



What does ‘Social Investment’ mean for the European Commission?

An interpretative content analysis of the 2013 Social Investment Package (SIP)

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1. Introduction: how does social policy evolve? Analysing transcoding and problematisation processes

1.1 Problematisation

The social investment perspective has recently been defined as a new perspective for social policies in Europe. In a communication (2013),¹ the European Commission urges the Member States to develop a social investment strategy defined as a third – new - ‘function’ that welfare systems have to fulfil to achieve their objective, the other functions being ‘social protection’ and ‘stabilization of the economy’. The aim of this paper is to conduct an in depth interpretative analysis of what ‘Social investment’ means for the European Commission.

The departure point of this analysis is the common statement in public policy analysis that ‘contemporary public policies are mainly resulting from compromises and reformulations of pre-existing solutions’ (Lascoumes, 1996: 334, translation from French).² This is especially true in a field such as social policy that has a long history and that occupies a central position in the realm of public actions conducted by all European States. Analysing the emergence of a ‘new’ referential in social policy or of a new problematisation in the field of social policy requires understanding this process in its historicity.

Following Lascoumes, we will investigate the production of this new narrative of ‘social investment’ as a ‘transcoding’ process. Transcoding is precisely defined as ‘all the activities that aim at regrouping and translating information and practices in a different code’ (Lascoumes, 1994: 22). Our aim when analysing the transcoding process of a public problem is to understand how a new way of conceiving a (old) problem emerges. Analysing the re-problematisation of a public problem in terms of transcoding activities implies that (1) we consider this process as a process of production of new meanings, significations, and knowledge that will frame the public action in a certain way, and (2) we take as a departure point that the transcoding process connects different kinds of autonomous actors that have heterogeneous perspectives. According to Lascoumes (1996: 335) transcoding activities can have four different modalities. They can be: (1) the aggregation of different pre-existing diffuse perspectives, (2) the recycling, or relabelling, of pre-existing practices or meanings, (3) a broader dissemination of pre-existing practices or set of meanings and (4) the shaping of a clear valuational frame for the pre-existing practices.

It is worth noting that these pre-existing practices or meanings do not necessarily have to be vehicle by the main actor (here the EC) in the field but can be brought by other actors that are ‘mobilised’ or ‘interested’ (Callon, 1986)³ in the problem during the transcoding process. The capacity to intervene in the transcoding process of a public policy problem is not reserved to public administration. Transcoding is made in a ‘concurrential universe’ (Lascoumes, 1995: 338) where different actors, that do not have the same performative capacities, try to give their imprint to the new code being created.

When analysing the Social Investment Package, our aim will be twofold. We will first try to understand what this new ‘code’ of ‘social investment’ means. We will identify the different significations associated to

¹ COM(2013)83 Final, Towards Social Investment for Growth and Cohesion - including implementing the European Social Fund 2014-2020. Brussels: European Commission, 20 February 2013.

² Pierre Lascoumes (1995), ‘Rendre gouvernable : de la traduction au transcoding. L’analyse du changement dans les réseaux d’action publique’, In : CURAPP, *La gouvernabilité*, Paris : PUF, p. 325-338.

³ Michel Callon (1986), ‘Éléments pour une sociologie de la traduction’, *L’année sociologique*, vol.36, p. 169.

this idea of social investment, and identify the different kinds of knowledge associated with this re-problematisation in the field of social public policy. We will secondly investigate the connection of autonomous actors that are mobilised in this transcoding process.⁴

1.2 Methodology

These two aims can be achieved using different kinds of measurement. As transcoding activities are mainly activities aiming at producing meanings and significations, interpretative policy analysis (Yanow, 2000) is particularly adequate to perform such an analysis. Different kinds of data can be collected in order to conduct an interpretative policy analysis. Dvora Yanow distinguishes in this regard observational data, conversational data (interviews), document analysis and participant-observation/ethnography (Yanow, 2000: 39). In this paper, we perform an interpretative analysis of the transcoding process that led the EC to promote the idea of ‘Social investment’ using two different techniques of document analysis.

The methodological stance adopted here to understand what ‘Social investment’ means for the EC consists, following Latour’s work on controversy and translation, in the following principle: ‘when faced with an object, attend first to the associations out of which it is made and only later on look at how it has renewed the repertoire of social ties’ (Latour, 2005: 233). Texts and cited texts are seen as vehicles for meanings or as ‘immutable mobiles’ (Latour, 2006), i.e. objects that are vehicles for (immutable) meanings and that can be mobilised (or moved or transformed) to produce other objects (texts) that compose a policy framework. These ‘immutable mobiles’ also connect different actors or organisations that will build collectively the frame of the policy framework by their association.

We first performed a thematic analysis (see Boyatzis, 1998 or Kaufmann, 2011 for a precise description of the methodology) of the main document of the SIP: the communication of the Commission (COM(2013)83 FINAL). The aim of such analysis is, by reading and re-reading the document, to identify inductively (when the presence of a certain code was not predictable by the researcher) or deductively (when the presence of a code was identified before the reading of the document) the main themes (we will call them the main codes) that compose the meanings of the document. Once several codes have been identified by the researcher after a first reading, every sentence or paragraph of the text is associated to one or sometimes two codes. This produces a new version of the text where all sentences or paragraphs associated to the same code are aggregated. This data reduction process allows the researcher to analyse the precise meaning (or meanings) of every code according to the producer of the document. This analysis will allow us to give a first answer to the question: What does Social Investment mean for the European Commission?⁵

We secondly performed a quali-quantitative analysis of the pre-existent meanings and knowledge mobilised in the SIP. In order to do so, we analysed exhaustively all the references made to other documents or other sources of information mentioned in the communication of the Commission and in one of the Staff Working Documents (SWD) that accompany the Communication (SWD(2018)38 final, composed of two documents) titled ‘Evidence on Demographic and Social Trends. Social Policies’ Contribution to Inclusion, Employment and the Economy’. For every reference, we identified the type of document, the year of the document, the author(s) of the document, and finally we qualitatively associated one, two or three code(s) to the document. The assignation of a code (a set of meanings) was made according to the signification of the sentence or the paragraph to which the document is associated. This operation gives us a database (with

4 This problematisation in terms of transcoding activities can be considered as one of the variant of ‘cognitive public policy analysis’ that is a field in public policy analysis mainly developed by French public policy scholars. For a synthesis of the debate in this field of research, precisely on the question of ‘How can a policy field change?’ see: Pierre Muller (2005), ‘Esquisse d’une théorie du changement dans l’action publique. Structures, acteurs et cadres cognitifs’, *Revue Française de Science Politique*, n505.

