

# Engagement and Framing in the EU's Fair Transition Discourse

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Received: December 5, 2024      Accepted: February 10, 2025      Online Published: March 1, 2025

doi:10.5539/ijel.v15n2p14      URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v15n2p14>

## Abstract

On 16 June 2022, the European Council approved *Recommendation no. 2022/C 243/04 on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality*. This recommendation encourages actions to safeguard people affected by the green transition, promoting quality jobs and facilitating access to proper working conditions while protecting health and safety. Importantly, this recommendation marks a move away from some previous documents—e.g., the Green Deal—issued by international and European institutions, which focused on a ‘just’ transition rather than a ‘fair’ one. As a result, it might be worth exploring the way this new fair transition has been framed, viz. how some aspects of this process have been selected and made more salient from a communicative point of view, in order to background certain dynamics while foregrounding others. In light of the above, this paper sets out to investigate the framing of the discourse featuring the recommendation on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality and the way the text was construed to fulfil certain communication purposes. In so doing, Entman’s four functions of framing—i.e., “defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies” (Entman, 1993, p. 52)—will be investigated in the text in the context of the Appraisal Theory developed by Martin and White, in order to deal with “the construction by texts of communities of shared feelings and values, and with the linguistic mechanisms for the sharing of emotions, tastes and normative assessments” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). More specifically, this paper will seek to understand how the textual voice characterising this recommendation positions itself with respect to other voices and other positions. For the purposes of this study, the category of Engagement will be considered.

**Keywords:** sustainability, framing, appraisal, engagement, EU discourse

## 1. Introduction

In June 2022, the Council of the European Union adopted *Recommendation no. 2022/C 243/04 on ensuring a fair transition towards climate neutrality* (henceforth, ‘Recommendation’). This instrument aims to set out comprehensive and concrete guidance to help Member States deliver policies, making sure that the green transition is “fair and leaves nobody behind” (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 9). In examining the EU policy language about sustainability, it is evident that this Recommendation marks a shift away from the terminology of previous documents—the European Green Deal, among others—where the expression ‘just transition’ was employed, becoming the watchword of sustainable development. In the latest text, the wording ‘fair transition’ is used in lieu of ‘just transition’, in consideration of the fact that “*fairness* and solidarity are defining principles of the Union’s policies towards the green transition” (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 2, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, “language is entwined in social power” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 10) particularly at the EU level, where the decisions made affect the life of millions of people, so this change might not be an innocent one. If we understand language as one element of social life “which is interconnected with others” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2) then opting for certain words is likely to alter the structures and the contents of “the mental models we construct of specific events” (van Dijk, 2007, p. 16).

In the case at hand, characterising the transition as ‘fair’ rather than ‘just’ means foregrounding certain values while backgrounding others, so as to prompt some reactions on the part of the public. Therefore, the way the fair transition towards climate neutrality has been framed comes to the fore. Significantly, “the notions of ‘frame’ and ‘framing’ have become very popular in these three decades” (van Dijk, 2023, p. 153) and “have been applied in the most diverse disciplines and research areas” (Catenaccio, Garzone, & Reisigl, 2023, p. 7) using numerous

definitions. Yet in the context of this paper, ‘framing’ refers to “the selection and highlighting of certain facets of events or issues establishing connections among them in order to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution” (Entman, 2010, p. 417).

Consequently, this paper sets out to investigate the way the concept of ‘a fair transition’ is constructed in the Recommendation issued in June 2022. Emphasis will be given to those aspects of the discursive process that have been selected and made more salient from a communicative point of view; the aim is to understand the mechanisms through which some elements in the Recommendation are made “more noticeable, meaningful and memorable to audiences” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Analytically, this paper will be informed by the Appraisal Theory elaborated by Martin and White (2005), which is concerned with “the means by which writers/speakers positively or negatively evaluate the entities, happenings and states-of-affairs with which their texts are concerned” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 2). Emphasising the way the fair transition is conceptualised, attention will be paid to how the drafters of the Recommendation “approve and disapprove, enthuse and abhor, applaud and criticise, and how they position their readers/listeners to do likewise” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). This study aims to stress how the textual voice characterising this Recommendation positions itself with respect to other voices, affecting the reader in terms of value judgment. As the focus is on the framing mechanisms employed in the Recommendation, only the Engagement framework will be discussed here; Engagement deals with “the ways in which resources such as projection, modality, polarity, concession and various comment adverbials position the speaker/writer with respect to the value position being advanced and with respect to potential responses to that value position” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 36). The writer’s stance with regard to a certain issue can be understood as a way of framing it, which affects the reader’s appreciation in important respects. In the next section, some theoretical considerations will be outlined that underpin the present analysis, highlighting how legal texts like the one scrutinised here contribute to “the knowledge base that may feed into policy and public discourse” (Council of the European Union, 2022, p. 8).

