

1 Article

## 2 People-centred approach for ICT tools supporting 3 energy efficient and healthy behaviour in buildings

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10 **Abstract:** This paper attempts to alter a prevailing assumption that buildings use energy to an  
11 understanding that in fact, people use energy. Therefore, to successfully accelerate the transition to a  
12 low-carbon society and economy more emphasis should be on motivating people and increasing their  
13 awareness by making them energy conscious building users and therefore active players in the  
14 energy transition process. In this context, this paper provides insights from the Horizon 2020  
15 MOBISTYLE project. It demonstrates research and development approaches, highlights the main  
16 project objectives, and presents findings of an ethnographic (qualitative) study of users' habits,  
17 practices, and needs. The aim of the project is to motivate behavioural change by raising consumer  
18 awareness through the provision of attractive personalized information on user's energy use, indoor  
19 environment and health, all enabled by an integrated information and communication technology  
20 (ICT) service. In this context, the anthropological people-centred approach is integrated into the  
21 MOBISTYLE approach putting users at the centre of the ICT tools development process. The main  
22 quantitative objective of the project is a reduction of energy use for at least 16 % prompted by the  
23 provision of combined information and feedback systems on energy, indoor environmental quality  
24 (IEQ) and health. The most relevant motivational factors and key performance indicators (KPIs) for  
25 encouraging a more energy conscious and healthy lifestyle were defined by means of a people-  
26 centred approach, adopting anthropological inquiries in different settings. Information about users'  
27 lifestyles and their needs was collected in focus groups with potential users in five case studies,  
28 located in different European Union (EU) countries. Behaviour change is achieved through  
29 awareness campaigns, which encourage users to be pro-active about their energy consumption and  
30 to simultaneously improve health and well-being.

31 **Keywords:** Energy use, indoor environment, health, behaviour change, awareness campaign, people-  
32 centred approach.

### 33 1. Introduction

34 "Buildings represent 40 % of final energy consumption, offering the highest potential for  
35 efficiency improvement and savings on energy bills [1]." This is a commonly used explanation of  
36 European Union (EU) when arguing the necessity to increase the number of buildings energy  
37 retrofits. Consequently, stricter EU regulations are introducing energy labelling and encouraging the  
38 use of smart technologies and advanced control strategies.

39 People often find information from their utility bills, smart meters or energy performance  
40 certification (EPC) difficult to understand or credible [2]. Oftentimes, users' behaviours do not match  
41 the design intentions as users find building technologies difficult to control since these most often do  
42 not comply with their needs and their everyday habits [3–5]. A research conducted at Aalborg  
43 University analysed 230,000 detached homes building's energy labels and their actual energy  
44 consumption revealed that occupants in homes with less efficient energy labels (i.e. G) consumed less  
45 energy than predicted by the label [6]. However, occupants in homes with best energy labels (i.e. A)  
46 were using more than predicted. As discovered, the users dictate how much energy is actually  
47 consumed, while EU legislation dictates how much this amount should *technically* be. This result

48 shows there is a need to educate the users on how and why they are consuming energy since often  
49 they are not aware their behaviour results in wasteful energy usage.

50 The aim of the MOBISTYLE project is to increase the awareness of the users, change their habits  
51 and practices, and show that in fact, their energy usage is correlated to behavioural patterns adopted  
52 to achieve comfort at home and work, during their public and private life. The final scope of the  
53 MOBISTYLE is to offer attractive services for users and increase their understanding of what  
54 buildings and technologies can actually enable and what technology is capable of bringing to support  
55 healthy building and lifestyles [7].

56 Actually, the experiences from practice show that energy efficiency as such is not alone a  
57 sufficient motivating factor for all the users [8]. Therefore, a better understanding of the drivers of  
58 consumer acceptance and behaviour change in relation to energy efficiency should be developed.

## 59 2. Methodology

### 60 2.1 *People-centred approach in design and development of ICT tools*

61 In the MOBISTYLE project, the development of the ICT-based engagement platform and tools is  
62 supported by a people-centred approach, involving users as a necessary and knowledgeable  
63 stakeholder during the design and development processes [9,10]. Identification of user types  
64 (consumers) and observation of their everyday lifestyle is a prerequisite in such approach in order to  
65 understand their needs. In the first phase, the MOBISTYLE project is focusing on an anthropological  
66 observation of users, scrutinizing their level of engagement with building components, technology,  
67 energy systems and ICT tools in their everyday life.

