

Two country reports on policy communication and emotions: Germany and Estonia

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Climate, Inequality & Democratic Action:
The Force of Political Emotions



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Executive Summary

Climate policies are communicated by policy actors and received by the public through policy narratives, as emotion-laden stories. Analysing the emotional dimensions of climate policy narratives therefore provides a better understanding of the emotional foundations of polarised climate policy conflicts. As emotional expressions vary between contexts, a comparative angle provides insights into the variation of emotional and narrative patterns within a similar policy domain.

As part of the CIDAPE research project, this report analyses how policy narratives and emotions have shaped climate law debates in Germany and Estonia. Germany represents a large industrial Western-European member state, with an established climate governance framework. Estonia is a small, fossil-dependent Baltic EU member state, with a comparatively limited prior climate governance tradition. The analysis focuses on two contested climate law debates: the 2021 German Climate Law reform and the 2024/25 Estonian Climate-Resilient Economy Act debate. The case studies employ a Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) analysis, based on a dataset comprising different text types. Different forms of emotion analysis are used in the two case studies: The German case employs dictionary-based emotion coding and qualitative narrative analysis; the Estonian case a methodology grounded in linguistic appraisal theory and interpretive emotion analysis.

The findings suggest that, across both cases, climate law debates were conflictual and characterised by diverse emotionalisation strategies. Despite contextual differences several similarities emerge: Emotionalisation varies by text and speaker type. Governments are central targets of blame, although the underlying storylines differ. Climate policies and the climate policy processes themselves become targets of emotions. Economic actors in both countries evoke fears that climate policy could harm economic prosperity, while climate sceptic narratives call into question the outcomes, the scientific and ideological bases of climate policy.



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1 Introduction

The **CIDAPE** research project starts from the observation that, in face of the climate crisis, emotions about and perceptions of inequality play a pivotal role in shaping our decisions. Understanding how political emotions frame online and offline political discourse, and how climate policies are politically communicated, is key in this context (Durnová et al., 2025). In our previous work, we have laid foundations for grasping the role of emotions in policy communication and policy narratives conceptually (see Blum et al., 2026; Habelitz et al., 2024) and investigating it methodologically (Habelitz & Blum, 2024). Empirically, the emotionalisation of climate policies, the role of inequalities and the emotional tone of political communication may vary significantly between contexts – at different time periods, in different regions, and for different policies.

Against that backdrop, this report presents a focused comparison of key policy narratives and their emotional dimension for two distinct European contexts – Germany and Estonia. These serve to follow the question: Which policy narratives and which emotions have characterised the climate law policy debates in Germany and Estonia¹?

The Climate Law reforms that were implemented in Germany (2021) and Estonia (2024) over the past years respectively are relevant cases when it comes to policy communication and emotionalisation, as they provided the key frameworks for climate policies in both countries, received significant attention and are thus illustrative of more general debates. The 2021 German Climate Law reform was selected as a key moment in the German climate policy debate, following a successful climate litigation case initiated by environmental actors. In its March 2021 ruling, the Constitutional Court found that the existing Climate Law was insufficient, as it failed to regulate emission reductions beyond 2030 and risked disproportionately shifting the burden to future generations (see Töller, 2024). This decision was followed by a broad debate on climate policy in general, lasting until the law's revision in June 2021. In this debate, major conflict lines between actor coalitions and broader structural challenges of climate policymaking became visible, which continue to shape the German climate policy context.

The Estonian Climate-Resilient Economy Act, initiated in 2024 and still under preparation at the time of writing, was selected to illustrate the political tensions surrounding legislation in a small, fossil-dependent EU member state. Estonia remains one of the most carbon-intensive economies in the EU, heavily reliant on oil shale in energy production (EPRS, 2025; CCPI, 2026). Energy supply has long been treated as a national security concern and climate policy has increasingly been drawn into debates about energy independence, geopolitical vulnerability and the socioeconomic transformation of fossil-dependent regions (see Loik & Jürgenson, 2023). The bill originated as a top-down legislative initiative partly in response to EU-level obligations, generating extensive debates about EU regulatory demands, economic competitiveness, energy security and the drafting process itself.

The report is structured as follows: In the next section we present the research design, including a brief revisiting of our theoretical framework, database, and the methods used for analysing policy narratives and emotions. Sections 3 and 4 then present the two country case studies, on the main actors, dominant narratives and emotionalisation observable in the German and Estonian climate law debate. Section 5 draws conclusions, and discusses what can be learned from the two cases more generally.

2 Research Design

2.1 Theoretical Framework – Policy Narratives and Emotions

This empirical report builds on our conceptual report on investigating emotions in (climate) policy narratives developed in the course of the CIDAPE project (Habelitz et al., 2024), as well as the corresponding methodological report and codebook (Habelitz & Blum, 2024). We will, therefore, only briefly summarise the theoretical framework at this point.

Essentially, we follow the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF). According to this theoretical approach, policy narratives are used at all stages of the policy process within institutional and informal venues and serve 'to influence others, to attract attention, persuade or manipulate' (Jones et al. 2023, 161). Understanding the

¹ Since the German case study is chronologically set earlier than the Estonian case study, we follow this order of country case studies throughout this report.



dynamics and uses of policy narratives therefore enables us to understand core dynamics at various stages of the policy process.

The NPF defines a policy narrative 'as featuring at least one character (such as heroes, villains, victims etc.) and containing some public policy referent' (Jones et al. 2023, 165). In addition to characters, policy narratives contain three other generalisable core elements: a setting, which often addresses the policy context; a plot that situates the characters and their relationship in time and space; and a moral of the story, as normative action for characters, which is often the policy solution (Shanahan et al. 2018, 175f.). Further, policy narratives operate and can be analysed at three interacting levels: 'micro (individual), meso (group), and macro (cultural and institutional)' (Shanahan et al. 2018: 2). We are here primarily interested in the meso level, that is, the narratives shared and communicated by various policy actors. In contrast to the generalisable structural elements, narrative content varies between cultural contexts and consists of different narrative strategies or belief systems (Jones et al., 2023). Narrative strategies, such as 'the devil-angel-shift' but also emotionalisation, organise narrative elements in a strategic way to serve policy actors' goals. Different belief systems can be, for example, political ideologies or policy-specific beliefs, such as different climate policy positions

Affect and emotions play an important role for policy narratives and researchers have started to conceptualise it in recent years, alongside efforts to conceptualise emotions in policy processes more generally and in neighbouring frameworks (Pierce 2021; Fullerton et al., 2023; Pierce et al. 2024; Maor, 2024; Kuhlmann & Starke, 2025; Blum et al., 2026). Here, we follow the conceptual and methodological approaches that have been developed in the above-named deliverables for the CIDAPE project and we will specify the concrete approach further in section 2.3, after, in the following section 2.2, summarising the database constructed for investigating climate policy narratives in Germany and Estonia.

2.2 Database

In order to reconstruct the emotional policy communication around the climate policy laws in Germany and Estonia, we constructed a dataset for both countries of relevant policy communication, following the same selection criteria. The dataset includes different types of data and text forms, which allows us to cover different forms of policy communication and to investigate potential differences between them, especially in their degree or style of emotionalisation.

For Germany, the dataset includes three different text types (see Table 2 in the Appendix). Five parliamentary speeches delivered during the Bundestag debate on the climate law revision on 10 June 2021, by deputies of five major political parties, were analysed. During this debate, the draft law and the German government's climate policy were discussed controversially by the party representatives, illustrating actors' positions and their narrative strategies. These were complemented by six speech fragments of six relevant public stakeholders and interest groups as part of a public hearing on the climate law revision, on 21 June 2021, providing insight into the narratives advanced by economic, environmental, labour and regional actors (see Section 3.2 for a detailed description of actors). Finally, 16 news articles published in two mainstream newspapers, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, between April and June 2021 were selected for their direct or indirect quotations from policy actors, including politicians, civil society representatives, economic actors and climate activists. The newspapers represent slightly different political orientations (centre-right and centre-left/liberal) and cover the timespan after the court ruling (24 March 2021) and until the climate law revision (24 June 2021).

The Estonian dataset comprises four text types (see Table 3 in the Appendix). Seven news articles from ERR, Estonia's public broadcaster, cover key moments in the climate law's development between May 2024 and May 2025, from the initial draft through the latest version shared with the public. Nine stakeholder position papers submitted during the formal consultation round represent industry associations, environmental organisations, as well as academic voices. These function as the primary formal channel through which organised interests articulate their positions, equivalent in purpose to the public parliamentary hearings used in the German case though different in form. Three parliamentary debate transcripts from plenary sessions between late 2024 and late 2025 address climate policy, energy costs, and industrial emissions legislation. These debates precede formal parliamentary deliberation on the bill, which has stalled due to a shifting security landscape and the EU's retreat from several key commitments. A revised version of the bill is expected to reach the parliament in 2026. Finally, 16 opinion articles published between February 2024 and May 2025, authored by politicians, business leaders, academics, activists and industry representatives, were included as a distinct category that partially compensates for the absence of public hearings in the Estonian case.



Additionally, from other parts of the CIDAPE project, we collected social media posts on climate and energy policies from the run-up to the 2024 EU elections (cf. Habelitz et al., 2026). These social media posts divert from the other policy documents in timing and are also not directly concerned with climate policy legislation. Against this backdrop, they are not in the focus of our empirical analysis presented here, yet are drawn on for some additional insights into this type of policy communication. For this, we included ten individually selected posts per country, which are exemplary for the discursive landscape of the national climate policy debates at the point of the EU elections, as an important focusing event.

2.3 Methods - Analysing Emotions in Policy Narratives

2.3.1 Dataset Construction and Identification of Policy Narratives

For our two case studies, we established, at the basis, common coding guidelines and a shared understanding of policy narratives. This builds on our previously published deliverables from this Working Package 2 of the CIDAPE project, namely: 1) the conceptual deliverable on how to study policy narratives and the role of emotions (D 2.1), and 2) two methodological deliverables, including an NPF codebook (D 2.2) and 3) a methodological guide for working with emotions (D1.4).² With this NPF codebook, we coded the policy narratives and the narrative elements in the original languages (Estonian, German). We test-ran the application of this codebook to our material from Estonia and Germany and clarified any emerging questions in reconciliation sessions of all coders.

Initially, we examined the dataset to identify all units of analysis, defined as policy narratives containing a reference to climate policy and one narrative character (following the NPF minimal definition). This resulted in N=246 policy narratives for Germany and N=464 policy narratives for Estonia.

For Germany, policy narratives (N=246) were identified across three text types (69 from parliamentary debates, 35 in public hearings and 142 in newspaper articles). Of these, more than half (131) are by politicians as speakers, equally from government and opposition parties. 13 narratives are also by the Federal Constitutional Court as a speaker itself. Economic actors account for 29 narratives and trade unions for 10. Environmental organisations and activists contribute 32 narratives, alongside 12 from environmental agencies. The remaining narratives stem from other public actors, such as municipalities and the scientific community. Table 2 in the Appendix lists all analysed documents for the German case.

For Estonia, policy narratives (N=464) were identified across four text types: 215 from opinion articles (16 opinion articles, written by policy actors), 116 from news articles (7 news articles), 96 from stakeholder position papers (submissions by 9 organisations), 37 from parliamentary debate fragments. The parliamentary debates cover three sessions of which one was a Q&A organised by the parliament's environmental committee (21 November 2024) and two were regular sessions (29 January 2025, 26 September 2025) in which climate policy was discussed. By speaker type, industry and business actors are the most represented group, followed by politicians from both the governing coalition and opposition, environmental organisations and activists as well as academic voices. The high narrative yield of opinion articles relative to other text types reflects both their discursive character and their function in the Estonian case. As individually authored, argumentatively structured texts, opinion articles typically develop more elaborate narrative configurations than news reports or formal consultation responses, which tend toward factual reporting critique. Their prominence in the corpus also reflects the absence of public hearings in the Estonian legislative process: opinion articles served as the primary public forum in which policy actors elaborated and contested the climate law's premises. Table 3 in the Appendix lists all analysed documents for the Estonian case.

Once the policy narratives were identified in the material, we coded narrative elements following the established Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) codebooks, as developed e.g., by Shanahan et al. (2018). The main codes (hero, victim, villains, problem, moral) were coded deductively on the basis of the theoretical framework, while sub-codes (e.g., hero-politician) emerged inductively from the empirical material.

2.3.2 Emotion Analysis

For the analysis of emotions in policy narratives, we started from a shared understanding of the role of emotions in public policy, as outlined in the theoretical foundations of the CIDAPE project (see, e.g., Durnová et al., 2025; Blum et al., 2026). Emotions in policy discourse are both represented and created through texts,

² These deliverables can be found on the CIDAPE website: <https://cidape.eu/results/project-reports/>



which deploy genre-specific discursive strategies to convey and evoke emotional meaning (Bednarek, 2008; Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2019; see Deliverable D1.4). Analysing how emotions are constructed in these texts brings into view how emotional meaning is mobilised to advance particular policy positions. For the empirical analysis, we utilised two complementary approaches for the empirical analysis. Thereby, we focused on a set of emotions that we identified as being particularly prominent in the climate policy narratives in both countries. These emotion types include anger and dismay, fear, suffering, compassion, hope and joy. Additionally, we were interested in 'performative rationality' or technocratic language (displaying 'un-emotionality') of texts.

The case study on Estonia uses the methodological framework developed in deliverable D1.4, while the case study on Germany uses a dictionary-based emotion coding, combined with qualitative narrative analysis. Consequently, the two sections in this report (3.3 and 4.3) are not strictly comparable with regard to the emotion analysis. However, the choice was made in this report for the advantage of illustrating complementary approaches of narrative emotion analysis. In the following, we briefly describe both approaches.

2.3.2.1 Dictionary-Based Emotion Coding and Qualitative Narrative Analysis (Germany)

The German case study analyses discrete emotions as part of policy narratives, drawing on the previously developed conceptual framework (Blum et al., 2026; Habelitz et al., 2024) and codebook (Habelitz & Blum, 2024). Emotions are understood and analysed as context-based, discursively constructed phenomena (Durnová, 2015; Fullerton et al., 2023). The German case study employs dictionary-based emotion coding of explicit emotions in English, combined with qualitative narrative analysis and emotion-coding in German.

Explicit emotion coding with emotion dictionary: Specific emotion dictionaries that were inductively developed for the public policy context first by Yordy et al. (2024) make it possible to trace explicit emotional expressions in English texts. Explicit emotional expressions are coded through emotion words, which are linked to the eight discrete emotion categories – affinity, anger, carelessness, compassion, dismay, fear, suffering, and trust, as named by Fullerton et al. (2023, 2024b). The emotion dictionary coding enabled the tracing of discrete emotions across a larger scale of texts and points towards prevalent emotion categories, sequences of emotions or variations (Habelitz & Blum, 2024). We coded the emotion words by importing the full emotion dictionary into MaxDictio and applying it to the text of the previously identified policy narratives. This automated coding process produced 800 coded segments, which were then manually validated based on the meaning of the emotion words in both English and the original language (see for more details on this approach: Habelitz et al., 2026). This stage involved deleting emotion-codes that did not correspond to emotionalised meaning in the narratives.

Qualitative coding of prevalent emotion categories in original language (in the following, compare Habelitz, 2026): In this subsequent step, the prevalent emotion categories indicated by the emotion dictionary were examined more closely in the original language narratives. New emotion-codes were added, when other emotion words were manually identified that were not captured by the dictionary. This coding phase also entailed the inductive coding of implicit emotional expressions, conveyed through phrasing, rhetoric or context rather than explicit terms. Implicit emotions were coded at the level of the full phrase, which indicates an emotional expression. Explicit emotion words detected by the dictionary are highlighted in bold in the in-text examples in Section 3.3, whereas the whole phrase is highlighted in bold in cases of implicit emotionalisation.

Linking discrete emotions with narrative elements and emotion-objects: Next, we examined emotion relationality more closely, which means uncovering the linkages between discrete emotions and narrative elements as their emotional objects, while considering the narrative context. Subsequent emotion-element linkages were coded (e.g., affinity-hero; sadness-problem). These emotion-narrative linkages describe the discrete emotions most frequently used by policy actors and the narrative elements to which these emotions were linked. The empirical objects of emotionalisation are in the parentheses. For example, in the case of affinity-hero (government), an actor used the discrete emotion of affinity to characterise the government as a narrative hero. Table 1 in the Appendix outlines the dominant narrative emotionalisation strategies by policy actors in the debate on the German climate law.

