
PRESS RELEASE

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Small changes in behaviour can have a big impact on the energy transition

In a new report, Sweco experts team up with scientists to reveal how individual efforts can make substantial contributions on a collective level. Decreasing European household temperatures by 1°C would save enough energy to provide electricity to a city the size of Amsterdam for 29 years.

“Collectively, we have more impact than one might think. On a European level, even small changes in behaviour will have a big impact. Several countries still rely on fossil fuels, which is why the less energy we use, the more emissions we save. A major effect can be achieved by turning down thermostats 1 degree,” says Lisette van der Kolk, Expert in Urban Planning and Built Environment at Sweco.

To accomplish the shift to a sustainable energy system we need to combine behaviour and technical measures.

“To motivate people, we must link change to their identities and provide them with social rewards and incentives for the behaviour that is expected,” concludes Catrin Finkenauer, professor at the University of Utrecht and scientific director of Dynamics of Youth.

When asked, the home energy savings measure people most commonly identify with is replacing lightbulbs with LEDs. But home lighting is not where the greatest impact can be made. Lighting, electrical appliances, cooking and air conditioning collectively account for only 20 per cent of final energy consumption.

At home, we use energy primarily for heating, which represents approximately two-thirds of our final energy consumption. When we add time spent showering and bathing, heating accounts for 80 percent of final energy consumption. Saving on energy (heating) is where many high impact measures in European homes start.

For more information about the energy transition and the measures that are most effective on an individual level, read “[Energy Transition: How Can You Contribute?](#)”.

Background

Urban Insight is based on a series of insight reports written by Sweco experts on various aspects of urban development from a citizen perspective. Read the report [here](#).

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