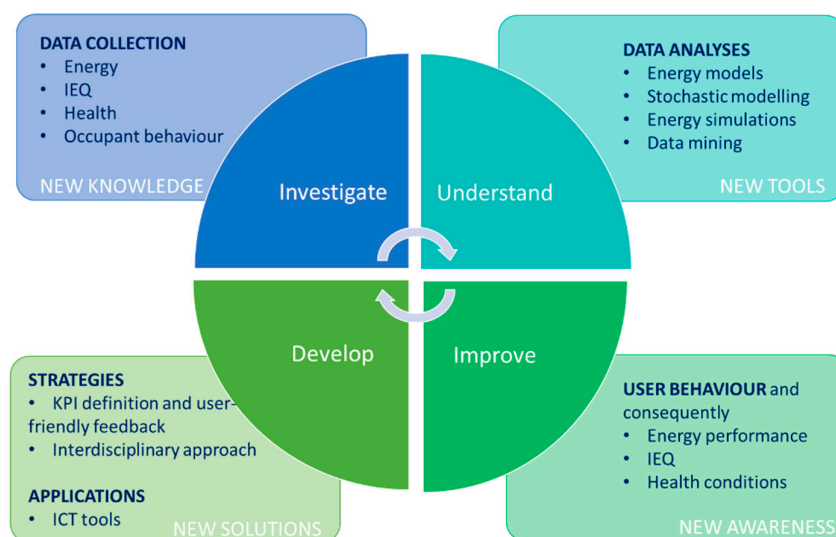
68 Through different qualitative inquiries (including focus groups, interviews, and participant  
69 observation) people habits are investigated to discover their current practices, use of existing  
70 technologies, as well to investigate key factors that would trigger them to change their behaviour.  
71 The anthropological approach enables to access 'thick data', as an in-depth understanding of human  
72 behaviour, able to penetrate beyond the quantified behaviour of 'big data' collected via technological  
73 solutions [11,12]. This understanding defines requirements for developing the ICT tools in order to  
74 provide user-friendly and attractive services.

75 Through anthropological observations, it is possible to understand not only *how* and *when* people  
76 consume energy, but *why* do they actually do it. This additional layer of personal information opens  
77 opportunities to understand and educate users at the individual level, increasing their awareness of  
78 how and when their daily habits have an effect on energy consumption. One of the most promising  
79 outcomes of this methodology is the shift in perception from passive building occupants to pro-active  
80 users, who become co-creators of their surrounding environment.

### 81 82 2.2 *From raw data to data-knowledge for different users groups*

83 After segmentation of users into different groups (having certain common needs, behaviour  
84 patterns, and lifestyles) the methodological framework was developed. This is based on the key  
85 concept that occupant behaviour is a complex process, which cannot be assessed only by a single field  
86 of science [13]. In the MOBISTYLE methodology, a multidimensional systematic approach analyses  
87 the interaction between buildings, users, and energy; therefore bringing together different fields:  
88 energy and building physics, health science, anthropology, social psychology, and computer science.  
89 Figure 1 shows the four main areas developed in the MOBISTYLE methodology.

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94 **Figure 1.** The four areas of the developed MOBISTYLE methodology. Adapted from [14].

95 The four areas shown in Figure 1 are:

96 1. Investigation of the operation of energy systems through behaviour-related data collection  
97 (building and user data monitoring) and monitoring of human presence and practices;

98 2. Understanding of the human behaviour (comfort, health) through user data analytics (from  
99 wearable sensors), stochastic modelling, and energy simulations;

100 3. Improvement of the building performance (energy, thermal comfort, IAQ) by integrating  
101 behavioural solutions (awareness campaign);

102 4. Development of strategies to transform different specific indicators into useful knowledge for  
103 the final users.