## 2. Rationale for This Research

Prior to engaging in more detailed analysis, some further clarifications are in order concerning the research rationale for this paper. It is well known that recommendations—along with opinions—are non-binding EU instruments; nevertheless, while “recommendations do not have legal consequences, they might offer guidance on the interpretation or content of EU law” (European Union, 2023, p. 1). In consequence, this soft law is devoid of prescriptive force, but it can play a persuasive role. Recommendations can function “as effective governance tools by encouraging addressees to comply” (Andone & Koman-Cund, 2022, p. 22); this was confirmed by the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) in a recent judgment specifying that “Article 288 TFEU intended to confer on the institutions which usually adopt recommendations *a power to exhort and to persuade*, distinct from the power to adopt acts having binding force” (41 Case C 16/16P *Belgium v Commission* (n 8) para. 26, quoted in Andone & Koman-Cund, 2022, p. 31, emphasis added).

For this reason, employing Martin and White’s Appraisal framework to examine the Recommendation seems justified because this theoretical model might reveal the subjective presence of the writer as they “adopt stances towards both the material they present and those with whom they communicate” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 1). These stances can strategically serve a hortatory function, affecting the readers’ perception of the topic discussed. Appraisal can be used—among other things—to identify instances of solidarity and power in texts; by means of bald assertions, solidarity can be realised not only by showing agreement with readers, but also by recognising alternative viewpoints, highlighting the fact that writers “are prepared to engage with those who hold to a different position” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 96). As far as power is concerned, “the textual voice assumes sufficient status or moral authority to be able to exclude alternative viewpoints” (Miller, 2004, p. 47).

The decision to focus on Engagement also needs further explanation. The Appraisal framework consists of three systems, namely Attitude, Engagement and Graduation. Broadly explained, Attitude deals with feelings and evaluation of things, and also with judgment of people’s behaviour; Engagement focuses on sourcing attitudes and the play of voices in relation to opinions in discourse; Graduation considers phenomena whereby feelings are amplified and categories blurred. As we are mostly concerned with the voices surrounding the discourse of the fair transition in the Recommendation, the Engagement subsystems will be considered here; priority will be given to the textual resources supplying “the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to [...] the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context” (Martin & White 2005, p. 94).

While conducting the Engagement analysis of the Recommendation, this paper intends to take a step further, by highlighting the ways the fair transition and the entailing issues are constructed considering Entman’s four

categories of framing, i.e., “defining problems; diagnosing causes; making moral judgments; suggesting remedies” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). The aim is to understand how the authorial voices engage with others in relation to these four dimensions. Emphasis will be given to the discursive processes through which the writer aligns with—or moves away from—the different value positions in the Recommendation and how they encourage readers to endorse their stance.

### 3. Methodology

As previously specified, this paper carries out a textual analysis of the Recommendation relying on Martin and White’s Engagement system, whereby “conflict and negotiation are typically construed by speaker selections from the semantic resources which the culture makes available for use in struggles for meaning ascendancy” (Miller, 2002, p. 120). In the Engagement system, the first difference that needs to be drawn is between monoglossic and heteroglossic utterances. Monoglossic utterances make no reference to alternative voices or viewpoints, whereas heteroglossic utterances allow for dialogistic alternatives. Drawing on Bakhtin (1981) and Voloshinov (1995), reference is made to the notions of ‘dialogism’ and ‘heteroglossia’, according to which verbal communication is dialogic, in the sense that it reveals the influence of what has been said before, concurrently anticipating the response of readers. Employing a dialogistic perspective helps to understand whether a given value position is presented “as one which can be taken for granted [...], as one which is in some way novel, problematic or contentious, or as one which is likely to be questioned, resisted or rejected” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 93).

