

**TUNED - Trade Union's National and European Delegation**  
**EUPAE - European Public Administration Employers**

# **FIRST FOCUS GROUP: THE IMPACT OF DIGITALISATION ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

**IMPROVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE:  
OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS COMING FROM DIGITALIZATION**

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**PARIS  
14 MARCH 2019**

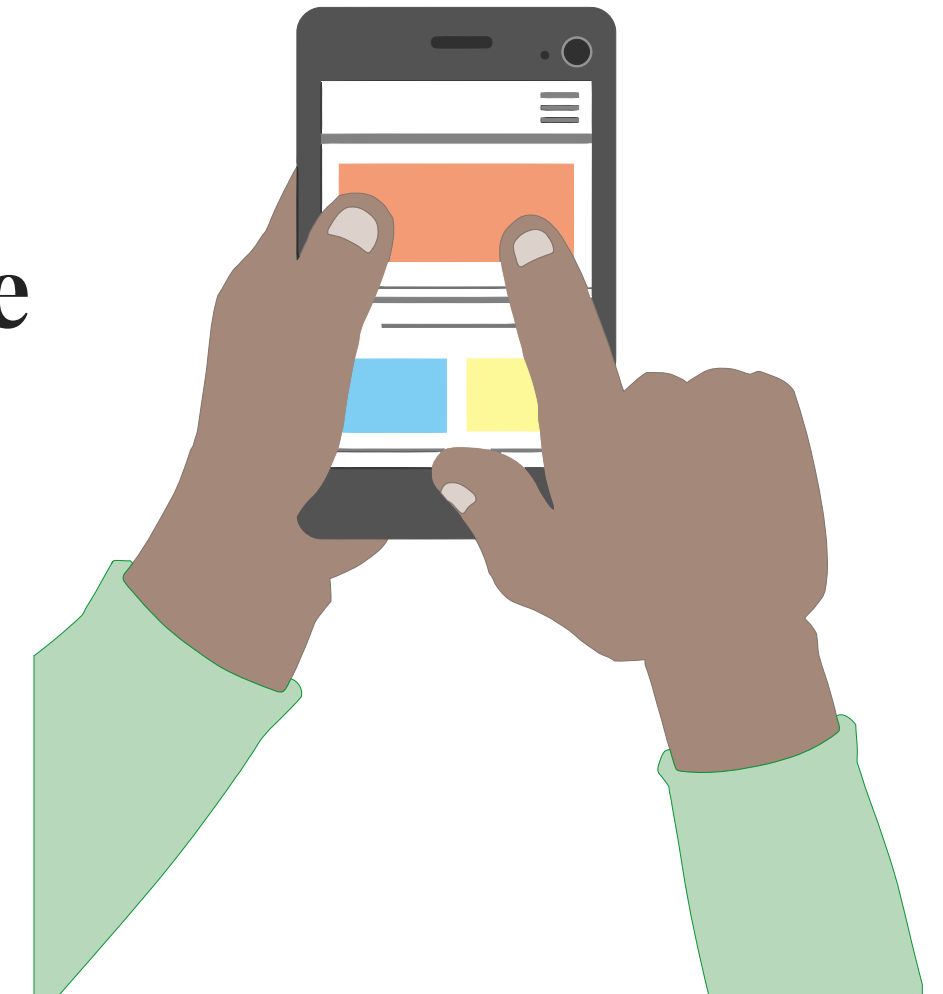
**With the support of the European Union - VS/2017/0370**

# Content of the Presentation

- Research Outline
- Methodology
- Literature Review
- Summary
- Q and A
  
- **Zoltan Vadkerti** – Project Researcher (work-life balance consultant, Co-Founder of the WorkLife HUB, author of *One Life – How the most forward looking organisations leverage work-life integration to attract talent and foster employee wellbeing*)