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### 105 2.3 *Development of personalized ICT services*

106 The main idea of personalized MOBISTYLE modular information services is to offer the so called  
107 *data acquisition bundles* where users decide which services they want, for how long and during when  
108 using it, and which data they are willing to share and disclose for these services. A modular structure  
109 is developed providing tailor-made information giving a possibility to add new modules later, e.g.  
110 desire to monitor additional IEQ parameters.

111 The MOBISTYLE Open Users Platform will be established having an open architecture for  
112 developers engagements and for further deployment of the developed tools. This platform will focus  
113 on the implementation of the end users behavioural aspects of the solution as well as the developed  
114 MOBISTYLE standardized methodological approach (including data analysis techniques). To test the  
115 attractiveness and ease of use of developed platform and services, an engaged learning method [15]  
116 with the users at the demonstration sites is elaborated. Following the people-centred approach, it is  
117 observed how the users interact with newly developed services and test their knowledge and  
118 understanding (i.e. the purpose of usage). This usability testing is functional to prepare  
119 recommendations for improvement and further development of ICT tools.

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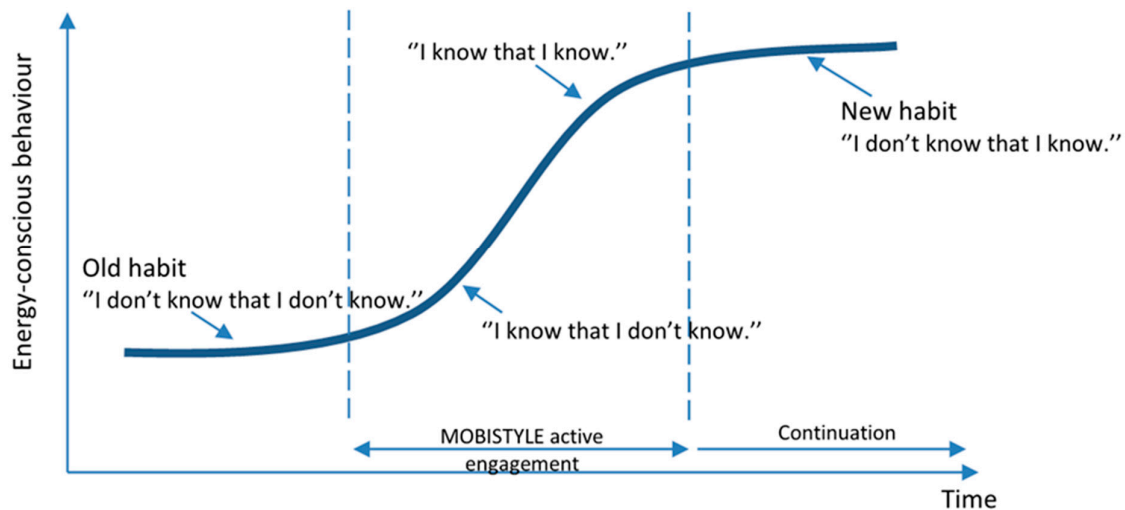
### 121 2.4 *Continuous feedback as a road to MOBISTYLE future*

122 The methodological approach tested during the MOBISTYLE project does not configure as a  
123 stand-alone development of ICT tools and services. Rather, it presents a long-term dynamic  
124 approach where ICT tools and services are supported and communicated with users through  
125 awareness campaigns.

126 The findings of an extensive literature review of experience on feedback and data display show  
127 that improved feedback on energy usage can reduce consumption up to 20 % with low capital (or

128 no-capital) technology investment expenses [16,17]. The study by Hong et. al [17] shows that for both  
 129 residential as commercial buildings 5 – 15 % saving can be obtained by providing direct feedback  
 130 (e.g. smart meters and target settings) whereas with a combined tailored information provision and  
 131 direct user control savings up to 20 % can be achieved. The MOBISTYLE project will measure, by  
 132 means of real-life demonstration cases of diverse building typologies and intended usage in different  
 133 cultural and climatic context, the achievable energy saving resulting from the data-driven  
 134 behavioural change. The measurable quantitative objectives of MOBISTYLE is a reduction of energy  
 135 use of at least 16 % prompted by combined monitoring and other consumption feedback systems on  
 136 energy, IEQ, and health. By educating the users, users have a sense of control and become aware  
 137 how the generated environment affects their health and well-being and how they spend their energy.