In the Recommendation examined here, a dialogistic approach can reveal how the writer is positioned in relation to the fair transition and which resources they make use of to prompt the readers to align to or distance themselves from a certain viewpoint. For the sake of clarity, it is important to stress that even in cases where monoglossic assertions are used, the co-text might feature heteroglossic options; in other words, interpolations exist between monoglossic and heteroglossic resources, “opening up different degrees of dialogic spaces” (Trevisan, 2018, p. 343). Figure 1 summarises the basic engagement system:

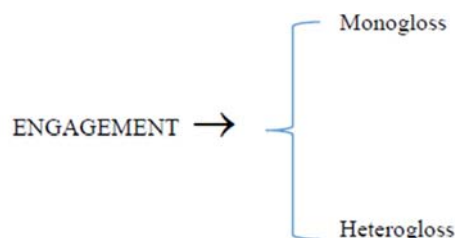


Figure 1. The Basic Engagement System

Source: Trevisan, 2018, p. 340.

Heteroglossic Engagement allows for other positions, in order to dialogically contract—i.e., to close the space for dialogic alternatives—or expand, i.e., to open up the dialogic space for alternative positions. Both dialogically expansive and dialogically contractive heteroglossic resources also contain a number of subcategories, which are illustrated in Figure 2 below. Therefore, in the Engagement system, “the intersubjective relations of alignment and disalignment are linguistically construed, negotiated and made rhetorically functional by means of wordings” (Miller, 2004, p. 40).

The following Section outlines how these wordings work in the context of Entman’s four categories of framing referred to above, and the Engagement resources will be investigated in texts classified according to Entman’s categories as identified in the Recommendation. This will help to cast light on how the discourse of fair transition is framed by the writer and how they aim to position the reader, in consideration of the relevance of the topic examined.

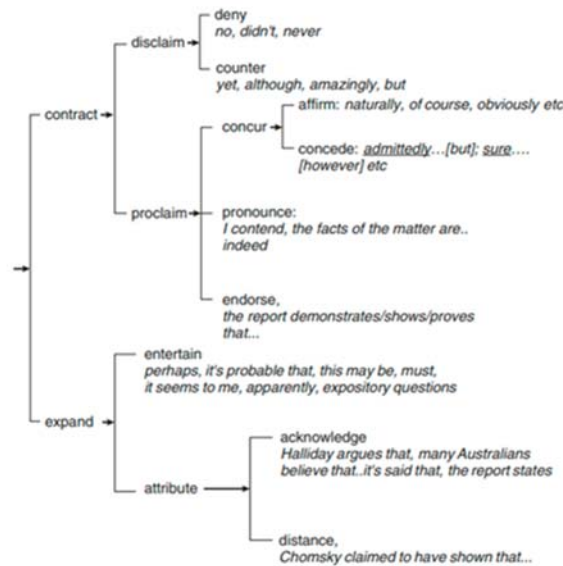


Figure 2. Heteroglossic resources in the Engagement system

Source: Martin & White, 2005, p. 134.

#### 4. Engagement Strategies in the Recommendation Considering Entman’s Framing System

##### 4.1 Defining Problems

Entman’s first category of framing is concerned with defining problems, that is determining “what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Let us now consider how the writers of the Recommendation position themselves in relation to identifying possible problems and how this positioning is achieved linguistically. The issues related to the fair transition in the text under examination are frequently referred to by means of monoglossic assertions which, although not invoking dialogistic alternatives, are construed in two different ways. In some cases, the problems hampering the shift towards a fair transition are formulated through bald assertions—i.e., taken-for-granted utterances—particularly in the first part of the Recommendation. For illustration purposes, some instances are provided in Table 1:

Table 1. Monoglossic assertions for defining problems

1	“low- and lower-middle income households <i>spend a</i> high share of their income in essential services such as energy, transport and housing, as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises” (p. 4).
2	“ <i>Everyone has</i> the right to access essential services of good quality, including energy, transport, water, sanitation, financial services and digital communications” (p. 7).
3	“The affordability, accessibility and safety of sustainable mobility and different modes of transport, including private and public transport, <i>are key to</i> ensuring everyone benefits from and is part of the green transition” (p. 7).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

In the excerpts above, the problems characterising the transition to a more environmentally-friendly society are expressed by means of bare assertions, the effect of which is that they become given, shared information, leaving no space for alternative voices. By taking as given “what is assumed to be known or believed” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 60), the writers of the Recommendation conceive these assertions as undialogised, as the content of these propositions is not at issue. From an ideological point of view, they are effective in that the putative addressee is understood as sharing these value positions. Consequently, in (1) the fact that low- and lower-middle income families allocate a significant amount of their income to essential services is assumed to be true and construed as single-voiced. By the same token, in (2) the writer foregrounds the problem that good-quality essential services are the preserve of few people, while in (3) the issue of ensuring affordable and safe sustainable mobility is assumed.