5 It is worth noting that this technique can be used to assess the content of the text against pre-existing views or rationales. This is what has been done by Leibetseder (2016) who used a similar technique to give a precise answer to the question whether the SIP is neo-liberal or not. In our case we adopted a more inductive perspective. Our aim is to collect all the **meanings** present in the document without assuming neither the normative charge of these **meanings** nor the presence or the dominance of certain codes.

approximately 300 references) that we can statistically analyse. This statistical analysis gives us a precise description of what kind of knowledge is mobilised to justify or operate the transcoding process, what are the more frequent codes (or set of meanings) that are present in the two documents and that are linked to pre-existing documents, and more importantly what kind of actors (in what proportion and regarding what sets of meanings) have been mobilised by the EC⁶ in the transcoding process.

⁶ We take here the EC as a single actor in this process. It would certainly have been interesting to investigate how different internal bodies within the EC (DGs, Committees, etc.) or even within the EU institutions have contributed to the transcoding process under investigation. This was unfortunately not in our reach with the kind of methodology we used here.

2. Thematic analysis of the COM(2013)83 final: what does Social Investment mean for the EC?

We performed a qualitative thematic analysis of the COM(2013)83 Final document of the Commission. This document is the central Communication of the Commission about social investment. It gives a precise outlook of what SI is for the EC.

As explained in Section 1, we produced an inductive thematic analysis of the document. We identified, through the reading, the different codes (the different themes) that compose the document. The aim of this type of analysis is to reduce the content of the text to a set of codes that synthesise the main sets of meanings present in the text. This exercise will give us a precise and empirically grounded answer the question: What does Social investment mean for the European Commission?

We identified 13 different codes that allowed us to synthesise 88% of the words contained in the document (excluding footnotes). Out of 9,126 words, 8,028 were attributed to one or two codes (rarely three). Words are not considered as autonomous but have a meaning in a sentence. Words are thus not directly linked to a code, sentences are. A sentence can in certain cases be connected to two codes, very rarely to three, most often, to only one.

Not all codes have the same importance. Some codes are linked to many more sentences than others. The thematic analysis methodology does not aim at producing a statistical account of the different frequencies of different codes. We can however identify which codes are more central, and which codes are present but seem less important.

The Table 2.1 presents the 13 codes we identified (by order of appearance in the text)

Table 2.1 13 identified codes (by order of appearance in the text)

1.	Link between economic competitiveness and social protection, or between productivity, growth and social protection
2.	Poverty (fight against)
3.	Social protection is good per se, human rights, social rights
4.	Risk, social risk
5.	Response to the crisis
6.	Disparities between European countries
7.	Capacity/capability
8.	Implementation
9.	Efficiency gain
10.	Monitoring/knowledge
11.	Activation, ALMP
12.	Private sector /public sector
13.	Stakeholder involvement

For each code, we will give a definition of the code and illustrate the code with evocative excerpts of the document linked to the code.

2.1 Code 1. Link between economic competitiveness and social protection, or between productivity, growth and social protection

The idea that social protection and economic competitiveness are two intertwined categories is one of the central set of meanings present in the text. This idea is present in the very first sentence of the Communication:

'The Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth sets targets to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty and social exclusion and increase employment of the population aged 20-64 to 75%. The flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, including the European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion and the Agenda for New Skills and Jobs, support efforts to reach these targets.' (p. 2 §1)

In the following excerpt we will see that among social policies in general, this connectedness between social protection and economic productivity is particularly true in the case of social investments:

'Future economic growth and competitiveness [of Europe] require investing in human capital, which lays the foundation for productivity and innovation' (p3 §1)

This set of meanings states that social investments are mainly investment in 'human capital'. The term 'human capital' has 13 occurrences in the whole document. The expression is used in the paragraph where we find what is close to a definition of the expression 'social investments':

'Social policies often have two or even all three of the functions cited above, and these can be mutually reinforcing. Typically, the protection function during adverse periods enables previous investments made in human capital to be preserved.' (p. 3 §2)

Another version of this code is present in the following excerpt:

'Ageing, rising dependency ratios and a smaller productive population threaten the affordability and sustainability of public budgets for social policies.' (p4 §5)

Not only does social protection contribute to economic productivity. Economic productivity, or a 'productive population', is seen as the pre-condition for a sustainable public budget for social protection. The relationship that links economic productivity and social protection is a circular or recursive relationship. Social protection is good for the economic productivity and economic productivity is good for social protection.

Finally this code is linked to other sub-codes, or other sub-themes also very connected to the idea of social investment.

'The need for investment in human capital starts at very early age and continues throughout life.' (p6 §4)

'As gender inequality [in terms of labour market inclusiveness] runs through an individual's entire life and its negative effects cumulate over time, this results in for instance lower GDP, lower social security contributions and higher poverty among older women, with 18% of women of 65 years and over being at risk of poverty, compared with 13% of men.' (p8 §1)

We see that this idea of the connectedness of social investment and economic return (incorporated in the notion of 'human capital') is linked to the theme of youth and education, but also to the theme of gender inequality. It is worth noting that, for these two sub-themes (youth and gender), this code (code 1) is not the only code mobilised. In the 'gender' excerpt (p8 §1) this sub-theme is also connected to the theme of risk poverty, but the first two syntagmes connected to gender inequality are part of the code that we examine here with the words: 'lower GDP' and 'lower social security contributions'.

With about 15% of the words of the Communication classified under this code, and with sentences linked to this code present on every page of the document, this code is one of the most central codes that structure the meanings associated to the idea of Social Investment.

2.2 Code 2. Poverty

The second code, in order of appearance, is related to the idea of poverty. The word ‘poverty’ appears 29 times in the document (footnotes excluded), and is also mentioned in the very first sentence of the document.