138 As shown in Figure 2, people are often not aware how and when they are using energy nor  
 139 whether such actions lead to relatively high or low consumption, whether it is decreased or increased  
 140 in comparison with their previous actions [18]. This shows a great potential for improvements where  
 141 awareness campaigns and feedback features can be chosen depending on the project needs (different  
 142 frequency, duration of feedback, medium and way of presentation, translation from big data to smart  
 143 data, communication strategies, etc.).



144 **Figure 2.** MOBISTYLE awareness process encouraging a change from energy unconscious to energy conscious  
 145 behaviour due to the engagement with the MOBISTYLE tools. Adapted from [19].

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147 Efficient communication and information strategies will be developed beside offering users  
 148 tailor made ICT tools and services in order to assure efficient usage of the developed services. Age,  
 149 educational background, social control and supervision on various levels (top-down, peer-to-peer,  
 150 self-monitoring), knowledge, habits of using new technologies are powerful features influencing the  
 151 use of ICT services. As an example, older people are typically driven by different reasoning factors  
 152 than the younger generation. Necessarily, different communication methods need to be chosen to  
 153 trigger these two groups [20]. Communication strategies are analyzed in order to find most suitable  
 154 stimulating strategies that encourage different users groups to feel an emerging need to delve further  
 155 and become curious about energy, health and the resulting improvements in their lifestyle. The  
 156 MOBISTYLE concept is kept alike, while ways of interpreting data and communication strategies  
 157 are adapted to the different user needs.

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### 159 3. Results

#### 160 3.1 *Demonstration and validation of the MOBISTYLE approach*

161 The developed MOBISTYLE approach and tailor-made services are validated for the five  
162 demonstration cases in real life operating conditions, in five different locations:

- 163 • Social housing apartments at Kildenparken, Aalborg, Denmark;
- 164 • University buildings at the University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia;
- 165 • Apartments at the Hotel Residence L'Orologio, Turin, Italy;
- 166 • Health care centre azM Herstelzorg, Maastricht, The Netherlands;
- 167 • Residential houses as part of the Smart City Wroclaw, Wroclaw, Poland.

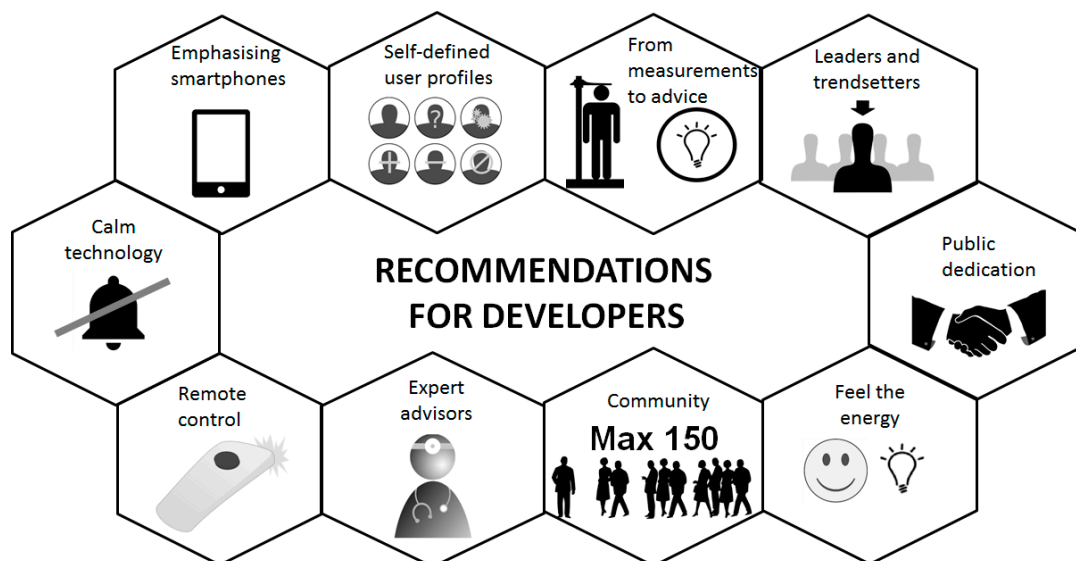
168 The usability of the MOBISTYLE tools is evaluated by monitoring behavioural change for each  
169 demonstration case after 2 months, 6 months and 12 months of the behavioural change strategy  
170 implementation. Baseline was defined at the start of the monitoring phase, as any MOBISTYLE  
171 measures were implemented in order to assess users' old habits and their daily behaviour.  
172 Behavioural and building data gathered from the demonstrators and feedback from the user groups  
173 are used to adjust and fine-tune the methodologies, tools, services and supporting business models  
174 along with the project. Outcomes from the study will be used for generalizing recommendations in  
175 which the individual building users are classified in archetypes (personas), each with their own  
176 information approach and strategy to come to lasting behavioural change and motivation. For this  
177 purpose, and for each of the demo cases, a monitoring and awareness campaign is devised, that will  
178 be continued after the project duration.

