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THE INFLUENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON HOUSEHOLD DECISIONS ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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Abstract – Young people are the future members of the energy communities and form part of a climate-responsible society already now. However, in the context of the geopolitical and economic events of 2022, the awareness of young people in Latvia about energy efficiency issues and the readiness to engage in climate change mitigation processes, as well as the influence of their attitude on the decisions of adult household members in the field of energy efficiency have not been sufficiently studied. The aim of the study is to evaluate the knowledge of Latvian youth about energy efficiency issues, associations about a climate-responsible society, attitudes towards daily habits in the field of energy efficiency, as well as whether climate change issues are also discussed in young people's families and whether young people believe that they can influence the family's opinion or habits. 71 participants participated in the study, and the methods used are group questionnaires and interviews. The results of the research show that young people in the regions of Latvia are well aware of measures of energy efficiency, and the answers provide an insight into the various experiences they have had in their households. More than half of the research participants between the ages of 14 and 19 are aware of the amount of utility expenses and discuss with their relatives the possibilities of saving energy resources. The research also highlighted negative aspects, for example, concerning to reducing the level of household comfort in the name of climate change, young people are not strongly supporting – only a little more than half would be willing to live in cooler rooms. Young people believe that they can influence the attitude and behaviour of other household members in matters of energy resource management. The results of the study lead to the conclusion that more attention should be paid to messages dedicated to young people in public space, so that they associate themselves more as an existing or future part of the energy community, and they should be given the opportunity to set an example and explain why their actions are important to reduce climate change. The results obtained in the study can potentially contribute to the development of the digital tool designed within the RTU project 'BRIDGE' to promote the development of energy communities.

Keywords – *Climate-responsible society; energy community; EU Green Deal; serious games*