However, monoglossically asserted propositions might not always be taken as given as those previously illustrated. Alternatively, “the disposition of the text may be such that the categorical, monoglossically asserted proposition is presented as very much in the spotlight—as very much a focal point for discussion and argumentation” (Martin &

White, 2005, p. 101). This aspect is exemplified in the excerpts below (Table 2):

Table 2. Monoglossically-declared assertions that are not taken for granted

4	<p><i>Energy poverty</i>, resulting from a combination of low income, a high share of disposable income spent on energy and poor energy efficiency, <i>has been a major challenge for</i> the Union for some time (p. 4).  <i>Furthermore, the risk of energy poverty increases</i> with high and volatile energy prices, which are driven by a number of factors including those related to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the subsequent Union policy response (p. 4).  <i>This form of poverty affects</i> not only low-income households, but also lower middle-income households in many Member States (p. 4).  <i>Households with above-average energy needs</i>, which include families with children, including those headed by single parents, persons with disabilities, and older persons, <i>are also more susceptible to energy poverty</i> and to its effects (p. 4).  <i>Women</i>, and in particular those who are single parents and older women, <i>are also particularly affected by energy poverty</i> (p. 4).</p>
5	<p><i>Restructuring and adjustment</i> in the companies, sectors and ecosystems concerned <i>require the development of new business models</i> and large labour reallocations across sectors and regions (p. 3).  <i>For instance</i>, job losses are expected in some mining activities or fossil-fuel based energy production, as well as in parts of the automotive sector (p. 3).</p>

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

In (4) it is clearly stated that energy poverty has been a challenge for some time, therefore perfectly falling within Entman's first category—problem definition—which is discussed here. Unlike the previous monoglossic assertions, the argument needs to be further supported in the following paragraphs as this proposition might not be taken for granted. Therefore, reference is made to the fact that energy poverty is caused among others by Russia's war and affects middle-income households, especially some categories of them. Energy poverty is then seen as the focus of the debate, so “the text construes a reader who does not necessarily share the writer's views [...] who is perhaps undecided and looking for further guidance” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 102). The same is true in (5)—where the risk of letting many people go is further reinforced by a more detailed explanation in the following paragraph relative to the sectors which will be affected the most by the reorganisation process. These examples illustrate that energy poverty and unemployment are focal points for discussion or argumentation, so a more articulated formulation is necessary to deal with the reader's possible resistance.

Moving to the analysis of the linguistic resources for heteroglossic dialogic contraction, that is those used to reduce the dialogic space—the focus is on Disclaim and its subcategories, i.e., Denial and Counter. Denial in the context of problem definition is scarcely used, while countering formulations appear more frequently in the text (Table 3). Their primary aim is to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions by invoking “a contrary position which is then said not to hold” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 120):

Table 3. Counter used for defining problems

8	<p><i>While</i> the reforms and investments they support and help finance are designed to provide lasting impact, both TJTPs and RRP are limited in time” (p. 5).</p>
9	<p>“This form of poverty affects not only low-income households, <i>but</i> also lower middle-income households in many Member States” (p. 4).</p>
10	<p><i>However</i>, in a pessimistic scenario, the impacts of the green transition towards climate neutrality if not supported by an adequate policy mix could imply GDP losses of up to 0.39 % in the Union, and job losses of up to 0.26 % (p. 4).</p>

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

By way of illustration, in (8) arguments are made against the belief that the plans (i.e., Territorial Just Transition Plans or TJTPs, and Recovery and Resilience Plans or RRP) will have long-lasting effects, therefore questioning the expectation that these initiatives will tackle sustainable issues. In (9) the countering mechanism triggered by *but* introduces a proposition which is in contradiction with the value position that energy poverty only affects low-income households, while in (10) the adversative *however* casts doubt on what has been said previously, notably that the green transition will contribute to people's wealth and increase employment opportunities. In all these instances, Counter takes the form of propositions defeating what is assumed as the typical outcome of a given situation. While these positions are acknowledged, they are not regarded as applicable, as they rule out some dialogic alternative when constructing the definition of problems affecting sustainability and the green transition. In relation to Proclaim, by means of which dialogic alternatives are confronted or challenged, no statistically relevant instances were found in the Recommendation examined as far as the definition of problems related to the

fair transition is concerned. As regards dialogistically expansive resources—i.e., those resources opening up space for alternative positions and voices—two subcategories can be found, namely Entertainment and Attribution. Entertainment—that is wordings allowing for heteroglossic alternatives—might take the form of modal auxiliaries, modal attributes (Table 4), certain mental verb/attribute projections and “evidence/appearance-based postulations (e.g., it seems, it appears, apparently, the research suggests)” (Martin & White 2005, p. 105). No instances were found of Attribution concerning problem definition:

Table 4. Entertainment used for Defining problems

11	“Those losses <i>could reach</i> an additional EUR 175 billion, which is 1.38 % of Union GDP, per year if global warming reaches 3°C above pre-industrial levels” (p. 1).
12	“Europe <i>must strive</i> to at least halve the gender employment gap compared to 2019” (p. 3).
13	“This [economic loss] <i>would disproportionately harm</i> certain groups, notably people already in vulnerable situations and regions already facing challenges” (p. 1).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

Many instances can be found of modals being used to define problems while construing the proposition as one among the many available in discourse. For example, the recourse to modals in (11), (12), and (13) is illustrative of the fact that writers organise the utterance in a way that other stances may also be entertained. The use of modals might point, among other things, to the writer’s limited knowledge of the issue under evaluation, therefore it is not possible to formulate an unequivocal assertion.

#### 4.2 Diagnosing Causes

Entman’s second category of framing, diagnosing causes, is concerned with identifying “the forces creating the problem” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). In the Recommendation examined here, monoglossic assertions are frequently employed to identify the causes of problems affecting the green transition (Table 5):

Table 5. Monoglossic assertion used to diagnose causes

14	“Energy and transport poverty are at risk of being exacerbated <i>due to</i> the internalisation of emissions costs in price formation” (p. 4).
15	“People furthest away from the labour market <i>due to</i> their skills or characteristics” (p. 5).
16	“Mitigating the protracted decline in middle-skilled jobs <i>as a result of</i> automation and digitisation” (p. 3).
17	“Human suffering and economic losses <i>stemming from</i> more frequent climate-related extreme events” (p. 1).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

On close inspection, monoglossic resources are used to identify the negative elements which call for the green transition—e.g., the decline in middle-skilled jobs, the exclusion of people from the labour market, and climate-related extreme events. In some cases, the negative connotation attached to these monoglossic assertions is confirmed by the use of negatively evaluated lexis—e.g., *exacerbated*, *protracted*—of loaded words making the pictures appear bleaker—*mitigating*; *extreme*—or intensifiers—e.g., *more frequent*. One reason for the use of monoglossia in relation to cause identification might be to construct a text which encourages the reader to endorse the green transition, without leaving room for uncertainty. In other words, in these assertions there is “no recognition of the heteroglossic backdrop in which the text operates” (White, 2012, p. 62), so they do not allow for the possibility of alternative actions.

Framing these propositions as presupposed—“especially when outlining worrisome consequences” (Manzella, 2023, p. 102)—makes these issues self-evident for the putative reader for whom the text is intended, so monoglossic propositions show alignment with what is stated. This type of framing highlights some elements—in our case the underlying causes of the difficult shift to climate neutrality—giving them more salience. Interestingly, unlike the frame concerning problem definition, the one identifying cause does not provide instances of monoglossic assertions which need to be further motivated in order to win the reader over (see Table 2).

Therefore, the causes outlined through these monoglossic propositions are supposed to be fully shared by the reader, as no additional argumentation is necessary. The recourse to bald assertions like the ones used to identify the need for a fair transition also construes solidarity, in the sense that these propositions are uncontentious and exclude alternative points of view. No instances were found of dialogically contractive and expansive propositions, so it can be assumed that the need for sustainable measures was a compelling issue for the writer(s) of the

Recommendation and also for the reader.