2.3.2.2 Analysing Explicit and Implicit Emotional Expression (Estonia)

The Estonian case study analyses emotion through a framework developed in Deliverable D1.4 'Methodological guide for working with emotions'. Emotional language can naturalise particular ways of understanding the urgency, costs and responsibilities associated with climate action. Attention to emotion in texts thus reveals the relational and normative work performed in public discourse: how positions are constructed and negotiated



between participants, how shared values are invoked and contested, and which positions are made available within the field of debate (Bednarek, 2008; Alba-Juez & Mackenzie, 2019).

Grounded in linguistic appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2005; Bednarek, 2008) and Interpretive Emotion Analysis (Durnová, 2022), our framework captures a broad range of evaluative resources through which emotional meaning is constructed, including explicit and implicit emotional expression, assessments of actors' character and conduct, and evaluations of situations, policies, and processes. It addresses the following questions: what kinds of emotions appear in climate policy discourse and what are they directed towards; whose emotions are represented, legitimised or marginalised; and how do texts position themselves in relation to alternative viewpoints.

Linguistic Appraisal Framework: The analysis was structured around four dimensions that we adapted from Martin and White's (2005) linguistic appraisal framework. The coding combines a deductive framework adapted from linguistic appraisal theory with subcodes developed inductively from the material. Attitude describes the evaluative orientation of the text, distinguishing between emotion (the expression of emotional responses), judgement (evaluations of actors based on their behaviour, competence, or ethical standing) and appreciation (evaluations of things, situations, policies, or processes). Attribution locates the source of evaluation: whether it is presented as the author's position, assigned to an external source, attributed to a collective or presented impersonally as objective description. Realisation distinguishes between inscribed evaluation, expressed directly through evaluative lexis and invoked evaluation, constructed without explicit evaluative language through taken-for-granted assertions, figurative language, or the selection and presentation of information (Martin & White, 2005). We also traced the targets of evaluation in our corpus. The most prevalent were physical climate phenomena, policy content, the policy process, the socioeconomic impact of transition and specific actors.

The analysis traces how evaluative meaning accumulates across texts, attending to repeated rhetorical strategies, shifts in evaluative intensity and the overall emotional orientation. We read stated neutrality, balance and technocratic constructions not as the absence of evaluation but as evaluative strategies that perform ideological work, naturalising certain responses while implicitly delegitimising others. The analysis also attends to how emotion objects are named and characterised, since naming choices (whether climate change is framed as a 'crisis' or a 'challenge', whether actors are called 'experts' or 'activists') carry evaluative meaning that operates below the level of explicit argumentation. The analysis was conducted in Estonian, since emotional and evaluative meaning, especially when invoked rather than inscribed, is often tied to specific linguistic and cultural contexts.

In the following sections, we present the findings on policy narratives and emotions which characterised the climate law debates in Germany and Estonia, respectively.

3 Country Report: Policy Narratives and Emotions in the German Climate Law Debate

In this section, we briefly describe the case context of the German Climate Law (3.1), and then sketch the main policy actors that are relevant in German climate policies as well as their main climate policy positions (3.2). Afterwards, we present the main narratives that were identified in our analysis of the climate law debate as well as their emotionality (3.3).

3.1 Case Context: The German Climate Law Revision in 2021

As one of Europe's largest industrial economies and emitters, Germany's climate transition is crucial for achieving European decarbonisation goals (Burck et al., 2024). However, climate policy-making in Germany today is characterised by a polarised public debate, where 'social policies and climate policies seem to be played out against each other, creating a lack of support, such as for renewing heating systems' (Burck et al., 2023).

The policy debate surrounding the revision of the German Climate Law in spring 2021, initiated by a climate litigation case and subsequent constitutional court ruling, showcases a crucial period in the development of German climate policy. In this debate, the major lines of conflict that structure the German climate policy until today came to the fore. While German climate policy and the surrounding political context shaped



by several crises have evolved since then, these conflict lines are still apparent, albeit with shifted power positions. The analysed period also coincided with the end of the Merkel IV cabinet (2018-2021), and upcoming Federal elections in September 2021. The analysed case and timeline are shortly presented below.

The German Climate Law (*Klimaschutzgesetz, KSG*) was issued in 2019 as a major policy framework, aiming to lay out the path towards climate neutrality. It presents Germany's National Determined Contribution (NDC) in fulfilling the 2015 Paris Agreement, aiming to limit global warming to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. On 24 March 2021 the constitutional court (BVerfG) ruled that parts of the 2019 Climate Law were unconstitutional, following a climate litigation case initiated by environmental activists and supported by environmental organisations. The court ruled that the law failed to sufficiently regulate emission reductions beyond 2030 and risked disproportionately shifting the burden to future generations, thereby potentially infringing upon their fundamental rights (see Töller, 2024). In doing so, the ruling defined climate protection and the safeguarding of present and future livelihoods as fundamental rights, and compelled the government to strengthen its climate targets (Kortulla et al., 2025, 298).

The constitutional court ruling sparked an intense public debate about climate politics in Germany and was followed by a revision of the *Klimaschutzgesetz (KSG)*, passed by the German Bundestag on 24 June 2021. In the analysed parliamentary debate of 10 June 2021, the revised draft law is discussed. The revised law of 2021 sets out an overall more ambitious path with higher reduction targets, which are to be achieved earlier: It raised Germany's greenhouse gas reduction target from 55% to 65% in 2030 and to 88% in 2040, compared to 1990 levels. Also targets for emission reductions in individual sectors such as energy, industry, mobility etc. have been tightened (BMWK, 2021). Climate neutrality should now be achieved by 2045, five years earlier than envisaged in the 2019 law. This was followed by the *Klimaschutzsofortprogramm* (which can be translated roughly to: immediate climate protection programme). This programme allocated an additional €8 billion to implement climate protection measures, particularly in the industrial, energy, building and mobility sectors.

However, the Climate Law was revised again in April 2024 by the then governing coalition of SPD, Greens and FDP, abolishing sector-specific emission targets for areas such as transport and buildings. Previously, these targets ensured accountability by requiring immediate action programmes (*Sofortprogramme*) when sectors failed to meet emission reduction goals (Tagesschau, 2024). In response, environmental stakeholders issued new constitutional complaints, arguing that the 2024 reform undermined Germany's decarbonisation ambitions (cf. Germanwatch, 2025).

3.2 German Climate Policy Actors and Their Policy Positions

In the debate surrounding the revision of the German Climate Law in 2021, a broad range of policy actors participated. These can be grouped into five categories (cf. Löhr, 2018): political parties, institutional actors, civil society, economic actors and labour unions. To contextualise the empirical analysis, the section below outlines climate policy positions of the analysed actors.³

Political parties are the key actors in climate policy and aim to translate their electorate's preferences into legislative action, but at the same time have to make compromises within government coalitions. In the period analysed, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany [CDU] / Christian Social Union in Bavaria [CSU] and the Social Democratic Party of Germany [SPD] formed a coalition (Merkel IV, 2018-2021), while Alliance 90/The Greens [Die Grünen], Free Democratic Party [FDP], The Left [Die Linke] and Alternative for Germany [AfD] were in opposition. Their party positions differed substantially regarding policy ambition, instruments and the pace of decarbonisation.

The CDU/CSU supported the long-term target of climate neutrality by 2045 and emphasised technological innovation, promoting, for example, low carbon technologies and economic competitiveness (Clean Energy Wire, 2025; Rovny et al., 2025). With a focus on businesses and consumers, the party advocates for a gradual transition, endorsing the coal phase-out by 2038 (Clean Energy Wire 2025). Similarly, the SPD supports climate neutrality by 2045 and aligned its agenda with European climate goals. The party emphasises renewables expansion, e-mobility and advocates for social compensation mechanisms, while internal debates surround potential redistribution mechanisms (Plaß & Jähnert, 2021; Rovny et al., 2025). The Federal Ministry for the

³ As described in more detail above, an additional institutional actor influencing German climate policy is the Federal Constitutional Court [BVerfG]. In 2021, the court declared parts of the *Klimaschutzgesetz* unconstitutional because it failed to sufficiently regulate emission reduction beyond 2030.



Environment under SPD minister Svenja Schulze played a central role in revising the *Klimaschutzgesetz* in 2021 (Deutscher Bundestag, 2026).

Among opposition parties, positions diverge significantly. Alliance 90/The Greens advocated for more ambitious climate targets, including a coal phase-out by 2030, faster renewable expansion and stronger CO₂ pricing combined with climate dividends to reduce social impacts (Plaß & Jähnert, 2021; Otteni & Weisskircher, 2022). The Left Party also supported ambitious climate goals, such as climate neutrality by 2040, but emphasised social justice, public investment in industrial transformation and stronger state intervention. The party rejects CO₂ pricing for heating and proposes direct state support for the transition to climate-friendly heating systems (Rovny et al., 2025; Clean Energy Wire, 2025).

In contrast, the liberal FDP preferred market-based mechanisms such as emissions trading and technology-neutral carbon pricing over regulatory instruments. It proposed postponing Germany's climate neutrality to the EU target of 2050 and replacing sector-specific regulations with technology-neutral carbon pricing mechanisms (Clean Energy Wire, 2025). The far-right AfD represents a clear outlier, rejecting the scientific consensus on climate change and opposing climate policies, such as CO₂ pricing or renewable energy expansion. Instead, it supports the continued use of fossil fuel, the expansion of coal power and the reintroduction of nuclear energy (Otteni & Weisskircher, 2022; Radtke et al., 2018: 25).

Civil society actors crucially shaped public discourse and political pressures for stronger climate action. Environmental organisations such as the Environmental Action Germany [DUH], Greenpeace, World Wide Fund [WWF] and Friends of the Earth Germany [BUND] engaged in advocacy, litigation and public campaigns (Löhr, 2018: 114). The DUH supported climate litigation that led to the 2021 Constitutional Court ruling, arguing that the original Climate Law did not meet the requirement of the Paris Agreement (Deutsche Umwelthilfe, 2021). Climate movements raised public awareness and shaped the political agenda in the climate policy debate in 2021, in particular Fridays for Future [FFF]. The movement mobilised large-scale climate protests, including in Germany (Zilles, 2023).

Economic actors were equally influential due to Germany's industrial economy, influencing the climate policy debate via lobbying, expert contributions, such as in the analysed public hearings, and particularly compensation schemes. The Federation of German Industries [BDI], representing 38 industry associations, generally supported the energy transition while emphasising international competitiveness and compensation for energy-intensive industries (BDI, 2026; Löhr, 2018: 114). The energy sector itself underwent significant transformation. Major German companies such as RWE, E.ON, EnBW and Vattenfall diversified their portfolios towards renewable energy sources, following political and societal changes, particularly the nuclear phase-out in 2011 and the agreed upon coal-phase out planned for 2038 (Löhr, 2018).

Labour unions played an important role, as climate policy directly affects employment in carbon-intensive sectors, which can entail a dilemma between protecting jobs and supporting long-term environmental stability (cf. Räthzel & Uzzel, 2011). The dual role of trade unions, representing industrial and societal concerns, often results in support for policies combining climate protection with industrial modernisation and employment campaigns (Cremer, 2024). The German Trade Union Confederation [DGB], representing 5.6 million members across eight trade unions, supported climate protection but stressed the need for a socially just transition (Löhr, 2018: 114). Industrial unions such as IG BCE adopted a more cautious position toward decarbonisation, emphasising gradual transformation and government support to prevent job losses in affected sectors (Cremer, 2024: 189).

Local authorities are key to climate transformation, as they represent regions impacted by, or set to be affected by climate change, which is why climate adaptation is important for them. In our dataset, local authorities are represented: The Association of Municipal Enterprises [VKU] represents local utilities and distribution network operators, many of which view themselves as strategic actors in the energy system. Municipal utilities invest in renewable energy projects and decentralised energy systems and often advocate for regulatory frameworks facilitating cooperation between citizen energy initiatives and local utilities (Löhr, 2018: 114).

3.3 Prevalent Narratives and Emotions

Next, we present findings, as identified from our document analysis. Several questions can be raised to the material: Which narratives were identified to dominate the policy debate on the German climate law? Which problems are described, which solutions are suggested, and how do they relate to emotions? Which emotions are evoked by whom? Whose states of feeling are evoked, who are the targets of these emotions? To



answer these questions, we first start with an overview of the differences identified between policy actors and their use of emotionalisation and narrativity.

3.3.1 Differences between Actors and their Use of Emotionalisation and Narrativity

The policy actors, including politicians, institutional actors, civil society, economic actors and labour unions, used different climate policy narratives and emotionalisation strategies often linked to their climate policy positions (see Section 3.2 for a detailed overview of actors and positions) or to other strategic objectives within the policy process, such as electoral competition, interest group representation or political mobilisation. Table 1 in the Appendix summarises the actors' most frequent emotionalisation strategies and objects of emotionalisation.

Most narratives in our dataset by party politicians are conflict-oriented, shaped by emotionalised villainy (dismay and anger) and hero-constructions (affinity). The different roles of parties in the government (CDU/CSU and SPD) vs. in opposition (Greens, Left, AfD, FDP) are noticeable. Intra-coalition conflicts are openly debated, that can be interpreted in light of the upcoming Federal elections in September 2021. As for the governing parties, the SPD emphasises the need for policy action through emotionalisation and uses *compassion* to call for redistribution and social support mechanisms, while presenting itself and the constitutional court as a hero (via affinity). In contrast, The CDU/CSU blames the Green party, through *dismay*, portraying them as restricting individual freedoms, while portraying itself and the government as heroes (through affinity).

Opposition parties use *anger* and *dismay* towards the government as a villain, though their storylines differ substantially: The far-right AfD directs *dismay* at the government, the FDP and sometimes the Greens, portraying climate policy as harmful to citizens and the economy. Also, the FDP blames the government with *anger* and *dismay* and criticises excessive state regulation and the associated problems for economic and technological development, via *suffering*. The Left Party criticises the government via *anger* for implementing socially unjust climate policies that do not consider the burdens suffered by citizens in precarious circumstances (victim-suffering). The Greens use *affinity* to promote climate action and praise the constitutional decision, while expressing *compassion* for future generations and the climate (through suffering) and blaming governmental inaction.

Civil society and organised actors use less personalised emotionalisation and focus more on emotionalised problem-descriptions and solutions. Similarly to the Greens, environmental organisations and activists express *joy* and *affinity* regarding the constitutional decision, portray the constitutional court as hero and underline the need for climate policy action (affinity-moral). They also stress the problem of climate change via *dismay*.

By contrast, economic actors primarily evoke *fear* and *dismay*, by highlighting potential economic decline and portraying businesses and citizens as victims of climate transformation. Trade unions and local authorities similarly emphasise *fear* and *dismay* when describing problems, but highlight the vulnerability of the affected groups and regions (via suffering/ compassion-victim) and the need to support them through fair cost distribution (compassion-moral). Public agencies, such as environmental foundations and energy agencies, use *fear* and *dismay* to describe the problems of climate change and climate governance and call for international solutions. The constitutional court, which is mainly portrayed as hero via positive emotions, invokes narratives that employ *affinity* and *trust*, legitimising stronger climate action and legal reform, while invoking *compassion* and *suffering* for future generations as victims of climate change.

3.3.2 Differences in Emotionalisation Across Text Types

The three text types (parliamentary debates, newspaper articles, public hearings) differ in their levels of narrativity and emotionalisation, partly because they involve different policy actors and audiences. Parliamentary debates, featuring the German government and opposition party actors, show the highest level of narrativity and emotional diversity, with a broad range of emotions, particularly *dismay*, *compassion* and *affinity*. Government and opposition parties strategically use *anger* and *dismay* to assign blame to villains, compassion to emphasise vulnerable victims such as citizens or the climate and affinity or trust to legitimise policy action and portray themselves or the constitutional court as heroes.

The newspaper articles, being directed at a general public, contain a broad range of narrators, including climate activists, environmental organisations, party politicians, the constitutional court, science representatives and economic actors. Narrativity and emotionalisation are high, with positive emotions, such as affinity, dominating, followed by *dismay* and *trust*. Narratives in news articles stress the urgency of climate action and praise the constitutional court or environmental organisations ruling through *affinity*, while *fear* and *dismay*



underline the severity of the climate crisis and the lack of political action and of related socio-economic challenges. The public hearings show lower narrativity and emotionality overall, reflecting their communication context, where interest groups and experts aim to influence policy making via factual language and rational arguments. Emotional expressions are reserved, focussing on problem descriptions through fear and dismay, alongside calls for action, via affinity. Compared to the other texts, in the public hearings personalised blaming plays a smaller role.

Following this overview of narrative emotionalisation patterns between policy actors and between text types, the next sections exemplify and discuss the predominant narratives in more detail.

3.3.3 Prevailing Narrative Themes and Emotions in the 2021 German Climate Law Debate

The debate on the climate law in 2021 was a key moment in German climate policy, highlighting broader dynamics within the policy field, tensions between actor coalitions and competing narrative legitimisations of their policy positions. Across the analysed texts, five narrative strands emerged, each linked to distinct narrative strategies and emotionalisation; yet it needs to be mentioned that these narrative strands partly overlap.