# Fast forward into the Future...

- Once available 5G data speed will be **1000-times faster** than today
- Some predict work-life balance will be gone, instead the focus will be on "**device/non-device balance**"
- Within this new economic reality and "digital opportunities" **our understanding of work-life balance will most likely change**



# The Challenge for our project

## *Work-life balance*

- **Various definitions** of work-life balance: researchers agree that there are **many aspects** to this concept that **cannot be properly captured in one phrase**; we use work-life balance because of its prevalence in **international literature**, and **EU policy making**
- Who studies this: organisational psychology, sociology, family policy and demographers

## *Digitalisation*

- **Practical and conceptual limitations**: digitalisation covers thousands of individual technological innovations, its **impact** at times can be **direct, indirect and interconnected**, which makes simple analyses difficult (OECD, 2019)
- It is difficult to observe the impact of digitalisation beforehand, as the **impact is systemic**
- Digitalisation transforms the **material, social, temporal, spatial dimension** of work practices, thus it has various impact on individual's perception on work-life balance
- **The role of digitalisation can depend** on various **occupations** (Jääskeläinen, 2015)

# Research Outline

**AIM**



**METHODOLOGY**

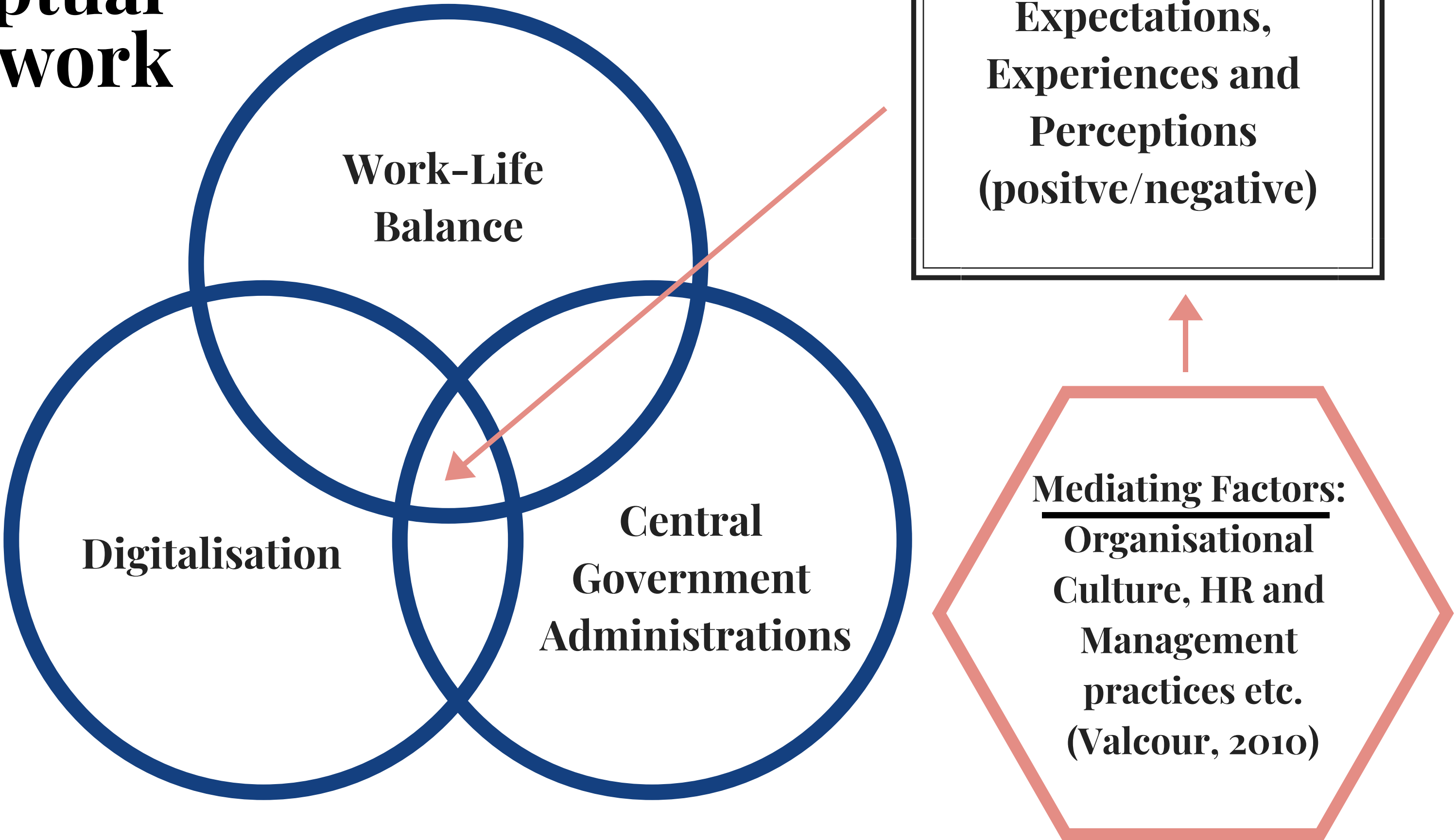


**RESULTS**

# Aim

- To explore what is the relationship and to what effect (**positive and/or negative**) between **DIGITALISATION** and how employees in **central government administrations** perceive their level of **WORK-LIFE BALANCE**
- Select and collect **INSPIRING PRACTICES** on how central government administrations approach the impact of digitalisation on employees' work-life balance
- Two key project output: **FIELD STUDY** and **GUIDELINES**
- Study outline: Introduction, Explanatory session + Introduction of case studies, Recommendations and Summary

# Conceptual Framework



# Main Research Questions

- 1) What is the **impact** (positive/negative) of **digitalization** on the work-life balance of central government administrations employees?
- 2) What are the **opportunities** and **challenges** of digitalization on the work, family and private lives of central government administration employees?
- 3) What specific public **measures and practices** are in place to influence the impact of digitalisation on employees' work-life balance?
- 4) What are the lessons learnt, what general **recommendations** can be formulated for the future?