#### 4.3 Making Moral Judgments

Monoglossic propositions are to be found when it comes to conveying moral judgments, i.e., when evaluating “causal agents and their effects” (Entman, 1993, p. 52) (Table 6):

Table 6. Monoglossic assertions used to make moral judgments

18	Climate change and environmental degradation <i>pose severe threats</i> that require <i>urgent action</i> (p. 1).
19	<i>Human suffering</i> and economic losses stemming from more frequent climate-related extreme events, such as floods, heatwaves, droughts and forest fires, are becoming more common (p. 1).
20	Social partners have <i>a vital role</i> to play in contributing to addressing, through dialogue, the employment and <i>social consequences</i> of the challenges of the green transition (p. 6).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

In this case, moral judgments are expressed by means of evaluative adjectives, e.g., *severe*; *urgent*; *vital*, which stress the moral dimension of both current issues and the actions to be taken, as the environment needs “to be respected, valued and protected” (Stibbe 2021, p. 76). It can be noted that, in terms of framing, some propositions—e.g. (18) and (19)—are intentionally regarded as both defining problems and making moral judgments, in consideration of the fact that a particular utterance “might perform more than one of the four framing functions” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). More generally, it can be said that “these framing functions hold together in a kind of cultural logic, serving each other, with the connections cemented more by custom and convention than by the principles of valid reasoning or syllogistic logic” (Entman, 2010, p. 417).

Interestingly, monoglossic propositions expressing moral judgments (Table 7) make repeated mention of the notions of ‘fairness’ and ‘solidarity’—the latter to be understood in a general sense and not as defined in the Appraisal system. This should come as no surprise, as these are founding elements of the EU’s environmental policy. Yet, repetition—as is the case with the notion of ‘fairness’ and ‘solidarity’—is one of the ways through which Graduation (specifically, its subtype ‘Force’) is realised in texts. While Graduation will not be dealt with in this paper, it is important to stress that it is employed “to either increase or decrease the ‘volume’ [...] across the text” (Martin & White 2005, p. 152):

Table 7. Monoglossic assertions used to make moral judgments: the case of fairness and solidarity

22	<i>Fairness and solidarity</i> are defining principles of the Union’s policies towards the green transition (p. 2).
23	Principles of <i>social fairness, cohesion and solidarity</i> are firmly built into the design of relevant climate, energy and environmental frameworks (p. 5).
24	The European Green Deal principles of <i>fairness and solidarity</i> are integrated in policy design, implementation and monitoring from the outset, providing the basis for broad and long-term support for inclusive policies advancing the green transition (p. 8).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

As for dialogically expansive propositions, moral values are usually represented through assertions, which are just one of many possibilities, for example through Entertainment mechanisms featuring modal verbs (Table 8):

Table 8. Dialogically expansive propositions: Entertainment

28	The green transition <i>can contribute</i> to raising incomes and reducing inequalities and poverty overall (p. 4).
29	It <i>can thus help</i> tackle pre-existing socio-economic inequalities and social exclusion, improving health and well-being, and promoting equality, including gender equality (p. 4).
30	A combination of various policies <i>can support</i> the most vulnerable households and workers most affected by the green transition (p. 7).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

Alternatively, Attribution is realised in the form of acknowledging a certain value proposition, which is considered one of several alternatives (Table 9):

Table 9. Dialogically expansive propositions: Acknowledgment

29	The communication from the Commission of 4 March 2021 entitled ‘The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan’ <i>highlights that</i> unity, coordination and solidarity are needed to move forward towards a greener and more digital decade in which Europeans can thrive (p. 3).
30	The need for a fair transition is an integral part of the European Green Deal, which <i>underlined that</i> no person and no place should be left behind (p. 1).
31	The European Green Deal <i>stresses that</i> the transition must be fair and inclusive, putting people first and paying particular attention to supporting those regions, industries, workers, households and consumers (p. 2).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

#### 4.4 Suggesting Remedies

Suggesting remedies is the last category of Entman’s framing system and it deals with offering and justifying “treatments for the problems and predict[ing] their likely effects” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). It is important to stress at the outset that—along with defining problems—the text examined contains many instances of propositions advancing possible solutions. At times, they take the form of monoglossic assertions (Table 10):

Table 10. Monoglossia to put forward remedies

32	The 8th Environment Action Programme to 2030 <i>aims to accelerate</i> the green transition to a climate-neutral, sustainable, non-toxic, resource-efficient, renewable energy-based, resilient and competitive circular economy in a just, equitable and inclusive way (p. 1).
33	It also <i>includes proposals</i> for new legislation, notably to support the use of cleaner fuels in the aviation and maritime transport sectors, as well as to establish a carbon border adjustment mechanism and to establish a Social Climate Fund, which is directly related to the proposed introduction of emissions trading system for fuels used in buildings and road transport (p. 2).
34	The ‘Fit for 55’ package, combined with measures taken at Union level to support and incentivise the necessary public and private investments, <i>is aimed to</i> help support and accelerate the growth of new markets (p. 2).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

Once again, presuppositions are the key element in the monoglossic utterances identified in the Recommendation. For example, in (32) the green transition is regarded as already in progress, as it only needs to be accelerated; the authorial voice constructs a text which assumes climate neutrality as an ongoing process, so both the authors and the readers recognise the fact that this process exists. While framing the need for remedies to deal with the issues of sustainability, in (33) new legislation is put forward—assuming that existing measures are either flawed or unsuitable—whereas in (34) the growth of new markets needs to be expedited.

