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How The (E)User is Used

A policy analysis of the user and digital skills in the European Union's digital policy

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Abstract

As many societies are digitally transforming, citizens need to adapt and acquire digital skills to participate. Research has shown that low levels of digital skills can increase digital exclusion, and that skills needed to participate in society should be addressed in digital policy. The European Union (EU) with its many citizens has the potential to affect them all through its policies. In this thesis the EU´s digital policy between 2010 and 2020 has been studied to see in what way the EU views the user and its skills. Through combining a computer-aided content analysis and a discourse analysis, based on Carol Bacchi's *what's the problem represented to be* approach, the EU's user view was found to be dual. The dominating view was of the user as part of the workforce. Situated in the aftermath of the economic crisis 2007-2008 the EU needed a digitally skilled workforce as a resource. The other view was of the user as citizens where skills were needed for participation in society. Employing both neofunctionalism and constructivism on these results could shed light on why digital policy was linked to economic policy and hence why the workforce view was strong. A constructivist approach could further explain why the citizen view was secondary and why it started to increase. Digital policy had a closer tie to an economic norm than a social norm, which was somewhat altered partly in 2020 due to the Covid-19-pandemic being seen as a social crisis.

Key words: digital user, skilled workforce, digital citizen, EU digital policy, digital exclusion
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1 Life in digital society

As an effect of the Covid-19-pandemic, our societies changed drastically overnight. Digital technologies became essential for the functioning of our societies in many ways and have at the same time also radically changed them. Although, we may in some ways go back to how we lived and worked before there are aspects of the digital society that most likely will not retrograde but rather prevail (Mckinsey 2020). We should however not forget that our societies were becoming more digitalised even before the Covid-19-pandemic, although not as rapid.

Perhaps the digitalisation has at this point reached a level where it is no longer useful to talk about it as one big entity but rather something that has become incorporated in the European societies. Therefore, many aspects of the digital society that are possible to study. For example, the case of the digital giants and the monopoly they are said to have (Kang – McCabe 2020), could from a competition policy perspective be interesting to study. Artificial Intelligence and its implications on society also fits in the range of the possible topics to study. Furthermore, economies around the world are becoming digital and could potentially be an enormous research field.

Undoubtedly there are many things with digitalisation that are interesting but how does we as humans fit in this development? For example, the younger generations might enjoy many of the new digital possibilities that let us do almost anything through our smartphones. However, the grandparents' generation might not enjoy or perceive this development in the same way. This is probably true for many others in their generation but also true for many more regardless of age. To not be able to participate in your society because of limitations in your capacity to understand or use the digital tools or services that are increasing in our societies must feel very challenging.

As of 2019, the European Union's (EU), broadband coverage was estimated at 86% and at the same time basic digital skills in the EU were estimated at 58% (COM "Broadband Connectivity" 2021; COM "Human Capital and Digital Skills" 2020). In other words, society is becoming digitalised faster than we are adapting to this changing society. What is interesting here is to know what is done about that and if the understanding for the people who are not able to keep up has changed over time.

In the first sentences of the EU's new digital strategy (2020) "Shaping Europe's Digital Future" the following focus is set:

> *The digital transition should work for all, putting people first and opening new opportunities for business. Digital solutions are also key to fighting climate change and achieving the green transition.* (COM "Shaping Europe´s Digital Future" 2020)

The formulations "*should work for all"* and "*putting people first"* can be contrasted with the claim Ellen Helsper and Alexander Van Deursen make in their article "Digital Skills in Europe: Research and Policy" (2015:128) which is that the focus of digital policy in Europe is often on creating internet access for many while the focus on creating digital skills is not prioritized in the same way. Whether or not the new strategy has moved away from the focus on access need to be further studied.

There are of course plenty of other digital strategies outside of the EU and inside the EU in the member states. But the EU is especially interesting as a global digital actor. In 2010 the EU aimed to harness Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), to foster economic growth and to compete as a global actor (COM "Digital Agenda" 2010). The EU is hence very much a global digital actor, and its policies has implications for the member states and its citizens. And many of the national strategies probably have some relation to the EU's policies and strategies. Therefore, it is important to study the EU´s digital policies with implications on its many citizens.

In general, and not just in the EU, the discussion around digitalisation and the digital divide has been connected to whether an individual has been able to access ICTs mostly in terms of individuals having internet access or not (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:127). Today this debate can be said to have shifted from focusing on a divide towards discussing levels of digital inclusion or exclusion (Helsper 2014:1). A digital exclusion or divide has been summed up in whether an individual has internet access or not. As the digital sphere has developed immensely connectivity could be an expected part of society and we would be missing the problem with a static focus on connectivity in a discussion on inclusion. According to Helsper (2014:1), those who risk digital exclusion today are often the same as those who traditionally has risked social exclusion. Therefore, the discussion around digital policy and skills must be focused on social challenges at large and what risks there are for these groups. In this way, social policy becomes connected with digital policy (Helsper 2014:1).

1.1 Purpose and research question

Although the EU does not strictly possess competence in social policy (EUR Lex "Social Policy"), it would be interesting to look at if it has started to acknowledge the effects of an increased digitalisation on European citizens and if it has incorporated social inclusion in digital policy. Has the EU adopted a more diverse digital policy that factors in other user needs than solely internet access? And how could this development or lack of development be explained? This has led to the following research question:

- *In what way has the view of the user in the European Union's digital policy changed between 2010-2020?*

The purpose of the thesis is to look at in what way the EU incorporates the user in its digital policy over the last 10 years. By asking this question the thesis aim to shed light on in what way the EU expresses itself in relation to the user and in that way gain knowledge in what actions are taken towards an increased social inclusion and improved overall skills. Using policy as material enables the thesis to illustrate in what way the EU views the user. Policies collect the ambitions of the EU and are a good indication of what the EU is striving for and what it has decided is the most important to focus on. What incorporates *policy* and *user* will be explained in a coming chapter.

To answer the question both a computer-aided content analysis and a discourse analysis based on Carol Bacchi's *what's the problem represented to be* (WPR) were used. Through this the author developed an argument that there is a dual view of the user. The more dominating view of the user was of those who were part of the workforce, and the other view was of the user as citizens in a broader understanding.

1.2 Understanding the research question and its limitations

Understanding the user's position in digital policy and how this relates to social and digital inclusion is in this thesis done through analysing EU policy documents. To do this there must be a clear direction of the question and what it intends to study. Therefore, this section is spent explaining the composition of the question to limit misunderstandings. Lastly, some limitations are mentioned.

User in the sense of the word can be rather broad in its interpretation. By user the thesis is referring to an individual and someone who can possess what is often called digital skills, digital competence, or digital literacy etc. It is not a company, institution, or software program but a human being. In other words, this thesis is referring to every individual in society. Now it should also be explained that users have different levels of digital skills affecting how well they can participate in a more digitalised society. However, they are all collected in the same group in this thesis but there is an expected differentiation in the policy documents. To be more concrete it is expected that the EU's digital policy mentions different groups of people and all of these constitute the *user*.

In this thesis the EU is understood as the institutions. This is because the main political goals and strategies are developed by these (COM "Strategy" 2021). Through the institutions the member states can reach their policy commitments and through these institutions EU policies are made (Hodson – Peterson 2017:2-3). Therefore, this understanding of the EU is fitting for this thesis as it intends to study EU policy. At the same time, much of the documents are published and introduced by the European Commission (COM). The intention of the thesis is not to incorporate documents that have been published by every different institution but to focus on the main documents that have been published and that is often done by

the COM as it has the right to propose legislation and plays a part in the creation of EU strategies and implementation of policies (COM "Strategy and Policy" 2020).

The EU's digital policy is at the core of the thesis. Later in the analysis, there are indications that digital policy is the bridge between economic and social policy. But what is meant by *digital policy?* Policy could mean a great deal of things and be produced in a large part of society. Policy in this thesis should be understood as public policy or more specifically the EU's digital policy. So, what is then part of this term? The COM says that "*EU policies are designed to bring benefits to citizens, businesses and other stakeholders in the EU.*" (COM "Strategy and Policy" 2020). Meaning that they are efforts to bring about change, development, problem solving or whatever you may call it. Therefore, policy should here be understood as documents that are published by the EU that intend to bring benefits, change or development. Evaluations and studies are also frequently published by the EU and they can be argued to have the same intention. However, policies (as understood in here) from the EU are probably incorporating the findings in evaluations and studies and translates them to the EU priorities making policy a good fit for this thesis as it intends to look at how the EU's view of the user has developed.

View is here the way the EU expresses itself in terms of the user. The language is therefore important to analyse. How is the text in the EU's digital policy referring to the user? This is what is important to know to be able to answer the research question.

How the view has changed is also central for the research question. *Change* can in this thesis be shown by there being new terms referring to the user or new skills that are said to be necessary for the user. Also new contexts in which the EU positions the user could be a change in view.

Now there is one more part of the question to be explained, the *time frame* 2010-2020. This time frame begins with a digital strategy "A Digital Agenda for Europe" (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010) and ends with the latest digital strategy "Shaping Europe's Digital Future" (COM "Shaping Europe´s Digital Future" 2020), which makes for a good comparison. Also, the material prior to 2010 is rather scarce and more difficult to find as the EU tends to update its websites leading to some documents not being accessible. Furthermore, in digital divide research there was a drift in what constitutes a digital divide around 2010 where the focus became more about skills and how the problem foremost grounded itself in economic and social restrictions rather than on internet access (van Dijk 2020:9). It is interesting to see if this change in what researchers argue constitutes the digital divide has been transferred to policy formulation and hence the time frame 2010-2020 is important. Lastly, the majority of the digitalisation has probably taken place between 2010 and 2020 leading to these being the most interesting years to study.

What this thesis makes no attempt of studying is in what way there is a digital exclusion in the EU, and it makes no attempt to measure how many users there are and what type of digital tools they are using. The thesis is also limited to the studying of views of individuals in a specific policy. Therefore, the EU might have another view of its citizens or individuals in other policy areas, but these are not addressed in the scope of this thesis. The member states views of the user are also not studied. It's an interesting aspect because of varying levels of digitalisation

throughout the EU as well as different possibilities in harnessing it. Some member states might fall behind and this could create another type of digital exclusion between member states instead of different social groups. However, this thesis cannot include too many aspects and this one will have to be left to someone else.

1.3 Reading the EU through policy documents.

As said before digital policy can incorporate a range of different areas, which make digital policy as a limitation too broad. Digital policy in this thesis only incorporates policy that links to the user in one way or another. For example, this could be documents directly aimed at increasing digital competence or increasing digital and social inclusion, but it is also documents that partly deal with the user. An example of this are the larger digital policy documents that cover a broad spectrum of digital policy in one long document such as the strategies already mentioned. Policy documents that are of more industrial, business, or innovation perspective were not used. Other more specific documents were chosen with the user in mind. This was to fully unveil how the EU views the user in these fields. It should be added that social policy documents were added in a limited amount.