The first narrative, promoted especially by environmental organisations, praises the Constitutional Court's 'groundbreaking' intervention as a window of opportunity for climate policy. Closely related, a second narrative portrays future generations as the main victims of insufficient climate policy. A third theme views climate policy as a redistributive issue and discusses specific instruments, such as the renewal of heating systems. This perspective is countered by a 'technological openness' narrative advanced mainly by economic actors, which sometimes overlaps with criticism of the Green Party and climate-sceptic narratives promoted by centre-right and far-right actors. The last narrative theme, which our analysis identified as predominant, focuses on the specific challenges of climate governance at national and international levels.



3.3.3.1 A Moment of Hope for Climate Policy After the 'Groundbreaking' Constitutional Court Ruling

The Court ruling is welcomed and celebrated as a window of opportunity for climate action by most actors, despite their different climate policy positions. Actors positively refer to the court ruling, which declared the previous law unconstitutional, thereby acknowledging the burden on future generations and hoping to enshrine climate protection in the constitution. The overall emotional tone of these narratives is positive, shaped by expressions of *affinity*. Specifically joy, hope and agreement are expressed by speakers, when referring to the Court ruling. Rhetorical superlatives, such as 'historic' and 'groundbreaking' underline the uniqueness of the case. The most frequent emotion-element combination in this context is affinity-hero and affinity-moral, where the Constitutional court and its ruling are praised.

With the exception of the far-right AfD, who does not mention the court ruling, all other party actors welcome the intervention of the Federal Constitutional Court as a hero. The governing parties, CDU and SPD, strategically referred positively to the ruling and used it for legitimising their own proposals and for positioning themselves in light of the upcoming election in autumn 2021. This is illustrated in the narrative by Federal Minister for the Environment Schulze (SPD) (explicit emotion words are highlighted in bold, and the whole phrase is highlighted in case of implicit emotionalisation):

*'The existing Climate Protection Act is less than two years old. But the Federal Constitutional Court **wants** more - more climate **protection** and more intergenerational justice, and that is a **good** thing. The SPD also **wanted** more from the outset, and a broad majority of people in Germany **want** it too. The SPD has been calling for a climate protection law for over ten years. **All of you here in Parliament know who did not want this and who then tried to water down my draft.**'⁴ (PS-5)*

The first part of the narrative builds on expressions of *affinity*, linked to the narrative moral and heroes. Associated emotion words 'want' and 'good' portray the ruling itself as a desired solution and present the accountability of the constitutional court and the SPD as a responsible government actor. Schulze's narrative continues by implicitly blaming her coalition partner CDU/CSU for having delayed climate action. The CDU/CSU does not properly respond to this critique. Instead, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Altmaier (CDU) called the ruling '*epochal for climate protection and the rights of young people*' (NA-3)⁵

In particular the plaintiffs, who initiated the lawsuit, Environmental Action Germany (DUH) and climate activists Fridays for Future, celebrated the court ruling. In several narratives, *joy* and *happiness* are reported as actors' felt emotions. This is exemplified by the narrative by Fridays for Future:

*'Environmental organisations described the ruling as **groundbreaking**. Luisa Neubauer from Fridays for Future said on Thursday: 'It is an incredibly **great** day for many. Climate protection is a fundamental right.(.)'⁶(NA-3)*

Environmental actors' emotional expressions range from joy about the court ruling to *anger* towards the government, blaming them as villain:

'Felix Ekardt, the legal representative (of environmental organisation BUND), said that the court had slapped the German government in the face.'⁷(NA-3)

The two narratives exemplify the ambiguous emotions of activists and environmental organisations, as well as energy agencies (such as DENA) in light of the court ruling. Across actors, *anger* and *dismay* towards the government as a villain is the emotion-object linkage that largely dominates. Environmental activists blame the government for its previous inaction and a lack of accountability. Conversely, *joy* and *hope* about the court

⁴ 'Das bestehende Klimaschutzgesetz ist noch keine zwei Jahre alt. Aber das Bundesverfassungsgericht will mehr – mehr Klimaschutz und mehr Generationengerechtigkeit, und das ist auch gut so. Auch die SPD wollte von Beginn an mehr, und eine breite Mehrheit der Menschen in Deutschland will das auch. Seit über zehn Jahren fordert die SPD ein Klimaschutzgesetz. Sie alle hier im Parlament wissen, wer das nicht wollte und wer dann auch versucht hat, meinen Entwurf zu verwässern.' (PS-5)

⁵ 'Es ist epochal für Klimaschutz und Rechte der jungen Menschen' (...)(NA-3)

⁶ 'Umweltverbände bezeichneten das Urteil als bahnbrechend. Luisa Neubauer von Fridays for Future sagte am Donnerstag: 'Es ist ein unfassbar großer Tag für viele'. Klimaschutz sei ein Grundrecht.' (NA-3)

⁷ 'Felix Ekardt als rechtlicher Vertreter sagte, dass das Gericht der Bundesregierung eine schallende Ohrfeige verpasst habe.' (NA-3)



ruling and the portrayal of the Constitutional Court as a hero-character express *hope* for a different form of climate governance, where the need for more climate action is enshrined and protected through constitutional courts, and not undermined by unstable and opportunistic governments. In this sense, the narrative overlaps with the narrative viewing climate governance as a problem that requires different forms of policymaking.

3.3.3.2 *The Burden Placed on Future Generations and the Present Society*

Another central narrative surrounding the court ruling focuses on future generations and frames climate policy as a redistributive task. Promoted mainly by environmental actors and the Left and Green parties, this narrative presents climate protection as a matter of international justice and fundamental rights. Future generations are portrayed as vulnerable victims whose freedoms are being restricted by current political inaction. Victim constructions are underlined through emotions linked to *compassion*, *suffering* and *dismay*. Centering on future generations, this narrative entails a strong problem-description and blaming of the government, consisting in the lack of adequate policymaking, which ultimately postpones emissions reduction, shifting the burden disproportionately into the future. Also here, heroes are the constitutional court, climate activists and progressive political actors who advocate for ambitious and immediate climate measures.

A key argument is that current climate policy consumes too much of the remaining CO₂ budget before 2030, leaving future generations with drastic reduction obligations and limited room for adaptations. This narrative is illustrated by the environmental organisation WWF, whose representative criticises the proposed law for lacking sufficient ambitions for emission reduction:

*'In order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees and not impose a disproportionate burden on future generations, at least 70 per cent would be necessary,' says Viviane Raddatz, climate expert at the environmental foundation WWF. Moreover, measures are now needed quickly to achieve the targets. 'Otherwise, even the best targets will be useless.'*⁸
(NA-11)

Here, future generations are described through words linked to *dismay*, as being disproportionately burdened, while the lack of policy action is constructed as the central problem. Calls for swift policy action are associated with expressions of *affinity*, stressing that delayed action could otherwise undermine climate targets.

This narrative gains particular force from the court ruling, which introduces a new judicial figure of 'future generations' as rights-bearing subjects. By arguing that postponing emissions reductions beyond 2030 violates fundamental rights, the court frames climate change as a matter of intergenerational justice and constitutional protection of future freedoms. Environmental activists reinforce this argument by linking scientific findings with moral responsibility, emphasising that climate action must be taken immediately and burdens should be distributed fairly across generations.

3.3.3.3 *Climate Policy as a Question of Inequality and Distribution of Costs*

Several policy actors narrate climate policy as a problem of redistribution, where climate change potentially enhances existing inequalities and where costs and burdens of climate policies need to be shared. Although this narrative is brought forward by several actors, it does not dominate on the level of decision-making and within the governing coalitions. This is notable in the emotional tone of the narratives. While expressions of *compassion* dominate, negative emotions, like *dismay*, characterise problem-descriptions and villain-characterisations and are directed at governmental inaction.

This narrative addresses social justice and focuses on citizens in less powerful positions, such as tenants, workers and older people as victims. These groups are likely to be disproportionately affected by high climate or policy costs, such as the CO₂ price. In contrast, more powerful societal groups, such as economic elites, landlords and the government, are portrayed as villains who should be held accountable. The problem-description in terms of social inequality is often met with calls for solutions that aim to achieve social balance, supporting victims and distributing burdens more fairly between societal groups. The portrayal of the unfair situation of victims, such as the calls for supporting them through socially just policies, are often supported through expressions of *compassion*.

⁸ 'Um die Erderhitzung auf 1,5 Grad zu begrenzen und den nachfolgenden Generationen keine unverhältnismäßige Bürde aufzulasten, wären mindestens 70 Prozent nötig', sagt Viviane Raddatz, Klimaexpertin bei der Umweltstiftung WWF. Im Übrigen brauche es nun rasch Maßnahmen, um die Ziele zu erreichen. 'Sonst nutzen auch die besten Ziele nichts.' (NA-11)



Solutions that focus on social justice, meaning a socially just sharing of burdens, are advanced by the Social Democrats (SPD), opposition parties (Greens, Left), environmental organisations, climate activists and trade unions. This narrative is often communicated in more general terms, focusing on the socio-ecological transformation of society and economy, and the subsequent general costs and problems.

The constitutional court, climate activists and environmental organisations are portrayed as heroes, supporting and protecting the climate and citizens as victims through economic benefits (for example through a proposed 'climate dividend' *Klimageld*), and a fair distribution of costs. A narrative by the Green party illustrates this, using emotionalisation, specifically *fear* and *dismay*, to describe the situation of affected victims.

*'Employees in the automotive industry are **worried** about their jobs, people in rural areas are **worried** about their mobility, tenants are **worried** about rising rents.(..)This is precisely why we are making concrete proposals. Our aim is to use the energy subsidy to relieve the **burden** on people on lower incomes in particular. While you are publicly **po-lemicising**, we are taking **care** of the social balance.'*⁹ (PS-1)

Reporting the worries, fears and burdens experienced by victims, emotionally underlines the problem-description of unequal social structures in the climate transformation. The policy solution, to achieve a 'social balance (justice)' is supported through words linked to *compassion*, while the CDU (government centre right) is blamed as a villain through *dismay*.

The inequality and redistribution narrative also involves discussions on specific policy issues within the climate transformation, such as the decarbonisations of heating systems and the transformation to sustainable mobility. When these instruments are discussed, shortcomings of existing climate policy become particularly visible, often reflected in the implicit emotional tone of narratives, highlighting how not only major frameworks, but also specific policy instruments are perceived as having been blocked.

The sustainable renewal of heating systems, that sparked a heated debate in German politics in later years, was already discussed in 2021. Schulze (SPD), the Federal Minister for the Environment at the time, addressed the issue of fairly distributing the costs of sustainable heating systems renovation:

*'We can see from the current debates, for example on the distribution of the CO₂ price for heating costs between tenants and landlords, that people are interested in how climate protection can be organised in a socially **just** way. **It doesn't help - and I say this quite clearly here - when colleagues from the CDU/CSU parliamentary group pretend that landlords should pay half of the heating costs for their tenants in future. We are talking about the CO₂ price - a fraction of these costs. It is only **fair** to split this surcharge at least 50/50, because although tenants influence CO₂ costs through their heating behaviour, it is the landlords who decide which heating system is installed in the basement, which then accounts for the CO₂ costs.'***¹⁰(PS-5)

Schulze employs emotion words, evoking *compassion* for victims and advocating for a socially just policy solution that splits the burden of climate costs between tenants and landlords. At the same time, her narrative implicitly blames her coalition partner CDU/CSU for promoting, according to her, misleading information regarding the policy.

Another topic is sustainable mobility, as transport remains one of the largest sources of CO₂ emissions in Germany. In the public stakeholder hearings, the representative of Environmental Action Germany (DUH, *Deutsche Umwelthilfe*) advocated for the introduction of a speed limit.

⁹ 'Die Beschäftigten der Autoindustrie sorgen sich um ihre Arbeitsplätze, Menschen auf dem Land um ihre Mobilität, Mieterinnen und Mieter über weiter steigende Mieten. Genau dafür machen wir konkrete Vorschläge. Unser Ziel ist es, mit dem Energiegeld vor allem Menschen mit geringerem Einkommen zu entlasten. Während Sie öffentlich polemisieren, kümmern wir uns um den sozialen Ausgleich.' (PS-1)

¹⁰ 'Wir sehen an den aktuellen Debatten, zum Beispiel um die Aufteilung des CO₂-Preises bei den Heizkosten zwischen Mietern und Vermietern, dass es die Menschen interessiert, wie Klimaschutz sozial gerecht organisiert werden kann. Da hilft es nicht – das sage ich hier auch ganz deutlich –, wenn Kollegen aus der Unionsfraktion so tun, als ob Vermieter künftig die Hälfte der Heizkosten für ihre Mieterinnen und Mieter zahlen sollen. Es geht um den CO₂-Preis – einen Bruchteil dieser Kosten. Es ist nur gerecht, diesen Aufschlag zumindest hälftig aufzuteilen, weil Mieterinnen und Mieter durch ihr Heizverhalten zwar die CO₂-Kosten beeinflussen, aber die Vermieter darüber entscheiden, welche Heizung im Keller steht, was dann eben die CO₂-Kosten ausmacht.' (PS-5)



*'That is why I would like to focus on key immediate measures that we believe are **unavoidable** and **must** be implemented immediately. First and foremost is the speed limit of 120 km/h on the motorway, 80 km/h outside built-up areas and 30 km/h in urban areas. In Spain, a speed limit of 30 km/h has just been introduced in urban areas. This measure could save up to 100 million tonnes of CO₂ by 2034. Germany **must** do this. **It's long overdue. We are very much alone in the absence of this measure.**'¹¹(PH-2)*

The speaker uses emotional appeals, linked to *affinity* and *fear*, that convey urgency and underline the need to implement measures for sustainable mobility and a speed limit. The DUH representative implicitly assigns blame to Germany, portraying the country as lagging behind in international comparison and conveying an underlying tone of *dismay*.

3.3.3.4 Competing Narrative: Achieving Climate Neutrality through 'Technological Openness'

A competing narrative can be understood as part of a broader narrative of 'technological openness,' which challenges both the feasibility and fairness of far-reaching, long-term climate commitments. In contrast to the narrative focussing on redistributive aspects of climate policy, this perspective narrates climate policy as a matter of market-based technological innovation. This perspective is articulated by various economic and industry actors in public hearings and newspaper articles and by party actors, the Christian Democrats, as well as liberal FDP.

The narrative reframes intergenerational fairness by emphasising that protecting future generations should not come at the expense of overburdening the present ones, who may bear disproportionate costs under overly rigid policies. A central argument concerns the limits of long-term planning. Detailed targets for 2030–2050 are framed as unrealistic given uncertain technological development, and that strict regulations risk undermining competitiveness and merely shifting emissions elsewhere. Instead, they advocate for less regulation and market-based mechanisms as more flexible pathways to climate neutrality. The view of an uncertain, unforeseeable future is linked to emotionalisations of *fear*, caused by too much regulation, but also to emotions of *hope (affinity)*, for the possibilities of technological progress. This is exemplified in the narrative by the Managing Director of the mechanical engineering association VDMA:

*'However, it is **difficult** to regulate the period from 2030 to 2050 in detail today, as technological progress will open up new **possibilities** that we are **not yet aware of.**'¹²(NA-6)*

Within this narrative of technological openness, the economy and citizens are portrayed as victims of excessive state intervention and regulatory policies, while the government assumes the role of a villain by hindering economic prosperity and international competition, and ultimately the progress toward climate neutrality. The moral of 'technological openness', tied to the concepts of less regulation and of cooperation with the economy, provides conditions for innovation and action for economic actors, thus turning them into heroes. The view of an uncertain, unforeseeable future is linked to the emotion of *fear*, caused by too much regulation, but also to emotions of *hope (affinity)*, for the possibilities of technological progress. The narrative by car lobby organisation VDA is prototypical for this narrative theme:

¹¹ 'Deswegen möchte ich gerne auf wesentliche Sofortmaßnahmen eingehen, die aus unserer Sicht unausweichlich sind und sofort umgesetzt werden müssen. An erster Stelle steht das Tempolimit mit 120 km/h auf der Autobahn, 80 km/h außerorts, 30 km/h in der Stadt. In Spanien wurde gerade eine Höchstgeschwindigkeit von 30 km/h in der Stadt eingeführt. Mit dieser Maßnahme könnten bis 2034 bis zu 100 Millionen Tonnen CO₂ eingespart werden. Deutschland muss das tun. Das ist lange überfällig. Wir stehen sehr alleine da mit dem Fehlen dieser Maßnahme.' (PH-2)

¹² 'Schwierig ist jedoch, die Zeit von 2030 bis 2050 bereits heute im Detail zu regeln, da der technische Fortschritt neue Möglichkeiten eröffnen wird, die wir heute noch nicht kennen.' (NA-6)



*'It is important for us to focus on competition instead of bans and on openness to technology instead of a planned economy.' (...) We can only successfully manage the record efforts on the path to climate neutrality if German and European industry remain internationally competitive.'*¹³ (NA-6)

Although there are few direct emotion words here, the words 'ban' and 'planned economy' imply a threat of coercion and restriction that the speaker identifies in specific climate policy proposals.