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#### 180 3.2 *People-centred recommendations for the technology development based on focus groups*

181 Focus groups, supplemented by participant observation, have proven to be a useful research  
182 technique for studying users' habits, motivations, needs and expectations in the MOBISTYLE project  
183 since they allow researchers to study people in a less structured conversation pattern than typically  
184 occurs in an ethnographic interview [21]. For each demo case, one focus group involving 5-8 people  
185 users per case, was carried out. Whenever possible, the discussions were elaborated with the people  
186 in their own buildings, avoiding more formal artificial environments, such as research institute  
187 facilities, as well as Skype conversations. Questions for the participants were in one part unified for  
188 all groups and partly adapted to specific cases. In this way, the main topics of the project were  
189 discussed with users of the demonstration buildings and the MOBISTYLE common goal was  
190 discussed in different settings.

191 Findings from the focus groups, supplemented by interviews and participant observation have  
192 been instrumental in preparing ten key recommendations (Figure 3) which defined the boundary  
193 conditions for the further development of the ICT tools and awareness campaigns, as illustrated in  
194 the following sections.



**Figure 3.** MOBISTYLE recommendations for the ICT developers based on the focus groups findings.

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1. *Emphasizing smartphones:* People in focus groups preferred the usage of the smartphone as the main platform for communication between the users and the ICT tool. Smartphones are among the most widespread and accessible tools for accessing information about weather, following the local and international news, and are often used as a health and wellbeing tracker, and having become an omnipresent and indispensable part of users' identity. Because people are typically very well acquainted with the mobile phone technology, this can be used for tracking behaviours and presences, gathering people feedbacks, as well as for influencing and changing habits (i.e. with push communication).

2. *Self-defined user profiles:* Users should have the possibility to create their own user profiles and to set customized personal pro-environmental goals. This can give them a feeling of active participation in defining settings for influencing their own habits. Based on the selection of preference and interests, different parameters can be shown to the users. The ICT tool can be fine-tuned according to users' goals, preferences, and priorities over time, i.e. by sending an inquiry (pop-up-notification) after a certain period (e.g. one month), to see whether these are still in line with the user's requirements or if he or she wishes to reassess or change them. This adjustable self-assessment capability of the system enables a continuous opportunity for the users to actively cooperate in the creation of their own ambitions.

3. *Customised and location-based advice:* By combining measurements from sensors with location-based services (e.g. weather data), generic and local-specific advice can be prepared according to the local environmental characteristics. In this way, specific energy and health related habits can be supported by taking into account individuals' needs and habits when deployed in the situation of the local environment.

4. *Calm Technology principles:* ICT tools should not irritate the user with too frequent unnecessary notifications. Instead, the developers should rely on Calm Technology principles [22], which suggest that the most robust and reliable technologies are those that disappear and weave themselves into the fabric of everyday life until they are indistinguishable from it [22,23]. According to Case [22], the principles of Calm Technology are that a technology should require the smallest possible amount of attention, inform and create calm, make use of the periphery, be able to communicate, and work even when it fails. Finally, the technology should also take into account the existing norms in a socio-cultural environment. Out of these principles, the most relevant for MOBISTYLE users is the capability of a technology to communicate information without interrupting or distracting the users from their primary tasks [22].