In 2010 the EU introduced "A Digital Agenda for Europe" (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010) which were one of the broader documents used in this thesis. Another of these was "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe" that was introduced in 2015 (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015). Lastly, the "Shaping Europe's digital future" (COM "Shaping Europe´s Digital Future" 2020), were also part of the sample. There was an interesting dynamic between the three documents as they were published with five years apart and the ambition was that this would illustrate a change in how the EU views the user. The remaining documents were found through a snowballing technique where the links in the pages for these three main documents were used to find other useful documents. Furthermore, Google was used to search for "Digital policy European Union 20xx" or "European Union digital policy 20xx". The "xx" are for different years. This process unveiled what was relevant for each year and all documents have been retrieved from official EU websites. A total of 20 documents were used.

As said before there is also a small amount of social policy document included, mainly the documents from 2017 and 2013 are social policy. The 2017 document was retrieved from a subsection to the new digital strategy from 2020. To place social policy evenly over the time frame there was an active choice to find a document that covered the earlier years. The Social Investment Package (SIP) presented in 2013 was an action from the EU to address the social issues that had increased since the economic crisis 2007-2008 (Eurofund 2013). Hence it was a big part of the EU's social policy at the time. The document used in this thesis was the communication that presents the package.

1.4 Digital skills, exclusion, and divides in the literature

Although digital policy is an emerging area there is existing literature on it. In this section the most relevant articles, chapters and books will be shown and compared in what they study to what this thesis aims to look at. Much of the literature in the digital inclusion and exclusion area is written on the digital divide (van Dijk 2020; Thompson et al 2014; Ragnedda – Muschert 2018; Warschauer 2004). The digital divide is not really the centre of this thesis however the literature on it often gives some direction that public policy should adopt to increase digital inclusion.

Looking at the EU's digital policy and how well it considers digital inclusion has been done before (Helsper 2014). Building on a framework created by the author herself she assesses different digital and social policy documents published by the EU to assess how effective the digital inclusion policies are (Helsper 2014:1-2). Helsper first establishes that the discussion around digital inclusion has its starting point in the concept of the digital divide but has since developed into a discussion around levels of inclusion (Helsper 2014:1). It is no longer just about having internet access to be digitally included but rather a range of different competencies are needed (Helsper 2014:1). The notion that digital inclusion is more than just universal access is a shared perception by much of the literature (Warschauer 2004:199; Thompson et al 2014:4-5; van Dijk 2020:3; Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:126).

Helsper's definition of digital inclusion is "[...]*an individual's effective and sustainable engagement with Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in ways that allow full participation in society in terms of economic, social, cultural, civic and personal well-being.*" (Helsper 2014:1). She further argues that the real challenge with digital inequality is not to increase engagement or skills but to make society more equal. The digital inclusion policies should be directed at those groups who are at risk of social exclusion in society with factors such as social and economic disadvantages (Helsper 2014:2). The notion that those who are already at risk in society are more likely to experience digital exclusion is shared by other authors (van Dijk 2020:132; Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:129). For example, individuals with a lower level of education or higher age have in previous studies been shown to have the highest risk of digital exclusion (van Dijk 2020:12).

Helsper analyses parts of the EU's digital policies and social policies to see in what way they do deal with these issues and where they can do more. The conclusion is that digital policies need to be defined in relation to social outcomes to become effective in increasing social inclusion (Helsper 2014:19). The focus on creating more access for all is helping from an economic perspective by increasing growth but does not aid Europeans in their everyday life which a more social perspective could (Helsper 2014:19). Helsper clearly states that a focus on access is not enough to create an inclusive digital society however what is also interesting is the conclusion that it is not good enough to focus on skills. Instead, the focus needs to be on "[...]*meaningful engagement and tangible, social outcomes of ICT*

use by embedding digital inclusion into a number of different policy and regulation areas, notably the wider European policy landscape that deals with social challenges." (Helsper 2014:20).

In the chapter "Digital Skills in Europe: Research and Policy" Helsper and Van Deursen (2015) problematise the usual conception of what digital skills is understood as (127). That understanding is often constituted of skills being related to the amount of use. For example, Eurostat measures different kinds of use which implies that more use is the same as more highly skilled (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:132). They argue that the focus should rather be on how well individuals use digital tools and that skills are part of a bigger spectrum summed up as *digital literacy* (2015:127).

The authors further argue that there is a lack of equality when it comes to the distribution of the benefits from the internet (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:128). Other authors argue similarly that the rich are getting richer by taking advantage of their opportunity to harness the internet while the poorer are falling behind (van Dijk 2020:132). In European digital policy, the emphasis is often on increasing the skills of those working in information technology industries and not on the ones who struggle to use digital tools in their everyday life which puts them at risk from fully participating in society (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:137).

The problem with the policies that have tried to ensure a more capable workforce and citizens in the digital society is that there is not enough precision in definitions around digital literacy, skills and engagement (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:128). The digital policies are often based on an emphasis on technology and infrastructure with a lack of understanding for those who lack digital skills (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:129). A more adaptive policy could isolate the problem areas of digital literacy more effectively by understanding the needs of the groups that are at the risk of exclusion (Helsper – Van Deursen 2015:129).

Other approaches to the studying of the digital divide or digital exclusion can be seen in the studies of the relationship between the state and the citizen (Hjelholt – Schou 2018:173). This body of literature is trying to explain how technologies and their adaptation to society are affecting the relationship between state and citizen (Hjelholt – Schou 2018:173). By drawing on an example from the Danish digital post-system the authors illustrate how the implementation of digital tools in government services can alter the state-citizen relationship (Hjelholt – Schou 2018:181). When a fundamental citizen service becomes digital it sets a frame of what is expected of a citizen, in this case, to have some sort of digital competence. The authors argue that the problem with this is that the state is assuming that the citizens have a widespread digital competence, which becomes increasingly problematic when further digital services are implemented with the thought that citizens can serve themselves (Hjelholt – Schou 2018:181).

As mentioned before digital policy is a huge subject with many branches and there is research done in other areas of digital policy. This thesis has digital policy and the EU as the focus and these are the most prominent researchers on the digital inclusiveness of the EU's digital policy as well as digital inclusion, skills and divides more generally.

The relation between the literature above and this thesis is based in the focus on digital inclusion and in what way policy can be used to mitigate this inequality or in what ways it might hinder it. The similarities with Helsper's studies are obvious with the focus on analysing digital policy within the EU. This thesis will also use some of the same documents that she uses in her studies and has drawn inspiration from her to include social policy documents as well. Some years have passed since this and more documents have been published by the EU which will make the analysis in this thesis different. Furthermore, this thesis will contribute by looking more closely at how the EU views the user and how this has changed since 2010 and not how effective the EU's digital policy is at increasing digital inclusion. By drawing on Bacchi's WPR approach it is possible to focus on the discourse around the user. This thesis can help understand why certain policies are defined as they are and perhaps why they do not focus on social inclusion or why they do. While all the above-mentioned literature directly or indirectly focuses on the user, or non-user, this thesis takes another approach in how it studies digital policy.

1.5 How are digital and social policy related?

So, what can be understood from the literature review and in what way was this implemented in the thesis? Much of the literature emphasise the shift from studying digital divides to studying levels of social inclusion. This has implications for the importance of digital skills, competence, and literacy in society. By looking at what causes digital exclusion we can understand the development that digitalisation is pushing in our societies and what implications this has for us as individuals. What is further understood from the literature is that social inclusion, social exclusion, and social policy should be connected to digital inclusion, digital exclusion, and digital policy. More than linking digital policy to economic aspects there should also be a link to social policy. Therefore, the use of both social and digital policy is important.

Digital exclusion, social exclusion or their opposites digital inclusion and social inclusion were not measured in this thesis. Instead, it was important to look at in what way they were incorporated with each other. As the literature have shown this is important for an inclusive digital society where many can participate. Digital skills, competence and literacy were used as synonyms in thesis because of the varying use of these words in the documents. These words were important to look for in the in-depth reading as they are understood as something the user can have or not have, which could indicate the view of the user.

Looking at this from a member state level could have been a possibility. But by specifically looking at the EU policies it could capture implications for all citizens in the EU. When making the choice to look at changes in the EU's digital policy it was important to use theories that could explain change in them. The theories used where neofunctionalism and social constructivism, which is further discussed in the next section.

2 Analysing the view of the user through European integration theory

With a base in the literature review the thesis has tried to shed light on what previous researchers have identified in terms of the user perspective and what needs to be included in digital policy. Whether or not this has been implemented in the EU's policies is discussed in the analysis. Besides studying this it is necessary to understand why there has been change or not. Theory was used in this thesis to explain possible changes in the EU's digital policy and hence what form the European integration has taken in this area.

By first conducting a computer-aided content analysis followed by a discourse analysis with in-depth reading, the core of these findings was analysed with European integration theories. The theories were hence used to make sense of the changes or non-changes found in the discourse analysis. To do this there was a need for theories that can explain why certain EU policies are developed. Traditional theories of European integration are known to be used to explain policymaking in the EU. Theories such as *neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism* and *social constructivism.* But also, the theories of *new institutionalism* (Pollack 2015). Neofunctionalism and social constructivism are as said before used in this thesis and below they are introduced and adapted to the framework. Why liberal intergovernmentalism was not used is also brought up. In the theories of new institutionalism, the focus is on in what way the institutions affect EU policymaking through the way that they are structured (Hodson – Peterson 2017:19). This focus on hard and soft institutions is interesting but was not included in this thesis and therefore these theories were not used.

2.1 The theory of spill-over

When theorising European integration neofunctionalism take on a perspective where the state is not seen as the core actor. Instead, actors such as the bureaucrats or "*secretariat*" of the EU are important in the integration process. Also, actors based in the member states such as "*interest associations*" and actors with political or social interests are pushing the integration forward (Schmitter 2005:257). But neofunctionalism acknowledges that national states have a role to play in the European integration, however, it is the actors such as bureaucrats in combination with a shifting political interest towards Europe that can influence the European

integration through what is called *spill-over*. States agree to one thing but within that agreement actors take over and through a growing political legitimacy of the community the non-state actors come to lead integration rather than national states. (Schmitter 2005:257). The concept of spill-over is central to neofunctionalism and it is generally thought about in three different variations, *functional spill-over*, *political spill-over* and *cultivated spill-over*.

The logic of the *functional spill-over* stems from the assumption that policy areas are related and that integration in one area demands further integration in a related area (Niemann 2017:4). In the initial integration process actors come to realise that to be able to achieve a goal there is need for interference in another sector because of their interdependence (Niemann 2017:4). The prediction from neofunctionalists is that sectoral integration leads to unforeseen integration in other sectors (Pollack 2015:15). In this thesis an example of this type of spill-over could be how digital policy becomes more connected to other policy areas, here social policy. If there is no proof of there being a spill-over to social policy this could indicate that the areas are not interlinked to the extent needed for a functional spill-over.