The next example, from a representative of local enterprises, uses explicit expressions linked to *fear* and *dismay* to emphasise the underlying problem:

*'From our point of view, it would appear to be **conflict-laden** and **risky** to conduct a discussion at the present time that narrows down the technological options too much. In fact, we are running into a **dilemma** that can be characterised by the fact that significantly more **ambitious** targets naturally lead to certain developments being anticipated in the market and by the operators of the corresponding assets in generation, but also with regard to the grids.'*¹⁴ (PH-3)

This fear-based problem description presents risks, conflicts and dilemmas tied to far-reaching climate policymaking that would narrow down the possibility of technological innovation.

While in the analysed narratives, technological openness is rarely defined more concretely, the notion is mainly linked to two ideas. As shown in the previous narratives, it suggests the possibility of a 'technical' solution to reducing emissions, circumventing the need to change economic structures to comply with emission reduction targets and thus rendering regulatory policy unnecessary. 'Technological openness' also implies that focusing solely on renewable energy sources (such as solar and wind), would be (ideologically) limiting. This implies opening up to other 'technologies', such as nuclear energy, 'green' gas or hydrogen. Opening up to new climate-neutral technologies is advocated for by economic actors, also on the local authority's level. However, these technologies either carry substantial risks (nuclear energy) or require a lot of energy (green hydrogen and green gas), and are thus not actually compatible with sustainability and mitigation goals.

3.3.3.5 Competing Narrative - Climate Skepticism and Blaming the Green Party

Especially among the far-right party *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) climate-sceptic narratives can be identified. In these narratives, different dimensions of scepticism towards climate policy are expressed that can be interpreted in light of Forchtner and Lubarda's (2023) typology of climate scepticism as evidence-, process- or response- based. In the German far right narratives, different dimensions of climate scepticism can be identified, as the narrative by AfD deputy Kraft illustrates:

*'For your contribution to **so-called** climate protection, you are prepared to **neglect** other sustainability goals and indicators that are quite real in contrast. You accept deforestation and the industrialisation of land for the increase in **so-called** renewable energies. But in doing so, you are **contradicting** sustainability goal 15: sustainability in ecosystems on land and sustainable forest management. Cutting down forests to erect a wind turbine is not sustainable forest management.'*¹⁵ (PS-4)

¹³ 'Wichtig für uns ist, auf Wettbewerb statt Verbote und auf Technologieoffenheit statt Planwirtschaft zu setzen', sagte Müller auf Anfrage. 'Die Rekordanstrengungen auf dem Weg zur Klimaneutralität können wir nur erfolgreich stemmen, wenn die deutsche und europäische Industrie international wettbewerbsfähig bleiben.'

(NA-6)

¹⁴ 'Dabei erscheint es aus unserer Sicht konfliktreich und riskant, zum gegenwärtigen Zeit punkt eine Diskussion zu führen, die technologische Optionen zu stark verengt. De facto laufen wir in ein Dilemma hinein, das dadurch beschrieben werden kann, dass deutlich ambitioniertere Ziele dazu führen, dass im Markt und angesichts und seitens der Betreiber von entsprechenden Assets in der Erzeugung, aber auch, was die Netze anbetrifft, natürlich bestimmte Entwicklungen vorweg genommen werden.' (PH-3)

¹⁵ 'Für Ihren Beitrag zum sogenannten Klimaschutz sind Sie bereit, andere, im Gegensatz dazu ganz reale Nachhaltigkeitsziele und Indikatoren zu vernachlässigen. Für den Anstieg der sogenannten erneuerbaren Energien nehmen Sie die Abholzung von Wäldern und die Industrialisierung von Flächen in Kauf. Aber damit widersprechen Sie dem Nachhaltigkeitsziel 15: Nachhaltigkeit in Ökosystemen an Land sowie nachhaltige Waldbewirtschaftung. Das Abholzen von Wald, um eine Windenergieanlage hineinzustellen, ist keine nachhaltige Waldbewirtschaftung.' (PS-4)



Here, the government is portrayed as the villain for implementing harmful policies that do not protect the climate and environment, but instead harm them, which can be interpreted as response-based scepticism. This is conveyed through emotional expressions of *suffering* and *dismay*. Climate policy and environmental protection are presented as opposing forces, questioning the democratic legitimacy of climate policies (process). The repeated use of the word ‘so-called’ indicates scepticism, towards climate protection and renewable energy, questioning the scientific foundation of climate policy. Also, the Green Party is presented as a villain in the AfD narratives.

Interestingly, the centre-right CDU/CSU also sometimes adopt this strategy and blame the Greens. There is some overlap between the climate sceptic narrative and the narrative of technological openness. Similarly to the latter, climate policy is portrayed as restrictive and prohibitive, and thus seen as a regulatory rather than a redistributive issue. This is illustrated in the narrative by CSU deputy Weisgerber:

*‘But now comes the crucial difference: the Greens want a **ban** on combustion engines, a **ban** on oil heating; they want regulatory law. And the truth is: That will make everything even more **expensive**!’¹⁶(PS-6)*

Blaming the Green Party, by portraying them as limiting individual freedom via expressions of anger seems to be a strategy to portray their own party in a better light. This also includes a problem description linked to *dismay* as the green policy would make everything more expensive. Interestingly, the Green Party is being blamed despite not being part of the government, unlike the CDU/CSU, and thus not being responsible for existing climate policies.

3.3.3.6 Climate Governance as a Problem Itself

Another key issue addressed in the debate is climate governance itself and more specifically the temporalities of climate policy making, the need for international coordination and compromise between coalition partners.

Many narratives emphasise the *temporal challenges of climate governance*, as climate change requires urgent solutions but also time for democratic deliberation. Climate policy needs to set binding targets for long periods of time that exceed legislative periods of four years (in Germany) and do not correspond to a logic of electoral campaigns. Actors criticise the slow drafting of the original Climate Law, the hasty amendments following the Constitutional Court’s ruling that leaves out substantial parts. Also, a fast implementation of measures is called for. Here, the government is frequently portrayed as a villain by environmental activists, industry representatives, and opposition parties, all criticising inconsistent or insufficient climate action. Tensions within the governing coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD are visible in the analysed texts, with coalition partners blaming each other as villains. Olaf Scholz, then SPD deputy and later chancellor, wrote:

*‘As I recall, you and the CDU/CSU have prevented exactly what the Federal Constitutional Court has now admonished. But we can correct that **quickly**. Are you on board?’¹⁷(NA-5)*

Here, the SPD frames the CDU/CSU as having blocked earlier negotiations by resisting stronger climate protection targets, thereby contributing to the policy shortcomings later criticised by the Constitutional Court. But also, the SPD is facing criticism based on its position as governmental coalition partner. Other politicians identify the CDU/CSU as a villain, for example The Greens and The Left parties, again referring to the temporal aspect, calling the CSU *‘the major deterrent to climate action.’*¹⁸ (NA-2)

Environmental actors also strongly emphasise the urgency of climate action. Fridays for Future activist Luisa Neubauer accuses the government of having undermined and blocked climate protection measures over the last decades:

¹⁶ ‘Aber jetzt kommt der entscheidende Unterschied: Die Grünen wollen on top das Verbot des Verbrennungsmotors, das Verbot der Ölheizung; sie wollen Ordnungsrecht. Und die Wahrheit ist: Das macht dann alles noch teurer!’ (PS-6)

¹⁷ ‘Nach meiner Erinnerung haben Sie und CDU/CSU genau das verhindert, was nun vom Bundesverfassungsgericht angemahnt wurde. Aber das können wir rasch korrigieren. Sind Sie dabei?’ (NA-5)

¹⁸ ‘Chefbremser im Klimaschutz’ (NA-2).



'(..) the German government had not only slept through climate protection for decades, but had blocked it and thus fueled the climate crisis. She called the judgement of the Constitutional Court 'great', which determined that all generations have equal rights. What sounds banal is revolutionary. 'Suddenly the future actually plays an officially legitimised role,' said Neubauer. '19 (NA-9)

Neubauer expresses *anger* towards the government, accusing it of having 'slept through' climate policy, and thereby failing to respond to the urgency of the climate crisis. Thereby, she portrays governmental inaction not as carelessness, but as actively fuelling and exacerbating the climate crisis. This contrasts with her enthusiastic praise of the Constitutional Court as a hero and its ruling, centering again on the future. Similarly, other environmental actors and party representatives by the Greens and Left, call for the need of urgent and quick measures, underlining this call through notions of *affinity*:

'Climate policy must therefore be greatly accelerated,' said Felix Ekardt and Franziska Heß, who represented BUND in the lawsuit. '20 (NA-2)

Another dimension concerns the *international nature of climate governance*. While on the one hand actors argue that Germany should take on a pioneering role in climate policy for the European Union, economic actors, international organisations and some politicians find a mismatch between the global nature of emissions and the national scope of policymaking. This narrative calls for caution regarding climate policy making at the national level. It partly overlaps with the narrative of technological openness, in being sceptical towards state intervention. Within this narrative, European institutions and international agreements such as the Green Deal, are portrayed as heroes. The EU is constructed as a crucial arena for effective governance, with instruments such as CO₂ pricing and shared targets aligned with the 1.5 or 2-degree goals seen as key solutions. Germany, by contrast, is depicted as constrained in its ability to act independently. A central argument is the concept of interdependence, suggesting that unilateral efforts may be counterproductive, leading to relocation effects or economic disadvantages. The narrative by an economic representative outlines this:

'There are good scientific reasons why unilateral voluntary commitments to reduction targets for the distant future are the wrong approach and could even backfire. (..) If you want to combat climate change effectively, you have to prioritise cooperation and innovation,' said the economist. 'Otherwise, we will get bogged down with our self-centred policies - and global CO₂ emissions will continue to rise dramatically. '21 (NA-2)

Emotional expressions of *dismay*, *anger* and *fear* are employed to illustrate the dramatic consequences of unilateral policy action as a problem, which could ultimately result in Germany and its economy becoming victims. This narrative's moral overlaps with that of the narrative on technological openness, as international cooperation and innovation are portrayed as feasible solutions.

¹⁹ '(..) die Bundesregierung habe über Jahrzehnte hinweg den Klimaschutz nicht nur verschlafen, sondern ihn blockiert und damit die Klimakrise vorangetrieben. Sie nannte das Urteil des Verfassungsgerichts 'großartig', das festgelegt habe, dass alle Generationen gleiche Rechte hätten. Was banal klinge, sei revolutionär. 'Auf einmal spielt die Zukunft tatsächlich eine offizielle legitimierte Rolle', sagte Neubauer.(NA-9)'

²⁰ 'Die Klimapolitik muss also stark beschleunigt werden', so Felix Ekardt und Franziska Heß, die die Klage für den BUND vertreten hatten.' (NA-2)

²¹ 'Es gibt gute wissenschaftliche Gründe dafür, dass unilaterale Selbstverpflichtungen auf Minderungsziele für die ferne Zukunft der falsche Weg sind und sogar nach hinten losgehen können.' Darauf hätten beispielsweise die wissenschaftlichen Beiräte des Bundeswirtschaftsministeriums und des Bundesfinanzministeriums hingewiesen. 'Wer den Klimawandel effektiv bekämpfen möchte, muss vor allem Kooperation und Innovation setzen', so der Ökonom. 'Ansonsten werden wir uns mit unserer selbstzentrierten Politik verzetteln -und die globalen CO₂ Emissionen werden weiter drastisch ansteigen.' (NA-2)



4 Country Report: Policy Narratives and Emotions in the Estonian Climate Law Debate

4.1 Case Context

Estonia's Climate-Resilient Economy Act (*Kliimakindla majanduse seadus*)²² provides the legislative event around which this analysis is organised. Unlike the German case, where the analysis centres on a completed legislative revision, the Estonian draft bill has not yet been presented for formal discussion in the parliament and the materials analysed here concern the preparation of act. The protracted and politically charged process of drafting, consulting, contesting and ultimately stalling a piece of legislation generated substantial public discourse and political emotion despite not yet having reached the parliamentary floor.

The act emerged in the context of EU-wide momentum toward national climate legislation. As an EU member state, Estonia is bound by the European Climate Law's objective of climate neutrality by 2050, by sectoral commitments, as well as the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECPs) that all member states have been required to prepare. Estonia's GHG emissions per capita exceeded the EU average in 2022 (Climate Action Progress Report, 2025). The main source is the energy sector, followed by land use, land-use change and forestry. Forestry and energy in particular have been the focus of sustained public contestation (Loik & Jürgenson, 2023; Estonian Environment Agency, Forestry Department, 2025).

After a brief and contested public engagement process, the draft bill was presented to the public under the title 'Climate-Resilient Economy Act' in August 2024 and sent to interministerial and public consultation with a one-month deadline for feedback. The draft outlined the law's basic parameters, including sectoral emission reduction targets for 2030, 2035 and 2040 and the overarching goal of climate neutrality by 2050. The responses were overwhelmingly critical and converged around several recurring fault lines: the pace and ambition of emission reductions, the adequacy of impact assessments, the balance between regulatory certainty and economic flexibility and the question of whether a dedicated climate law was needed at all.

Through late 2024, the climate law debate became entangled with broader political debates. A coalition reshuffle in early 2025 saw the Social Democrats leave the government coalition, which now consisted only of the Reform Party and Eesti 200 Party. The climate portfolio remained with the Reform Party throughout this period, with all three ministers who held the position between 2024-2025 coming from its ranks. An increasingly conflictual public debate about certain green transition initiatives, like wind-farms, and rising energy costs had cooled enthusiasm for ambitious climate legislation across the political spectrum. Meanwhile, at the EU level, the political landscape was also changing. The incoming European Commission signalled a more cautious approach to climate regulation, and several member states stalled key Green Deal commitments (see Moore, 2025; Di Sario, 2025).

A revised version of the bill reached the cabinet in November 2025 with notable adjustments: the 2040 emission reduction target was lowered from 82% to 80% compared to 1990 levels; the obligation for emission-free energy supply by 2040 was replaced with a provision allowing up to 60% of dispatchable capacity to remain fossil-fuelled and the bill was made shorter, with greater emphasis on sectoral roadmaps to be developed after the law's adoption. The bill is expected to enter parliamentary proceedings in 2026, in a political climate markedly different from the one in which it was conceived, shaped by the EU's retreat from several key commitments, a shifting global security landscape, and waning public enthusiasm for green transition across Europe.

4.2 Important Policy Actors and their Positions

The Estonian climate law debate involved actors from across the political spectrum, the business community, environmental organisations and academia. The debate was structured around the contestation of the bill's drafting process, with positions clustering less around clearly defined coalitions than around recurring fault lines, such as the pace and ambition of emission reductions, the adequacy of impact assessments, the balance between regulatory certainty and economic flexibility and the question of whether a dedicated climate law was needed at all.

²² *Kliimakindla majanduse seadus* (Kliimaministeerium, 2024a); *Kliimakindla majanduse seadus* (Kliimaministeerium, 2024b); 'Kliimaseadus jõuab üllatuslikult juba sel nädalal valitsuskabinetti' (ERR, 2025)



The voices that dominate the corpus by volume (government officials, industry organisations, opposition politicians) are not the voices most concerned about climate outcomes. Actors presenting climate change as an existential problem occupy a small fraction of the discursive space. This is because the debate is structured around a legislative proposal and the forums in which that proposal was processed structurally privilege procedural, legal and economic concerns over the ecological one. The genre of text shapes what gets said and by whom, and most of these spaces were designed to evaluate a draft law, not to deliberate about climate. The asymmetry of voices and the relative prominence of certain narratives over others reflect the discursive space in which the debate was conducted.

4.2.1 The Climate Ministry and the Government's Conditional Support

The Climate Ministry, which drove the bill's preparation, framed it as a necessary framework for directing Estonia's economic transition (Kliimaseaduse eelnõu väljatöötamise kavatsus, 2023). According to the ministry website and to the explanatory memorandum (Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu seletuskiri, 2024) of the draft bill, Estonia's existing climate obligations require action, and a dedicated law would provide legal clarity. The costs of inaction, in terms of both climate damage and EU non-compliance penalties, were argued to exceed the costs of transition and a clean economy was presented as a competitive advantage (Kliimaseaduse eelnõu väljatöötamise kavatsus, 2023; Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu seletuskiri, 2024).

