

INTRODUCTION

Latvia – northeast located European Union (EU) member state (Fig. 1) - has seen its **greenhouse gas emissions growing** despite an impressive decrease in the 1990s. This is in contrast to the trend in the EU, where the average amount of emissions is decreasing (Fig. 2). Aiming to explain the relatively low level of environmental awareness and support to climate-friendly policies in Latvia both at political and societal level, the authors align with scholarship that considers **narratives as important triggers for action** (or inaction). This study focuses on **business narratives in Latvia** to uncover business perception of low-carbon development perspectives and see how entrepreneurs can act as agents triggering change in production and consumption habits.

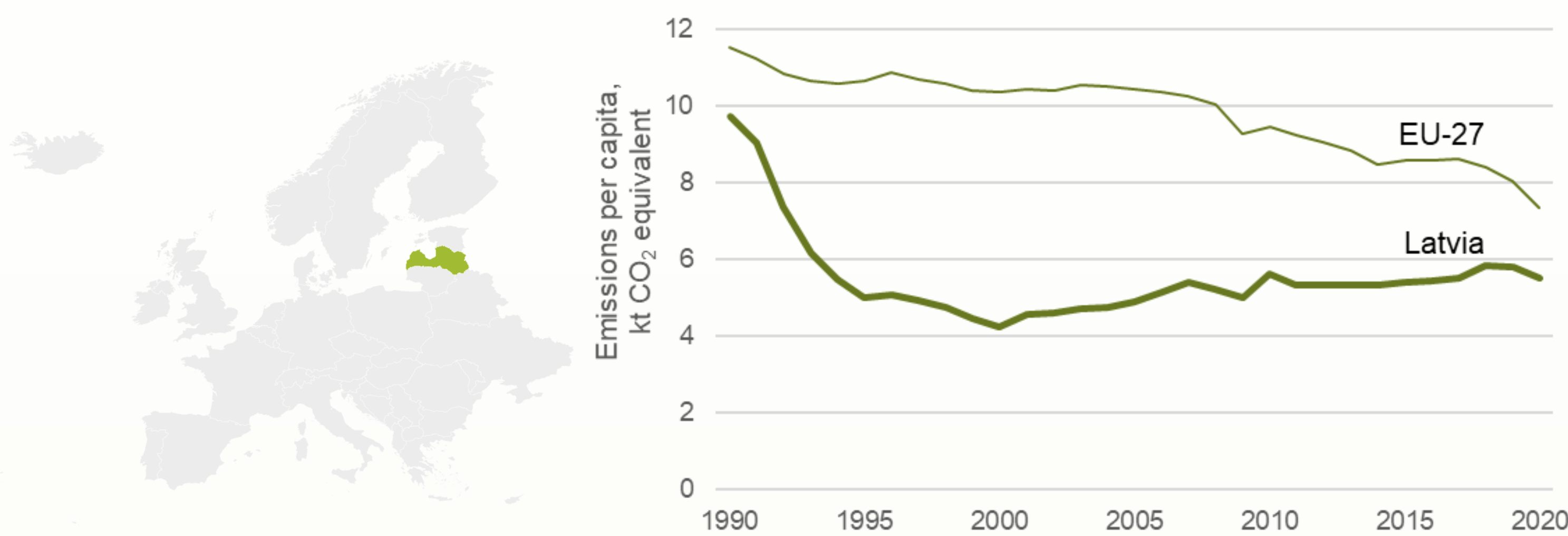


Fig. 1. Location of Latvia in Europe

Fig. 2. Total GHG emissions per capita, 1990-2020 (EEA, 2022)

The theoretical basis and methodological approach of the study is based on the concept of **strategic narrative**. Strategic narratives are defined as “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of international politics, and to shape the perceptions, beliefs, and behaviour of domestic and international actors” (Miskimmon et al., 2013). In this study, the emphasis is placed on the **domestic** side aiming to discover how domestic support to climate change mitigation and adaptation policies is being constructed.