Political spill-over can be understood as the process where non-state actors or national elites to a growing extent use the European level for political problem-solving. This could happen when these non-state actors realise that the European level is better fit to deal with the problem or if the non-state actors feel as if their problem is not solved nationally. The logic is that when this is done continuously the European level of political problem-solving is institutionalised and more problem-solving will naturally be transferred. This is known as *political spill-over*. (Niemann 2017:5).

The *cultivated spill-over* could be understood as a more calculated spill-over in which the actors within the European system actively seek more integration by using their positions as policy entrepreneurs (Niemann 2017:5). In other words, the thought is that as the integration progresses so does the power of the supranational institutions. With that power they can further influence what becomes part of their range. Functional spill-over, political spill-over and cultivated spill-over are at the core of neofunctionalism but the claim that spill-overs are the drivers of European integration has created some controversy and attracted criticism.

Neofunctionalism is not a new school of thought and has gone through many phases. From leadership in European integration theory to being called “obsolete” by its founder neofunctionalism has come a long way. From the 1970s and forward the theory has been revised (Niemann 2017:6-8). One revision is discussed further down in the essay after the criticism has been addressed.

Often the criticism of neofunctionalism has been based in the camp of liberal intergovernmentalism where the argument against neofunctionalism has been its dependence on and deterministic attitude towards automatic spill-over (Niemann 2017:5). Some argue that neofunctionalism was proven wrong since it was unable to explain why European integration came to a halt in the 1960s and 1970s. Later versions of neofunctionalism have had to develop a more nuanced picture of when spill-over will happen (Niemann 2017:6). Liberal intergovernmentalism further argue that neofunctionalism understates the power of the member states and

political developments in these entities. Waves of nationalism are example of this where the European project has been questioned which often has resulted in less integration (Niemann et.al 2019:50; Niemann 2017:7)

Constructivists have also criticized neofunctionalism on the basis that the theory fails to understand that there are multiple identities with shifting loyalties (Niemann et.al 2019:50). The followers of neofunctionalism argue that the criticism is undeserved and it is a misunderstood theory (Niemann et.al 2019:49, Niemann 2017:5).

A follower that has offered a revision is Arne Niemann. He distances himself from the notion of automatic spill-over and argues that the process is influenced by both "*driving forces*" and "*countervailing forces*" (Niemann et.al 2019:52). Niemann argues that it is not enough with an economic linkage leading to interdependence between policy areas for there to be a functional spill-over. Niemann emphasises that the thought leading to a functional spill-over also needs to be valid and appealing (Niemann et.al 2019:53).

In the analysis of the thesis the original framework of the three different spill-overs will be used with an incorporation from the thoughts added by Niemann. Especially the concept of non-automatic spill-over. By doing this it deals with much of the critique the theory has sustained over the years. However, updated or not, other scholars such as liberal intergovernmentalism and constructivism have continued to criticise neofunctionalism. Therefore, it is interesting to contrast neofunctionalism with one of these.

In this thesis this will be constructivism. This is because liberal inter-governmentalism has a substantial focus on the national states as the driver of European integration through their own interests and bargaining (Moravcsik – Schimmelfennig 2019:65). The focus of the thesis is to look at the changes in views of the user. The interests of one entity, the member state, could be hard to isolate in this study of policy. The critique often directed at liberal intergovernmentalism is its lack of explanation in the everyday life of the supranational institutions. The theory instead tends to focus on larger events such as reformation of the treaties (Moravcsik – Schimmelfennig 2019:80). This is not of interest here.

Therefore, constructivism is needed in this thesis as a healthy contrast to neofunctionalism. What it brings to the table is another ontological view which helps foster a discussion in what possible explanations there could be as to why European integration goes forward or not. The EU is made up of many policy actors both within its main institutions of the EU as well as its member states. The member states are as mentioned not of interest. Therefore the actors within the EU becomes important and both neofunctionalism and constructivism can explain how they influence and become influence by the process. However, they do so from different perspectives making the two a nice combination to base the theoretical discussion on. In the coming paragraphs constructivism is presented as an analytical tool. Both theories are part of the analytical framework and are applied in the discussion after the discourse analysis.

2.2 "How do norms shape political outcomes?"

Although having different ontological approaches, social constructivism, or constructivism, and neofunctionalism are similar in their view of how identities can shift (Risse 2019:132). This is where the ontological approach of constructivism becomes important to foster a discussion. The ontological claim of constructivism is that "[...]*social reality does not fall from heaven, but human agents construct and reproduce it through their daily practices.*" (Risse 2019:130). Through our daily actions, we change, develop, and repeat our culture. At the same time, we are constituted by the setting we find ourselves in. Constructivists argue that both structures as well as agents shape our reality (Risse 2019:131). In the example of bargaining actors, differing preferences cannot be taken for granted but rather must be seen in the social context in which they act. Constructivists also take into consideration that actors' preferences and standpoints can change during negotiations due to new information reaching them (Risse 2019:131). The important notion is that reality is a social construct (Saurugger 2014:145). This makes constructivism and neofunctionalism contrastable even though they have agreements on some aspects. Even the founder, Ernest Haas, recognised a more constructivist approach to institutions indicating a move away from a more rational choice view (Risse 2019:132).

The construction of political will and policy is about persuasion and creating narratives about why this issue is important (Brysk 2013:197-198). In other words, the understanding of a problem or what even constitutes a problem is a social construct and for there to be a policy to act upon this problem it needs to be persuasive. This is like Niemann's understanding of when there is a spill-over, when the policy area can be justified to enter. The difference here would be that the constructivist goes into more depth as to why something is seen as justifiable and in what way it is constructed and by whom.

Constructivism is a diverse approach with different branches depending on epistemological positioning (Saurugger 2014:145). The constructivism used in this thesis takes on more of a post-positivist approach. What this means is that ideas are social construct in which we are limited by and it shapes our perception of reality. Therefore, one's reality is not necessarily the same as another and the interpretation of policy actors or researchers can never be detached from their own social frame (Saurugger 2014:145; Risse 2019:130). And hence information or interpretations are never neutral (Bergström – Boréus 2015:29).

Using constructivism to analyse policy change in the EU could give an interesting explanation of what kind of ideas and norms are driving digital policy. What has persuaded the policy makers as the most important thing to focus on? And where does the user fit in this picture? Constructivism could further show how socially constructed worldviews open and close possible scenarios. The way we think about issues or problems does lead to actual outcomes (Winther Jørgensen – Philips 2000:12).

The socialisation process in the EU is in constructivist theory what leads the European integration process forward. Actors in the EU create and internally shapes

the context in which the norms are created causing further internalisation when the actors' decisions and ideas are reproduced in this social context (Saurugger 2014:152). Constructivist socialisation research can show how an accepted behaviour among actors can influence the policy making (Saurugger 2014:153). Which leads to the interesting question *"How do norms shape political outcomes*?" (Saurugger 2014:145).

This logic and study of the socialisation process attracts criticism because of the difficulty in proving when such a socialisation process happens (Saurugger 2014:153). Also, the epistemological stance of the post-positivism attracts criticism because of its inability to find truths and to say how we can know something (Saurugger 2014:146; Risse 2019:130). At the same time, if it is so that actors have different concepts of reality that affect their decision-making it is important to be able to take that perspective and offer insight to other logics than rational choice (Risse 2019:145).

Constructivism is important in this thesis because it helps explain why there is a specific focus in a policy. For example, why there are specific views of the user in the EU's digital policy can be understood in the way they are persuade and sold as the solution to a problem. This persuasion in a policy becomes a truth. So, the thoughts, ideas, and norms that policymakers in the EU are surrounded by affect what becomes the general EU "truth". Constructivism can disseminate and illustrate this. Neofunctionalism can comparably illustrate how digital policy is a bridge between economic policy and social policy leading to EU takin more space in social policy. In other words, the theories explain the European integration process in different ways.

3 Research design

To study in what way the view of the user has changed between 2010 and 2020 a sample consisting of 20 documents were used with the intention of being narrowed down. This larger sampled was used to find the best documents among them for in-depth analysis. The smaller sample and hence more narrow analysis was necessary to read the texts very closely and establish in what way the EU views the user. In other words, this thesis used a larger sample of 20 to capture the general digital policy as well as the development over time. Hence it has a longitudinal design. The thesis also used a small sample size of 8 to qualitatively analyse what words were used to describe the user and its needs. In this thesis the larger sample is narrowed down through a computer-aided content analysis.

The choice in using both a more "quantitative" approach and qualitative approach was made to have the best possible sample that can capture the EU's digital policy. If the thesis was to focus on simply a qualitative method the development over time would be lost as the material would be too comprehensive for the length of this thesis. Using only a quantitative method could open the thesis to take on a longer period and more aspects of digital policy. However, as the question is formulated the thesis needed to answer how the view of the user has changed which demanded a closer textual analysis. On this basis the thesis used a computer-aided content analysis for the larger sample followed by a discourse analysis drawn upon Bacchi's WPR approach. The following parts will go into more depth on these choices.

3.1 Defining the approaches used

The use of both "quantitative" (because of there being a larger and smaller sample the larger sample will be referred to as quantitative) and qualitative research approaches to create a framework for better understanding and interpreting the problem is often referred to as a mixed method (Creswell 2015:6). And since this thesis used both a quantitative and qualitative research design this thesis can be said to have a mixed method design. This became a strength in the analysis as it was clear what documents were supposed to be read. Furthermore, it was strengthened by isolating what was important in the text by drawing on Bacchi's take on how to find the problem representation.

An important question to answer when conducting a mixed method design is in what way the methods relate to each other. In what way are they independent or interacting? What status is given to each method i.e., is one more dominant? And

in what order will the methods be used? (Creswell 2015:13). In the previous chapter, it was explained why there was a need for both a quantitative and qualitative method. What is left to answer is, besides the questions just asked, why content analysis and discourse analysis were used.

As already mentioned, the quantitative process of this thesis is to go through 20 policy documents to explore in what way the EU's view of the user has developed. The actual written text of the policy was the data used in the analysis. In other words, what the thesis aims to look at was the content of the policies in connection to the user.

Stemming from the quantitative family content analysis was as a method a useful tool in this thesis with its capacity to single out specific content in fixed categories that can be replicated in the same manner on all documents (Bryman 2012:289-290). Also, the method is generally useful for customising a specific finding in texts (Bryman 2012:295), which was practical in this thesis because of the focus on the user in EU's digital policy. Furthermore, when the rules of what is searched, as in content analysis, are predetermined it increases the objectivity of the research with less impact or influence from the researcher during the process (Bryman 2012:289). This thesis has focused on the content of large samples of texts (policies) and therefore content analysis has been a good fit.