Successive climate ministers articulated this position with shifting emphases. Earlier in the process, the framing was more assertive about climate ambition and the opportunities of clean growth (Michal OP-4; Alender OP-12). After the coalition reshuffle, the tone shifted toward pragmatism and flexibility (Sutt NA-7), reflecting both changed political dynamics and a broader European recalibration away from climate ambition.

During the feedback process, various ministries expressed their broad support for climate action, but the support for the bill was conditioned on substantial revisions. The breadth and intensity of institutional criticism signalled that the bill lacked internal consensus across government (NA-3; NA-4).

4.2.2 Political parties

The positions of Estonia's political parties on climate and sustainability had already crystallised, to varying degrees, in the 2023 election programmes. Estonian parties have struggled to articulate sustainable development as a comprehensive framework, tending to engage with it through the narrower lens of economy-environment interactions (see Marling & Keller, 2023).

Reformierakond (The Reform Party), a liberal party and the dominant force in Estonian politics for much of the post-independence period, led the coalition as senior partner and held the climate portfolio for the duration of the bill's development. In their 2023 election programme, the focus remained firmly on economic benefit, with sustainability framed as a matter for specialists who would ensure continued prosperity without requiring voters to curtail consumption (Marling & Keller, 2023). In the climate law debate, this orientation translated into support for the transition as economically rational while resisting what the party framed as excessive regulation (Michal OP-4; Alender OP-12).

Eesti 200, a centrist-liberal party that entered parliament in 2023, similarly framed climate policy as an economic opportunity in its election programme (Marling & Keller, 2023). In parliamentary sessions, the environment committee chair from E200 was supportive of the legislation but hedged his stance on some key issues like oil shale and forestry (Taro PS-1; Taro PS-2) and the potential administrative burden the law could cause (OP-7).

During the 2023 elections, SDE (Social Democrats) was the only party to introduce the concept of 'energy inequality' and to acknowledge explicitly that well-being must respect ecological limits. Their language was more direct than that of the Reform Party, emphasizing transitions and shifts rather than reforms (Marling & Keller, 2023). Regarding the climate law, SDE members emerged as the coalition's most forceful pro-climate voice, advocating for greater ambition and stronger social safeguards until leaving government in early 2025, after which it reframed the revised bill as a retreat from substantive climate policy (Izmailova OP-11; Maran OP-15).

Keskerakond (The Centre Party), historically a centrist party with a strong Russian-speaking electoral base and rural support, mentioned sustainable development in their election programme but did not include detailed policy positions (Marling & Keller, 2023). Notably, their 2023 programme pledged to maintain oil shale-based energy production to serve its northeastern Estonian electorate. This was framed as being done in a 'sustainable' manner, though the programme provided no details on what that meant (Marling & Keller, 2023).



In the climate law debate, the position of Keskerakond has focused narrowly on energy security, arguing that oil shale remains Estonia's only credible guarantee of energy independence (Laats NA-6).

Isamaa (Fatherland), a national conservative party, engaged with sustainability through the lens of heritage and presented a vision of careful land management that would allow the continuation of the current way of life (Marling & Keller, 2023). Their programme stated that Estonia's own capacity to influence the climate is 'extremely low' and warned against 'climate populism' (Marling & Keller, 2023). In the climate law debate, Isamaa framed its critique not as climate scepticism but as fiscal responsibility, citing the potential costs and administrative burdens of the law as too heavy for Estonian society (Reinsalu PS-3; Reinsalu NA-6).

EKRE (Estonian Conservative People's Party), a right-wing populist party, took a distinctly different stance. Its short, straightforward programme rejected the green transition outright, stating 'We do not agree with a mad green transition that impoverishes our people and businesses' (Marling & Keller, 2023). Regarding the climate law, EKRE has adopted the most uncompromising position, questioning the scientific basis for climate action and framing the green transition as a threat to Estonia's economy and sovereignty (Epler PS-1; Poolamets OP-16).

Parempoolsed (the Right-wingers), a non-parliamentary right-wing party, presented a brief programme that did not engage with sustainability (Marling & Keller, 2023). However, the party featured prominently in the climate law debate through opinion articles written by affiliated academics (OP-9). Presenting their opinions as evidence-based rather than ideological, the party's perspective largely aligned with the opposing points raised by various industry actors (c.f. SF-5; SF-7; SF-9).

While not elected into the parliament, Eestimaa Rohelised (The Estonian Greens) provided the most detailed election programme on sustainability. From the outset, the climate crisis was emphasised as a central concern and explicitly linked to fossil fuel dependence. The language was more emotional than that of other parties, incorporating specific terminology related to environmental issues to the programme and occasionally adopting an apocalyptic register (Marling & Keller, 2023). As a party, the Greens have not featured prominently in the climate law debate (at least not in the texts published on Estonian Public Broadcasting).

4.2.3 Industry and Business Actors

The business community's engagement with the climate law was extensive, vocal and overwhelmingly critical, especially in the extractive industries (oil shale, peat, timber). Several concerns recurred across public statements and opinion articles: the absence of socioeconomic impact assessments, the seemingly disproportionate expectation that the private sector would bear the bulk of transition costs, the lack of sectoral roadmaps that would translate abstract targets into actionable plans and the perception that many of the proposed regulations were excessive and harmful to competitiveness (SF-1; SF-2; SF-3; SF-4; SF-5; SF-7; SF-9; NA-2).

For example, the Estonian Employers' Confederation refused to endorse the bill, characterising it as an incomplete framework that creates uncertainty rather than resolving it, and ultimately recommended that the government abandon the standalone law in favour of working through existing legislation (SF-4). This position was echoed by several sector-specific associations, particularly in forestry and timber, which argued that the bill would have a harmful impact on the economy (SF-7).

Representatives of non-renewable industries also voiced their opposition to the draft bill, arguing that existing EU emissions trading mechanisms were sufficient and that additional domestic regulation amounted to overregulation, competitive distortion and, in some cases, unconstitutional interference in mining rights (SF-1; SF-3; SF-9). Renewable energy producers supported climate legislation but criticised Estonia's lack of investment in renewables (NA-2). Nuclear energy advocates framed the debate around CO₂ pricing as the central market mechanism and argued for small modular reactors as a long-term complement to renewables (OP-5; NA-2).



4.2.4 Environmental Organisations and Academic Institutions

In their feedback to the draft law, environmental organisations, coordinated through the Estonian Council of Environmental Organisations²³, welcomed the climate law's creation but argued that the proposed emission reduction trajectory was incompatible with the Paris Agreement (SF-8). Their critique was that the bill would neither protect against climate impacts nor provide the legal certainty that various stakeholders were demanding. These concerns were voiced by environmental activists in opinion articles as well (OP-8; OP-10).

Various academic voices from Estonia's universities also commented on the draft bill. The Estonian University of Life Sciences criticised the bill for inconsistency with existing forestry development plans and for treating forests primarily as a sector to be constrained rather than as a resource for climate adaptation and carbon sequestration (SF-6). Researchers from the University of Tartu (OP-6) raised concerns about the rushed engagement process and noted that the bill focused almost exclusively on emissions reduction while remaining vague on mitigation and with no concrete targets for adaptation to climate change when it comes to infrastructure, for example.

Although these voices contributed substantively to the debate, their volume in the corpus is modest relative to that of industry and government actors, reflecting the structural asymmetry noted above.

4.3 Prevalent Narratives and Emotions

The Estonian climate law debate is structured around the shortcomings of the law. Across the corpus, actors identify what is wrong with the draft law, with the policy process or with the climate trajectory but rarely propose concrete alternatives. The distribution of blame and vulnerability varies by genre: stakeholder position papers assign villain and victim roles at comparable rates, constructing a narrative of blame that simultaneously foregrounds the conduct of the Ministry of Climate as well as the bill's provisions and its impact. News articles present a wider range of narratives, since they include governmental actors articulating and defending the bill alongside critical responses. Parliamentary speeches and opinion articles combine these approaches, mixing critique of the bill with competing claims to represent the public interest. Opinion articles and news coverage also give space to voices less prominent in the formal consultation process, including environmental organisations, climate activists, and academic commentators.

In the debate, emotional meaning is mostly conveyed through assessments of the policy and judgments of actors and institutions rather than expressed through explicit appeals to emotion. The discursive space in which the bill was discussed favours this kind of evaluation. As a result, actors most practiced at constructing assessment through ostensibly neutral prose hold an advantage in shaping the emotional landscape of the debate. However, emotion is not absent from texts that use seemingly factual or technical language; it simply takes forms other than explicit emotion words. A text that presents cost figures, lists missing analyses or catalogues unresolved legal questions constructs an emotional orientation as effectively as one that explicitly names alarm or indignation. The difference is that it does so through *emotional* talk rather than *emotion* talk (Bednarek, 2008, 2009; c.f. Deliverable D1.4).

By examining the targets of evaluation, we can identify the debate's underlying priorities. The policy process and the bill's specific provisions absorb the greatest share of evaluative attention, followed by the socioeconomic consequences of the transition and the competence or conduct of the actors involved. Physical climate phenomena receive comparatively little sustained attention. When climate change does appear, it is typically invoked briefly to establish the context before the texts redirect attention to economic costs, procedural deficiencies or regulatory design. As a result, even though the legislative event that organises the debate is a response to climate change, climate is consistently displaced as an object of emotion by other targets.

The distribution of evaluative agency varies by genre. News coverage relies most heavily on attributed evaluation, with assessments sourced to external actors in keeping with journalistic conventions of reported speech. Parliamentary debates favour collective attribution, using first-person plural forms such as 'we', 'our country', and 'our economy'. This reflects the rhetorical function of parliamentary speech in contracting dialogic space around shared interests. Stakeholder position papers tend toward authorial evaluation, with organisations taking direct ownership for their assessments. Opinion articles move between authorial and impersonal registers and often present contested positions as 'common sense'.

²³ Estonian environmental NGOs often coordinate their activities, petitions and related advocacy work. The response to the draft bill that we analysed was submitted jointly by the Estonian Council of Environmental Organisations (members listed here: <https://eko.org.ee/liikmed>), Päästame Eesti Metsad MTÜ, and Fridays for Future Estonia.



The analysis is organised around five narratives. The first is the dominant narrative articulated by the Ministry of Climate and its political allies: green transition as economic opportunity. This narrative is dominant not by volume but by institutional position, since it generates the legislative event to which all others respond. The four counter-narratives are: a procedural failure narrative that criticises the quality of the draft bill; an economic burden narrative that frames the transition as a threat to competitiveness and livelihoods; a sovereignty and security narrative that reframes energy policy as a matter of national independence; and a climate urgency narrative that argues the law does not go far enough. These narratives are not mutually exclusive. In fact, some of the harshest critiques of the bill come from opposite sides of the debate: from actors who find the bill too ambitious and from actors who find it insufficiently ambitious. Despite their disagreement on substance, what unites much of the counter-narrative space is a shared negative assessment of the bill.

4.3.1 The Dominant Narrative: Transition as Economic Opportunity

The Ministry of Climate framed the Climate-Resilient Economy Act primarily as an instrument for securing Estonia's economic competitiveness rather than as environmental protection legislation (Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu seletuskiri, 2024; OP-4; NA-7). The 2024 explanatory memorandum draft opens with the claim that the law creates the basis for a 'competitive and resilient' economy, foregrounding clean technology, greater domestic resource use and reduced environmental impact as conditions for economic growth (Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu seletuskiri, 2024). Seven specific areas of competitive advantage are identified: large-scale renewable energy production, more efficient resource use, low-emission fuel production, climate and environment-related digital solutions, research-based applications and developments, the coastal economy and the use of new mineral resources (Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu seletuskiri, 2024). A pamphlet produced by the ministry states the core argument plainly: 'a smaller environmental footprint is a competitive advantage' (Kliimaseaduse kaksleht, 2023). Export and financial markets, the pamphlet argues, already prefer green business models. Estonia's choice, therefore, is whether to capture the benefits of an inevitable shift or be overtaken by it (Kliimaseaduse kaksleht, 2023).

Competitiveness is the bill's organising logic, but the degree of emphasis on climate ambition shifted across the three Reform Party ministers who oversaw it (Kristen Michal, Yoko Alender, and Andres Sutt). Earlier in the process, the narrative was more assertive about climate ambition and the opportunities of green growth (Michal OP-4; Alender OP-12). After the coalition reshuffle in early 2025, the tone shifted toward pragmatism and flexibility. The latest Minister of Energy and the Environment, Andres Sutt, foregrounded breathing room and 'roadmaps' on the emissions trajectory and emphasised that the 2040 target could be lowered (Sutt NA-7). The shift from 'competitive advantage' to 'roadmaps' captures the trajectory of the dominant narrative across the period under analysis.

The evaluative orientation of this narrative is predominantly positive: the transition is beneficial, rational and economically advantageous. The texts never directly name hope or optimism. Instead, they generate it through positive economic projections, sector-specific opportunities and comparisons with successful green policies in other European countries. Official communication from the Ministry of Climate presents renewable energy as already the cheapest option, fossil fuel subsidy reform as fiscally rational and energy infrastructure investments as common sense (OP-4; OP-12; NA-5). The effect is to make resistance to the transition appear irrational. It is effective because it presents the transition as the natural operation of impersonal market forces, rendering opposition not wrong but beside the point. When urgency appears, it is framed around economic competitiveness, not ecology. The risk is not climate catastrophe but falling behind trading partners or losing investments elsewhere.

Two complementary strategies illustrate how this narrative presents the green transition as inevitable, desirable, and good for business. The first strategy constructs positive evaluation through appreciation, foregrounding the benefits the law is expected to provide. Minister of Climate Alender argued:



'The Climate-Resilient Economy Act is an agreement that provides certainty that we continue moving in the right direction and clarity that public and private sector investments will help preserve the living environment for our children and promote clean economic growth and improve wellbeing.' (OP-12)²⁴

The passage builds a hopeful orientation through the accumulation of positive outcomes. The inclusive pronoun in 'for our children' and the framing of the law as an 'agreement' rather than a regulation evokes a sense of consensus and shared purpose. The future-oriented optimism here is not presented as a feeling but as a reasonable assessment of the situation.

The second strategy is the neutralisation of emotion: the Ministry of Climate's formal communications and supporting texts present the transition in technocratic, market-rational terms that position the government's stance as beyond contestation. Writing in an opinion article during his time as Minister of Climate, the current Prime Minister Michal frames the green deal as an economic growth plan ('majanduskasvu kava') and reduces the debate to a question of pace rather than direction ('küsimus on vaid tempos, mitte suunas') (OP-4).

Within the dominant economic opportunity narrative, the government and forward-looking entrepreneurs are cast as heroes guiding Estonia toward a competitive clean economy. The implicit victims are various groups who would suffer from inaction: future generations would bear the environmental costs of climate change while businesses that fail to adapt would suffer from reduced competitiveness. Villains are largely absent, though those who resist the transition are implicitly positioned as obstacles to progress (OP-4). Beneficiaries are constructed broadly: Estonian society as a whole is presented as benefiting from the legislation, with the explanatory memorandum specifically listing new jobs, lower long-term energy costs and improved international competitiveness as gains for both businesses and households.

An interesting aspect of this narrative is its reactive quality. Although the dominant narrative is institutionally authoritative, it is discursively responsive rather than agenda-setting. The opportunity argument surfaces most prominently when the bill is challenged. For example, Michal's opinion article (OP-4) builds its argument *against* opposing claims, rather than by arguing *for* the bill. In a parliamentary session on climate policy (PS-1), environment committee chair Igor Taro (E200) also invoked the economic opportunity narrative, arguing that the bill could provide a competitive edge for Estonia's businesses. However, this argument took up only a fraction of the debate time claimed by the economic harm and procedural critiques it was responding to. This suggests that while the dominant narrative frames the purpose of the legislative event, it does not necessarily control which arguments receive the most attention.

4.3.2 The Procedural Failure Narrative

The narrative with the broadest support in the corpus is that of procedural critique. Regardless of the position on climate ambition, the draft law is presented as a failure in lawmaking. This narrative is shared, with different emphases by multiple ministries (NA-3; NA-4), sector-specific industry organisations and lobbyists for trade associations (SF-1; SF-2; SF-3; SF-4; SF-5; SF-7; SF-9; OP-3; OP-5; OP-14), environmental activists (OP-8; OP-10; SF-8; NA-1) and academic contributors (OP-1; OP-6; OP-9; OP-10; SF-7). It also appears across all four text types, making it the most consistent narrative in the corpus. The core claims are that the bill is vague, not supported by scientific evidence and constitutionally questionable. It sets targets without specifying responsibility, enforcement mechanisms or consequences for non-compliance. It grants wide administrative powers but provides no legal criteria for their exercise. It is stressed that the draft bill was pushed through consultation too quickly to permit serious deliberation.

