

D3.6 Interactive social platform





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DISSEMINATION LEVEL

- Public**
- Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. THE ROLE WITHIN START2ACT	2
3. FUNCTIONALITIES	3



1. Introduction

This deliverable introduces the Interactive Social Platform, a sub-feature of the START2ACT Interactive Energy Saving Platform (see Deliverable 3.3). In addition to the more directed approach to behavioural change through the e-learning facility, the START2ACT Interactive Energy Saving Platform will also allow for the individual SMEs to share learning and results between themselves. The users will be provided with a topic-based forum where learning can be shared and individuals can offer support and advice to each other. This forum will also have an 'Ask the Expert' area where each project partner will be responsible for providing tailored web-based expert advice to questions posed by participating SMEs.

This Interactive Social Platform complements the Interactive Energy Saving Platform with a topic-based forum that addresses three groups of end-users (see Figure 1) within the START2ACT target groups (young SMEs and startups) in the nine participating countries.

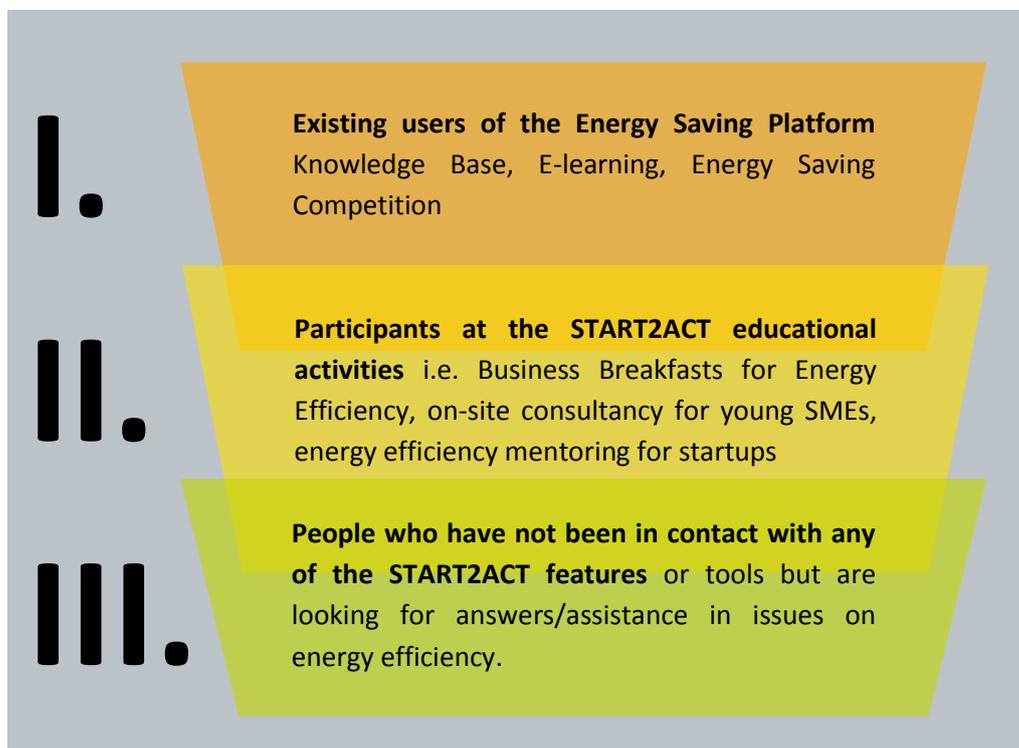


Figure 1: Three target end-user groups of the interactive social platform within the overarching START2ACT target groups of young SMEs and startups.

2. The role within START2ACT

As a topic-based forum, the Interactive Social Platform provides the three end-user groups with a structured and easy-to-use online space for giving their feedback to the manifold inputs on energy efficiency delivered by the START2ACT activities. This feedback is highly valuable for the START2ACT consortium in maintaining and improving the relevance of the START2ACT support scheme to European young SMEs and startups. Figure 2 shows that knowledge provided by the START2ACT experts and the feedback provided by the end-users stand in a mutually reinforcing relationship. The logic behind is that the knowledge which is delivered through the educational activities on-site (Business Breakfasts, on-site consultancy for SMEs, mentoring for startups) and through the Interactive Energy Saving Platform online, needs to be customised to the end-user needs to be effective and impactful. The Interactive Social Platform provides the link where end-users can provide feedback on the delivered knowledge and, hence, represents an interface between the knowledge cycle and the feedback cycle in START2ACT.