The content analysis was useful in identifying passages where the policies are mentioning the user among other things but to unveil the view of the user there was need for a deeper textual analysis. Content analysis in EU studies has often been paired with discourse analysis as the content analysis alone is often not sufficient to identify the underlying discourses (Lynggaard 2019:57-58). Therefore, the more in-depth textual analysis of this thesis was based in discourse analysis. What discourse analysis, helped with was its ability to both say something about what was explicitly written and what was not. In this way the driving ideas behind the policies could be found. An observant reader might react and say that both content analysis and discourse analysis are textual analyses. However, there is a distinction summed up by Amandine Crespy (2015).

> *While the latter [discourse analysis] involves a more encompassing theoretical approach to social phenomena, the former [content analysis] is, rather, a technique for analysing textual material in various kinds of research designs.* (Crespy 2015:106, Author interference within brackets)

They both focus on text but differ in the way they do so making them compatible to combine in a mixed method. This conclusion circles back to the questions asked earlier about the relationship between the mixed methods. Those will now be answered.

The question of timing between the methods also gives an indication of dominance by one method and how they interact. What has been established is that the content analysis is the better method for the larger sample and the discourse analysis is better suited for a smaller sample. The same documents have been used for both methods but by allowing the content analysis to go first it narrowed the

scope down in terms of which documents was the most important and locate where in the texts the relevant parts were. Therefore, the quantitative method preceded the qualitative. From that, it also follows that the data from the quantitative method was built to a qualitative analysis. In other words, the interaction between the methods occurred when the data from the quantitative method was used to perform the qualitative. This mixed design is called an explanatory sequential design and is useful when the quantitative findings need further in-depth analysis to say something more (Harnish et.al. 2011:522). The qualitative analysis is more dominant as the discussion around the findings was given more space.

3.2 The mixing of methods

In this thesis there has been an active choice to use methods that in the best way possible can help illustrate the EU's digital policy and its user view. Using two methods in this thesis is not only because it is a tool two deal with two different sample sizes. It is also because this was the best way to answer the research question. Method should be created to answer the research question in the best possible way and therefore mixing methods is often the best way to go about it (Crespy 2015). By taking building blocks from a method and complementing it with another it creates a strong research framework where the strengths of the methods are used.

3.2.1 Computer-aided content analysis

As mentioned, the content analysis will be computer-aided through the program Nvivo. A computer-aided content analysis helps the researcher search the text efficiently and can increase the reliability of the results (Krippendorff 2004:258-259). The computer-aided content analysis has located and isolated in which sections the documents are referring to the user directly or indirectly through a search string, (*user OR individual OR competence OR skill OR literacy OR learn*). This search string is further presented and explained shortly, but the short version is that it has been used to search for words linked to the user.

Nvivo has a range of different tools to search the texts but only one of these were used in this thesis. As just mentioned, this thesis used a search string to locate interesting passages. The function "text search" lets you do this. This function both visibly locates all the areas and calculates how many times the words are mentioned and their percentage of the text. The percentage was used as a tool to identify which documents that were the most relevant for the discourse analysis. Reading the documents in Nvivo also helped because the software had highlighted words from the search string.

3.2.2 What is the problem represented to be?

As mentioned before the discourse analysis was based on the results of the content analysis to offer an in-depth analysis of what was said and how this has developed over time. To create a more structured analysis that can be easily followed the thesis drew on Bacchi's WPR approach (2009). This approach is built on a set of questions that the researcher should use to analyse the policy in question. In other words, it is a sort of guide for how you best identify the problem representation in policy. When studying policy the important thing is to look at know what is left out and what is included (Bacchi 2009:xii). Bacchi describes policy in the words of a program with a positive connotation towards "fixing" problems in society (2009:ix). Even though there is an underlying understanding that policy aims to fix something this is often not explicitly said or even meant by the responsible authority when presenting or implementing the policy. Nevertheless, Bacchi argues that the very act of a policy is to change something which in other words is the same thing as saying that something is problematic and needs to change (2009:ix). Unveiling what the true underlying problem in a specific policy is can show how something is understood. How the problem is viewed tells us what assumptions are made and what needs to be done to solve it (Bacchi 2009:xiv). The following questions constitutes Bacchi's framework:

1. What's the ´problem´ represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ´problem´?
3. How has this representation of the ´problem´ come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ´problem´ be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ´problem´?
6. How/where has this representation of the ´problem´ been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced? (Bacchi 2009:xii).

An initial remark to make is that this thesis did not try to specifically answer all these questions but draw upon them and incorporate them. Questions 1, 2, and 4 were drawn upon in the analysis. Question 3 was not used in the analysis however it was somewhat answered in the discussion with the theories. Question 5 and question 6 were not drawn upon. The 5th question could have been useful to study if the policies were helping digital inclusion or not, but this was not within the scope of this thesis to assess that specifically. The thesis touches upon what implications there could be if there is a lack of focus on inclusion in digital policy, but the aim was not to analyse in what way the EU's digital policy produces inclusion or exclusion through its policies. The 6th question targets how specific discourses in policies become legitimate when they encounter their target group (Bacchi 2009:19). This was not of interest in this thesis.

The 1$^{st.}$ question, *What's the ´problem´ represented to be in a specific policy?* was used to unveil how the policy refers to the user and indirectly the non-user by

looking at the problematisation and words used about the user. It was further used to see if there was a problematisation around a lack of inclusion. The 2nd question *What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ´problem´?* built further on what was captured in the first question and analyses what assumptions were made about the user. This question was drawn upon to analyse the logics and assumptions there were behind the view of the user and what type of individual it was assumed to be. The 4th question(s) *What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ´problem´ be thought about differently?* was used to analyse if some users were excluded from the EU's digital policy and how this could potentially be problematic. The literature review was often referred to when "answering" this question as an argument for what should be included in digital policy. As said before these WPR questions were not explicitly answered but functioned as a guide for the reading of the material.

The discourse analysis was in this thesis more of a soft constructivist nature. It was not post-structural, which would imply that there is no free structure of language, it is dependent on the context in which it is produced. A post-structural view leads to the analysis of text being only temporal and nothing general can be said over time. Then it is only possible to analyse text in a specific moment in which it was produced (Winther Jørgensen – Philips 2015:132). By using a softer constructivism, the texts could be compared over time and the structure of the text could still be influenced by norms and underlying discourses, which were analysed and presented in this thesis. In other words, the epistemological stance of the thesis is that it is possible to draw inferences from texts without it having a "best before date". However, our experience from life, education, language, and many other things affect the way we perceive the world and therefore there is not one truth.

In every textual analysis there is a level of interpretation made which can influence the results or conclusions made. The reader can never fully be separated from its knowledge about the texts at the point of reading (Bergström – Boréus 2015:30-31). This also leads to a researcher reading text differently than perhaps another person would. At the same time, this knowledge is essential for interpretation of texts to be possible. This in turn is affected by a range of different thing. For example, our education, upbringing, knowledge of the area of interest and language affect the way we interpret the texts (Bergström – Boréus 2015:31). The author of the thesis has Swedish as the main language and English as the second language. This could have affected the analysis by the author drawing certain inferences from words or phrases that could in a Swedish context mean something other than an English. Furthermore, the policy documents that were used in this thesis does probably not have one author and many of the authors does likely not have English as their first language. The meanings of the texts could have been thought about differently when written by a non-English EU bureaucrat with a base in their language. In other words, there were a range of different thing that could have affected both the meaning transferred into text and from the readers perspective there were many more aspect that can have influenced what was drawn and understood from the texts. To work around this issue in the best possible way there are of course references throughout the analysis to specific parts of the

documents. There are also plenty of citations made for the reader of this thesis to make its own interpretation and to understand why certain points have been made by the author of this thesis.

3.3 Conducting the policy analysis

The mixed method was conducted in a sequential way meaning that the results of the content analysis built the discourse analysis. The first step of the analysis was therefore to conduct a content analysis, which as mentioned before was aided by Nvivo. The search string used to find specific passages in the texts that were of interest in the thesis is (*user OR individual OR competence OR skill OR literacy OR learn*). With the thesis focusing on the *user* in the EU's digital policy it was natural to include this word in the search. However, this is only the main term that has been chosen in this thesis and therefore there can be other types of words that are synonyms to *user* or can be related to user as for example *competence* which is something the user can possess or not. The same goes for *literacy*, *skills* and *learn*. These are all related words to what a user can poses or acquire to be able to participate in a digital society. These types of words had to be included to get a broader search and collect more parts of the text where the EU was referring to the user directly or indirectly.

Following the search string-step the elimination of some documents was done. 8 of those documents moved on to the WPR approach. The Nvivo software was further used when reading the documents to see where the software had highlighted the important sections. These documents were read more carefully with the three questions from WPR as a collective guide.

After reading, analysing, and interpreting the eight documents the author illustrated the findings in four different perspectives of the user. The *economic perspective*, *the social perspective*, *the digital citizen perspective*, and *the global competitiveness perspective.* These perspectives and views of the user were then discussed from a neofunctionalism and constructivism perspective to see in what way they can explain why there was change in the view of the user or why there was not. A problem that arose in the analysis is the problem with lack of comparability between some of the documents. Because of different aims and sometimes topics the weight of the findings or explanations are at parts isolated to the specific document.

4 Computer-aided content analysis: Narrowing it down

The base for the discourse analysis was made by exploring all documents in terms of user specific words to isolate parts where the user is mentioned directly or indirectly. The point with doing this was to narrow down the sample to a manageable amount for further analysis and to find the most relevant documents. As mentioned before this process was guided by Nvivo and its text search.

Below the results are presented in the picture. The results of this text search are not analysed in terms of the *references* or *coverage*, instead these numbers worked as a tool to narrow down the larger sample to a smaller sample.