5. *Heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) and other home device controls:* Ideally, the user should be able to adjust various parameters influencing his or her indoor comfort through the same ICT tool (e.g. readjusting temperature or humidity in the room or turning off the lights). This implies

232 there is a need to give the user control over his indoor environment through ICT tools that are at the  
233 same connected to multiple sensors, equipment and devices from the environment.

234 6. *Expert advisors*: It is recommended to prepare communication material (i.e. short video clips)  
235 of experts (i.e. researchers, academic figures) providing advice or explaining capabilities and tasks  
236 which will be accessible via the ICT tool. There should be a possibility for deepening their pro-  
237 environmental interest and knowledge about a specific recommendation, for example by links to  
238 popular social media as well as scientific articles, connected to health, wellbeing, air quality, and  
239 energy savings. Advice should be supported by a trusted reliable source and reference as this can  
240 improve people's propensity to behave in a suggested way. The videos should be prepared or  
241 subtitled in local languages, to overcome communication barrier with users.

242 7. *Spreading the concept through community leaders and trendsetters*: When implementing the  
243 technology and approaching for changing habits, the developers should focus on early adopters,  
244 trendsetters, and influencers who are able to motivate others to use the novelty in a community. If  
245 they manage to start collaborating with them already during the development phase and include  
246 their ideas and suggestions in the ICT tool, it should be easier to motivate other users in different  
247 cases to accept it. Furthermore, popular local public figures can help spreading the main message.

248 8. *"Feel the energy" approach*: The problem related to energy saving is that energy is often  
249 impossible to be felt and cognitively processed. People are able to see the impacts of energy.  
250 However, they are unable to perceive the quantity of energy there are using in their everyday  
251 practices (i.e. increasing the heating set point of the thermostat can increase the heating energy  
252 consumption up to 7 %). Therefore, energy should be visualised in a clear and understandable way,  
253 without using standardised units of measuring energy and power. For example, the energy can be  
254 compared to daily physical activities or food consumption of an individual or a community. In this  
255 way, the designers and developers are able to combine health, wellbeing, and energy use, and make  
256 the users feel how energy is produced and consumed.

257 9. *Public dedication to a goal*: Anthropological, psychological and sociological studies show that  
258 when an individual's decision for changing a certain habit is presented to other people and to the  
259 public, this provides a strong peer pressure and stimulates a person to actually achieve a certain  
260 commitment [24]. The technology used should, therefore, enable public commitment to a goal, which  
261 has to be meaningful and relevant for an individual and a community. Social media or existing local  
262 groups in different cases can be used for this purpose.

263 10. *Community size*: Anthropologists have explained that individuals can maintain stable social  
264 relationships with around 150 friends and acquaintances at most [25,26]. The MOBISTYLE studies  
265 have led to a similar finding in practice: in buildings with less than 150 people, the inhabitants (or  
266 employees) have a feeling of a community; they meet each other and regularly communicate.  
267 However, buildings and settlements with a larger number of inhabitants witness problems of social  
268 bonds breakdown. In such cases, the developers should support establishing new communities and  
269 enable people to create new ties for helping each other and exchanging information through the ICT  
270 tool.

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272 In addition, the focus groups provided some unexpected findings, relevant for the development  
273 of ICT tools. For example, before the studies were put in place, it was assumed that behavioural  
274 changes motivated by health-related issues rank higher on the priority list than energy-saving  
275 opportunities, which has proven to be correct. However, it was unexpected to see which elements of  
276 a healthy lifestyle are most relevant for people: food, sleeping, rehydration, etc. In addition, the  
277 research showed that social pressure and community-based support play important roles in changing  
278 existing practices and supporting healthy and sustainable lifestyles. Finally, particularities of  
279 different demonstration cases should be taken into account when adapting the general ICT tool to  
280 different cases and their socio-cultural specifics, people of different age, gender, social and  
281 employment status who live and work in different settings, locations, and buildings. Instead of 'one-  
282 size-fits-all' approach, the ICT tool should be therefore tailored to different cases and specifics of  
283 people, who should have a possibility to change and adapt the tool to individuals needs and attitudes.