Consequently, in looking for remedies to address the questions previously underlined, the text is framed monoglossically so that some aspects are taken for granted. More to the point, the way the text is disposed also provides a positive evaluation of certain processes, so the green transition in (32) is a mechanism under way and we just need to accelerate it, and the same holds for labour market growth in (34). The upshot is that relatively little effort is necessary to move towards greener policies, a framing which somehow clashes with the alarming scenario outlined when defining problems. Nevertheless, in a significant number of cases, the authorial voice constructs a text for the reader who might need further information to be aligned (Table 11):

Table 11. Provision of further details to monoglossic assertions when putting forward remedies

35	Member States <i>have a range of tools</i> at their disposal to outline and coordinate their actions for a fair transition. <i>National energy and climate plans</i> (NECPs) prepared in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council should assess the number of households in energy poverty and outline the measures needed to address the social and territorial implications of the energy transition. <i>Territorial Just Transition Plans</i> (TJTTPs) prepared in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council should identify the territories eligible for support under the Just Transition Fund up to 2027 (p. 5).
36	Apprenticeships and paid traineeships, <i>including</i> strong training components, <i>in particular for</i> young people, contribute to labour market transitions, <i>notably</i> towards activities contributing to climate and environmental objectives (p. 6).
37	Up-to-date labour market and skills intelligence and foresight, <i>including</i> at regional, sectoral and occupational levels, allow for the identification and forecasting of relevant occupation-specific and transversal skills needs, <i>including as</i> a basis for adapting curricula to meet the skills needs for the green transition (p. 6).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.



In the excerpts above, the tools to coordinate the actions for a fair transition, training and skills advancement plans are seen as up for debate, so further elements are necessary to win the reader over. In these cases, the value position is under discussion and not taken as given as in the previous instances. In other words, while the clauses in Table 10 are monoglossically formulated, those in the latter table (Table 11) are in need of additional information to talk the reader into agreeing with them. It can be postulated that propositions exemplified in Table 10 concerning highly-specialised issues (i.e., new legislation in (33)) are taken for granted—perhaps because the authorial voice is seen as having more expertise than the putative reader. Conversely, Table 11 contains utterances related to more generalised aspects which require further evidence, perhaps because they are conceived as a part of the typical institutional language devoid of any practical implication. To illustrate, in (36) the fact that training and apprenticeship contribute to labour market transition is a rather obvious assertion, which needs more specifics to be understood as genuine tools promoting the fair transition.

The focus now turns to dialogically expansive propositions, as no instances of dialogically contractive utterances were found in the text. The Recommendation is replete with assertions which expand the discourse by referring to alternative positions. It is not surprising that at the time of framing possible solutions to the issues arising from fair transition, the text is constructed as entertaining other possibilities; putting forward responses is by definition one way of dealing with problems, so other options are always taken into consideration.

Modal verbs are frequently used when evaluating ideas for tackling problems; *should*, *will*, and *need* are the three most frequent modal verbs in the Recommendation. Yet a difference may be seen in their usage; when the focus is on acting, *should* is employed, as this modal is mostly intended to express “what is reasonable to expect” (Palmer, 2014, p. 33). This is particularly the case in the text analysed here—i.e., a Recommendation—which is not binding but intended to give directions. Furthermore, most propositions using *should* and describing remedies to deal with issues hampering the fair transitions are formulated in the passive or by means of nominalisation. Rather than simply “eliding agency” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 115) in legal texts, these constructs are intended to ensure objectivity and to prioritise the action to be taken rather than the entity in charge of doing it (Table 12):

Table 12. Use of ‘should’ when putting forward remedies

38	Specific attention <i>should be paid</i> to women and particular groups which are more at risk of being affected by energy poverty (p. 7).
39	Fair transition aspects <i>should thus be</i> integrated in the development and implementation of national skills strategies (p. 6).
40	Active support to quality employment <i>should focus</i> on helping workers (p. 6).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

