (if not done before); record thermometer and power meter readings. (Prepare a table for this beforehand).
- Let them know what’s coming next (ELLS and next interviews / focus groups), agree on next steps.
- Take notes immediately after / complete the researcher feedback form (currently under development); Note down any key statements that should be translated as a quote from respondent.
- Note down any misunderstandings, highly positive feelings, negative emotions, moments of agreement or disagreement, confusion or need for further clarification, etc.
- Note any facial expressions or other body movements (comfort, discomfort) that say something about the interview
- What was not said can be as important as what was said

4. USE OF VISUAL TOOLS (not repeated here, see ELL1 guide)

Please see the Annex for suggested visuals and related themes (same as ELL1).

5. FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

The following themes are detailed in the guide below.

A. Introduce the study	B. Laundry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habits and routines - Material dimension - Competencies - Related practices - Social norms 	C. Indoor comfort <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Habits and routines - Material dimension - Competencies - Related practices - Social norms 	D. Introduce the challenge, co-designing the process
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A. INTRODUCING THE STUDY (15 minutes) (collectively with all if you have all 20 HHs assembled)

Thank you for participating in our European project ENERGISE, which in total involves 320 households in 8 European countries. We already reviewed the surveys you completed. The focus of today is to discuss everyday life, how much of what we do is tied up with social norms and habits, and that changing these habits can be a challenge. We propose to discuss these challenges together at the end of the discussion.

Key message: Reducing energy is important, but it's hard to change routines and habits.

- Energy consumption is an important theme at the moment: countries around the world (including this country) are trying to find ways to a) encourage more renewable sources of energy, to reduce negative environmental impacts such as local and global pollution (climate change), and b) render energy consumption more efficient.
- Our research project takes as a starting point the idea that energy relates to many different household activities, such as indoor heating and clothes washing. We want to challenge people to think about how they can feel comfortable and clean, while using less energy.
- That is the challenge we want to work on with you over the next few weeks! Findings ways to reduce energy used for indoor comfort and cleaning clothes.

B. LAUNDRY (30 minutes, in smaller groups of 6-8)

Let's start by talking about laundry practices.

Habits and routines: In our recruitment survey and first visit to your home (benchmarking survey), we learned a bit about your routines around washing and drying clothes. mNow we could share some of our thoughts on washing routines with each other:

- When do you wash: How do you determine what is clean and what needs to be washed?
- Do you remember any change in your laundry practices from the past (e.g. compared to your childhood home?)

Skills and competencies:

- Who does most of the laundry in the home, and how is it done?
- Does anyone have strategies for keeping clothes clean and tidy, instead of washing them (e.g., airing out clothes, wearing aprons for cooking, removing stains, etc.)?

Material dimension of laundry (if there is time):

- Where is the laundry and drying machine? Do you have space to hang clothes to dry?
- Does anyone have strategies for saving energy (full loads, washing cold, “eco button”?)

C. INDOOR COMFORT (30 minutes, in smaller groups of 6-8))

Let’s turn now to indoor heating and what it means to be comfortable in the home.

Habits and routines: In our recruitment survey and first visit to your home (benchmarking survey), you told us about routines you engage in relation to heating. Let’s share some thoughts on this:

- Can you tell me more about how you regulate indoor temperatures? (Additional prompting questions, if needed: What heating adjustments were made, when and how in relation to different occasions: being home/not being home (not using a room), receiving guests, sleeping).

Skills and competencies:

- Does anyone have other ways of keeping warm in the house do you engage with, without turning up the heat? (heating spaces, heating people with warm clothes, slippers, blankets, warm foods, moving around...and relating this to different occasions).

Material dimension of heating:

- Is it easy to adjust the temperature in your homes?
- Are you satisfied with your indoor temperature? Are there areas of the home or times when your home feels cooler or warmer?
- Do you regularly open your windows, for sleeping, airing out, etc.? and why?

D. INTRODUCING THE CHALLENGE, CO DESIGNING THE PROCESS (45 minutes, collectively with all participants)**Discussion points around the co-design process:**

- We have had a good discussion on how people engage in doing the laundry and how they manage their indoor comfort. We have found that people do this quite differently. Some people have clever ways to keep clean and warm with less energy, such as [group moderators very briefly report some interesting practices from their tables]. Now, we are going to discuss our challenge.
- You are participating in a Living Lab and we wanted to take time today to discuss how we might work together to reduce indoor temperatures and laundry cycles, shall we start talking about the challenges we might experiment with?
- We designed these Living Labs based on research among over 1,000 initiatives in Europe that focus on energy consumption in the home, and brainstorm with our different partners.

- There are two challenges we want to engage you in: one for laundry and one for heating. In both cases, we are challenging social norms around what it means to be comfortable indoors and feel clean. Let's start with laundry, shall we?
- The idea of the challenge is that it should somehow take you outside of your comfort zone:
 - **Laundry:** doing half of the number of cycles from what was done before, reducing temperature for cycles, increasing loads; laundry is metered; idea is that drying will also be reduced, as a consequence
 - **Heating:** reduce to 18 degrees (shared living areas, one bedroom, if available, one children's room); one thermo-logger in the main shared room, thermometers in other rooms
 - *For those who are already at this level, learn from them.*

Social norms around cleanliness: washing less at lower temperatures.

