

Annex 1 – Template Dissertation Report EPS



Joint Dissertation Review

Name of the student:	Inel Shalabayev
Title of the thesis:	Towards coherent cybersecurity in the EU? The impact of the NIS Directive implementation on the European cyberspace
Reviewer:	Lukas Milevski (second reader)

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The research question is interesting, well enunciated, and clearly relevant both to issues of on-going academic concern as well as of policy at national and EU levels. The thesis was fairly well embedded in the academic literature on coherence and its conceptualization, as well as on EU cybersecurity. The thesis made a good case for its originality with regard to both literatures.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The methodology of qualitative content analysis was clearly chosen and explained, together with the relevant primary and secondary sources and the overall structure of the research design. However, it was unclear why exactly it suited the question—content analysis naturally aims to aggregate content from multiple texts, but the question was not asking such a question but instead about the coherence of EU cybersecurity strategy, insight which the chosen methodology could not provide. Moreover, it did not really seem like qualitative content analysis was actually applied in the argumentative chapters of the thesis. However, the thesis seemed fairly well grounded theoretically with reference to securitization theory, liberal intergovernmentalism, and the concept of coherence.

3. CONCLUSIONS

The argument itself seems somewhat troubled. This is partly a result of the improper choice of methodology, as already explained. Furthermore, while the conceptualization of coherence done earlier in the thesis was reasonable, it did leave out key issues which were brought up in the conclusion— notably, for example, issues of extra OES designations on top of the ‘core’ designations. If two (or 27) countries are coherent with regards to OES X but 17 of those also add Y and 9 also Z, this is technically incoherent but may also not necessarily be a problem for reasons which may well be context-dependent to the countries involved. As such, coherence incoherence can result from both too little central designation and too much local designation, excessive coherence imposed from the center may be just as damaging in its own way, a nuance which the thesis seemed to miss. A key aspect of conceptualization of coherence, which would have also deepened the subsequent analysis, revolves around how much (and what sort) of coherence is desirable or useful. Ultimately, the thesis made a pretty ambitious argument and, although it’s more superficial than it could have been, it still makes a useful contribution to the literatures in which it sought to contextualize itself.

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The formal aspects and language of the thesis were fine, with only a few minor issues. The language was appropriate and the thesis adhered pretty well to academic standards, although one consistent error was to shorten digital service provider (DSP) to DPS instead. The thesis formatting was straightforward and effective, although sometimes paragraphs might go on a bit too long (and therefore became increasingly hard to read), and the structure was fine as well, although the gear change from methodology/setting up the thesis’ inquiry to the actual substance and content of that inquiry itself was somewhat abrupt. Citation style was consistent.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The thesis was an interesting attempt at exploring issues of coherence in EU cybersecurity policy when examined at the level of implementation by the member states of the NIS Directive. The thesis was pretty clearly written with a good awareness of the relevant literature and relevant theories, although the methodology did not seem particularly apt. The argument was reasonable, although more superficial than it could have been if the student had been armed with a deeper conceptualization of coherence.

Grade (A-F)	C
Date	Signature
23/06/2022	