One interesting finding is that the word ‘poverty’ is never used alone as the only set of meanings in a sentence. It is always connected to other sets of meanings. For example we find some excerpts where the term ‘poverty’ is associated to the term ‘social inclusion’ or ‘social exclusion’:

Moreover, it has proposed that at least 20% of the total ESF resources in each Member State should be allocated to the thematic objective ‘promoting social inclusion and combating poverty’ (p 16 §1)

Furthermore, the risk of poverty and social exclusion of foreign-born people aged 25-54 exceeds on average that of others by more than 10 percentage points across the EU as a whole.’ (p6 §5)

‘Early school leavers are far more likely to end up unemployed or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.’ (p21 §2)

The most common association is the association of the word poverty with notions like ‘labour market’ or ‘employment’ as it is the case in the following excerpts:

‘The result is that in some Member States young people are becoming relatively more at risk of poverty than the elderly. Such risks and lack of employment are also a serious concern in many rural areas in the EU where young people find it more difficult to enter the labour market or find jobs compared to their contemporaries living in urban areas and big cities. Prime-age and older workers are affected by the rapid rise in long-term unemployment. This puts them at risk of poverty and presents a danger to their employability, the stability of their families, and their mental and physical health.’ (p6 §4-5)

‘Social investment plays a particular role for those people that are disproportionately affected by unemployment, poverty, bad housing and poor health conditions and discrimination.’ (p 11 §2)

‘Poverty’ is not something well defined in the document but we can conclude from the excerpt p6 §4-5 that it is something (a problem?) different from ‘employability’, ‘stability of the family’ or ‘mental health’.

A second interesting finding is the fact that ‘poverty’ is often presented as something that has to be measured, or that has been measured, through statistical analysis (‘poverty’ is often associated with ideas of ‘percentage’, ‘average’, numbers (like 12 million)). In this case, poverty is often seen as a ‘risk’.

‘Furthermore, the risk of poverty and social exclusion of foreign-born people aged 25-54 exceeds on average that of others by more than 10 percentage points across the EU as a whole.’ (p6 §5)

‘The gap in the risk of poverty after social transfer between migrants and EU citizens is also significant, with 8 percentage points.⁷ Further, children with a migrant background have a higher risk of leaving school early.’ (p 6 §6)

‘For many people, their current job is not enough to lift their families out of poverty. The working poor represent a third of adults of working age at risk of poverty.’ (p7 §3)

‘Overall 12 million more women than men in the EU are living in poverty. In addition to women earning lower wages, they also have a lower participation rate in the labour force and work fewer hours, partially caused by unpaid household, childcare and long-term care tasks.’ (p7 §6)

‘It will support through the ESF the development of ‘poverty maps’, identifying local areas of multiple and severe disadvantage to ensure that interventions impact on the target population.’ (p18 §3)

7 Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC 2008

2.3 Code 3. Social protection is good per se, human rights, social rights (+ justice, fairness)

The third code brings the idea that social protection is something good *per se*. That no other justifications are needed in order to extend or diffuse social protection. They can be presented as human rights or as social rights that everyone should have access to. The first paragraph of the Communication makes specific reference to this idea:

'Promoting economic, social and territorial cohesion and combating social exclusion and discrimination are fundamental objectives of the European Union identified in the Treaty. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union provides that EU institutions, as well as Member States when implementing EU law should respect personal, civic, political, economic and social rights.' (p2 §1)

This code brings also the idea that extending social policies is good for the society as a whole:

'(...) it also risks widespread negative social and economic consequences as not just individuals, but society as a whole bears the social and economic costs of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.' (p2 §3)

And the idea that all European citizens should have social rights:

'Inequalities in disposable income have widened in some countries, while at the same time absolute living standards for many already in vulnerable positions have fallen disproportionately. This is at odds with the social rights of citizens to live a life in dignity.' (p7 §4)

From the close examination of the text, we can see that, if this code is present (essentially, if not only) in the first page of the document, this code is not one of the central codes that structure the meanings present in the text.

If we look into the text for close notions, central in Amartya Sen's work on capabilities, such as 'justice' or 'fairness' or 'fair society', we will find only two occurrences for the term 'fair society', and no occurrence for justice or fairness. Justice and fairness are clearly not part of a set of meanings associated with the idea of social investment presented in the Communication of the Commission.

2.4 Risk and future

The notion of 'risk' seems to be central in the text. Different meanings of this notion can be found. In a first sense, risks are risks of 'poverty and social and labour market exclusion' (p. 2 §3). In a second sense, risks are 'risk of structural labour market shortages in the future' (p. 2 §4).

Two kinds of risks are identified in the text: risks for individuals (of being poor, of being excluded, of being unemployed) and for the society (structural risk).

The notion of risk seems to work well with the notion of social investment, because they are both directed toward the 'future'. As stated in the last paragraph of the first page:

'Future economic growth and competitiveness require investing in human capital, which lays the foundation for productivity and innovation.' (p2 §4 – p3 §1).

This is clearly established in the paragraph that gives the more precise definition of what social investment is:

'Welfare systems fulfil three functions: social investment, social protection and stabilisation of the economy. Social investment involves strengthening people's current and future capacities. In other words, as well as having immediate effects, social policies also have lasting impacts by offering economic and social returns over time, notably in terms of employment prospects or labour incomes. In particular, social investment helps to 'prepare' people to confront life's risks, rather than simply 'repairing' the consequences. Modernisation of social policies requires systematic introduction of ex-ante result orientation in financing decisions and a systematic approach of the role social policies play in the different stages in life: from education via work/unemployment to sickness and old-age.'

Social investment is directed toward the future and ‘helps to prepare people to confront life’s risks’. This definition is interesting, as it allows us to identify central codes in the structuration of the meanings in this text. The codes about risk, future, and the code that connects social policies with economic productivity (code 1) are all central in this definition.

Finally this notion of risk is closely connected to the notion of poverty (see code 2).

2.5 Crisis

Some paragraphs are organised around the idea of crisis. The idea that SI can be a response to the crisis (the crisis of 2008) or a solution to the crisis is well present in the document. The crisis is seen as something that ‘lead to growing risks’ (p2 §3), and that also leads to the obligation to ‘make the best use of existing resource’ (idem.)

‘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.’ (p. 4 §5)

Again we see in this excerpt that one of the main concerns linked to the idea of crisis is the rising unemployment rate in Europe. This is however not the only concern. Concerns about the demographic evolution of the EU, and especially the growing proportion of elderly in the EU, are seen as part of the crisis code:

‘Ageing, rising dependency ratios and a smaller productive population threaten the affordability and sustainability of public budgets for social policies. 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.’ (p. 4 §5)

‘The challenges posed by changing demographics have been aggravated by the crisis, putting pressure on Member States’ budgets at a time when efforts to meet the Europe 2020 objectives need to be stepped up.’ (p. 4 §7)

The crisis set of meanings is mainly used as a justification for action.