File Name	In Folder	References	Coverage
2010 A Digital Agenda for Europe	Files	90	0.43%
2010 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	Files	40	0.18%
2010 The European eGovernment Action Plan 2011-2015	Files	18	0.16%
2012 Digital to do list new digital priorities for 2013-2014	Files	4	0.21%
2012 Press release reform of data protection rules	Files	3	0.22%
2012 The Digital Agenda for Europe	Files	25	0.25%
2013 Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion	Files	36	0.21%
2015 A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe	Files	30	0.22%
2016 A New Skills Agenda for Europe	Files	259	2.01%
2016 Council recommendation New Opportunities for Adults	Files	100	2.15%
2016 DG CONNECT Strategic Plan 2016-2020	Files	19	0.10%
2016 EU eGovernment Action Plan 2016-2020	Files	12	0.11%
2017 European Pillar of Social Rigths	Files	5	0.13%
2019 EP EU policies Digital Transformation	Files	19	0.20%
2020 A European strategy for data	Files	69	0.36%
2020 Data Governance Act	Files	167	0.59%
2020 Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027	Files	196	1.22%
2020 European Skills Agenda	Files	414	1.98%
2020 Press release Digital Europe Programme	Files	2	0.17%
2020 Shaping Europe's Digital Future	Files	18	0.21%

Large sample Nvivo text search (*user OR individual OR competence OR skill OR literacy OR learn*)

In terms of coverage most of the documents have a percentage below 1% except for four of the documents who are targeting skills and competences in the EU. Due to this their coverage are higher. Looking at the number of references or hits in the text, this is varying a bit more in the documents. This could be due to different document lengths. The aim was to narrow the number of documents down a manageable amount to be read and analysed in this thesis. One document per year was put in the smaller sample. This was done by highest coverage and not by

number of references to eliminate the risk of length affecting. Some years only have one document in the large sample and some years have none. The ambition is to study the change over time and therefore the missing years were not as important in the bigger picture, although the wish was to have a slightly larger sample to begin with. Going by the highest amount of coverage per year the documents shown in the picture were part of the smaller sample. For the years with only one document these were automatically used as they by default had the higher coverage. After having finished this process each of the remaining documents were read through the process mentioned earlier. The following section is the analysis and hence the discourse analysis and the results from in-depth reading.

File Name	In Folder	References	Coverage
2010 A Digital Agenda for Europe	Files	90	0.43%
2012 The Digital Agenda for Europe	Files	25	0.25%
2013 Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion	Files	36	0.21%
2015 A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe	Files	30	0.22%
2016 Council recommendation New Opportunities for Adults	Files	100	2.15%
2017 European Pillar of Social Rigths	Files	5	0.13%
2019 EP EU policies Digital Transformation	Files	19	0.20%
2020 European Skills Agenda	Files	414	1.98%

Small sample Nvivo text search (*user OR individual OR competence OR skill OR literacy OR learn*)

5 Analysis

After having narrowed down the documents to 8 the next method is used to unveil the EU's view of the user. This analysis is divided in two parts with the first part being the documents between 2010-2015 and the second is the years 2016-2020. This is to make the analysis more manageable and hopefully show what shifts there are between years. It also gives the chance for summaries which can help the reader with grasping the views. An initial remark is that certain views are more prominent than others such as for example the view of the user as part of the workforce.

5.1 The early years, 2010-2015

Looking at the first timeframe 2010-2015 it has an interesting setting. With the launch of much of the social media we use today. For example, Facebook launched in 2004 and had in 2010 reached 608 million users, which in 2013 had doubled to 1,230 million users (Sedghi 2014). Similarly, Instagram was launched in 2010 and became one of the leading digital media platforms (Bruner 2016). These platforms among others have revolutionised how we communicate and put their mark on our societies from roughly around 2010 and forward. Therefore, it is interesting to start analysing in this period to grasp what is happening in policy when society is in some ways drastically starting to change.

5.1.1 A Digital Agenda for Europe (2010)

In the document "A Digital Agenda for Europe" from 2010 the EU sets out 7 areas in which the EU needs to become better in or focus on to fully utilise the abilities of ICTs to reach the Europe 2020 Strategy. The strategy was presented by the COM at a time when the EU was rebuilding its economic capacity after the economic crisis 2007-2008. As a part of this strategy, the COM, identified ICTs as an important area in which the EU could improve. "A Digital Agenda for Europe" was born and with it 7 areas in which the EU needed to become better in or focus at to fully harness the possibilities of ICTs and their wished positive effect on the economy, citizens and society (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:3-4). One of these 7 areas focus on the user under the headline "Lack of digital literacy and skills"

> *Europe is suffering from a growing professional ICT skills shortage and a digital literacy deficit. These failings are excluding many citizens from the*

> *digital society and economy and are holding back the large multiplier effect of ICT take-up to productivity growth.* (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:6)

Both the "*professional skills shortage*" and "*digital literacy deficit*" is problematised in this paragraph as something the EU suffering from. The exclusion from the digital society is mentioned in combination with the economy and the problem that a lack of digital literacy and skills are posing for the growth that could be possible through harnessing ICTs.

Later in the document, the topic of digital literacy, skills and inclusion is further discussed. Initially, there is a text on the increasing need to use the internet to access some services and that this poses a problem to those who are lacking user skills such as digital literacy (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:25). Below is a cut out from parts of the text that is especially focusing on the user and digital inclusion. After this bit of text, there is also a problematisation around Europeans with disabilities and their lack of access to digital tools (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:25).

> *In many cases the take-up gap is due to lack of user skills such as digital and media literacy, not only for employability but also for learning, creating, participating and being confident and discerning in the use of digital media.* (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:25)

Although the text does indeed mention the problem of lack of participation in society and the risk of this creating inequality it is rather short in comparison with the rest of the passages on skills and literacy. In the following paragraphs after the ones cited and referred to the discussion around digital literacy and skills continue however with another focus.

> *In addition, ICT cannot function effectively as a European growth sector and as a motor of competitiveness and productivity gains across the European economy without skilled practitioners.* (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:25)

> *It is essential to educate European citizens to use ICT and digital media and particularly to attract youngsters to ICT education. The supply of ICT practitioner and e-business skills, i.e. the digital skills necessary for innovation and growth, needs to be increased and upgraded. In addition, given there are 30 million women between the ages of 15-24, it is necessary to improve the attractiveness of the ICT sector for professional use […].* (COM "A Digital Agenda" 2010:25)

The focus of the text is now on how a skilled workforce can be essential for well-functioning innovation and growth. These are more economic arguments as to why users need digital skills and literacy. At the same time jobs, employment and being part of the workforce is also an aspect of social inclusion and a rather substantial

part of being able to participate in society. However, the economic ambitions of the EU are strong, and the EU has at this point also realised that there needs to be a better focus on digital with the workforce for the EU to build a strong economy. In other words, there is a difference between a social focus and economic focus on the workforce. One where the EU is interested in the employability of the citizen for its participation. One where the EU needs the citizen to be employable to foster a good economic and growth climate.

In this document the EU views the user as an individual that needs to have digital literacy and skills to participate in society, to learn and to be confident. Second the EU views the user as someone who needs to be a "skilled practitioner" to harness ICTs to foster economic growth in the EU. The "skilled practitioner" view of the user is in this document dominant over the view of the user as someone in society outside of work assessed by the amount of text dedicated to each of these views. At the same time, the problem that certain groups in society have a harder time participating than others are raised but not without a direct linkage to employability and harnessing the ICTs positive effect on growth. Through this the norm/story of the user and its skills become stronger linked with economic growth than social inclusion.

5.1.2 The Digital Agenda for Europe (2012)

As a follow up to "A Digital Agenda" from 2010 the EU in 2012 presented "The Digital Agenda for Europe" (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012). The European Council and European Parliament (EP) had expressed their concerns about the EU falling behind in its digital leadership and although "A Digital Agenda" was seen as relatively successful the EU now needed to target further areas to take leadership (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:3-4). With this background updated areas of interest for the EU's digital development were presented in "The Digital Agenda" as a follow up to the agenda from 2010.

The results reported from "A Digital Agenda" were focused on increased internet use over many different groups including disadvantaged and high-speed broadband is also reported to be rolled out (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:3). This specific focus on increased internet use can be related to what the literature review showed. That the discussion on whether society is digitally inclusive is often discussed in terms of use. which researchers argue is a simplified picture.

The refocus in 2012 key areas are presented with the ambition to "[...]*better stimulate the digital economy*[...]" (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:4). The overall problem representation in this policy is like the 2010 policy with its focus on the economy. So, where does the user fit in here? First, the user is mentioned in connection to security online and the EU wants to create a trustworthy and secure environment for the user where there are global risks (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:4). The view of the user could be on someone that needs protection which the EU is responsible for. This further puts the user in the context of a European as the global risks posed by the internet are raised. Another key area in which the user is mentioned in the following citation.

> *[...]Increase digital literacy and the proliferation of digital skills, to fill the gap between demand and supply of ICT professionals;[…] (*COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:5)

The connection to the user is through the words "*literacy"* and "*skills"*. The view of the user can be understood in terms of workforce and how this is best adjusted to the digital transformation which is aimed at increasing economic growth in the EU. Further down on the same page "*e-skills"* are mentioned in the context of the labour force and the internet economy (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:5).

Trust and security are further problematised as an issue for why there is a lack of use of digital media. The EU would like to see a more trustworthy internet for the users to feel safe which can be democratically empowering (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:10). Here the EU does recognise the need to be included in the use of digital media for there to be democratic empowerment. They further recognise that it is the lack of trust that makes individuals refer from using the internet. The view of this group of users could again be understood in the context of citizens needing help or assistance, but also to take part in a democratic society. And in other words, this could be a case where the EU recognises that some users need assistance to fully take part in a digital society.

Skills are specially brought up in the part "*Entrepreneurship and Digital Jobs and Skills"* (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:11). By the title of this key area, the interest around skills is related to the workforce, which is a limited part of users. Even the users who are part of the workforce have a life outside of this where there could be other types of digital skills that are necessary.

> *Youth unemployment is a massive concern and there is a need to strengthen the link between regular ICT use and formal ICT learning, and recognise this as vital to the success of young people. Digital skills should be the indispensable component of all professional training, business education and lifelong education programmes to ensure new generations as well as those currently in the workplace are able to acquire the skills they need.* (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:11)

In this citation, there is however an indication that both the overall use of ICTs and the use within the workforce are important for the younger generation. This could be an example of when the focus on workforce has a more social and participatory focus. But an important distinction is that the training is for those who are within the workforce and not those who have left. The literature review showed that higher age is often something that can link to digital exclusion, which could be explained by the fact that skills in policy are often focused on the workforce. Here the user could be understood as an individual entering the workforce or someone within it, an important distinction is that those who have left are not in this document explicitly viewed as a user. This might not be too surprising since the aim is to increase employability. But this focus on the user in connection with the overall

aim of the EU's digital policy in 2012 points to an important fact that the use of digital media or ICT is important from an economic perspective more than from a participatory perspective. At the same time, this is one document that was possible to find and other documents that were published in these years could have another focus.

> *The objective is for the EU's economy and society to rejuvenate itself into a digital Europe, where digital technologies, media and content are embraced and exploited by the whole population. The explosive growth of the utilisation of ICT in our daily life is contributing more than any other technological innovation to a radical change in the economy and the society as a whole*. (COM "The Digital Agenda" 2012:13)

In contrast to the parts about the workforce, the EU expresses a wish for all to be part of the digital society. However, little attention has been paid to this or the daily life-aspect in the document. This could be an example of the EU mainly viewing the user as a part of the workforce.