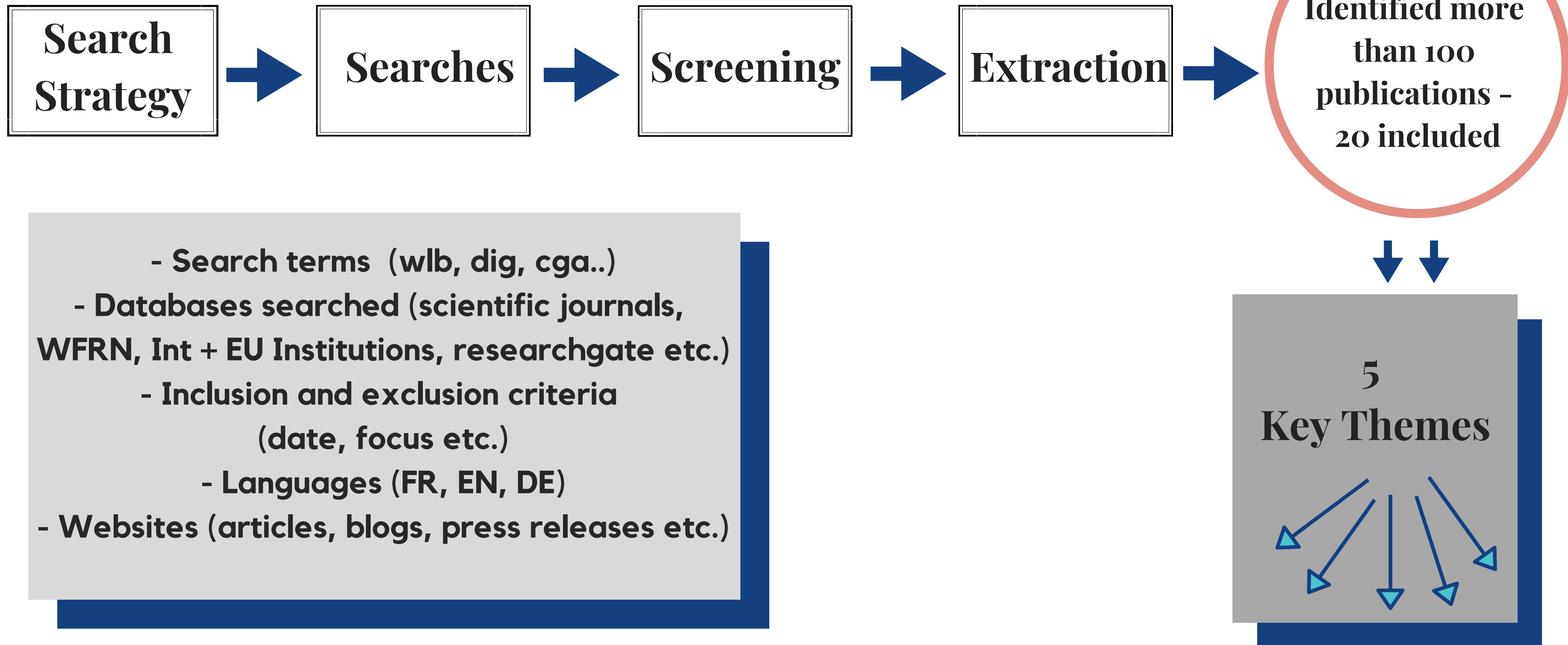
# Research Methodology

- Focus on the **individual**
- Review of existing knowledge (**Literature Review**)
- **2 Focus Group meetings** (14 March Paris; 29 May Madrid)
- Collection of **Case studies** + set of **Interviews**
- **Data analysis**
- Scope: **12 countries** (Denmark, Estonia, Belgium, France, Germany, Romania, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia)
- Established a set of **9 criteria** to select the **case studies** from the Member States

# Set of Criteria

- 1) Level of **participation** and involvement of **trade unions**
- 2) **Transferability** of the initiative from one Administration to another
- 3) **Data protection**
- 4) Coverage considering the **variety of organisations** (Ministries, Agencies, etc.) and different activities within Public Administrations
- 5) Coverage considering the **different types of employment status**
- 6) Coverage considering the **different levels of personnel** within the Offices (line managers, employees, top management etc.)
- 7) Coverage by **gender**
- 8) Training and earmarking of **training resources**
- 9) **Effectiveness and impact on work-life balance**

# Literature Review



# Key Themes

*I. Digitalisation*

*II. Work-life balance*

*III. Positive (+) impact of digitalisation on employees' work-life balance*

*IV. Negative (-) impact of digitalisation on employees' work-life balance*

*V. Central Government Administrations and Work-life balance/Digitalisation*

# Key Theme I.

## *Digitalisation*

- **Use of Technology:** smartphones/tablets, remote access to files, apps, emails, social media (Nam, 2013)
- **Availability of New/Mobile Technology:** "always-on" culture, longer working hours, right to disconnect (Sylvain, 2011, Froger-Michon et. al., 2018)
- **Flow of Information and Communication:** permanent connectivity, time independent working, work interruptions (Villadsen, 2016)
- **New working environments:** remote workers, work intensity, control of choice (Böckelmann, 2018)
- **Future of Work:** New Ways of Working, Work 4.0 (Jääskeläinen, 2015)
- **Impact of digitalisation on Worker Autonomy** (Gerten et. al., 2018)

# Key Theme II.

## *Work-life balance*

- **Flexible work arrangements** (Anthias & Meta, 2004)
- **Telecommuting and Telework** (Niles, 2006)
- **Boundary management:** blurring of work-life boundaries (Messenger et. al., 2017), transitions between boundaries (Chamakiotis, 2015)
- **Work-life spillover:** work to home, and home to work (Stephens, 2007)
- **Work-life merge** (Golden & Geisler, 2007)
- **Work-life conflict** (Brosn and Paliva, 2015)
- **Working Time + Directive** (Anttila et. al., 2015)