‘The crisis has underlined both the interdependence of EU economies as well as the great divergence in the capacity of labour market institutions and welfare systems to respond to shocks. It also confirmed the role of social policy and budgets for the overall stability of the EU.’ (p. 21 §2)

2.6 Divergences within and between Member States

The code number 6 gathers sentences stating that there are divergences between the Member States and that this is a matter of concern for Europe. Here are some examples:

‘There are differences between countries, regions and sectors. Overall, the EU has experienced modest population growth in recent years, but a number of Member States, all in the Eastern part of the EU, have seen consistent declines in their populations over the past decade. Some disadvantaged regions, in which the population of marginalised communities is growing, face particular challenges.’ (p. 4 §4)

‘The need to step up reform has already been reflected in the 2012 country specific recommendations (CSRs).’ (p. 5 §4)

‘In the social area, Member States still make insufficient use of more innovative approaches to financing, including by using participation of the private sector and financial engineering through instruments such as micro-finance, policy based guarantees and Social Investment Bonds which should strive for budgetary savings.’ (p. 6 § 1)

‘Despite efforts to modernise welfare systems, progress is uneven across the EU, and in a number of Member States social policies too often fail to prevent parts of their populations from slipping into poverty and social exclusion, and/or becoming long-term unemployed.’ (p. 7 §4)

The following excerpt is of particular interest (the centrality of the code 1 that links social policies and economic productivity is also very salient here):

'Despite large differences between Member States, all are confronted with structural, social and demographic challenges. Those that moved towards a growth model including a social investment approach in their social policies early, consistently, and before the crisis have more inclusive growth than the others. Modernising social policies is a matter of common concern at EU level, as ineffective social policies in one country can have consequences for others, particularly within the Eurozone. Insufficient investment in social policies that strengthen human capital development, for instance in early childhood education and care, is manifested in lower educational levels and overall lower skill development in some Member States. This can contribute to explaining differences in economic competitiveness between Member States and the current disequilibria observed in the EMU as poor education and skills lead to a lower-quality and less-productive workforce. In Member States with reduced economic competitiveness, this may also result in a tendency for the high skilled to leave their country of origin to find work elsewhere, further reducing productive potential.' (p. 8 §3)

2.7 Capacity/ capability

This code is the only code we build deductively, namely that we derived from our theoretical work on Amartya Sen's capability framework (this means that we were explicitly looking for this specific code in the text). As we have shown in our paper for Deliverable 4.1 (see De Munck & Lits' paper), the notions of capacity and capability are central in Sen's approach. In order to be able to assess the SI perspective against the CA framework it is thus essential to understand how the term 'capacity' is defined in the COM(2013)83.

This word is well used (8 occurrences) as well as the term 'capability' (1 occurrence).

The term is first coined on p. 3 in the definition of what SI is:

'Social investment involves strengthening people's current and future capacities.'(p. 3 §2)

Being part of the very definition of SI, the idea of capacity seems to be a good entry to discuss the EU SI perspective against the normative CA framework.

We can however note that after this first occurrence, the word 'capacity' appears only two times to refer to the enhancement of one individual's capacity to do something. The second occurrence is p. 15:

'Working together with the SPC in 2013 on a report on long-term care policies to support healthy and active ageing and raise the capacity for independent living of people of all ages, using all the potential of new technologies.' (p. 15 §6)

Here the capacity is the capacity 'for independent living' even when being old.

The third occurrence is:

'If a person can temporarily not find work, the focus should be on improving their capabilities with a view to them returning to the labour market. This needs to be done through a targeted approach focused on the individual needs and delivered in the most cost-effective way.

Enabling individuals to live up to their full potential to take part in social and economic life in society entails supporting people at critical junctions in their lives. This starts with investing in children and youth, and continues thereafter.' (p. 8 §4-5)

Other occurrences are not linked to individual's capacities but are used in the term 'capacity-building' or 'institutional capacity', or to refer to the 'capacity of labour market institutions and welfare systems to respond to shocks' (p. 21)

In conclusion, if the 'capacity' vocabulary seems central when it comes to define what social investment is, this set of significations and the connectedness it has with other words such as frail dependent elderly people is less present in the text than the 'human capital' vocabulary (see code 1). We can assert that in the

Commission proposal, the notion of ‘enhancing people’s capacities’ is subordinated to the economic goals (i.e. mainly strengthening the European labour market).

2.8 Implementation

The code 8 is a code we used to collect all the sentences where implementation tools are discussed. Most of the time these sentences are also linked to another code as for example in the following excerpt:

‘Sweden has one of the highest female employment rates in Europe due to family-friendly employment policies, generous parental leave, coupled with investment in universal provision of childcare.’ (p. 3 §2; linked with code 1 employment and code 6 divergences within MS)

‘Support should be better targeted to those in need at the times they need it. Individualised and integrated services and benefits (e.g. provided through one stop shops) can enhance the effectiveness of social policies. Simplifying procedures can help people in need to access benefits and services more easily, also avoiding overlapping schemes and costs.’ (p. 3 §3; linked with code efficacy gain, see below)

This code gathers 3,053 (out of 9,126) words, 33% of the document, which is understandable as an important part of the document is devoted to the proposal of measures and implementation tools. Especially the second part of the document titled ‘What is needed? Focus on simple, targeted and conditional social investment’ presents a lot of possible implementations of SI policies.

The aim here is not to analyse those implementation strategies or the different policy tools that are envisaged to develop a SI perspective in the EU. This code will thus not be exhaustively presented here.⁸

2.9 Efficacy gain

The ‘efficacy gain’ code is also well present in the document. The first occurrence is in a paragraph titled ‘Room for efficiency gains in social policies’ (p. 4). This paragraph states that:

‘Many reforms must focus on making efficiency gains, paying attention that reforms are well-designed in order to avoid negative repercussions on poverty levels, productivity and economic growth, health of the population and social cohesion.’ (p. 5 §1).

This code is linked to code 1 (social*economic) and code 7 (capacity):

‘If a person can temporarily not find work, the focus should be on improving their capabilities with a view to them returning to the labour market. This needs to be done through a targeted approach focused on the individual needs and delivered in the most cost-effective way.’ (p. 8 §4)

Efficiency is seen as a way to develop SI policies. Different measures are envisaged. For example:

‘Social policies need to be both adequate and fiscally sustainable, as these are two sides of the same coin. This implies first of all using the available resources more efficiently and effectively, through simplifying, better targeting and considering conditionality when designing policies.’ (p. 8 §6)

‘The impact of spending should be further maximised by increased efforts to reduce fraud and administrative burdens for users and providers.’ (p. 9 §3)

‘Following the mandate from the Council and as announced in its 2013 Work Programme, the Social Protection Committee (SPC) will work on the financing of social protection systems and efficiency and effectiveness of social protection expenditure.’ (p. 10 §1)

⁸ Beside, this analysis has already been conducted elsewhere. For a qualitative appraisal of the SIP that takes into account those proposals see: Leibetseder B., (2016), ‘Social investment policies and the European Union: Swimming against the neoliberal tide?’, *Comparative European Politics*, p. 1472-1490.