5.1.3 Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion (2013)

A document that does pay attention to the social exclusion of the EU citizen is "Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion" (COM "Towards Social Investment" 2013). This document is also produced in relation to the Europe 2020 Strategy with the aim of minimising the negative social effects of the economic crisis (COM "Towards Social Investment" 2013:2). Some interesting findings in this document are that there are no hits for *user* and when searching manually for *digital* there are no hits. The document overall deals little with anything connected to the digital society and ICT is mentioned only twice. Including the document in the analysis could still bring some interesting perspectives on the relationship between social policy and digital policy in 2013. It could be that these different areas are not seen in combination which is potentially an interesting finding.

The document was produced as a part of the Europe 2020 Strategy which is putting it in a setting of the economic crisis. There is a strong focus on economy like the two other documents that have been related to the European 2020 Strategy. This can be seen from the citation below.

> *The economic crisis has raised unemployment, decreased tax revenues and increased the number of people who need benefits, further threatening the sustainability of our social protection systems.* (COM "Towards Social Investment" 2013:4)

This is further problematised from the perspective of costs. Social policies are seen as increasingly more expensive, and they need to be seen from an efficiency perspective to what they are accomplishing (COM "Towards Social Investment" 2013:4-5). Furthermore, the EU highlights the need to invest in human capital to combat the problem of poverty and social disadvantages.

> *Children who grow up in poverty often stay in poverty for their entire lives. For example, significant disadvantages faced in childhood in education and health are often compounded over life.* (COM "Towards Social Investment" 2013:6)

This is a similar argument that was found in the literature review. But instead, poverty could be a determinant for digital exclusion, existing social issues could be said to be amplified or transferred to the digital society. However, this connection is not shown here.

Overall, little or no attention is paid to the digital society and the possible implication this could have on social inclusion. Therefore, the user is missing from this problematisation. The document "A Digital Agenda", which is also connected to the European 2020 Strategy, does discuss the user. However, from an economic perspective. When it comes to social policy in connection to the European 2020 Strategy the user is not mentioned, and the citizen is not seen from a digital exclusion perspective. The social policy norm can here be seen as detached from the digital in this document.

5.1.4 A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe (2015)

In 2015 the EU presented "A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe" (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015). With this initial paragraph the tone is set for the rest of the document.

> *The global economy is rapidly becoming digital. Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is no longer a specific sector but the foundation of all modern innovative economic systems. The Internet and digital technologies are transforming the lives we lead, the way we work – as individuals, in business, and in our communities as they become more integrated across all sectors of our economy and society.* (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015:3)

The economic aspects are still prominent but the realisation that there is a digital transformation of many parts of society has been added. There is a section called "*An inclusive e-society*" where most of the user-related text is found. This section is divided in two different headings *"Digital skills and expertise*" and "*E-government*" (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015:16).

> *The EU has seen improvements in the basic digital skills of its citizens (increasing from 55% to 59% of the population), but still has a long way to go. Digital skill levels need also to be raised among employees in all economic sectors and among job seekers to improve their employability.* (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015:16)

Both the general citizen and the workforce are said to need skills. An important thing to notice is that they are distinguished from each other, which is done in almost every document. In connection to this it is also important to note that the view of the user as part of the workforce is the most discussed and emphasised. The following citation is another example of this picture. "[...*]enhancing the recognition of digital skills and qualifications and increasing the level of ICT professionalism in Europe.*" (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015:16). By first separating the views then emphasising the economic perspective it creates a notion and a picture of this being the more important view and hence it can become the stronger truth.

Under the E-government section, the problematisation surrounds modernisation of public administration with an example such as creating a single point of contact with citizens that can store their information for cross border use. This would be an "*EU wide e-safe solution*" (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015:16). Furthermore, the what is said about E-government can be illustrated by the following citation: "*Contact points between public authorities and citizens/businesses are currently fragmented and incomplete*." and "*Businesses are held back by regulatory fragmentation and barriers which makes it harder for them to scale-up and operate across borders within the Internal Market."* (COM "Digital Single Market" 2015:17). The user focus of the E-government could instead be on safety for the user and making it simple for the user to be in contact with authorities online. The remaining part could be seen as the economic gains and business gains.

5.1.5 Summary 2010-2015

In the document analysed from 2010 there are two perspectives of the user found. First, the user is an individual who needs skills to participate in society. Second the user is the "skilled practitioner". Both are shown in the text, but one has been given substantially more space, the "skilled practitioner" view. When and why the document is published becomes important. *When* is in the years after the economic crisis which also leads to the *why*. The aim is to harness ICTs to foster growth within the Union. The economic perspective and "skilled practitioner" perspective probably has its explanation in this.

Moving on to 2012 there is an update of the agenda from 2010 with new targets. The economic and workforce centred view is still prominent in this document. There are also similar mentions of how digital skills are important for participation in society, however, again at a lower rate than the economic perspective. And what is added is a view of the user that needs assistants or protection from harms that are thriving on the internet.

The document for the year 2013 was a social policy document with relations to the European 2020 Strategy like the documents from 2010 and 2012. The interesting findings here is that there was almost no connection to the digital society being made. The user is therefore hard to identify here. An interesting point to be lifted is that the user can be identified in the more economic policy documents but when it comes to social policy it is essentially missing. No connection is being made between social exclusion and digital exclusion.

Lastly, a policy document from 2015 was analysed. This is again a document where the view of the user as part of the workforce is rather prominent. But there are also connections to the digital transformation affecting our everyday lives. In other words, the user could be viewed as all citizens who use digital technologies. However, the ones who are more often said to need skills are those part of the workforce to foster employment and growth. By not putting more emphasising on the need for skills all over society it puts a limit on who is a user or at least who is the most important user. The economic perspective of this, and the previous documents, could be putting a limit on the expansion of skills in society and hence who is viewed as a user. At the same time the document could have slightly more of the citizen view than the previous documents.

This dual view that is found in almost all these documents is important to discuss. Dividing skills in two rough groups and emphasising skills as something mainly being linked to what is needed in work can creates a picture and a norm around what digital skills are. By viewing the user in a certain way, it could put limits on the development of digital skills for everyone in society and perhaps slow down the digital inclusion. Emphasising or recognising skills equally is important for societal equality and everyone's active and fair participation in society.

5.2 The later years, 2016-2020

Moving on to the later years digital and social media had in 2016 become something that was used more and more by many citizens as an important source for information. In the Brexit referendum in 2015 and US election in 2016 social media has been said to have affected the results by spreading fast and fragmented information (Gorodnichenko et.al., 2018:3). Fake news and false information were spread with a click without little hindering and in a way affected the outcomes of the referendum and election (Gorodnichenko et.al., 2018:20). By extent this does affect the democratic process and the user. Digital policies in the EU are hence expected to change after 2015 and 2016. Digital skills, competence and literacy are in this period becoming more important for the democratic society and whether this is illustrated in the digital policies after 2016 could give an indication of what the EU's priorities are for the user.

5.2.1 Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, Recommendation from the Council of the European Union (2016)

In 2016 the Council of the European Union (Council) published a recommendation for skills needed for Adults (Council "Upskilling Pathways" 2016), which was a response to the COM's proposal "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults". The core point or problematisation of this document is introduced with the following paragraph.

> *In today's society everyone needs to have a wide set of skills, knowledge and competences, including a sufficient level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence, in order to achieve his or her full potential, play an active part in society and undertake his or her social and civic responsibilities. Such skills, knowledge and competences are also crucial for accessing, and progressing in, the labour market and for engaging in further education and training.* (Council "Upskilling Pathways" 2016:1)

Interestingly digital competence is one of the essential skills mentioned and it is mentioned in connection to participation in society before it is mentioned as an essential competence for the workforce. There is a substantial focus in the text around the problematisation around lack of digital skills in the workforce but there is also a problematisation of other users as can be seen below. The problematisation around the skills for the workforce are in this document more of a social nature because of the focus on participation in the economy and society more than it is on the economic growth of the EU.

> *[...]European adults aged 16 to 65 with low levels of proficiency in those skills are less likely to take part in learning or to participate fully in the digitally driven economy and society. They face a higher risk of unemployment, a higher incidence of poverty and social exclusion, higher health risks and a lower life expectancy, while their children face higher risks of educational underachievement.* (Council "Upskilling Pathways" 2016:1)

This paragraph is followed by how the low levels of skills also relate to unemployment (Council "Upskilling Pathways" 2016:2). What could be seen from this is that the societal aspect of digital competence and skills have been given more space in these discussions. "[...]*relevant for the labour market and for active participation in society*." (Council "Upskilling Pathways" 2016:2). This sentence illustrates that both the users within the workforce and users overall in society need digital competence and skills. The next passage is one of the recommendations from the Council.

> *Offer adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences [...] access to upskilling pathways which provide them with the opportunity, according to their individual needs, to:*
>
> *(a) acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy and digital competence; and/or*
>
> *(b) acquire a wider set of skills, knowledge and competences, relevant for the labour market and active participation in society [...]* (Council "Upskilling Pathways" 2016:4).

Here there is a combination of both participation in society and workforce, showing that the EU recognises the need for sufficient (digital) skills to participate in society. The view of the user as a citizen can be seen more in this document. Even though the question of a competent workforce does still have an important role in the EU's digital policy. The dual view of the user is hence still present further implementing two norms of the user.

5.2.2 European Pillar of Social Rights (2017)

The "European Pillar of Social Rights" published in 2017 set out in the aims of the EU stated in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (COM "Social Rights" 2017:4). In, for example, Article 9 TFEU it is stated that the EU must in its policies have regard to "[...] *the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion and a high level of education[...]*" (COM "Social Rights" 2017:4). The treaties are perhaps not counted as policy documents, however, they do give an indication of what responsibilities the EU does have when developing and defining policy. Among other things, the responsibility is to promote high employment and reduce social exclusion. Social exclusion, as argued in the literature review, is difficult to separate from digital exclusion. Therefore, this document should be important to look at when studying the user and digital exclusion.

With this said little attention is being paid to the digital transformation of society. It is mentioned in two places where there is both a recognition of challenges and opportunities with digitalisation as well as a statement that digital communications are a citizen's rights.

> *Labour markets and societies are evolving quickly, with new opportunities and new challenges arising from globalisation, the digital revolution, changing work patterns and societal and demographic developments.* (COM "Social Rights" 2017:7)
>
> *Everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications.* (COM "Social Rights" 2017:22).

From this it is hard to say in what way the EU views the user in this document with no mentioning of it. There is also no connection being made between social and digital exclusion. Under the section of "*Social Protection and Inclusion*" there are writings like the following citation.

> *People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs.* (COM "Social Rights" 2017:21).

It does not actively state what type of services should be given but rather services that help individuals participate in the workforce and society. This could very well be digital services making this group a part of the users. The document is very general in what help or assistance will reach the citizens and therefore this might be incorporating the user, or it might not.

5.2.3 Policy Briefing: Digital transformation, European Parliament (2019)

The EP briefing "Digital transformation" is concentrated on the digital revolution and its impact on businesses, individuals, and society. The EU is said to have a role in the digital shaping of the society and economy and the EU citizens are becoming more aware of the need for digital technologies in their lives (EP "Digital transformation" 2019:1). The first EU action mentioned is to foster the digital transformation which is followed by this citation.