The viability of strategic narratives depends on their persuasiveness, their spread in media ecology and perception. Therefore, it is important to consider the complete communication cycle of a strategic narrative – **formation, projection and reception** (Miskimmon et al., 2003). This study focuses on the reception side of strategic narrative exploring the business perception of officially constructed narratives.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore **public communication** of the most valuable Latvian enterprises across six sectors (energy, transport, agriculture and forestry, waste management, manufacturing, and retail).
- To compare the narratives across sectors in order to identify (1) their **alignment** with the official political narrative; (2) **similarities** and **differences** in narratives across sectors.
- To build a **matrix** that demonstrates similarities and differences in rhetoric across sectors.

METHODOLOGY

30 the most valuable Latvian enterprises were selected, five from each sector – energy, transport, agriculture and forestry, waste management, manufacturing, and retail, according to assessment by Prudentia & Nasdaq Riga (2021). The **public communication** posted in the period of **2020-2021** at **official websites** of the selected enterprises was analysed. The period marks the beginning of change in Latvian political rhetoric advancing more ambitious climate policy both at national and the EU level, and ends up with the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow at the end of 2021.

The sample consists of **264 articles** selected using keywords as climate change, global warming, emission, carbon neutrality, decarbonisation, green transition, environmental protection, nature conservation, biodiversity and the Paris agreement. In addition, other keywords related to sustainable climate policies were noted in the course of the study (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Keywords used in the study

A **qualitative content analysis** was applied to code the articles using a common methodology developed within the CLINAP project (RSU, 2021-2023). In a **codebook**, each selected article was assessed according to parameters that characterise the narrative structure, i.e. scene, actors, action/conflict, time. For the purposes of this study, selected categories from the codebook were used, demonstrating the context in which climate change related issues are addressed, and the emerging narratives in the public communication of Latvian enterprises.

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RESULTS

Overall, in the enterprises' websites, **10%** of all information is related to climate change or environment. The highest attention to climate change related issues is observed in the retail and waste management sectors, whereas comparatively less articles are found in energy and agriculture & forestry sectors.

Regarding low-carbon transition, **energy efficiency** is the context, in which climate change related issues are addressed the most. It is the dominant topic in energy, transport, production, and retail sectors (Fig. 4). Other topics (i.e. transition from fossil to renewable energy resources, state support for low-carbon energy, digitalization) are less popular.

Specifically in the energy sector, **transition to sustainable energy sources** is the second most popular context. However, its visibility is only relatively high as the total number of articles in the energy sector is low. In the transport sector, no articles on the topic were identified.

	Use of conventional existing energy sources	Transition to sustainable energy sources	Energy efficiency	Digitalization	Access to energy supply	State aid to the energy sector	Air transport	Freight transport	Light transport	Public transport	Infrastructure	Forestry	Animal husbandry	Crop production	Waste prevention	Reuse	Sorting & Recycling	Waste management system	Infrastructure	Raw materials & energy used	Green transformation, innovation & design	Bioeconomy	Digital transformation	Other	
Energy	8	11	19	2	1															1					
Transport	3		43	3			42	7	1	2	2				2	1	1					4			
Agriculture & Forestry	2	6	8	3			1	4	1		1	47	12	3	9	1	3		3	19	20	16	3		
Waste Management			1						4						24	16	58	7	35	1					
Production	15		17			1	1	1				7		1	1	5	6	2	4	14	7	2		5	
Retail	5	2	44	3			4	3		5					38	15	31	2	20	7	3		2	2	

Fig. 4. Matrix of similarities and differences in topics across sectors

Across sectors, a **narrative of corporate social responsibility** dominates (Fig. 5) emphasising that Latvian business environment transforms and entrepreneurs have already become or aim to become environmentally responsible in the nearest future. In the transport sector, it is the major narrative. In the **energy sector** other narratives prevail: the **opportunity** narrative that highlights the aspects of climate change as an opportunity for Latvia's economy; the **duty** narrative emphasizing the need to comply with the EU policies; and the **recognition** narrative that underlines the impact of climate change on environment and the need to protect it. These are the narratives that resemble the official political narrative the most, yet underestimate the agency of an enterprise.