This code is presented by the EC as something central in the EU SI perspective that has to be developed; or as a criteria that allows to assess the best practices to adopt. Efficiency is part of the valuational frame that underpins the SI European perspective:

'Innovation is an essential element of social investment policy since social policies require constant adaptation to new challenges. This means developing and implementing new products, services and models, testing them, and favouring the most efficient and effective.' (p. 11 §3)

One system is designated as the most efficient for the delivery of social assistance: the one-stop-shop model:

'The one-stop-shop model contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection systems. 'one-stop shops' simplify the organisation, enhance delivery and increase take-up of services. This approach improves accessibility of user-friendly information, coordination among different levels of government and capacity that could reduce the administrative burden on both customer and provider.' (p19. §5).

Finally the code of efficiency also has a financial dimension. The best use of the EU funds should be guaranteed:

'The Social Investment Package aims at reorienting Member States' policies towards social investment where needed, with a view to ensuring the adequacy and sustainability of social systems while linking these efforts to the best use made of the EU funds, notably the ESF.' (p. 21 §5)

2.10 Monitoring, knowledge production

The code number 10 gathers sentences that refer to the idea that knowledge has to be produced about different phenomena. This idea comes for the first time on page 4:

'This [this package] also calls for improved measurement of poverty and greater timeliness of EU-wide social statistics that monitor trends and performance.' (p. 4 §1)

This code is connected to the previous code (efficiency). Insufficient monitoring could be the cause of unnecessary spending (that is, inefficient policy measures):

'In some cases, the multiplicity of benefits, agencies, and conditions for entitlement leads to extra administrative costs and low take-up by those most in need. Also insufficient monitoring leads to unnecessary spending' (p. 5 §2).

In this code we also regrouped all the sentences where statistical knowledge about different social groups (women, elderly, young people, Roma people, unemployed, etc.) is presented in the document.

It is worth noting that among the commitments that the EC takes in this communication (on several pages, we find the expression: 'The Commission will support Member States by': on p. 10, 12, 15, 18), 'monitoring', 'sharing knowledge', 'produce report' are some of the most common supporting strategies we find. We can conclude that for the EC, developing an EU SI perspective, requires the development of new knowledge and new monitoring tools.

2.11 Activation, ALMP

The activation code regroups sentences that present the idea that 'active labour market policies' (ALMP) are good and part of the SI strategy. The first occurrence is p. 9:

'The Commission urges Member States to: better reflect social investment in the allocation of resources and the general architecture of social policy. This means putting greater focus on policies such as (child)care, education, training, active labour market policies, housing support, rehabilitation and health services. Improve the sustainability of the health systems.' (p. 9 §4)

As it is very clear in the following excerpt, this ALMP code is seen as an inheritance of former packages promoted by the EC (typical ALMP measures are put in bold, our bold):

*In addition to the policy lines set out in the Employment Package and in the 'Rethinking Education' Package focusing on the demand and supply sides of the labour market, this means investing in social policies, services and cash benefits **which both activate and enable**. Social investment should focus on the outcome for the individual and society at large. Support must offer individuals an exit strategy, be granted for as long as needed, **and so in principle be temporary in nature**. In certain cases, social services are more supportive than cash benefits. In addition, certain kinds of support should be reciprocal: **conditional upon the individual achieving** an appropriate and specific goal to the best of his/her abilities, as often done e.g. regarding unemployment benefits.*

*The implementation of the Active Inclusion Recommendation and guidance provided in this Package is key in this respect. **Measures must match the need of the individual rather than be tied to the nature of the benefit or the 'target group' a person happens to be in**. One-stop shops and individual contracts are examples of a simplified approach that matches people's needs.'* (p. 10 §3)

The most significant sentence is maybe the following: 'this means investing in social policies, services and cash benefits which both activate and enable'. The European SI perspective must 'enhance' and 'activate' the people.

Investing in education and health finds a justification in the fact that they allow the individual to 'remain active':

Investing in health, starting from an early age, allows people to remain active longer and in better health, raises the productivity of the work force and lowers the financial pressure on health systems.' (p. 14 §3)

Activation is thus part, together with the codes: fight against crisis, productivity and efficiency, of the valuational frame that allows assessing what is a good SI policy measure.

2.12 Private sector role /public sector role

In the communication, we find several sentences that define the role that the private sector can play in the setting up of an EU SI strategy. The first occurrence of this code is p. 5:

Resources for social policies are not limited to those from the public sector. A non-negligible part comes from people and families. In addition, non-profit organisations provide social services on a substantial scale. These range from homeless shelters, support for the elderly, people with disabilities, to advice centres on social benefits in general. Social enterprises can complement public sector efforts, and be pioneers in developing new markets, but they need more support than they are receiving now. The for-profit parts of the private sector would need to be further encouraged to use the potential of social investment through, for instance, a healthy and secure social and working environment.' (p. 5 §5)

The same idea is developed on p. 11:

Social enterprises together with the third sector can complement public sector efforts, and be pioneers in developing new services and markets for the citizens and public administrations, but they need skilling and support. It is important for Member States to provide social entrepreneurs with support schemes, incentives for start-ups and put in place an enabling regulatory environment. Examples of successful projects and orientations for further use of EU funds, notably the ESF, are included in this Package.' (p. 11 §5)

A definition of what is a 'social enterprise' is given in a footnote (this word has 5 occurrences in the document, plus 8 more occurrences in footnotes).

Social enterprises are businesses with primarily social objectives, and where surpluses are usually reinvested into the business or in the community, rather than maximising profit for owners and shareholders.' (footnote p. 5)

As it is the case for several codes, this code is connected to the code 'creation of knowledge':

Further, the Commission will develop a methodology to measure the socio-economic benefits created by social enterprises and organise a high-level conference early 2014 to disseminate good practices in supporting social entrepreneurship.' (p. 18 §7)

The main idea is that ‘Resources for social policies are not limited to those from the public sector’ and that the private sector could be an important actor in the development of SI measures. The MS should encourage private entrepreneurs to invest in social investments.

2.13 Stakeholder involvement

The last code we identify brings the idea that ‘relevant stakeholders’ must be involved in the development of the EU SI strategy. The word ‘stakeholder’ is used for the first time on p. 13:

‘Clarifying to public authorities and service providers how EU rules on State aid, internal market and public procurement apply to social services, through an updated Guide and regular exchanges of information with stakeholders.’ (p. 13 §1).