> *Further EU action will doubtless be needed, notably to increase infrastructure investment, boost innovation, foster digital champions and businesses digitalisation, reduce existing digital divides, remove remaining barriers in the digital single market and ensure an adequate legal and regulatory framework in the areas of advanced computing and data, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.* (EP "Digital transformation" 2019:1)

The reader can among other things see the writing "*reduce existing digital divides"*. This is brought up later in the document (citation below) but there is no mention of digital skills, competence, or literacy, which the literature review has shown is the more important aspect of the digital divide than internet access. After the citation below, there is a text where digital skills and competence is mentioned, this is connected to the workforce showing again that the view of the user who needs skills is a specific group.

> *There is some concern that not all consumers and businesses in Europe will benefit from digital transformation, given the current and future digital divide between urban and rural areas and across EU countries. [...] For instance, the price and quality of telecoms services for consumers varies considerably.* (EP "Digital transformation" 2019:3)

An explanation to this could be the fact that initiatives surrounding e-skills, as said in this document, is a national competence (EP "Digital transformation" 2019:4). At the same time, there is little restriction in any of the documents when it comes to speaking of digital skills and competence in a specific group of society, the workforce. Again, this can cement the view, norm, and assumption that digital skills are mainly needed for those who work. The explanation for this can be understood in relation to the EU's political agenda which is to use the digital transformation for "[...] *unlocking future growth in Europe."* (EP "Digital transformation" 2019:7). The digital transformation has an economic perspective. The use of the word *skills* is almost exclusively done in connection to *jobs* showing that this is something needed for the workforce and hence the user could be viewed as a part of this group.

5.2.4 European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience (2020)

The "European Skills agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience" was published in June 2020. This was at a time when the world and the EU had lived with the Covid-19-pandemic for some months which had accelerated the digital transformation (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:3).

> *The pandemic has accentuated the digital skills gap that already existed and new inequalities are emerging as many people do not have the required level of digital skills or are in workplaces or schools lagging behind in digitalisation.* (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:3)

In this paragraph, the EU both recognizes the pre-existing skill gap and accentuated inequalities that Covid-19 has brought about. They furthermore recognize that people in general lack skills as well as those in workplaces and in school. The understanding that skills are needed for all becomes clearer in this document which also makes the interpretation of how the user is viewed broader. Some are not users or are restricted in their use due to a lack of skills. This is seen as bad for equality. In the following citation there are other implications for the user.

> *As Europe sets off on its path to recovery, the need to improve and adapt skills becomes an imperative. This will also be crucial to enable the EU, as a geopolitical actor, to pursue its leadership towards global recovery.* (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:3)

For Europe to emerge as a leader and strong international actor it needs its citizens to have the highest levels of skills possible. The user and its level of skills become a crucial piece for the global success of Europe. This is similar to the previous documents that have emphasised the need for a skilled workforce for growth. The user becomes a resource. Furthermore, in this document skills are pointed out as a determinant for international success for Europe (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:3). Other writings are saying that no one should be left behind but again this is connected to the workforce and having the right skills keeps you employed (COM "Skills Agenda 2020:4). In a way, the text is talking about skills in two different ways, the skilled workforce, and lifelong learning which includes everyone. From the citations already made this can be seen but it will be further proven with more examples.

The document is built with an introduction which most of the citations made above has been taken from. It also has five topics where it goes more in-depth. 1. "*Working together under a pact for skills" 2. "Skilling for a job: Aligning policies to deliver results" 3. "Developing tools that empower people to build skills throughout life" 4. "Setting ambitious skills objectives" 5. "Making it happen: unlocking investment"* (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020).

Under section 1 The Pact for Skills is presented, and the following citation holds the objective for The Pact. "*The Pact for Skills will bring together all stakeholders, private and public, which share the objective of up- and reskilling Europe's workforce to enable people to participate in the twin transitions*. (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:6). Interpreted from this text the skills could be understood as something that is for the workforce and this group is to aid the *twin transition*, which is the green and digital transformation. The user could here again be viewed as part of the workforce and a resource.

Section 2 is rather straightforward with the focus on skills needed for the workforce. As can be discerned from the section title and this initial claim "*The first step to make sure people can acquire the skills they need for a current or future job is up-to- date information on skills needs*." (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:8). Although it does not specifically say digital skills this is probably what is meant with regards to the introduction of the document. What is interesting is that under section 2 there is an action included that targets skills for the older population i.e., the ones who have left the workforce (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:14).

> *It [European Agenda for Adult Learning] will aim towards building comprehensive, quality and inclusive adult learning systems, which reach out to all, including seniors and in particular those most in need of access to learning, including through distance and online learning. It will prioritise non-formal, life-wide learning, intergenerational, intercultural and community learning.* (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:14, author interference within brackets)

By this, the EU recognises the need for skills, especially for the elder. When using the words "*non-formal"* and "*life-wide learning",* there is an active distinction

between the skills needed for the workforce and skills for other groups such as the elders. The dual view is present again in the EU's digital policy.

In section 3 the EU has an ambition "[...]*to empower everyone, whether employed, unemployed or inactive, to build skills throughout their lives.*" (COM "Skills Agenda 2020:15). Both "*everyone"* and words associated with working or looking for jobs are used as synonyms here as the ones who should build throughout life. Using the word everyone it effectively excludes specific groups from the largest part of society. For example, elders, migrants and disabled who are not able to be part of the workforce are excluded from building skills for life. The view of the user becomes exclusive to some groups. At the same time, "*inactive*" could mean elders perhaps and previous citations have shown that there is a wish for the inclusion of other groups as users. These writings differ some from previous documents by being more specific in what is needed and what has happened when there is a lack of digital skills.

Section 4 is setting out the objectives for skills. A prominent goal or objective for this agenda is to increase the number of adults who are learning. The EU also recognises that a new approach to skills is needed to recover from the Covid-19-pandemic (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:18).

> *We need to first of all significantly increase the share of adults participating in learning overall – only this guarantees a lifelong learning approach.* (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:18)

> *[...]digital skills are of critical value for working, learning and social interaction. This is why the fourth objective to be monitored is the share of adults with at least basic digital skills.* (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:18*)*

These two citations can illustrate an increase in the EU's view that everyone should be included in this agenda and everyone needs to have a basic level of skills. Being a user is of critical value for the EU. The view of the user as a citizen is more prominent here with the words "*working", "learning"* and *"social interaction"*. On the same page in the agenda, the objectives are said to "[...] *also positively contribute to reducing the share of low-qualified adults which stands at 22% (2019) and where Europe falls behind its global competitors*." (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:18). Now the attention is drawn again to the dominant perspective and when doing so the individual skills are not explained as important for the individual but rather important for the success of the EU.

The assumption made of the user could be that it is viewed as someone who is working, and that this user is more important for the future of Europe than the everyday user is. By making this assumption the effects of social exclusion through digital exclusion are somewhat missed. At the same time, this document has in several places acknowledged the need for basic digital skills for social inclusion with specific targets although not to the same extent as with employability. For example, the agenda is referring to the effects of Covid-19-pandemic as "[...] *economic and social consequences of the crisis*" (COM "Skills Agenda" 2020:20).

By having a setting for this document that is both seen as an economic and social crisis it could have opened for the EU to include a need for skills on an economic ground as well as a social. Perhaps this could explain why social inequalities are linked to digital inequalities in this document more than in the others.

5.2.5 Summary 2016-2020

An interesting finding from 2016 in the Councils recommendation for "Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults" was that the two different groups of users found in the earlier documents were still present and had now been given a slightly more equal importance. There was still an emphasis on the workforce but also on the everyday user and their need for skills. In this document there was a more equal weighting of them. A possible conclusion to make from this could be that the view of the user between the two groups found was more equal and that the EU actively wished for the everyday user-group to grow. Hence, also showing that this group is of importance for the EU.

For the year 2017 no real conclusion can be made besides the fact that social exclusion and digital exclusion are not paired. As seen from the literature review, social exclusion is amplified or at least persisted when society is becoming more digitalised and instead it becomes a digital exclusion. The lack of digital focus in this document could hence be problematic.

In 2019 the EU expresses a wish to combat the digital divide but when reading more closely this has to do with internet access or telecom services rather than actual skills. Furthermore, the user, through the word skills, is mentioned most often in reference to jobs showing again assumptions made about the user and the economic growth norm connected to this.

The last document analysed was also the most recently published from 2020. This document could, because of Covid-19, have a different opportunity to talk about digital skills in different ways than the other documents could. For example, it early on recognise a skills gap that has been accentuated because of the rapid digitalisation that Covid-19 brought about. The view that some are non-users due to a lack of skills could in this document be understood as bad for equality. This is more in line with the arguments found in the literature review, that a lack of digital skills risk creating exclusion from society. However, in this document the user is also viewed as an important factor in the success of Europe as a global leader post Covid-19. The user in the workforce becomes a resource necessary for the EU to compete globally. Furthermore, there was an active distinction between the users and skills for the workforce and the "*non-formal"* skills needed in society. At the same time, the word everyone is used to explain who needs skills in connection to words that has to do with employment. This could exclude a certain group of the population from the users but as there has already been an emphasis on the need for skills throughout life the perspective of the user as a citizen is not lost. The conclusion from 2020 is that being a user is important to the EU. It is important for the growth and the EU's global competitiveness. The problem of an increased social and digital exclusion is somewhat smothered by this economic and global

competition view. The view of the user as part of the workforce is still prominent. But the other user, the ones who have left the workforce or the citizen, could be viewed as a more important group than before. Everyone's digital skills are needed for the EU to be globally competitive.

5.3 Presentation of the perspectives

Having analysed the documents there has been some interesting findings with similarities in many of them. However, the comparability or exact representation of the EU's view of a user in a specific year is hard to illustrate through this sample. What is perhaps found instead is a specific view of the user in a specific document. This maybe not be translated to what the EU's view of the user is in a specific year. Furthermore, some of the document have a different nature, some are purely digital policy, and some are purely social policy. For the years where the social policy documents are analysed it would be good to have complemented with a digital policy document. With this said this thesis could still show some interesting findings. It might not be possible to say something specific about how the view has changed for all years, but between the findings for example in the 2010 document and 2020 document can still be compared because of them both being digital policy documents.

After analysing the documents, the author has attempted to summaries them into different perspectives. They are presented in the table below.