Within this narrative, those drafting the bill are primarily seen as villains. Victims depend on the speaker's position and include businesses facing legal uncertainty, vulnerable affected populations inadequately served by a flawed law or even the rule of law. Heroes or beneficiaries are not prominently constructed in this narrative, which is oriented toward harm identification rather than positive outcomes. Where beneficiaries appear implicitly, it is in the suggestion that a properly drafted law would benefit everyone.

²⁴ 'Kliimakindla majanduse seadus on kokkulepe, mis annab kindluse, et jätkame liikumist õiges suunas ning selguse, et riigi ja erasektori investeeringud aitavad säilitada elukeskkonda meie lastele ja edendada puhta majanduse kasvu ning parandada heaolu' (OP-12).



Where the dominant narrative treats delay as the primary risk, this counter-narrative sees the danger in moving too fast. Across multiple stakeholder texts, the underlying issue is that a rushed process represents a democratic failure. Time pressure is cast not as a motivator but as a threat to quality, with feedback invoking references to ‘rushing’, ‘incomplete information’, and ‘legal clarity’ (SF-1; SF-4 SF-4). An ‘unjustifiably fast tempo’ is viewed as a primary cause of the bill’s deficiencies, prompting demands to restart the process (SF-4).

Although many stakeholder feedback submissions are written in measured, technical language, the procedural failure counter-narrative still expresses strong opposition to the draft bill. The texts rarely name frustration, dismay, or alarm directly. Instead, negative implicit emotion is conveyed by cataloguing specific deficiencies: the absence of socioeconomic impact assessments, the gap between stated goals and available instruments, the unquantified costs to specific sectors and the disconnect between the bill’s ambitions and the private sector’s capacity to absorb them (SF-4; SF-5; SF-7; SF-9). Though the language is formally neutral, the cumulative force of its taken-for-granted claims is that the bill is fundamentally flawed. The texts invoke negative judgments of the process of drafting the law without directly voicing the dismay or frustration that those judgments imply.

Criticism of the draft bill also came from within the government. The Ministry of the Interior refused to endorse the bill, stating that

‘The climate law draft is /.../ predominantly general and declarative, consisting largely of broad principles and guidelines for public sector policymaking, and therefore does not meet the requirements of good legislative practice.’ (NA-4)²⁵

Like the stakeholder submissions, rather than voicing political opposition, the text catalogues specific deficiencies and presents them as failures against a vague standard of ‘good legislative practice’. Yet while the listed deficiencies describe the draft law (its generality, its reliance on guidelines rather than binding obligations), the conclusion drawn is about the process of drafting. The conjunction ‘and therefore’ frames the negative judgment as a logical inevitability arising from the observed shortcomings, not as a subjective assessment. The critique thus shifts from what the text contains to how it was made, allowing the ministry to issue a strongly negative evaluation while avoiding any explicit stance on the policy itself.

In opinion articles, where genre conventions permit greater directness, the same procedural critique finds sharper expression. After several paragraphs of measured analysis of the law’s shortcomings and the costs it would impose, one author concludes with a passage that condenses the entire procedural critique into a single image:

‘But if the goal is to distribute tasks to cover commitments already taken at the national level, then what we get is not a law that builds society’s confidence, but tablets of the law of environmental burdens. Nobody needs those.’ (OP-1).²⁶

The metaphor ‘tablets of the law’ carries biblical and authoritarian connotations. It represents the legislative project not as democratic lawmaking but as an act of imposition from above. The final sentence, ‘nobody needs those’, is notably flat and colloquial after the elevated metaphor. This shift in tone frames the argument as self-evident, implying that it is a position no reasonable person could disagree with. What might have seemed like a contested claim becomes a matter of common sense.

What is remarkable about this narrative is how it enables actors with fundamentally opposed positions to share an emotional target. Environmental organisations stressed that the law is too weak to deliver on its stated

²⁵ Kliimaseaduse eelnõu on siseministeeriumi hinnangul valdavalt üldsõnaline ja deklaratiivne ning koosneb suuresti valdkonna üldpõhimõtetest ja juhistest avalikule sektorile poliitikakujundamiseks, mistõttu ei vasta see hea õigusloome nõudele’ (NA-4)

²⁶ ‘Kui aga eesmärk on jagada laiali ülesandeid riiklikul tasemel juba võetud kohustuste katteks, siis saame endale mitte ühiskonna kindlustunnet kasvatava seaduse, vaid keskkonnakooormiste käsulauad. Neid pole kellelegi vaja.’ (OP-1)



ambitions (NA-1; SF-8). Industry actors highlighted that the law is too demanding and costly to be economically viable (SF-4; SF-5; SF-9; OP-13). Opposition politicians characterised the law as ideological overreach (PS-1; PS-3; OP-16). Academic voices found that the law lacks a scientific and analytical foundation (OP-6; OP-9). Even within the government, the ministries' feedback identified problems with the drafting of the bill (NA-3; NA-4). The procedural critique thus serves as a rare point of convergence – actors who prefer the bill to have stronger regulation and actors who wish to reduce regulation both ground their opposition in the quality of the drafting process.

4.3.3 The Economic Burden Narrative

The most prominent counter-narrative in the corpus frames climate policy as a disproportionate economic burden on Estonia's small, fossil-dependent economy. This narrative dominates the stakeholder feedback, opinion articles and appears with considerable force in parliamentary debates across party lines.

The central argument is that the bill lacks credible economic analysis, does not quantify transition costs or how they will be covered and does not demonstrate cost-effectiveness. According to this narrative, the law will damage Estonian economic competitiveness, raise energy and living costs, undermine investment confidence and ultimately make the green transition harder to achieve, since a weakened economy cannot fund the necessary investment. This creates an interesting paradox in many of the analysed texts where climate goals are accepted in principle but the draft bill is rejected as counterproductive to achieving them.

Within this counter-narrative, the private sector, workers and taxpayers are positioned as victims. The government is presented as a villain, a negligent actor whose ambitions exceed the economy's capacity, and the bill as an instrument that creates economic harm. Interestingly, in some texts, even beneficiaries are constructed in negative terms. The state-owned energy company Enefit Power is occasionally portrayed as an unfair beneficiary of provisions that disadvantage private competitors (OP-13). More broadly, the narrative implies that EU member states with larger economies and fewer domestic resources to constrain benefit from the regulatory framework at Estonia's expense, positioning Estonia itself as the victim (SF-1; SF-3; SF-4; SF-7; SF-9; OP-1; OP-2; OP-3; OP-13; OP-14).

The narrative also absorbs concerns about administrative burden. While conceptually distinct from economic harm, these concerns are still consistently framed in economic terms. Requirements for climate reporting by public institutions, greenhouse gas footprint assessments and new planning obligations for local governments are evaluated not as procedural inconveniences but as costs to the state budget, to already overburdened institutions and to taxpayers and businesses (NA-3; NA-4; SF-1; SF-3; SF-5; OP-1; OP-2; OP-3; OP-7; OP-9; OP-14; PS-1; PS-3).

The economic burden narrative deploys the widest range of emotionalisation strategies in the corpus. In formal stakeholder consultation responses, the expression of critique resembles that of the procedural failure narrative. Texts rarely inscribe negative affect directly; instead, they invoke it through the accumulation of unquantified costs and unanswered questions. But where the procedural narrative builds its case through procedural shortcomings, the economic burden narrative anchors its critique in material consequences (such as rising costs, lost competitiveness, and declining household purchasing power) that are already emotionally legible to the intended audience without requiring further rhetorical work.

When emotion is inscribed rather than invoked, it tends to appear in opinion articles. An article authored by the director of the Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry states:

'One often gets the impression that in Estonia, there is a desire for the fastest and most ambitious green transition, but in doing so, the competitiveness of businesses is being sacrificed, and it is our own Estonian people who end up as sufferers' (OP-3)²⁷

The verb phrase 'is being sacrificed' inscribes negative judgment by attributing both agency and moral weight to those advocating for the transition. The sacrifice is presented as deliberate but, in the author's view, misguided. The passive construction obscures who is performing the sacrifice and this obscurity strengthens the emotional effect. The sacrifice appears systemic rather than the act of any identifiable actor, making it harder to contest. The noun 'sufferers' inscribes negative affect directly. Through the inclusive pronoun 'our', the reader is positioned as a member of the suffering community. The sentence thus moves from inscribed

²⁷ 'Sageli jääb mulje, et Eestis tahetakse teha kõige kiiremat ja kõige suuremat rohepööret, kuid sellega ohverdatakse ettevõtete konkurentsivõime ning kannatajateks on meie oma Eesti inimesed' (OP-3)



negative assessment of policy and its effects on the economy ('competitiveness... is being sacrificed') to inscribed negative affect ('sufferers') to the construction of a national collective as victim.

The same text naturalises economic primacy as 'basic truths' (*põhitõed*). The author prefaces his arguments about manufacturing and other businesses as the foundation for social benefits by stating that it is '*embarrassing to state the basic truths, but it must be done*'.²⁸ Through this prefacing statement, the author inscribes negative affect (embarrassment) not at the policy itself but at the need to state what should already be obvious. The following claims (that social goods depend on successful businesses) are not argued for but presupposed as already established. The construction positions economic competitiveness not as one argument among several but as the non-negotiable baseline that the bill has failed to accommodate. The author treats economic primacy as a 'taken-for-granted' proposition, as an assumption so deeply embedded that questioning it would itself be 'embarrassing' (see Martin & White, 2005). Competitiveness and economic interests thus become the self-evident ground from which any viable climate policy must proceed in this narrative.

The positioning of the speaker as truth-teller against government self-deception is another recurring strategy. One opinion article argues that '*We must honestly acknowledge that the commitments and goals set in the climate law are neither affordable nor sensible for Estonia or the European Union*'. The adverb 'honestly' performs a strategic discursive function. It inscribes a negative judgment of the government's position, specifically that it lacks competence or integrity, while simultaneously positioning the author as a truth-teller. The implied contrast is between the government's economically optimistic framing (presented as wishful or misleading) and the author's own stance (presented as realistic and candid). Through this framing, the economic burden argument is recast not as a self-interested position but as a reluctant acknowledgment of reality. This reinforces the narrative's broader claim that economic constraints are facts to be reckoned with rather than priorities to be weighed against others.

The economic burden narrative anchors itself in the present, emphasising the country's prolonged recession, rising energy prices, declining household purchasing power and investment decisions that should not be constrained by regulation. Making economic costs vivid, immediate, and personal gives the economic burden narrative considerable rhetorical traction within the corpus, especially when contrasted with the abstract and seemingly distant costs of climate change. The proposed solution within the economic burden narrative is not to abandon climate goals but to restart the process: complete the assessments, develop sectoral roadmaps, quantify costs, identify funding sources and only then set legally binding targets. The demand is for investment and legal certainty, things the bill, in this account, fails to provide (NA-1; NA-2; NA-3; NA-4; SF-1; SF-3; SF-4; SF-5; SF-7; SF-9; OP-1; OP-2; OP-3; OP-5; OP-9; OP-13; OP-14; OP-16).

4.3.4 The Sovereignty and Security Narrative

A further cluster of texts discusses the climate law in terms of national sovereignty, energy security and geopolitics. This narrative often co-occurs with the economic burden narrative. Its primary advocates are opposition politicians and energy sector representatives, though elements appear across a broader range of voices.

The argument takes two related forms. In its energy security version, Estonia's geopolitical situation as a small state on NATO's eastern flank is presented as requiring guaranteed domestic energy capacity. Oil shale is thus reframed from an environmental liability into a guarantee of energy independence. According to this argument, geopolitical security considerations more broadly should be factored into climate policy, rather than subordinated to emissions targets (PS-1; PS-3; NA-4; NA-6; OP-2; OP-13; OP-14; OP-16; SF-3).

In its sovereignty variant, the argument shifts to regulatory autonomy: Estonia is portrayed as a small country burdened by EU-level commitments or as one that has been too eager to adopt these commitments without adequately considering national interests (OP-2; OP-13; OP-14; OP-16; SF-1; SF-3; SF-7; SF-9). As with the economic burden narrative, this too constructs a victim-villain dynamic: Estonia and its citizens are victims of EU regulatory overreach, mediated by domestic officials who have failed to defend national interests during negotiations (OP-2; OP-16; PS-3).

Several texts construct skepticism toward the policy by questioning its origins and motivations (OP-2; OP-3; OP-13; OP-14; OP-16; NA-2). But not all actors deploying this narrative oppose the green transition outright. While claiming general support for climate policy, several industry actors and even coalition politicians argue that the draft bill might undermine its own objectives through excessive regulation (OP-1; OP-3; OP-7; OP-14). As one business leader argues:

²⁸ 'Piinlik on põhitõdesid korrata, aga teha seda tuleb: ilma töötleva tööstuse ja muu ettevõtluseta Eesti riik toimida ei saa' (OP-



*'Europe has itself to blame, because the unreasonable bureaucracy cultivated in Brussels has become a threat to the urgently needed green transition'*²⁹ (OP-14).

In this framing, climate policy is affirmed as necessary, but EU implementation is cast as the actual obstacle. Domestic officials who adopt these regulations uncritically are thus positioned as complicit in a self-defeating project.

Attempts to delegitimise the draft bill often take the form of framing it as an ideological project. This claim appears with varying degrees of directness in texts by opposition politicians (OP-16; PS-1; PS-3), several industry actors (OP-2; OP-3; OP-13; OP-14; SF-1; SF-7) and one academic contributor (OP-9). The bill is presented as driven by the desire to impose a worldview rather than by evidence or national interest, with its 'green' branding cited as proof of ideological commitment rather than policy orientation (OP-13; OP-16). To label the legislation as ideologically motivated is to imply that drafting it is not a legitimate exercise in governance but an attempt to conceal an agenda and advance a particular set of values under the guise of climate action.

In one parliamentary debate, an opposition politician from EKRE (Epler) challenges the Environmental Committee Chair Igor Taro (E200) by asking:

*'Have you read the IPCC report yourself and familiarized yourself with the scientific data, or have you read propagandistic mainstream media and put together your speech based on that?'*³⁰ (PS-1).

The question inscribes negative judgment through 'propagandistic', which evaluates its object not as biased or incomplete but as deliberately deceptive. Combining it with 'mainstream' extends the scope of this judgment from isolated outlets to the entire media landscape, invoking a narrative in which established media operates as an instrument of manipulation. The evaluation is embedded in a presupposition rather than asserted as a claim. The structure of the question ('have you read X yourself, or have you read Y') presents itself as an inquiry that does not invite a response. It functions as an accusation and casts doubt on the credibility of the addressee. Unless the addressee has read the IPCC report, they will either have to concede their reliance on 'propagandistic' sources or reject the presupposition embedded into the question.

In his response, the committee chair does not challenge the label and treats 'propagandistic mainstream media' as a valid category, stating that *'I have certainly not read propagandistic mainstream media'*.³¹ By failing to push back, his response becomes complicit in normalising the idea that mainstream media is propagandistic. The respondent may believe they are defending themselves against an accusation, but they are doing so on the questioner's terms.

Across the corpus, the sovereignty narrative ranges from measured critiques of how policymakers have handled EU regulatory obligations to stronger claims that these were adopted without democratic mandate or adequate assessment of national interests. Several texts inscribe negative judgment by foregrounding the perceived asymmetry between what Estonia is expected to sacrifice and what larger member states contribute. A peat industry representative writes:

*'I very much hope that in our country, where according to various estimates several tens of thousands of citizens still live below the poverty line, we do not make decisions that look good for the European Union but are harmful to ourselves.'*³² (OP-2).

The sentence is structured around a tension between its surface argument and its evaluative function. 'I very much hope' presents the speaker as temperate and forward-looking, but the clause that follows constructs the outcome it ostensibly hopes to avoid as already probable: decisions that 'look good for the European Union but are harmful to us'. The verb phrase 'look good' suggests that EU-aligned policy is performative rather than

²⁹ 'Euroopa on selles aga ise süüdi, sest Brüsselis viljeldav ebamõistlik bürokraatia on muutunud ohuks hädavajalikule rahvapärandile' (OP-14)

³⁰ 'kas sa oled ise IPCC raportit lugenud ja ka teadusandmetega tutvunud või oled lugenud propagandistlikku peavoolumeediat ja selle põhjal oma kõne kokku pannud?' (Epler PS-1)

³¹ 'Ma kindlasti ei ole propagandistlikku peavoolumeediat lugenud' (Taro PS-1)

³² 'Ma väga loodan, et meie riigis, kus erinevatel andmetel elavad mitukümmend tuhat kodanikku endiselt allpool vaesuspiiri, ei tee me Euroopa Liidu jaoks ilusaid, kuid endale kahjulikke otsuseid.' (OP-2)



substantive. The subordinate clause invoking the poverty line introduces an evaluative standard against which EU-level ambition is judged: a country with tens of thousands of citizens below the poverty line cannot afford policies designed to satisfy external audiences. The possessive pronoun ‘us’ consolidates a national community whose interests are presented as diverging from those of the EU. By setting EU-oriented decision-making against hardship at home, the passage frames climate policy not as a collective good but as a trade-off that sacrifices local welfare for external validation.