The commission also ‘urges’ the MS to:

‘Involve stakeholders, particularly civil society organisations close to the target groups for social interventions, in programming and implementation and facilitate their access to funds.’ (p. 18 §1).

Even if the idea is present, this code is not central in the document, and no explanations are given on how to involve the stakeholders, or on who are the stakeholders.

3. Quali-quantitative analysis of the references mobilised in the SIP

In this section, we present the results of a quali-quantitative analysis of the pre-existent meanings and knowledge mobilised in the SIP. As public authorities cannot make statements or assertions without referring to existing data or knowledge that gives a rational foundation to their proposal, it is interesting to analyse the different themes for which previous knowledge or information is mobilised.

This analysis will give us two important informations about the meanings that compose the EC SIP: (1) the themes for which a rational grounding is deemed necessary, and (2) the sources of the knowledge that is mobilised. This analysis allows us to deepen the analysis of the main codes of the SIP presented in the second section of this report. It also allows us to investigate where the knowledge that gives a rational foundation to those codes originates from. Is it internal knowledge, built by different European institutions? Or is it knowledge built by external actors such as NGOs, scientists, or private companies? Does the trans-coding process have an EU internal origin? Or is it lead by external actors?

As explained in the methodological section, we analysed all the references (present in all footnotes and in the body of the text) of two documents that are part of the SIP: the main communication –COM(2013)83 Final and one of the staff working document that accompanies the COM(2013)83: the SWD(2013)38.

We integrate the SWD(2013)38 in this analysis because the aim of this SWD, conversely to the other SWDs that are part of the SIP, is to give precise ‘evidences’ that justify the need to develop a social investment strategy in the EU.⁹ The other SWDs present the position of the Commission on different themes that are connected to the Social investment perspective such as homelessness, long term care, the ESF, or health policy. They do not try to define what SI is, but rather connect different pre-existing initiatives of the Commission to the SI perspective.

It is no doubt that these two documents (COM(2013)83 and SWD(2013)38) strongly mobilised existing knowledge and sets of meanings. For the COM(2013)83 that has 22 pages, we identified 68 references. That is on average 3.1 references on every page. For the SWD(2013)38 that has 91 pages, we identified 177 references to pre-existing documents or sources of knowledge (e.g. statistical analysis or pre-existing data), that is on average 1.9 references on every page. About one paragraph out of three in these two documents is connected to a pre-existing document or source of knowledge that gives a rational grounding for the argument or set of meanings presented in the paragraph.

As explained previously, this analysis is a quali-quantitative analysis. For each reference, we identified the type (scientific article, book, report, statistical data, communication of the Commission...) of the document, the year of the document, the author(s) of the document, and finally we qualitatively associated a code to the document. The assignation of a code (a set of meanings) was made according to the meanings of the sentence or the paragraph to which the document is associated. This operation gives us a database (with 246 references) that we can statistically analyse.

3.1 Analysis of the COM(2013)83

We first analyse the different producers of the sources mobilised and the type of document they produced.

⁹ The full title of this SWD being: Evidence on Demographic and Social Trends. Social Policies' Contribution to inclusion, Employment and the Economy.

Table 3.1 Analysis of the different producers, sources mobilised and type of document

Origin of the document	Type of document/institutions	References
European institutions		63
	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union	1
	Economic Policy Committee and the Commission	1
	Analysis Unit of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion	1
	Cohesion Policy Regulation 2014-2020	1
	Communication of the Commission	16
	Commission Decision	1
	Commission Recommendation	3
	Commission staff working paper	1
	Conclusions of the European Council	1
	Council Conclusions	4
	Council document	1
	Council Recommendation	2
	Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on energy efficiency	1
	EPSCO Council	1
	EU regulatory framework	1
	European Commission and UNECE Policy brief	1
	European Council Conclusions	1
	European Parliament resolution	1
	European regulation	1
	Eurostat data	3
	Joint Report prepared by the European Commission (DG ECFIN) and the Economic Policy Committee	1
	Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council	1
	Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council	1
	Staff working document	15
	Treaty on the European Union (Lisbon)	1
	White Paper from the Commission	1
International organisations		2
	OECD report	1
	World Bank report	1
NGOs		2
	European Consumer Debt Network report	1
	FEANTSA (the European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless) report	1
Science		1
	Book (the EU Network of Independent Experts on Social Inclusion)	1
Total		68

93% (63) are references made to documents produced by the European Institutions. 3% (2) have been produced by NGOs and by international organisations and one originates in social science.

Table 3.2 Analysis of the year of production by the different producers and sources mobilised

Year of production	References
European institutions	63
2006	2
2007	2
2008	4
2009	3
2010	4
2011	13
2012	16
2013	16
no date	3
International organisations	2
2010	1
2012	1
NGOs	2
2009	2
Science	1
2010	1
Total	68

Most of the documents are recent documents. The average year of production is 2011 for EU institutions and international organisations documents, and 2009 for NGOs documents. On average a document is mobilised in the SIP two year after its release date.

For the 68 references, we identified 38 different codes. In most of the cases, more than one code was associated to one reference. The table below shows the distribution of code associations. As shown in the table below, 46 different associations were identified:

Table 3.3 Analysis of the codes and sources mobilised

Codes	References
Demography/employment	6
Health	5
Growth	4
European Social Fund	3
Labour Market	3
Poverty	3
Basic payment account	2
Early school leaving	2
Public procurement	2
Youth/employment	2
Finance/Social protection	1
Active ageing	1
Active ageing/solidarity	1
Ageing/budgetary implication	1
Ageing/Long term care	1
Budget	1
Children/Disadvantage	1
Early childhood/Education	1
Education	1
Education/youth/Erasmus	1
Employment	1
Employment/national reform	1
Energy efficiency/disadvantaged people	1
Entrepreneurship	1

Codes	References
Financial distress	1
Foreclosure/Mortgage	1
Funds	1
Growth/job	1
Health/Human capital	1
Health/safety at work	1
Homelessness	1
Pension	1
Primary education	1
Public body website	1
Right	1
Roma people	1
Social economy	1
Social enterprise	1
Social entrepreneur/incentive	1
Social exclusion	1
Social inclusion	1
Social investment	1
Social Protection Performance Monitor	1
Transport	1
Young people/employment	1
Youth/Education/Erasmus	1
Total	68

This list does not give us a precise idea of the meanings present in the text. We can try to reduce the number of codes by associating different codes together in new, more condensed codes. We succeeded to condense 57% of the references in 9 new condensed codes.