Year	Economic Perspective	Social Perspective (not digital)	Digital citizen perspective	Global competitiveness perspective
2010	X		X (somewhat)	
2012	X		X (somewhat)	
2013		X		
2015	X		X (somewhat)	
2016		X	X	
2017	X	X		
2019	X		X (somewhat)	
2020	X		X	X

The *economic perspective* collects the views of the user as a "skilled practitioner", part of the workforce or entering the workforce. And where skills are needed to increase the productivity in the EU and the growth, the user is seen as an important

resource. The *social perspective (not digital)* collects the text where the user is not found, and the social policy is detached from digital policy. The *digital citizen perspective* is the perspective where digital skills are seen as necessary for participation in society. It is also when the EU recognises digital exclusion, or a social exclusion caused by the digitalisation. Furthermore, it is also when there is a view that the user is a citizen and that skills are needed broadly in society. Finally, the *global competitiveness perspective* is rather alike the *economic perspective* but here there is an emphasis on the user needing digital skills to increase the EU's leadership in the world or its global competitiveness

6 Spill-over or social construct?

As discussed in the theory section European integration theory is important to make sense of how policy in the EU develops over time. After having conducted the analysis four perspectives have been presented as the core views of the user. To be able to answer the research question and understand why there has been a specific development of the user view or not neofunctionalism and constructivism are necessary. Shortly, their function is to explain why the EU's user view has changed or not.

Beginning with the economic perspective it is the perspective found in most of the documents, except for 2013 and 2016. The digital citizen perspective is found to the most extent in the documents from 2016 and 2020, in a lower level in the documents from 2010, 2012, 2015 and 2019. And not found at all in the documents from 2013 and 2017, which does instead have a purely social perspective. Lastly, the global competitiveness perspective is found in the document from 2020. All in all, a big change of view in the user is hard to see. There is a slightly larger incorporation of the digital citizen perspective in more of the later documents.

Starting in 2010 the digital policy is interlinked with economic policy as seen from the analysis and mentions of the user are made mainly through the "skilled practitioner". This link is persistent to 2020 when also the digital citizen perspective is more used. Economic and social policy, within the digital policy, have jobs and employment as a common denominator. Over this period, this could have had a functional spill-over effect explaining a slight increase in the view of the user as a citizen that risks digital exclusion. However, it is uncertain if this little change is enough for it to be an actual spill-over. From a constructivist perspective, this change could instead be understood by the lived effects of digitalisation. The actors who have created these policy documents could through the institutionalisation of digital services in society become more aware, intentionally, or unintentionally, of how digital services are affecting societies. Thus, their interests and understandings could alter towards seeing the user as a citizen more than part of the workforce.

Furthermore, the fact that the economical perspective appeared more in the analysis through the focus on skills in the workforce could be explained by digital elites or companies often operating on the EU level because of the single market. It is hence natural to address ICT issues and business growth in the EU because doing so nationally only covers a small part of the single market. It could therefore be that the economic discussions around the user in digital policy has been politically spilled-over to the EU level when it was discovered as an important resource.

The logic behind political spill-over could perhaps further explain why the digital citizen perspective of the user has not reached the EU level in the same way. As seen from the analysis, skills are often seen as a national competence. So, what is needed in a digital society to participate has, according to a neofunctionalism

perspective, not been necessary to deal with on the EU level. Understood from Niemann's perspective of non-automatic spill-over. The argument could be that including the digital citizen perspective in digital policy has not been seen as a justifiable or viable way to go possibly because the EU see this type of user and its skills as a national competence. At the same time, which is evident from the analysis is that certain skills are justifiable to deal with at EU level. And the EU has also produced social policy documents that has been analysed in this thesis. The EU does dabble with social policy meaning that it has justified to do so. Perhaps neofunctionalism falls a bit shorter in explaining why there has been less of a political spill-over from digital to social policy and hence less of an incorporation of them.

The focus on the economy could also be explained by the norms created in the EU. To again take the argument of the single market this is very much an economic ambition and seen as one of the EU's greatest achievements (COM "Internal Market" 2017). From a constructivist perspective, this economic norm is constantly reproduced in the EU's policies and so also in the digital policies. The norm and social construct the policymakers existed in could have been strengthened by the economic crisis which put many of the EU's policy within this context. Covid-19 and the document from 2020 could be compared to this. This is one of the documents where the most digital citizen perspectives are found. The Covid-19-pandemic is in the same document understood as a social and economic crisis because of the digital skills gap being accentuated. Suddenly digital policies are more broadly understood from the digital citizen perspective. This new context could have forced policymakers to act within a new context and shown a new social norm. Prior to this the same social norm (economic) had been reproduced repeatedly. By introducing a new social norm (social) Covid-19 altered actors' understanding of the EU's interests by throwing it into an economic and social crisis. However, this conclusion is difficult to draw when not much time has passed. The constructivist claim is that for an idea to root it must be studied over time otherwise it could just be an individual idea rather than a norm.

Viewing the user as two different groups, the workforce and those who had left it was found in many of the documents. From a constructivist perspective, these are two socially constructed groups. There are many different views in which the user could be seen from these are decided by the policymaker's social environment and culture. As mentioned, digital policymakers have most likely found themselves in a culture and environment where economic growth is driving. Furthermore, the author of this thesis can from the perspective of the reader of the documents is not separated from the construct of these groups by having drawing inferences from the words and contexts used by the EU.

Using this logic, the documents with a narrow focus on social policy i.e., social policy where problems such as digital exclusion are not present could be understood from the social context of these policymakers. The COM is structured in a range of different Directorate-Generals (DGs) that all deal with different policy areas (COM "Organisation" 2020). With different social contexts and group formations, these DGs impact the policies through their political and social culture. A DG responsible for social policy internally creates a social context that is in turn affected by the

actors in it. The policy outcome is a product of both the social context of the actors and the actor's ideas that are also a product of the social construct in which they find themselves. The social policymakers in 2013 and 2017 could have found themselves in a strong social context where problems like digital exclusion were not viewed as social policy. This leading to a similar social policy in 2017 as in 2013. An interesting question for the future is to study in what way the Covid-19-pandemic could have affected social policy and actor preferences.

Going back to the original neofunctionalistic perspective it could as discussed fall short in explaining why there is a lack of change in what way the EU views the user in its digital policy. Why is there little or no spill-over into social policy or social policy like problematizations around digital exclusion in digital policy? Perhaps the Covid-19-pandemic can foster a functional spill-over where the EU's digital policy leaves its strong hold in economic policy and enter social policy more broadly. From the document in 2020 where the global competitiveness perspective was more prominent there could be some indication for a functional spill-over. For the EU to be a global leader it needs to be digitally competitive. And in the analysis, there were findings that indicated that the EU needed all citizens to possess digital skills for the EU to succeed. In this way, the international economic goals of the EU could trough digital policy find its way to social policy. Hence, there could possibly be a functional spill-over. Or perhaps this is more of a cultivate spill-over if it is more of an active choice from policymakers.

To sum up, both theories could offer explanations as to why there has been small changes in the view of the user. The digital citizen perspective has slightly increased although the economic perspective has prevailed strongly. Perhaps the constructivist perspective is slightly better at explaining why there has been little change by focusing on strong identities, norms, and social contexts of the policymakers. This links back to criticism that has been directed at neofunctionalism over time. The lack of explanation for situations when European integration does not go forward. Niemann's approach to this has been to understand it as there needs to be a will to do so and the spill-overs need to be justified and persuasive. This is true. But as said above social policy is already justified and the EU could adopt a more of a digital citizen perspective. Constructivism could explain this by the economic norm being stronger than the view of the user as a citizen. Through its economic nature the EU could hence reproduce the economic ambition repeatedly. At the same time, digital policy is an emerging area and perhaps not enough time has passed for there to be a spill-over yet.

7 Conclusion

In this thesis the purpose has been to study in what way the EU views the user and how this could have changed between 2010 and 2020. This has been done through mixing a computer-aided content analysis with a soft constructivist discourse analysis, trough the WPR approach, to analyse EU policy documents. Using this combination of methods was an active choice to help the thesis answer the question in the best possible way. Furthermore, neofunctionalism and constructivism were used to foster a discussion around the findings in the discourse analysis to explain why European integration goes forward in digital policy or why it does not.

From the literature review it became clear that social policy within digital policy is important and vice versa. For there to be an active participation in society and to have high digital inclusion, the citizens need adequate skills to go about their everyday life when society is becoming more and more digitalised. The literature review also raised the interlinkage between social policy and digital policy by explaining that social inequalities transferee to digital inequalities.

The results from the analysis showed an overall dominating view of the user as part of the workforce. This view had its base in economic priorities for the EU with links to the economic crisis in 2007-2008. Paired with this was another view that for most of the years was limited. That was the view of the user as a citizen or a digital citizen. In some ways the EU here recognised the need for digital skills for equal participation in society. Although, this was a rather limited view there were some indications of an increase in this view towards the later years, mostly in 2016 and 2020. The increase in 2020 could have been explained by the Covid-19-pandemic being referred to as a social crisis that also highlighted inadequate digital skills.

Finally, the thesis reached the discussion around spill-over or social construct. Because of there being just slight changes the important thing for the theories was to explain why there was so little change. This problem could have been worked around if a longer period had been used. At the same time, digital policy is a new area, and a much longer period could perhaps be difficult. Both neofunctionalism and constructivism could offer an explanation to why there was such a strong focus on the economic perspective. For example, economic policy digital policy can politically have spilled-over to the EU-level through powerful companies focusing on the single market over national markets. The constructivist explanation could be connected to a strong economic norm and social context in the EU, the policies produced reproduces this notion with policymakers somewhat detached from the influence of the social norm. At the same time there was a slight increase in the digital citizen view which could be because the policy actors as citizen are influenced in their daily lives by technologies and hence their social context is

altered towards a more digital society also the Covid-19-pandemic can have made this norm more prominent.

Using these two theories to study digital policy are not the only way to go about it and the conclusions made in the discussion are driven by them. If the thesis would have used for example new institutionalism instead the implications of the EU's institutions would have been stronger. That aspect is somewhat lost in this thesis and would be an interesting thing to study. Another lesson learned was that social policy was perhaps not as easy to incorporate with digital policy as assumed, but it did give some interesting findings that there was such little relation between digital and social. Lessons drawn from the Nvivo text search process was that the original sampling going in to the Nvivo search should probably have been slightly larger. But because of the limits put on what is a policy document in this thesis it was hard. Perhaps future studies could explore this subject with a larger sample where more documents can be counted as digital policy. The problem with the original sampling being a little too small transferred to the analysis where some documents were perhaps not quite comparable.

The user view of the EU being dual with an emphasis on the workforce is something that needs further studying to explore in what way it is so in a broader sense of digital policy. Also, the view of the user could be entirely different in the member states' policies which of course also affects the citizens. This would be a good topic to study. Furthermore, the digital transformation shows no signs of slowing down and further studies which look at the inclusiveness of digital policies are important to foster an inclusive future. Lastly, the Covid-19-pandemic has, as said in the introduction, been life changing for almost everyone and what effects this has on the EU's digital policy and the user view is something to follow.

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