4.3.5 Climate Change as an Existential Threat

The narrative of climate change as an existential threat occupies a distinctive position in the corpus: it is the most scientifically grounded, the most temporally expansive and the least represented by volume. Its principal advocates are the Estonian Council of Environmental Organisations, climate activists, academic commentators, SDE politicians and one Minister of Climate (SF-8; OP-6; OP-8; OP-10; OP-11; OP-12; OP-15). It appears most fully developed in the environmental organisations’ joint feedback paper, but it also surfaces in several opinion articles by activists and scientists.

Within this narrative, victims are future generations and vulnerable populations, villains are the slow-moving government and business sector lobbyists and heroes are the courts and environmental organisations. It was also argued that adequate climate action will protect Estonia from EU non-compliance penalties and potential loss of funding, positioning the state as a beneficiary of stronger ambition (SF-8; OP-8; OP-10). Positive evaluation is directed at ambition and precaution, while negative evaluation targets delay and insufficient action.

A notable feature of this narrative is the use of international agreements and frameworks as a rhetorical strategy and as a benchmark for assessing the bill’s adequacy. The Paris Agreement, the IPCC reports, the European Climate Law and the rulings of international courts are invoked as external standards against which the Estonian law’s inadequacy can be measured (SF-8; OP-8; OP-10). This both grounds the position in external, non-partisan authority and it constructs an assessment of the bill’s moral adequacy.

Where other narratives build emotional responses through technical, procedural or economic referents, the climate urgency narrative often names alarm, moral obligation and intergenerational responsibility directly. Terms such as *climate crisis* or *catastrophic consequences* carry evaluative meaning on their surface. This inscribed quality creates a particular dynamic within the institutional context, where directness of this kind risks being read as over-emotional or ideologically loaded, a risk that does not apply equally to inscribed evaluation deployed in regard to economic or sovereignty arguments.

The environmental organisations’ feedback compares Estonia’s proposed targets against carbon budgets and identifies precise points of divergence from its international obligations (SF-8). Their main argument is that the draft climate law’s emission reduction targets fail to meet Estonia’s obligations under the Paris Agreement. The text warns:

‘If all countries followed a GHG budget similar to Estonia’s, it would lead to a rise of at least 3 degrees of average temperature, which would have catastrophic consequences for humanity.’³³ (SF-8)

The quote inscribes negative affect directly through the negative adjective ‘catastrophic’. However, the primary emotional force of the passage derives not from inscribed affect but from the invoked evaluation generated by the conditional construction (‘If all countries followed... it would lead to...’). The reader is positioned to extrapolate from Estonia’s GHG budget to a global outcome and from a 3-degree rise to catastrophe. The sentence constructs a scenario in which the bill’s logic, if generalised, produces global disaster.

The draft bill fails, in this view, to meet responsibilities toward future generations and toward the global community of nations committed to limiting global warming. The target of emotion is the habitability of the future. The Fridays for Future activist’s opinion article states:

³³ ‘Kui kõik riigid lähtuksid Eestiga sarnasest KHG eelarvest, viiks see vähemalt 3-kraadise keskmise temperatuuri tõusuni, millel on katastroofilised tagajärjed inimkonnale’ (SF-8)



'The question is not whether we set ourselves an ambitious goal to join the world's five richest countries or the most environmentally friendly countries, but whether we preserve or destroy the conditions necessary for life'.³⁴ (OP-8)

The contrastive structure of the statement ('not whether... but whether') dismisses the terms on which the public debate has been conducted thus far and rejects economic ambition as the primary concern of the debate. It reframes the question as a choice between preservation and destruction and inscribes a negative judgment not only of the bill but of the entire discursive field in which it has been debated. The lexical pair 'preserve' and 'destroy' inscribes affect directly: 'destroy' names an outcome of violent finality, while 'preserve' carries connotations of care and moral responsibility. The example sentence does not engage with the possibility that economic development and environmental protection might be compatible. Instead, it implies that the attempt to reconcile them is operating within a framework that is too narrow to register the severity of the threat of climate change.

For the reader, this reframes Estonia's targets from a domestic policy question into a matter of global ethical responsibility. However, the very abstraction of the arguments, scaling from one country's emission targets to planetary catastrophe, illustrates the rhetorical challenge this narrative faces throughout the corpus. It must ask the reader to identify with humanity as a whole rather than with the more immediate communities of workers, taxpayers or businesses that other narratives invoke and to respond to consequences measured in decades rather than quarterly reports. When business leaders reference declining competitiveness or rising energy prices, these are already emotionally legible: experienced directly, connected to household budgets and employment. Carbon budgets and intergenerational responsibility require a different kind of interpretive work from the reader, one that the institutional and procedural registers of the Estonian debate do not readily support. The climate urgency narrative is thus the most rhetorically disadvantaged, operating at a level of abstraction and temporal distance that the debate is not structured to accommodate.

5 Comparative Discussion and Conclusions

The comparison covered two distinct cases: Germany, a large, industrial Western-European member state and emitter, whereas Estonia is a small, fossil-dependent Baltic EU member state, located at the EU's eastern border. The two cases also differ in their temporal and political contexts. The German debate analysed here took place in 2021 after a landmark Constitutional Court ruling and in the context of pre-electoral campaigning, while the Estonian debate unfolded in 2024-2025 during the preparation of a climate law draft that was ultimately not enacted. The studies proceeded from the NPF framework but employed partly different approaches to emotion analysis, to bring into a dialogue the methodologies developed within the CIDAPE project. Despite these differences, several similarities emerge between the two cases, alongside particular country-specific dynamics. These similarities and differences are discussed below, after a brief summary of the main findings for each country.

5.1 Germany

The German case illustrates a critical juncture for German climate policy, with the Climate Law Revision following the Constitutional Court ruling in 2021. The ruling was narrated as a momentum of *hope*, particularly by environmental groups and Green politicians. This hope also reflected a desire for a different form of climate governance, less constrained by parliamentary politics, with rights to a sustainable livelihood constitutionally enshrined and protected by the Constitutional Court. At the same time, the debate was characterised by broad expressions of *anger* and *dismay* directed towards the government, constituting the dominant emotional pattern across the material. Different storylines intersected with actors' policy beliefs and strategic orientations, particularly in light of upcoming 2021 elections: Environmental actors and the Green Party blamed the government for delaying climate action, while a coalition of economic actors and liberal and centre-right parties

³⁴ 'Küsimus pole selles, kas seame endale ambitsioonika eesmärgi jõuda maailma viie rikkaima või keskkonnahoidlikuma riigi hulka, vaid selles, kas hoiaime alles või hävitame eluks vajalikke tingimusi' (OP-8)



criticised the government for intervening too much. Climate governance itself was also widely criticised and emotionalised.

A major conflict emerged between climate policy understood as an issue of inequality and redistribution and climate policy framed as something to be solved by markets and technological innovation. Narratives focusing on inequality and redistribution were advanced by coalition partner SPD (Social Democrats), oppositional Green and Left parties, environmental organisations and trade unions. Through expressions of *compassion*, these groups emphasised the need for social support and called for greater state intervention. In contrast, market-based narratives were advanced by economic and industry representatives and the liberal FDP. These narratives illustrated an uncertain future, drawing on *fear*, however with great potential for technological innovation, achievable only through limited state intervention. Long-term climate policymaking was presented as a threat to the economy and to citizens. Climate-sceptic narratives promoted by the AfD similarly portrayed climate policy as a threat, while also questioning its scientific basis and democratic legitimacy.

Since 2021, German climate policy has shifted considerably, with heated debates over policy instruments, such as the heating law or speed limits. While calls for urgent climate action were prominent in 2021, the paradigm of 'technological openness', which prioritises economic growth over climate protection, has since become dominant under the CDU/CSU-SPD coalition formed in 2025. This shift is reflected in the weakening of emission reduction targets through the 2024 Climate law reform, efforts to soften the European ban on combustion engines in 2025 and the rollback of key climate measures such as the heating law in 2026. At the same time, the rise of the far-right AfD has amplified climate-sceptic voices, while blaming the Green Party remains a dominant narrative strategy.

5.2 Estonia

The Estonian case captures a climate law debate at an earlier and more contested stage than the German one. The extended duration revealed a wide range of competing viewpoints on both the law and the process of drafting it. Despite being organised around a legislative response to climate change, physical climate phenomena receive remarkably little sustained evaluative attention. Texts redirect their emotional energy toward economic costs, governance deficiencies, regulatory obligations or geopolitics. The object that supposedly motivates the legislation is consistently displaced as a target of emotion by more familiar concerns in Estonian public discourse.

The most broadly shared emotional target is not climate change but the draft law itself. The procedural failure narrative draws together actors who agree on almost nothing else. Environmental organisations, industry associations, opposition politicians, academic commentators and even multiple ministries converge on a shared negative assessment of the bill's quality. The bill becomes a common villain and its perceived deficiencies, such as its vagueness, insufficient consultation and missing impact assessments, serve as a rare point of consensus across an otherwise fragmented debate. This shows that in polarised Estonian public discourse, agreement on what is wrong may be more achievable than agreement on what should be done and that procedural critique can function as a substitute for substantive deliberation.

The five narratives identified operate within a corpus shaped by structural asymmetries: in volume, where industry and politicians' voices dominate; in temporal framing, where present-tense economic concerns are more immediately legible than long-term ecological ones; and in linguistic realisation, where invoked evaluation through technocratic prose carries an authority that inscribed emotional language struggles to match in formal forums. These asymmetries shape which narratives gain traction. The economic burden and procedural failure narratives operate comfortably within the technocratic register that stakeholder feedback and institutional communication demand, while the climate urgency narrative, with its reliance on inscribed affect and existential framing, finds fewer genres in which its strategies carry authority. The result is a discursive landscape in which a legislative project designed to address a long-term existential risk is evaluated predominantly in terms of its short-term economic costs and in which climate, the very problem the policy purports to address, remains invoked to establish context but rarely sustained as the primary object of deliberation.

5.3 Similarities and Differences

Several similarities between the two cases can be found. First, the climate law debate is heated and conflict-oriented in both countries, with the government portrayed as the main villain by non-coalition parties. In Germany, this is the most prevalent emotional pattern, employed by opposition party members and, to a lesser



extent, by civil society members. The German government is blamed for different reasons: environmental actors, Green and Left Party members and Social Democrats focus on governmental inaction, while economic, right-wing and liberal party actors blame it for intervening too much. In Estonia, too, the government is primarily blamed, although left-wing parties are absent here and the Green Party has not won any parliamentary seats since 2011. In addition to the national government, Estonian actors blame the European Union as the source of pressure to create a climate law.

Second, economic actors use similar narratives and emotions: Both the German narrative of 'technological openness' and the 'economic burden' narrative in Estonia evoke fears that climate policy could harm economic prosperity. The German narrative focuses on the threat presented by excessive state regulation that constrains possibilities for technological innovation. Innovation, in turn, is presented as a solution to climate change and a source of *hope*. The Estonian 'economic burden' narrative does not criticise state regulation per se, but rather the lack of cost-effectiveness within the draft law. The Estonian narrative employs a broad range of emotionalisation strategies, emphasising neglected costs through invoked evaluation.

Third, across the cases, the policy itself and the policy process are viewed as a problem and object for emotions. In both countries, the temporality of climate change and of climate policymaking are discussed, debating whether delaying climate action poses a risk that should be countered by accelerating climate action or whether climate policymaking is already moving too fast. In the Estonian context, the 'climate urgency narrative', which is future-oriented, contrasts with the 'procedural failure narrative', which highlights risks to democratic deliberation. Similarly, in Germany, a future-oriented narrative proposes urgent climate action, whereas opponents advocate a more cautious approach, claiming that climate action must be internationally coordinated.

Fourth, climate sceptic narratives can be identified in both countries: The German far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party portrays climate policy and its proponents (the government and the Greens) as a threat to citizens and nature protection, and questions the scientific basis of climate change. Similarly, the Estonian sovereignty and security narrative presents the climate law as 'ideologically motivated' and portrays its proponents as influenced by the 'propagandistic mainstream' (see Section 4.3).

However, several differences remain, starting with different case contexts and temporal differences. Notably, the German case in 2021 took place before the 2022 Russian war on Ukraine and the related energy crisis, which is clearly noticeable in the Estonian debate and in the Estonia sovereignty and security narrative in particular.

First, the landscape of actors differs between countries, with Estonian data lacking important voices such as trade unions and courts that would represent non-elite perspectives. This is due to the nature of the debate, in which certain voices are given more prominence. Furthermore, opposition narratives in Estonia are more dominant than the government narratives. As a result, the technocratic narrative offered by the government is backgrounded in the debate.

Second, while several German narratives express joy and hope about the court ruling, portraying it as victory for more climate action, there are no such expressions in Estonia. Due to the arguably less ambitious character of the Estonian Climate law, even environmental organisations are criticising the draft. This is likely related to the perceptions of the policy process's democratic quality: The German Court ruling validates the voices of environmental groups, activists and young people; it can therefore be seen as a success for civil society and as a bottom-up process. In contrast, the Estonian Climate-Resilient Economy Act is often perceived as a top-down process ultimately 'directed' by the EU.

Third, social justice appears in different ways: In the German debate, social justice is a key demand of green and left parties and other social justice advocates, referring to vulnerable groups, disproportionately affected by climate or policy costs. This is underlined by emotionalisations of *suffering* and *compassion*. In Estonian narratives, social justice is primarily mentioned by economic actors. They criticise an unfair distribution of transition costs caused by the law, where the national collective as a victim would suffer.

Fourth, emotionalisation varied by genre and speaker: In the German case, parliamentary debates and political speakers showed high levels of emotionalisation, often characterised by personalised blame. In contrast, public hearings of organised stakeholders showed low levels of emotionalisation. When emotions were expressed, they focused on problem framing and proposed solutions. Also in Estonia, emotionalisation varied significantly across genres. Opinion articles presented the most explicit forms of emotionalisation, whereas stakeholder feedback papers were characterised by formal and technocratic language and rather implicit emotionalisation.



5.4 Conclusions

This report has focussed on the climate policy debates in Germany and Estonia. It asked which policy narratives and emotions characterised the climate law debates in the two countries. Across the cases, the findings show that the climate law debates were conflictual and shaped by diverse emotionalisation strategies.

In conclusion, this study has shown that emotions are a key ingredient of climate policy communication and more specifically of climate policy narratives. Despite two very different case contexts, both cases presented conflict-oriented debates, in which actors strategically employed emotionalisation for legitimising their policy positions. The similarities between the cases might point towards general characteristics of emotionalisation in climate policy narratives. Most prominently, governments were blamed as villains and relatedly, climate governance itself became a contested object of emotion, when its temporality and democratic quality was debated. Climate-sceptic and populist narratives also criticised procedural aspects, in addition to questioning the scientific foundation and the outcomes of climate policy.

While illuminating this emotionalised climate policy communication and differences between policy actors, this study has limitations, as it focused on specific time points, in two European Union countries. Future research could further expand the comparison and include other EU-countries as well as non-EU countries, and how their climate policy narratives and emotionalisation develop over time.