Table 3.4 The 9 new condensed codes

Code	References	%
Employment	18	26
Education	9	13
Health	7	10
Youth	7	10
Demography	6	9
Growth	5	7
Ageing	4	6
European social fund	4	6
Poverty	3	4
Others	29	43
Total references	68	100

The most important code is the ‘employment’ code that regroups the codes: ‘employment’, ‘human capital’, ‘work’ and ‘labour market’. The second most present code is ‘Education’, which regroups the code ‘Education’, ‘school’, ‘Erasmus’ and ‘lifelong learning’.

For the other codes, no regroupments were necessary or possible. It is worth noting that we did not regroup the code ‘growth’ with the code employment. If we had regrouped ‘growth’ into the code employment, this theme would have accounted for 34% of all references. This reinforces the conclusion of the interpretative analysis (Section 2 of this document): for the European Commission, social investments are mainly connected to employment and labour market policies.

We find the 29 remaining codes in the table below:

Table 3.5 The 29 remaining codes

Code	References
Basic payment account	2
Erasmus	2
Public procurement	2
Budgetary implication	1
Budget	1
Disadvantage	1
Energy efficiency/disadvantaged people	1
Entrepreneurship	1
Finance/social protection	1
Financial distress	1
Foreclosure/Mortgage	1
Homelessness	1
National reform	1
Pension	1
Public body website	1
Right	1
Roma people	1
Social economy	1
Social enterprise	1
Social entrepreneur/incentive	1
Social exclusion	1
Social inclusion	1
Social investment	1
Social Protection Performance Monitor	1
Solidarity	1
Transport	1

From this last table, it is interesting to see that only one reference is made to the term ‘social investment’. This reference is made to the Parliament resolution of 20 November 2012 on ‘Social Investment Pact – as a response to the crisis’.

3.2 Analysis of the SWD(2013)38

The SWD(2013)38 has 91 pages and 177 references. In the Table 3.6 we can see that the first providers of references are the European institutions. 72% of the documents mobilised in the transcoding process have an internal origin. From this analysis we can state that the main actors in the transcoding process under scrutiny are the European institutions. The justification and the rational foundation for the argument developed in the two documents are mainly derived from previous work made by the EU institutions.

Table 3.6 Main actors in the transcoding process

Producer	Type of document	References	%
European institutions		126	72
	article	1	1
	COM	6	3
	Council declaration	1	1
	report	42	24
	stat data	68	39
	SWD	8	5
European Institutions and OECD		1	1
	stat data	1	1
International Organisations		15	9
	report	11	6
	stat data	4	2
NGOs		7	4
	report	5	3
	stat data	2	1
Private data analysis firm/think thank		2	1
	report	2	1
Science		25	14
	article	20	11
	book	3	2
	book chapter	1	1
	report	1	1
Total		176	100

The table below shows from which EU institutions originate the internal references:

Table 3.7 Origin of internal references

EU institutions	Type of document	References	%
Commission		58	46
	article	1	1
	COM	6	5
	report	28	22
	stat data	15	12
	SWD	8	6
Council		4	3
	Council declaration	1	1
	report	3	2
Eurostat		54	43
	report	2	2
	stat data	52	41
JRC		5	4
	report	5	4
Social protection Committee		5	4
	report	4	3
	stat data	1	1
European institutions total		126	100

46% (58) of the European documents have been written by the European commission (or one of her DGs). This represents 33% of all the documents referenced in the text. 54 references are made to statistics produced by Eurostat. This represents 30% of all references present in the text. If we combine Eurostat references and EC references, we gather 63% of all references that serve as ‘evidence’ for the useful development of the social investment perspective.

The second producers are scientists with 14% of the references made to scientific outputs.

We can also analyse the date of the document mobilised. The aim here is to estimate if the transcoding process brings back old or very old ideas in the formulation of a new referential or if this transcoding process is the continuation of recent work being done by the producer of the document. The table below shows the average age of every kind of document by type of producers.

Table 3.8 Date of document mobilised

Producer	Type	Mean of year
European institutions		2011
	article	2002
	COM	2011
	Council declaration	2012
	report	2011
	stat data	2011
	SWD	2013
European Institutions and OECD		na
	stat data	na
International Organisations		2010
	report	2009
	stat data	2011
NGOs		2010
	report	2010
	stat data	2011
Private data analysis firm/think thank		2010
	report	2010
Science		2006
	article	2009
	book	1994
	book chapter	1992
	report	2010
Total		2010

As it was the case for the COM(2013)83, the references made to EU internal documents are 'younger' than those made to external documents. On average, European documents are two years old. Scientific outputs are seven years old and others are three years old. The transcoding activities made by the European institutions seems to be mainly the continuation of recent work. This indicates that we cannot clearly identify a disruption in the way social policies are problematised as the majority of sources mobilised are internal sources and as the sources mobilised are very recent sources.

We continue this analysis by analysing the codes associated to the references. The table below presents all the codes associated to the 176 references, by producer.

Table 3.9 Codes associated to the references, by producer

European institutions		126	
ageing	2	social investment expenditure	1
ageing/workplace	1	social protection expenditure	3
ALMP	1	social protection expenditure/GDP	1
AROPE	4	social protection financing	4
AROPE/elderly/gender	2	social spending/income	2
AROPE/gender	1	social protection spending/AROPE	1
AROPE/ gender	1	unemployment	2
child poverty	4	unemployment/age	1
child poverty/indicators	1	welfare spending/public debt	1
consequence of 2008 crisis	1	youth/fresh fruit	1
countries/child poverty	1	youth	1
demography/divorce	1	youth/AROPE	1
demography/employment	1	youth/AROPE/housing	1
demography/population growth	1	youth/employment	4
education/efficiency	2	youth/employment/education	1
education/poverty	1	youth/gender/early school leaving	1
employment	6	youth/poverty	1
employment/ALMP	2	Science	25
employment/AROPE	1	ageing/demography	1
employment/benefit	2	child poverty	1
employment/childcare	1	demography/employment	1
employment/crisis	1	demography/Roma	1
employment/education	1	education/employment	1
employment/exclusion	1	education/income	2
employment/ICT	3	employment/ICT/ageing	1
employment/ICT/skill	1	low income group	1
employment/job creation	1	poverty/health	1
employment/life long learning	1	public finance	1
employment/mobility	1	social investment	4
employment/poverty	2	social investment/employment	1
employment/productivity	1	social investment/employment/poverty	1
employment/tax/youth/poverty	1	social investment/EMU	1
free movement	1	social investment expenditure	1
gender/education	1	social investment state	1
growth/income	3	unemployment/youth	1
health	1	youth/education/care/poverty	1
health/efficiency	1	youth/education/poverty	1
health/financial crisis	1	youth/employment	1
health/income	1	youth/income	1
homelessness	2	European Institutions and OECD	1
homelessness/indicators	1	ageing/health	1