#### 284 4. Discussion

285 Knowing individual users and finding out as much as possible about their habits, practices, and  
286 behaviour has been a crucial aspect in the development of the MOBISTYLE ICT tools and services.  
287 Identified MOBISTYLE key takeaways learned until now are:

- 288 • *Listen to the people*: The crucial role when developing user-friendly and people-centred ICT  
289 tools is understanding users, their values, and capabilities in order to develop user-friendly  
290 and people-centred tools and services that are accepted by these users. Segmentation of  
291 people into different users groups makes it possible to identify main motivation factors for  
292 behaviour change, information and communication strategies common for different end-  
293 user groups and their lifestyles.
- 294 • *Educate the person*: More transparent, tailored and easy to understand information on how  
295 user actions affect health, environment, and energy consumption is effective in changing  
296 their current behaviours. By clearly communicating the benefits of using ICT based  
297 technologies, new desire is created where the user decides to use the technologies because  
298 of the actual benefits he or she will gain.
- 299 • *Variety of communication strategies and effective feedback*: When offering tailor-made solutions  
300 to different end-user groups different communication techniques need to be adapted  
301 according to the different user groups and their social background, age, gender,  
302 provenience, etc. In addition, continuous clear information needs to be provided leading to  
303 long-term behaviour change.
- 304 • *The user should be in control*: By giving users the possibility to decide which services they  
305 want to use, for how long and during what time, creates a hassle-free sensation that  
306 enhances the users' participation and control. Technology stress reduction can be achieved,  
307 i.e. by using pull instead of push communication service, as well as allowing the user to  
308 decide which data he or she is willing to share.
- 309 • *Ensuring data privacy and security*: The users should be clearly informed on data collection,  
310 storage, usage, and protection issues.
- 311 • *Providing an added value*: As recognized from practice, energy efficiency as such is not the  
312 most effective motivation factor from end-user perspective in order to change their  
313 behaviour [8]. Therefore, instead of selling energy efficient buildings, users can be offered  
314 healthy buildings where consequently also energy efficient and sustainable behaviour is  
315 achieved. As an example, users are educated that lowering down thermostat will not just  
316 bring energy savings but can also contribute to their better well-being and improved  
317 metabolic health [27–29].

318 A challenge correlated to this study is the replicability of the developed approach to different  
319 user groups involving a larger number of users. After MOBISTYLE completion, a guide for  
320 replication will be devised including insights and guidelines into the anthropology-based  
321 development of technical solutions and it will be explained how to identify different effective  
322 feedback mechanisms, communication and awareness campaigns strategies for different end-user  
323 groups.

#### 324 5. Conclusion

325 The aim of the MOBISTYLE approach is to show that improving buildings and building  
326 technologies is not enough. In order to achieve ambitious goals of EU on energy savings, a different  
327 approach is needed, where users of the buildings are equally important part of the building  
328 ecosystem as technologies. Therefore, the emphasis should be on educating users on how to behave  
329 in their buildings and how to increase their awareness by combined information on their energy  
330 usage, generated IEQ, health, and lifestyle. Contributing authors believe that with such an approach  
331 a long-term understanding can be stimulated where energy conscious and healthy behaviour  
332 becomes a way of life and not only a one-time service, noticed as energy saving at the end of the  
333 month. In addition, ICT engineers should start the development of new solutions from the people-



334 centred perspective, i.e. by discussing with people (potential clients and users) what are their actual  
335 needs and expectations and how the technologies should be designed to improve their lives for the  
336 better. Finally, it should be emphasised that the people-centred development is an iterative process,  
337 which means that the developers should continuously return to users of their products or services to  
338 repeatedly ask questions that shed light on how ICT solutions meet their needs and desires.

339 Going further, the development of the project aims to illuminate some practical ways to  
340 transform theories, analytical methods and ICT-based solutions developed in the context of the  
341 MOBISTYLE projects into real pilot study applications. Moreover, in a broader perspective, it will  
342 deliver ground to validate and test the effectiveness of enhanced human-building interaction as the  
343 innovative energy efficient paradigm in the building sector.

344 This range of human-building products is foreseen as a strong support to the implementation of  
345 the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and Energy Efficiency Directive (EED)  
346 regulations in the face of achieving 2020 and 2050 energy conservation goals in the European building  
347 sector. At the end of the project, it will be assessed how to integrate the developed MOBISTYLE  
348 methodology in Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) regulations.

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