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6 Appendix

TABLE 1 ACTORS USES OF EMOTIONS AND NARRATIVE ELEMENTS IN GERMAN CLIMATE LAW DEBATE		
Actor Group	Actor (Speaker)	Emotion–Narrative–Linkages
Party Actors	AfD (Alternative für Deutschland)	Dismay–villain (government, FDP, Greens) Suffering–victim (citizens, economy)
	CDU/CSU (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands; Christlich Soziale Union in Bayern)	Affinity–hero (government, own party) Dismay–villain (Greens)
	Die Linke	Anger–villain (government) Suffering–victim (citizens)
	FDP (Freie Demokratische Partei)	Dismay–villain (government) Anger–villain (government) Suffering–problem (economic decline, overregulation)
	Greens (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN)	Affinity–moral (constitutional decision, urgency for action) Anger–villain (government) Compassion/Suffering–victim (future generations, climate)
Civil Society Actors	SPD (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)	Compassion–moral (redistribution, support) Affinity–hero (constitutional court, own party)
	Economic actors	Fear/Dismay–problem (economic decline) Affinity–moral (need for economic support/action) Fear/Suffering/Dismay–victim (economy, citizens) Affinity–hero (economy)
	Environmental organisations / activists	Affinity–moral (constitutional decision, urgency) Dismay–problem (climate change, lack of action) Affinity–hero (constitutional court, environmental actor) Compassion/Suffering–victim (future generations, the climate)
	Local authorities (Kommunen)	Fear/Dismay–problem (climate change for regions, lack of funding) Affinity/Compassion–moral (to support, fair cost distribution) Dismay/Suffering/Compassion–victim (regions)



	Public agencies / Foundations	Fear/Dismay–problem (climate change, climate governance) Affinity–moral (need for global policy action)
	Trade unions	Fear/Dismay–problem (socio-ecological transformation, political inaction) Fear/Compassion/Suffering–victim (workers) Compassion–moral (support, finance)
Other	Courts / Constitutional Court	Compassion/Suffering–victim (future generations) Affinity/Trust–moral (climate law reform, coherent action)

Note: This table illustrates the dominant narrative emotionalisation strategies by policy actors in the debate on the German climate law. The emotion-narrative linkages describe the discrete emotions most frequently used by these actors, and the narrative elements to which these emotions were linked. The empirical objects of emotionalisation are in parentheses. For example, in the case of affinity-hero (government), an actor most often used the discrete emotion of affinity to characterise the government as a narrative hero.



TABLE 2: LIST OF ANALYZED DOCUMENTS (GERMANY)

Text ID	Date	Datatype	Document name	Actor/Speaker
Public Hearing of Organised Stakeholders (PH)				
PH-1	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.5	Municipal interest representative (Bundesvereinigung der kommunalen Spitzenverbände (BVKom); Federation of German Local Authority Associations)
PH-2	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.10f.	Climate/ environmental organisation: (Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH); Environmental Action Germany)
PH-3	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.8f.	Municipal interest representative: (Der Verband kommunaler Unternehmen (VKU); The Association of Municipal Enterprises)
PH-4	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.5f.	Economy: (Der Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI); The Federation of German Industries)
PH-5	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.7f.	Trade Union (Industriegewerkschaft Bergbau, Chemie, Energie (IG BCE); Trade Union for mining, chemicals and energy industries)
PH-6	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesre-	Trade Union (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB); The German Trade Union Confederation)



gierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.8

PH-7	21 June 2021	Public Hearing, Verbatim Transcript	Wortprotokoll der Sitzung 118. Montag 21 Juni 2021, Beratung des Gesetzentwurfs der Bundesregierung: Entwurf eines Ersten Gesetzes zur Änderung des Bundes-Klimaschutzgesetzes (BT-Drucksache 19/30230). S.6f.	Climate/ environmental organisation (Stiftung Umweltenergierecht (SUER); Foundation for Environmental Energy Law);
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Newspaper Articles (NA)

NA-1	22 April 2021	Newspaper Article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	EU schafft im Klimaschutz Fakten	Government (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); Opposition: (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)); European Union (Europäische Kommission; European Commission); (CDU-Europaabgeordneter (MdEP); CDU-Member of the European Parliament (MEP)); (Grünen-Europaabgeordneter (MdEP); Greens-Member of the European Parliament (MEP))
NA-2	29 April 2021	Newspaper Article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Das Klima entzweit die Koalition	Government (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); (Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP); Free Democratic Party); Opposition: (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)); Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)); Climate/ environmental organisations (Fridays for Future (FFF)); (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland (BUND); Friends of the Earth Germany); Public Agency (die Deutsche Energie-Agentur (dena); German Energy Agency); Economy (Der Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI); The Federation of German Industries)



NA-3	29 April 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Klimaschutzgesetz reicht nicht weit genug	Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)); Climate/ environmental organisation (Fridays for Future (FFF)); Government (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany)
NA-4	30 April 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Die Grünen freuen sich über das Klima-Urteil	Government: (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); Opposition: (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)); Climate/ environmental organisation: (Fridays for Future (FFF)); Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC))
NA-5	30 April 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Bundesverfassungsgericht verklagt ehrgeizigere Klimaziele	Government (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); Opposition (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens))
NA-6	03 May 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Die Furcht vor der Klima-Hektik	Economy (Der Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (BDI); The Federation of German Industries); (Verband der Automobilindustrie (VDA); German Association of the Automotive Industry); (Verband Deutscher Maschinen und Anlagenbau (VDMA); German Engineering Federation); Government (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany)
NA-7	06 May 2021	Newspaper article	Article	Habeck fordert ehrgeizigere Maßnahmen zur CO2-Einsparung	Opposition: (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens));



			(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)			Climate/ environmental organisation: (Fridays for Future (FFF)); Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)); Government: (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany)
NA-8	14 May 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Neues Klimaschutzgesetz sorgt für Ärger und Stauen		Government: (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); (Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP); Free Democratic Party); (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); Economy: (Zentralverband der Deutschen Haus-, Wohnungs- und Grundeigentümer (Haus & Grund); Central Association of German Property Owners); (Verband Deutscher Maschinen und Anlagenbau (VDMA); German Engineering Federation)
NA-9	15 May 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Merkel hält am Kohlekompromiss fest		Government: (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); Opposition (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)); Climate/ environmental organisation (Fridays for Future (FFF))
NA-10	27 May 2021	Newspaper article (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung)	Article	Shell zum Klimaschutz verurteilt		Climate/ environmental organisation (Friends of the Earth Netherlands (Milieudefensie)); Other (London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)); Economy: (Shell plc (Shell))
NA-11	05 May 2021	Newspaper article (Süddeutsche Zeitung)	Article	Faires Angebot auch für die jüngeren Generationen		Constitutional Court: (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)); Government: (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany) ;(Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany);



						Opposition: (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)); Climate/ environmental organisation (Weltweiter Fonds für die Natur (WWF); World Wide Fund For Nature)
NA-12	06 May 2021	Newspaper Article (Süddeutsche Zeitung)	Wir wollen hier Maßstäbe setzen			Regional Government (BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)); (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany); Climate/ environmental organisation (Naturschutzverband Deutschland (NABU); Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union)
NA-13	07 May 2021	Newspaper Article (Süddeutsche Zeitung)	Harte Kritik an neuen Klimazielen			Economy (Verband der Automobilindustrie (VDA); German Association of the Automotive Industry); Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)); Government (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany), (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany)
NA-14	11 May 2021	Newspaper Article (Süddeutsche Zeitung)	Mahnwache vor CSU-Büro „Fridays for Future“ fordert ehrgeizigere Klimaziele			Climate/ environmental organisation (Fridays for Future (FFF))
NA-15	14 May 2021	Newspaper Article (Süddeutsche Zeitung)	Wie aus dem Wind ein Sturm wird			Government (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany) ;(Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany); Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht (BVerfG); Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)); Climate/ environmental organisation (Germanwatch); Economy (Wirtschaftsvereinigung Stahl (WV Stahl); The German Steel Association)
NA-16	23 June 2021	Newspaper Article	Dicke Luft in der Union			Government (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany);



			(Süddeutsche Zeitung)		Economy (Mittelstands- und Wirtschaftsunion (MIT); SME and Economic Union)
NA-17	25 July 2021	Newspaper Article (Süddeutsche Zeitung)	Politisch passiert wenig		Climate/ environmental organisation (Fridays for Future (FFF))

Parliamentary Debate (PS)

PS-1	10 June 2021	Parliamentary Debate, Verbatim Transcript	Stenografischer Bericht, 233. Sitzung, 19. Wahlperiode, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 10 Juni 2021, Beratung zur Personalumsetzungsstrategie des Klimaschutzprogrammes 2030 der Bundesregierung (BT-Drucksachen 19/26218, 19/26708). S. 29944f.	BÜNDNIS 90/Die GRÜNEN (GRÜNE); Alliance 90/The Greens (The Greens)
PS-2	10 June 2021	Parliamentary Debate, Verbatim Transcript	Stenografischer Bericht, 233. Sitzung, 19. Wahlperiode, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 10 Juni 2021, Beratung zur Personalumsetzungsstrategie des Klimaschutzprogrammes 2030 der Bundesregierung (BT-Drucksachen 19/26218, 19/26708). S. 29942-29944.	Die Linke; The Left
PS-3	10 June 2021	Parliamentary Debate, Verbatim Transcript	Stenografischer Bericht, 233. Sitzung, 19. Wahlperiode, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 10 Juni 2021, Beratung zur Personalumsetzungsstrategie des Klimaschutzprogrammes 2030 der Bundesregierung (BT-Drucksachen 19/26218, 19/26708). S. 29941f.	Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP); Free Democratic Party
PS-4	10 June 2021	Parliamentary Debate, Verbatim Transcript	Stenografischer Bericht, 233. Sitzung, 19. Wahlperiode, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 10 Juni 2021, Beratung zur Personalumsetzungsstrategie des Klimaschutzprogrammes 2030 der Bundesregierung (BT-Drucksachen 19/26218, 19/26708). S. 29939f.	Alternative für Deutschland (AfD); Alternative for Germany
PS-5	10 June 2021	Parliamentary Debate, Verbatim Transcript	Stenografischer Bericht, 233. Sitzung, 19. Wahlperiode, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 10 Juni 2021, Beratung zur Personalumsetzungsstrategie des Klimaschutzprogrammes 2030 der Bundesregierung (BT-Drucksachen 19/26218, 19/26708). S. 29938f.	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD); Social Democratic Party of Germany



PS-6	10 June 2021	Parliamentary Debate, Verbatim Transcript	Stenografischer Bericht, 233. Sitzung, 19. Wahlperiode, Berlin, Donnerstag, den 10 Juni 2021, Beratung zur Personalumsetzungsstrategie des Klimaschutzprogrammes 2030 der Bundesregierung (BT-Drucksachen 19/26218, 19/26708). S. 29940f.	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU); Christian Democratic Union of Germany
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TABLE 3: LIST OF ANALYZED DOCUMENTS (ESTONIA)

Text ID	Date	Document Name	Actors / Speaker
Opinion Articles (OP)			
OP-1	07.02.2024	Mida oodata kliimaseaduselt?	Jaak Aaviksoo, akadeemik
OP-2	28.02.2024	Ettevõtlus välist ja sisemist sõda korraga ei võida	Jüri Tiidermann, Turbaliidu juhatuse esimees
OP-3	22.04.2024	Vastasseis rohepöördele kasvab ja see ei ole ime	Mait Palts, Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoja peadirektor
OP-4	23.04.2024	Roheleppe eesmärk on konkurentsivõimeline ja moodne majandus	Kristen Michal, kliimaminister (Reformierakond)
OP-5	23.05.2024	Kliimaseadus vajab mõistetavat CO2 hinda	Kalev Kallemets, Fermi Energia AS juhatuse esimees
OP-6	23.05.2024	Kliimaseadus sündis ahta fookuse ja kesise kaasamisega	Hans Orru, Piia Post, Martin A. Noorkõiv (Tartu Ülikool)
OP-7	08.08.2024	Kuidas vältida kliimabürokratia vohamist	Igor Taro, riigikogu keskkonnakomisjoni esimees (Eesti 200)
OP-8	21.08.2024	Kliimakriisi süvendades kliimakindla majanduse poole?	Kertu Birgit Anton, Fridays For Future Eesti aktivist
OP-9	03.09.2024	Kliimaseadus ei vii meid kliimakindla majanduse poole	Annela Anger-Kraavi, Cambridge Ülikooli kliimamuutuste poliitikate uurimisgrupi juht (Parempoolsed)
OP-10	08.10.2024	Ärивabadus vajab kliimakriisis piiramist	Marilyn Eessalu (MTÜ Eesti Roheline Liikumine) ja Halliki Kreinin (Potsdami Helmholtzi Keskuse Jätkusuutlikkuse Instituudi (RIFS) vanemteadur)
OP-11	14.10.2024	Kliimaseadus isegi ei proovi tulevaid põlvkondi päästa	Züleyxa Izmailova, riigikogu liige (SDE)
OP-12	25.10.2024	Kliimakindel majandus aitab hoida meie elukvaliteeti	Yoko Alender, kliimaminister (Reformierakond)



OP-13	11.02.2025	On aeg loobuda kliimaneutraalsuse seadustamisest	Ahti Asmann, Viru Keemia Grupi juhatuse esimees
OP-14	07.03.2025	Ebamõistlik bürokraatia hävitab rohepööret	Alan Vaht, AS Terminal juhatuse liige
OP-15	24.03.2025	Kas tõesti hakkavad mootorsaed laulma?	Tiit Maran, riigikogu keskkonnakomisjoni liige (SDE)
OP-16	31.03.2025	Kliimaeesmärkidega riiki ei kaitse	Evelin Poolamets, riigikogu liige (EKRE)
News Articles (NA)			
NA-1	06.08.2024	Kliimaseaduse eelnõu tekitab küsimusi nii ettevõtjates kui looduskaitsejates	ERR (Karin Koppel); Maia-Liisa Anton; Henrik Välja; Elena Sapp; Laura Vilbiks
NA-2	13.09.2024	Hinnangud kliimaseadusele: üldsõnaline, majandust kahjustav ja sisutühi	ERR; Rein Drenkhan; Ülle Tamm (Neste); Peeter Raudsik (Sunly); Madis Müller (Eesti Pank) jt
NA-3	19.09.2024	Majandusministeerium: kliimaseaduses on mõjuanalüüsid tegemata	ERR; majandusminister Erkki Keldo
NA-4	20.09.2024	Sise- ja justiitsministeerium valasid kliimaseaduse etteheidetega üle	ERR; siseminister Lauri Läänemets; justiitsminister Liisa-Ly Pakosta
NA-5	25.09.2024	Kasemets: kliimaseaduses puuduvad praktilised sammud sihilikult	ERR; kliimaministeeriumi kantsler Keit Kasemets
NA-6	02.12.2024	Opositsioonipoliitikud: EL-i kliimaeesmärgil puudub piisav mõjuanalüüs	ERR (Valner Väino); Urmas Reinsalu; Rain Epler; Lauri Laats; Jaak Aab
NA-7	23.05.2025	Kliimaseaduse uusversioonis pole 2040. aastaks heitevabaduse kohustust	ERR; energia- ja keskkonnaminister Andres Sutt
Parliamentary Sessions (PS)			
PS-1	21.11.2024	Olulise tähtsusega riiklik küsimus: Kliimamuutuste mõju Eesti õigusruumile ja majandusele	Igor Taro; Rain Epler; etc.
PS-2	29.01.2025	Õiguskantsleri ettepanek: tööstusheite seaduse § 48 lg 2 põhiseadusega kooskõlla viimine	Igor Taro; Andres Metsoja; Kalle Grünthal; Tiit Maran



PS-3	25.09.2025	Olulise tähtsusega riiklik küsimus: Hinnatõusu mõju majanduse konkurentsivõimele ja inimeste toimetulekule	Urmas Reinsalu; etc.
Stakeholder Submissions (SF)			
SF-1	06.09.2024	Eesti Keemiatööstuse Liidu tagasiside kliimakindla majanduse eelnõule	Eesti Keemiatööstuse Liit (EKTL)
SF-2	02.09.2024	Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõust	Eesti Väike- ja Keskmiste Ettevõtjate Assotsiatsioon (EVEA)
SF-3	04.09.2024	Eesti Turbaliit teeb kaks konkreetset ettepanekut seaduse eelnõu ja seletuskirja muutmiseks.	Eesti Turbaliit (ETL)
SF-4	05.09.2024	Tööandjate seisukohad kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõule	Eesti Tööandjate Keskliit (ETKL)
SF-5	04.09.2024	Eesti Põllumajandus-Kaubanduskoja tagasiside kliimakindla majanduse eelnõule	Eesti Põllumajandus-Kaubanduskoda (EPKK)
SF-6	05.09.2024	Eesti Maaülikooli seisukohad Kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõule	Eesti Maaülikool (EMÜ)
SF-7	04.09.2024	Eesti Metsa- ja Puidutööstuse Liidu kommentaar ning muutmisettepanekud kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõule ja selle seletuskirjale (edaspidi Eelnõu)	Eesti Metsa- ja Puidutööstuse Liit (EMPL)
SF-8	04.09.2024	Eesti Keskkonnaühenduste Koja, Päästame Eesti Metsad MTÜ ja Fridays for Future, Eesti (MTÜ Loodusvõlu) seisukoht kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu kohta	Eesti Keskkonnaühenduste Koda; Päästame Eesti Metsad MTÜ; Fridays for Future Eesti (EKO)
SF-9	13.09.2024	Arvamuse esitamine kliimakindla majanduse seaduse eelnõu kohta	Eesti Kaubandus-Tööstuskoda (EKT)