- Visual 1: any advertisement that showcases sparkling white clothes, from your country.
- (Key message: washing is tied to norms around cleanliness and hygiene). Here is an advertisement that suggests that clothes should be sparkling clean. What do you think about this message? Prompt if needed: is it easy to have clean white shirts all the time? Is it important and on what occasions is it more important to have freshly washed clothes, for example any special occasions, for children, for the workplace, after sports or maybe all the time? Do you think it's an important issue for hygiene to have sparkling white clothes, what does it mean for our health to be washing all of the time?
- Visual 2: any image found online that represents a never-ending laundry load.
- (Key message: washing uses up energy, but also takes time). What do you think about the never-ending laundry piles? In some European countries, it takes an average of 1.5 hours per week to do the laundry, including sorting clothes before washing, folding them and putting them away after washing, and any ironing (excluding the time of the wash cycle). You save energy by washing less cycles (at lower temperatures), but you could also save time. What do you think about saving time from washing less, what could you do with that extra time?

Social norms around indoor comfort: lowering indoor temperatures / heating people instead of spaces.

- Visual 3: image of changing technologies and clothing; or any image of a home where people are wearing a t-shirt indoors on a winter day.
- (Key message: Heating standards have changed over time and could change in the future). Indoor temperatures vary across Europe, ranging from 15 degrees to 21 degrees in the winter months. This relates to changing technologies – many people no longer huddle around one fireplace, but have central heating – but there have also been changes in the type of clothing we wear indoors. Some people are able to wear a t-shirt indoors all year round. What do you think about that?
- Visual 4: image of people under a blanket or image of a roaring fireplace with nobody home.
- (Key message: Why not heat people, instead of homes/spaces). In the past and in parts of the world today, there is a tradition of heating people and smaller spaces, rather than entire homes and rooms. Take for example the Japanese tradition of heating a table area, or closer to home, moments shared on a couch under a warm blanket. There are many ways to keep people warm, but oftentimes we

heat entire homes – or heat rooms – which are not even being used. What do you think about that? Can you think of ways to heat people rather than spaces?

Introducing the challenges

- Let's talk about the challenges now: each challenge lasts six weeks, with one week of overlap. Laundry comes first, then heating. We will be communicating with you throughout and letting you know when the challenges begin and end. These two boxes or Challenge Kits correspond to the two challenges.
- Let's discuss the overall aims of the challenges:
 - **Laundry:** doing half of the number of cycles from what was done before, while reducing temperature for cycles, increasing loads (within the limits given by the washing machine manufacturer, and without buying more clothes or using more detergent); laundry is metered; idea is that drying will also be reduced, as a consequence. There could be some discussion on whether this applies to everyday clothes or bedding/towels; aim for half the cycles overall.
 - **Heating:** reduce to 18 degrees (shared living areas, one bedroom, if available and possible, one children's room); one thermo-logger in the main shared room, thermometers in other rooms.
- The idea with the challenge is to discover and share innovative ways of coping with this “exceptional situation”, which should take you out of your comfort zone. We want to learn from you, to understand what was difficult and in what way. Never mind if the challenge is not achieved; it's about doing your best and aiming towards reductions, and having fun along the way.

Hand out the Challenge Cards (available on EMDESK/WP4) to gain their commitment on the challenges.

- As much as possible, we would like people to check the first box (18 degrees and half the laundry cycles).
- For people who want to differ from the suggested challenges (checking the second box on the Challenge Cards):
 - For those who are already wash very little, see if and how they can reduce more; for those who already heat at 18 degrees, explain that we want to learn from them.
 - If people do not want to reduce their cycles by half, please ask why they have another challenge, and why it is a challenge for them.
 - For those who do not want reduce their temperature to 18 degrees, please ask why they have another challenge, and why it is a challenge for them?
 - Please emphasize that this needs to be a challenge; reducing by 1 degree if you are at 23 degrees is not necessarily a challenge: We recognize that people may not be able to achieve 18 degrees, due to heat from surrounding apartments; this is part of our learning! If they cut off all heating and are still at 20 degrees, this is part of the learning.

You may decide what you do with challenge cards.

- It probably makes sense to let people keep the cards.
- At a minimum, it might be good to ask/see how many have written their own challenge.
- You may consider asking people to put all cards on a table and photograph them all together, to get an overview (even though you might not then be able to connect the challenge to an individual household) and perhaps a more collective type of commitment. Or organize a group photo with the challenge cards.
- Or you may have participants organize for a photo each with their challenge card, in which case you have a record of who committed to what.

E. CLOSING DISCUSSION

A big “thank you” for their time! This is what will happen next (maybe use slides to communicate next steps):

- Let them know what’s coming next (ELLS and next interviews / focus groups), agree on next steps.
 - Now the challenge starts (show timeline, potentially handout A4 on next steps)
 - Four weeks focus on laundry challenge
 - Diary continues, small weekly surveys will be sent out
 - At the start of November, the heating challenge starts (we will remind you)
 - Diary continues, small weekly surveys will be sent out
 - A new focus group discussion will be organized at the start of December (maybe circulate a “Doodle” about suitable times?)
 - We will hear about your experiences
 - FB group etc. to share experiences
 - If you have any questions, you can always get in touch with us
- Hand out challenge kits!
- Take photographs or copies of the weekly diary; record thermometer and power meter readings. (Prepare a table for this beforehand).

Annex: Suggested visuals for photo elicitations

Visual 1: any advertisement that showcases sparkling white clothes, from your country.



Visual 2: any image found online that represents a never-ending laundry load.

Gender dimension made clear: use of humour as a prompt.



Gender neutral:



Gender neutral with use of cartoon for humour



The example below could be used, but you would need backup in case it's not understood (for example, one of the images above).



Visual 3: image of changing technologies and clothing; or any image of a home where people are wearing a t-shirt indoors on a winter day.



Image at home could be made by a graphic designer, to be more vague on questions of race and gender.



Visual 4: Image of a roaring fireplace with nobody home. Image of person under a blanket. Image of window open during winter.



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