

What is the Consensus Research Project?

'Consensus' is an Environmental Protection Agency administered project involving researchers in Trinity College Dublin and the National University of Ireland Galway in the study of aspects of consumption, environment and sustainability on an all-Ireland basis (www.consensus.ie). The project focuses on four key areas of household consumption; transport, food, energy and water, all of which impact negatively on the environment and inhibit our ability to achieve sustainable development. The aim of 'Consensus' is to increase understanding of consumption behaviour, to analyse current policy responses aimed at promoting sustainable consumption, and to design recommendations for policies and initiatives to advance sustainable consumption in Ireland.

What research approach is Consensus adopting?

Visioning methodologies are being used as an imaginative approach to developing innovations that break away from current unsustainable practices. This technique involves the development of a desirable future vision by stakeholders, followed by a process of working backwards from that vision to see what strategies should be developed to lead to its achievement. Similar visioning techniques have been applied in product and service design and are increasingly being used in the United States, Canada and Europe to guide strategies for sustainable development.

How could homes be heated sustainably in the year 2050?...Can you help us answer this question?

As a first step in the research process, this key question will be addressed in an innovative 'Visioning Workshop'. This workshop will bring together a range of interdisciplinary stakeholders who currently shape energy practices in Irish households. Creativity techniques will be used in the workshop with the aim of liberating participants from current constraints. This will permit the generation of a range of imaginative ideas based on combinations of social, organisational, and technological innovations. (e.g. one proposed alternative to space heating incorporating both cultural and technological change is for householders to wear 'heated clothing').

What can be gained by participating in the workshop?

- Involvement in the creation of innovative solutions for sustainable home heating
- Insight into visioning techniques growing in popularity in research, innovation, and policy-making circles
- Contact with a variety of interdisciplinary stakeholders creating opportunities for learning and potential collaboration.

Workshop Date: Tuesday 28th September 2010

Time: 11:00 – 14:00

Location: The Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin

To enrol in the workshop or for more information, please contact:

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What happens after the visioning workshop?

Following the workshop, the research team will evaluate the sustainability of the proposed future home heating solutions and test them for public acceptance through focus groups. The research process will conclude with a stakeholder strategy workshop aimed at developing concrete proposals for the realisation of the most promising aspects of the future visions including R&D activities, partnerships and policy recommendations.