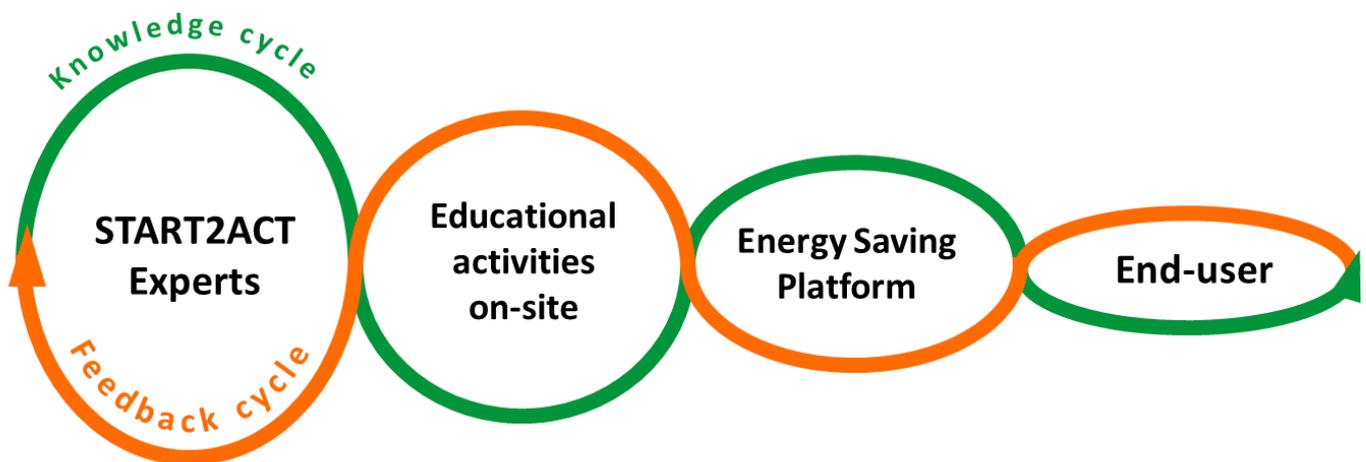


Figure 2: Knowledge feedback cycle in START2ACT: The experts are delivering knowledge (green arrow) on energy efficiency through the educational activities on-site and the Energy Saving platform online to the end-user. The feedback given by the concerned parties (orange arrow) helps in updating, reshaping and improving the knowledge and the entire support programme.

The specific aim

The aim of the Interactive Social Platform is to engage all end-users of START2ACT to bring the topic of energy efficiency within a company context to a public and everyday discussion level. To deliver this, the platform shall invite end-users to share all their thoughts, concerns and questions about energy efficiency, either delivered through START2ACT activities or evolved from a different context within the energy saving platform. In close connection with this narrative, one important statement within START2ACT is that the action of each single person, whether employee, manager or building owner is crucial to reach an energy-conscious and energy-efficient company culture.

This role of the interactive social platform within START2ACT and its specific aim requires the platform to be relevant to the end-users. This means that it needs to be presented and maintained in high quality with relevant and well-sorted contents.

3. Functionalities

In order to fulfil the role and achieve the aim as set out above, two main functionalities of the Interactive Social Platform have been conceived. The first is to engage the sharing of questions, experience, critique, knowledge and advice between the end-user groups (see Figure 3) and the second is to provide the possibility to end-users of taking up direct contact with partners/experts of the consortium to ask and discuss specific questions.

The first functionality is realised in a topic-based forum (Figure 3) where users have the possibility to create or respond to discussion threads. Single threads will be grouped within topic related categories that enable good navigation and orientation for each user. Examples for such topic related categories are the Knowledge Base, E-learning, or the Energy Saving Competition. Categories or sub-categories can be added by the administrator to improve the orientation further, based on the user activity and variety of topics within the forum. Additionally, the topic based forum can handle a keyword based search function for improved navigation.