# Key Theme III.

## *Positive (+) impact of digitalisation on employees' work-life balance*

- **Work-life balance:** Online-based work can have positive impacts on work-life balance (CESI, 2016)
- **Flexibility:** new technologies increase worker's flexibility (Derks & Bakker, 2010; Sylvain, 2011) allowing them to **regulate the pace, location and time** of day in which they conduct their work (Hill et al., 1996; Hill et al., 2001; Towers et al., 2006; and Middleton, 2008)
- **Autonomy:** teleworking can be seen by many workers as a way to increase their autonomy and their efficiency (Eurofound and ILO, 2017)

# Key Theme IV.


## *Negative (-) impact of digitalisation on employees' work-life balance*

- **Negative impact on mental well-being:** the loss of the commute to work could make it difficult for workers to transition from private to work life and back again at the end of their days (Redmond and Mokhtarian, 2001)
- **Increased level of stress:** digitalisation ability to enable working at any time could lead to a real or perceived need to be available all day every day (24/7), which could lead to stress (Unum, 2014)
- **Fear of Missing Out, Digital Addiction, Digi Presence** (Elmore, 2014)
- **Blurred boundaries:** new technologies could blur the boundary between work and family, increase workload, introduce longer working hours, evoke job stress, dissatisfaction, and burnout (Townsend & Batchelor, 2005).
- **Work-life conflict:** technology use can lengthen the working day, encroaching on family life (Hill et al, 1996; Towers et al., 2006) and leading to conflict with family members (Middleton, 2008)



# Key Theme V.

## *Central Government Administrations and Work-life balance/Digitalisation*

- **Institutional pressure** – and state level support – are the most important drivers for public sector organisations to offer work-life balance support to their employees (Groeneveld, 2013)
- **Teleworking**: it is unclear to what extent teleworking is beneficial for public servants (Hanna De Vries, 2018); reported **negative effects include greater professional isolation, less organisational commitment**. It is reported that **higher managers and employees exchange** reduced the impact of teleworking on professional isolation (De Vries et. al., 2018)   
**MEDIATING FACTOR!**
- **Factors that influence the use of telework**: in selected public sector organisations e.g. the **social, technological and inter-institutional dynamics factors** play a vital role in telework adoption (Svidronova, 2016)

# Implications for the research and Study

- *On reviewing the available research it became apparent that digitalisation can offer both advantages and disadvantages to employees, and can have both (-) and (+) impact*
- Advancements in **technology can both help and hinder** attempts to provide employees with the support they need in ensuring a **healthy work environment** (Sylvain, 2011)
- Empirical findings suggest that majority of the home-based employees acknowledge **both the positive and the negative impacts** the smartphone has on work-life balance (Ejidou et al., 2016)
- **Borders are almost non-existent for most knowledge workers**, which could lead to work-life balance challenges. In this case, if the work domain takes over the private domain, this might lead to dissatisfaction with the life situation of the individual and vice versa. (Ejidou et. al., 2016)

# Summary

- **No comprehensive MODEL** that explains the link between DIGIT and WLB
- Challenge: **only anecdotal evidence exist**; none or **limited number of research** available that look at the relationship between digitalisation and work-life balance
- Insufficient amount of – often **not comparable – data** on the impact of DIGI on WLB in CGA
  
- **Digitalisation is becoming an integral part of every sector**, which will enable new forms of work and employment status; **it will also impact how employees perceive their WLB**
- Aim of this project is to take stock of current evidence, as **discussion is still ongoing in terms of the real impact of DIGIT on WLB**, come up with signposts and recommendations for everybody involved in making key decisions
- **Response must be integrated, comprehensive and involve all stakeholders**

**Thank you for your attention!**  
**Any questions?**

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