As for *will*, it is epistemically used in the Recommendation to predict the successful outcome of the actions proposed (Table 13). In this case, personification is usually employed, i.e., “human qualities or abilities are assigned to abstractions or inanimate objects” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 171):

Table 13. Use of ‘will’ when putting forward remedies

41	the European Green Deal <i>will give</i> Europe the tools to strive for more when it comes to upward convergence, social fairness and shared prosperity (p. 3).
42	A fair transition towards climate neutrality in the Union by 2050 <i>will ensure</i> that no one is left behind (p. 5).
43	The European Semester—the Union economic and employment policy coordination framework— <i>will continue</i> to play this role in the recovery phase (p. 8).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

As is the case with *should*, *need* is often used in the passive, arguably to focus once again on the measures necessary to smooth the shift to a greener economy rather than on the actors tasked with devising them (Table 14).

Table 14. Use of ‘need’ when putting forward remedies

44	Specific measures <i>are needed to</i> prevent and tackle the root causes of energy poverty (p. 7).
45	Risk-awareness, risk reduction and risk-transfer solutions <i>need to be</i> promoted (p. 7).
46	Sex-disaggregated data and indicators <i>are needed</i> in particular to assess the employment, social and distributional impacts of climate change policies (p. 8).

Source: Own Elaboration, 2023.

## 5. Discussion

The analysis of the Recommendation provides some interesting insights in relation to the authorial voice and the way the text was drafted for the reader. This is the case when taking into account Entman's four categories of framing. In relation to problem definition, the drafters of the Recommendation—which, it bears repeating, is a non-binding act—strategically positioned the fair transition as a necessary path towards climate neutrality, in a way that brooked no arguments and could not be challenged. This aspect was illustrated by the significant number of monoglossic assertions which framed the issues as taken for granted and shared by the putative reader.

Heteroglossic utterances were also employed when characterising problems, especially when highlighting the seriousness of some of the main issues affecting the fair transition. As regards the identification of causes, this dimension too was framed monoglossically, imagining a reader who agrees with the elements acting as an obstacle to the fair transition. As far as making moral judgments is concerned, relevant propositions were formulated both monoglossically and heteroglossically. However, while generally accepted moral values were conveyed through monoglossic assertions, more technical issues required sources of endorsement to lend them greater salience. In a similar manner, the identification of possible responses primarily took the form of monoglossic propositions, even though overly generalised statements needed additional elements to demonstrate reliability and to move away from political rhetoric.

More generally, the analysis revealed that the shift to climate neutrality by means of the fair transition was framed as urgent when it came to defining problems, which were construed as shared by the public. The causes were also seen as universally acknowledged, yet in some cases more details were necessary to get the message through. As with the identification of problems, the moral values accompanying this transition were intended to be shared by the audience and therefore monoglossically constructed. With regard to remedies, highly technical solutions were presented as bald assertions, while generalised responses were formulated in a more detailed fashion, as if simply referring to them was not enough. However, most of the solutions suggested took the form of heteroglosses, particularly through Entertainment, meaning that their success was contentious and alternative viewpoints were to be taken into consideration.

The terminology of the Recommendation revealed some positionings. There are some issues featuring the fair transition towards climate neutrality which are intended as clear and—to some extent—generally acknowledged, as are the reasons for them. The moral commitments accompanying the shift to a greener economy are regarded as universally understood, but when it comes to finding solutions to the problems outlined, a more reassuring frame is provided, whereby solving issues is easier and less demanding than expected, particularly when looking at the scenario outlined at the time of identifying them. Engagement resources were therefore used strategically for each of Entman's categories, in order to address a reader who is mostly aligned with the text.

This paper is a further demonstration that language plays a crucial part in texts like the Recommendation examined here which, while not binding, can perform an ideological function. In other words, language is never neutral, even where, as in the law, there may be an attempt to give the appearance of being so (Cheng & Machin, 2023, p. 245). Further research might consider paying more attention to the interrelation between monoglossic and heteroglossic assertions, i.e., the role of co-text in influencing the meaning conveyed by stand-alone monoglossic utterances.

### Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

### Authors' contributions

Not applicable.

### Funding

Not applicable.

### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Informed consent

Obtained.

### Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Canadian Center of Science and Education.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

### Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

### Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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## Notes

Note 1. Some of the reflections included in this paper were presented at the international conference *CLAVIER 2023 – Framing Nature: Discourses of Nature and the Environment*, organised by the University of Milan (Italy), on 22–24 November 2023.

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