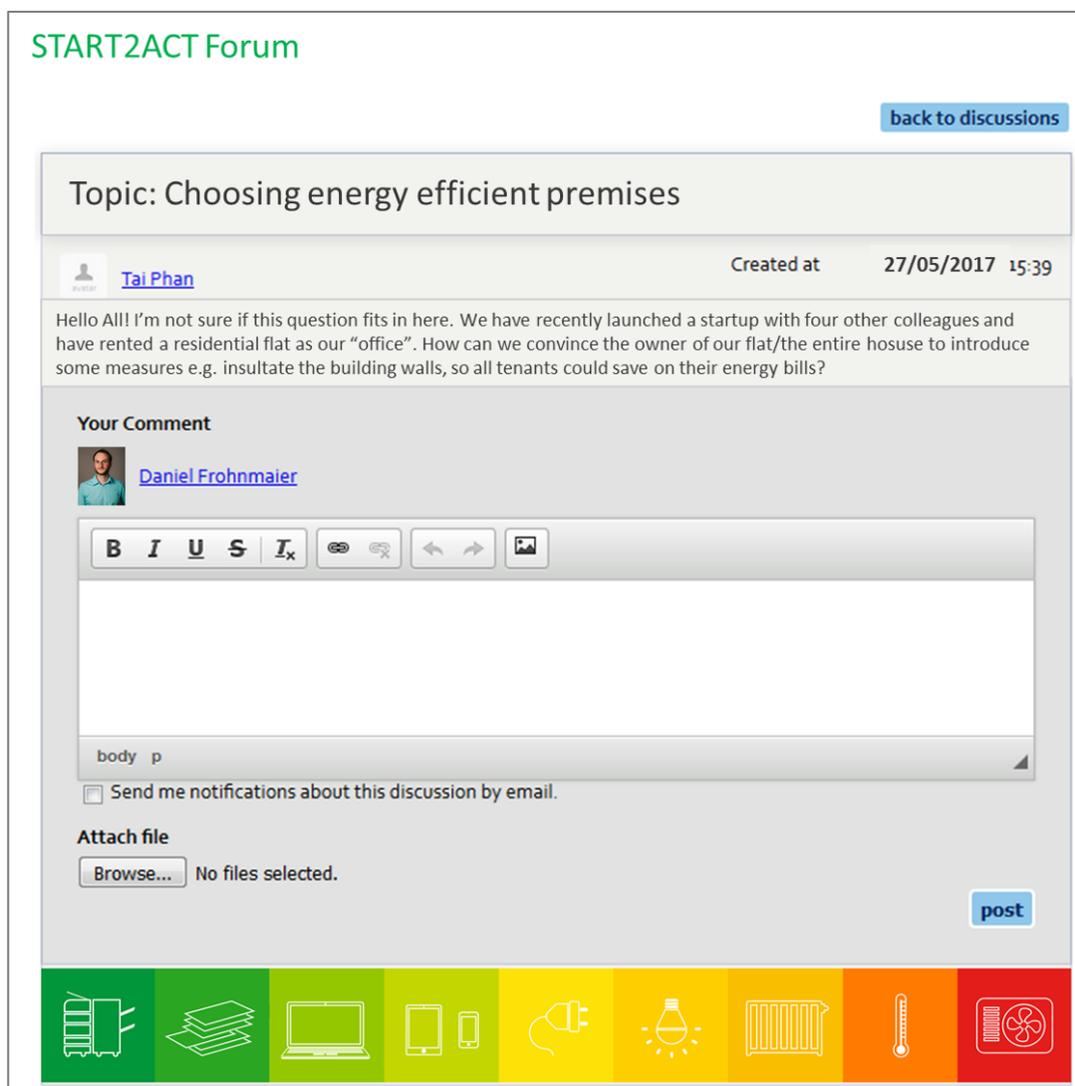


Figure 3: Mock-up of the START2ACT topic based Forum. The final design of the forum will be adjusted to the needs in START2ACT

The second functionality is the Ask the Expert feature (Figure 4). Users have the chance to directly get in contact with START2ACT experts from the project consortium and ask questions related to energy efficiency. This feature is intended to serve as a source of advice to end-users of START2ACT when the topic-based forum fails to provide appropriate answers to specific questions.

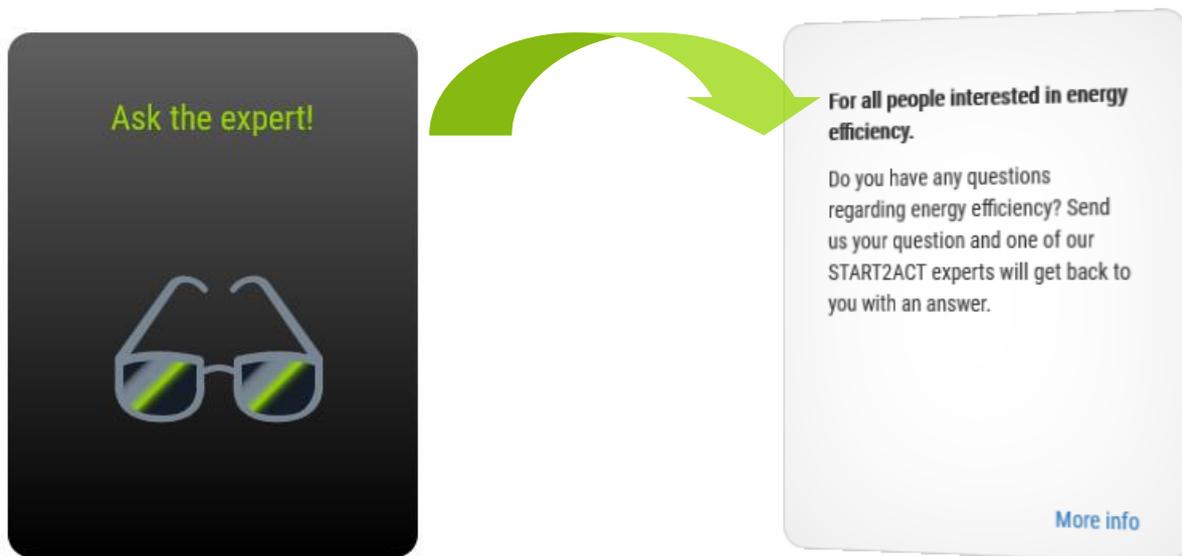


Figure 4: START2ACT Ask the expert. This feature of the START2ACT webpage is available via the Interactive Social Platform.

The result of a discussion within the Ask the Expert feature will be published on the interactive social platform to increase its quality and coverage with regards to the content.