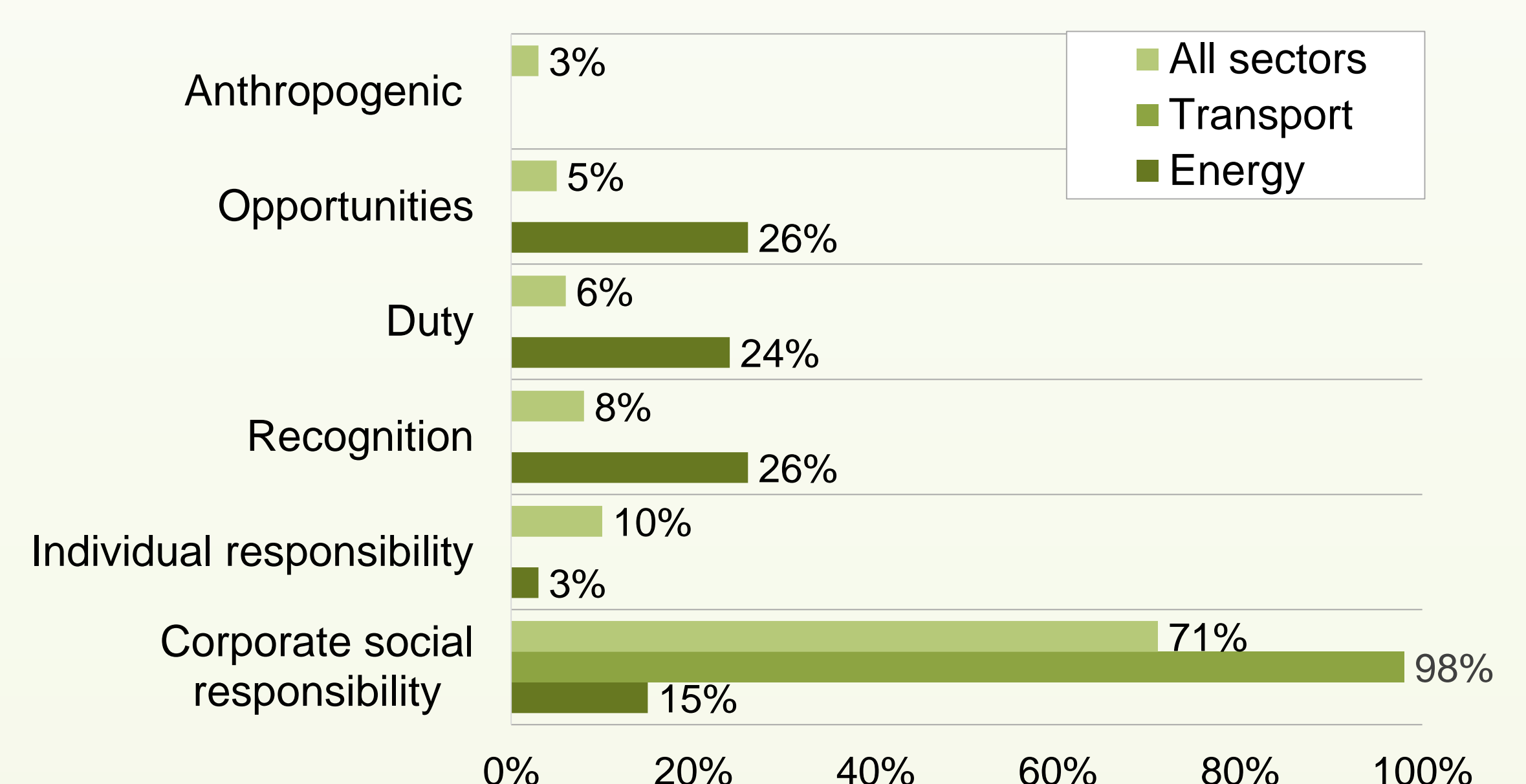


Fig. 5. Emerging narratives of Latvian enterprises

CONCLUSIONS

Narratives demonstrate that **enterprises have the potential to lead towards low-carbon economy** by constructing an enabling discursive environment. It is particularly important in societies with low trust to the government, where actors other than government may be more trustworthy to foster public demand and change in habits.

However, the findings on **energy sector** indicate that the sector is relatively passive in embedding low-carbon transition in its public communication. Given its share in fossil energy production and consumption energy sector bears a special responsibility as a driving force in influencing consumer perceptions. By communicating about low-carbon transition and the solutions that every individual can implement in their daily lives, and doing it in informative, educational and entertaining way, energy enterprises can attract consumers' attention, enrich their knowledge and promote climate-friendly choices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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