human capital/return	1	International Organisations	15
ICT	2	ALMP/ employment	1
ICT/employment	1	child poverty/indicators	1
ICT/inclusion	2	crisis/employment	1
income	5	education	1
income/financial distress	2	education/employment	1
indicators	1	employment/migration	1
labour/gender	1	income/statistics	1
life long learning	1	intergenerational inequality	1
life long learning/employment	1	Roma	1
material deprivation	2	social assistance/income	1
measurement/poverty	1	statistics/income	1
migrant/employment	1	women/employment	1
mobility	1	youth	1
mobility/employment	1	youth/health	1
mobility/free movement	1	youth/income	1
pension	1	NGO	7
poverty	1	child poverty	1
poverty/employment	1	homelessness	1
poverty/EU enlargement	1	ICT	1
poverty/family and child benefit	1	unemployment/youth	2
poverty/health	1	youth/health	1
reconcile work and private life	1	youth/health/Roma	1
Roma/youth/education	1	Private data analysis firm/think thank	2
single parent/AROE	1	employment/ICT	1
social investment/AROE	1	tax	1
social investment	1		
social investment/employment	1		

It is interesting to note that the code 'social investment' is found in 4 references produced by the European institutions and in 9 references produced by (social) scientists. This gives some weight to the idea that social scientists were key actors in the transcoding process that led the EC to adopt the 'social investment' vocabulary. 36% of scientific references are made to 'social investment' work.

If we aggregate the different codes in order to reduce the set of meanings present (as we have explained in the COM(2013)83 analysis) in the SWDs we obtain the following table:

Table 3.10 Key themes in selected documents, by source

Producer	Total ref.	Employment	% of ref.	Education	% of ref.	Poverty	% of ref.
European institutions	126	50	40	10	8	35	28
International Organisations	15	9	60	2	13	1	7
NGOs	7	3	43	0	0	1	14
Private data analysis firm/think thank	2	1	50	0	0	0	0
Science	25	12	48	5	20	5	20
Total	175	75	43	17	10	42	24

In this document (SWD(2013)38), 40% of all references can be connected to the ‘employment’ code. The second most frequent code is poverty with 28% of references, then comes ‘youth’ with 18% of references.

Table 3.11 Key themes in selected documents, by source (continued)

Producer	Total ref.	Youth	%	Ageing	%	ICT	%	Health	%	Other	%
European institutions	126	19	15	5	4	9	7	5	4	63	50
European Institutions and OECD	1	0	0	1	100	0	0	1	100	0	0
International Organisations	15	4	27	0	0	0	0	1	7	9	60
NGOs	7	4	57	0	0	2	29	2	29	1	14
Private data analysis firm/think thank	2	0	0	0	0	1	50	0	0	1	50
Science	25	5	20	2	8	1	4	5	20	8	32
Total	176	32	18	8	5	13	7	14	8	82	47

4. Conclusion

We used two different techniques to interpret the content of the Social Investment Package. Our aim was twofold. We first wanted to give an answer to the question: What does ‘Social investment’ mean for the EC? Our second aim was to characterise the transcoding process that led the EC to adopt the SI vocabulary when talking about social policies within the EU.

From the interpretative analysis presented in Section 2, we can conclude that almost 90% of the content of the main communication of the Commission about social investment can be reduced to 13 codes. Among these 13 codes, one seems particularly relevant to understand the meaning of SI for the EC. That is the connectedness between social investments and European economic productivity. This can be asserted by the fact that social investments are mainly conceived as investments in ‘human capital’.

It is also worth noting that SI have something to do with fighting poverty. In this regard we can state that the main text does not give a precise definition of what poverty is, and also that fighting poverty is never used alone as a justification for the development of a SI perspective. Poverty is rather seen as an indicator that can be measured through different monitoring tools.

From this analysis, we also identify four main rationales that give a precise idea of the valuational frame used by the EC to assess what a good SI should be. These four rationales are connected to the ideas of ‘efficiency’, ‘productivity’, ‘fight against crisis’ and ‘activation’.

It is finally interesting to note that, if the ‘capacity’ vocabulary, that is central in the CA approach, is well present in the SI perspective (it is even present in the definition of what SI is), the definition of ‘capacity’ is mostly reduced to the capacity to be ‘active’ in the labour market. Connected to this observation is the fact that the values of ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ are almost absent in the 2013 Communication.

From the quali-quantitative analysis of the references mobilised in the two documents under scrutiny, we can make some observations about the shape of the transcoding process that led the EC to promote this ‘new’ idea of social investment.

We can first conclude that most (93% for the COM, 72% for the SWD) of the ‘evidences’, ‘justifications’ and knowledge mobilised to give a rational foundation to the EC proposal come from internal, very recent (on average two year old), documents produced by the European institutions. This allows us to question the disruptive nature of this transcoding process. This analysis gives indeed some weight to the statement that this transcoding process is mainly the continuation of previous work conducted in recent years by the Commission. The idea of social investment does not seem to be a ‘new’ idea, or a radical shift in the way the EC conceives what social policies should be.

It is also remarkable that very limited external knowledge is mobilised by the redactors of the two documents. The second kind of actors that are the most mobilised are social scientists (1% in the COM, 14% in the SWD). In more than 33% of cases, their work is mobilised to explain what ‘social investment’ is. This observation can allow us to identify the possible origin of this vocabulary in the social sciences literature.

Finally, the quali-quantitative analysis allows us to confirm the fact that the most important idea present in the EC proposal is that social investments are mainly investment in human capital that should improve the employment potential of every active individual. It is remarkable in this respect that 47% of all references mobilised in the SWD(2013)³⁸ are connected to the ‘employment’ code.

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RE-InVEST - Rebuilding an Inclusive, Value-based Europe of Solidarity and Trust through Social Investments

In 2013, as a response to rising inequalities, poverty and distrust in the EU, the Commission launched a major endeavour to rebalance economic and social policies with the Social Investment Package (SIP). RE-InVEST aims to strengthen the philosophical, institutional and empirical underpinnings of the SIP, based on social investment in human rights and capabilities. Our consortium is embedded in the 'Alliances to Fight Poverty'. We will actively involve European citizens severely affected by the crisis in the co-construction of a more powerful and effective social investment agenda with policy recommendations.

<http://www.re-invest.eu/>

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