FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

The Impact of Technological Transformations on the Digital Generation (DigiGen)

EU Horizon 2020 project
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OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
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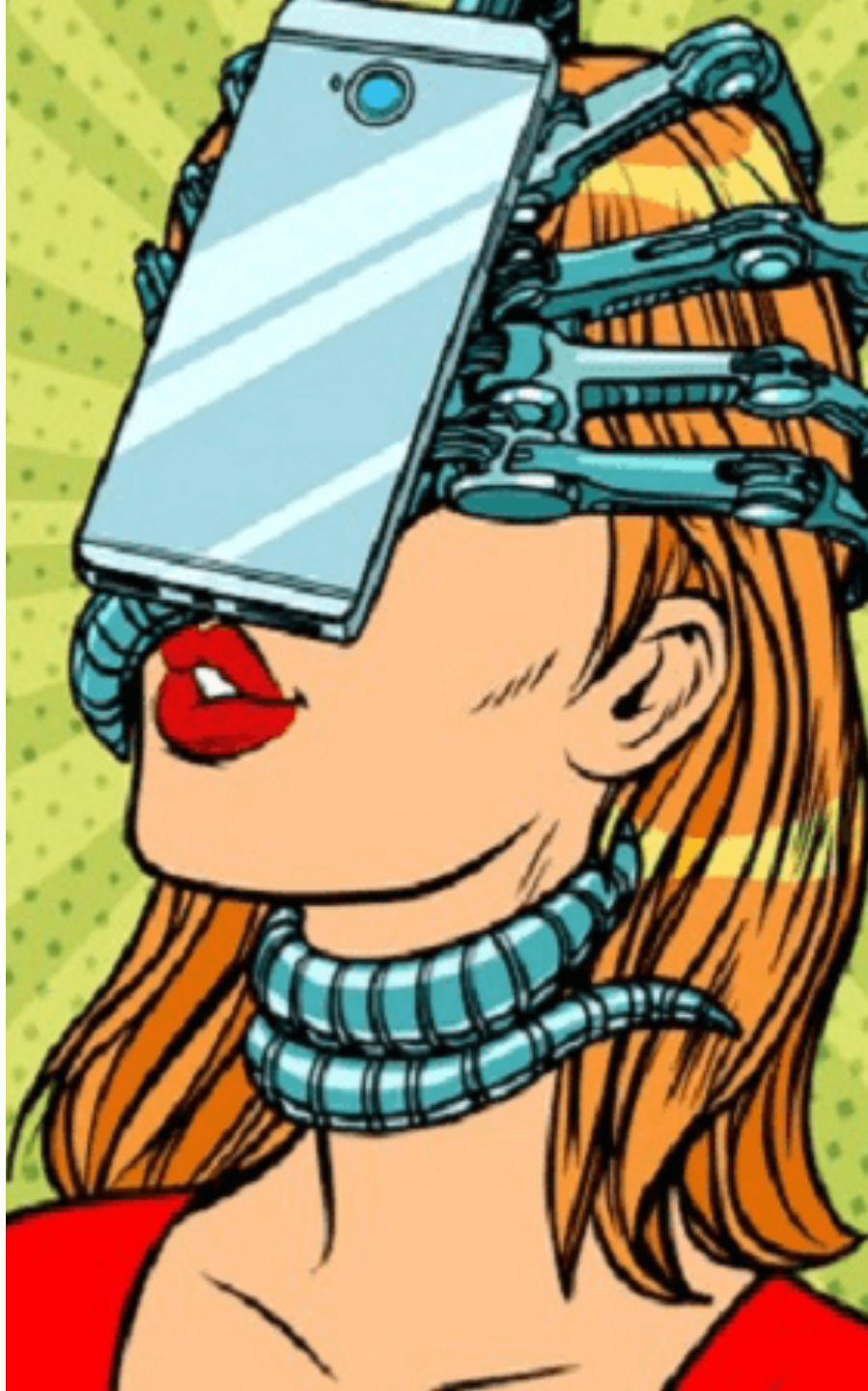
Negative effects of technology

The death by suicide in 2017 of a 14-year-old British girl led to a highly charged debate about social media's **negative effects** on children's and young people's **mental health**. The concern is the ease with which explicit images of self-harm can be accessed on Instagram and other platforms. Discussions have included the possibility of government-led regulations and legislation, such as privacy law. Facebook-owned Instagram reacted quickly to the scrutiny surrounding this news story and has taken responsibility for users finding harmful images without restriction. The association between social media and acts of self-harm remains a poorly understood one and it must be remembered that social media are just one influence on young people's mental health. Whatever the context, and whoever should take responsibility, social media platforms have been providing a route through which young people can find explicit images of self-harm (The Lancet, 2019).



Beneficial effects of technology

Robert and Trude tell the story of their disabled son's amazing online gaming life in the World of Warcraft, which highlights the **beneficial effects** of technology. As the parents mourned what they thought had been a lonely and isolated life for their disabled son, they discovered that people all over Europe lit candles in his memory. "We were really very traditional. We didn't want him turning his daily rhythm upside down." Sitting in a cafe by his office in Oslo, Robert describes how he used to worry about his son staying up late into the night. "In retrospect, I think we should have been more interested in the game world, where he spent so much time. By not doing so, we robbed ourselves of an opportunity that we didn't know we had." Mats had barely left the basement flat underneath his family's home in the last years of his life, so it was strange that people unknown to the family were present at the funeral. "Mats spoke quite a bit about these game characters - these avatars - but we didn't think much of it. You don't know who plays a role in your child's life if you don't know their **digital friends**." In his blog, Mats had written about the computer screen, which he had sat in front of for over half his life: "It's not a screen, it's a gateway to wherever your heart desires" (BBC News, 2019).

The impact of technological transformations on the Digital Generation (DigiGen)

- DigiGen aims to develop significant **knowledge about how children and young people use** and are **affected by the technological transformations in their everyday lives.** This will include a focus on **educational institutions, the home, leisure time and children and young people's civic participation**.
  - This will be achieved through the use of participatory methodologies that focus on understanding **why** and **how** some children and young people **benefit** from ICT use while others seem to be **impacted negatively**.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

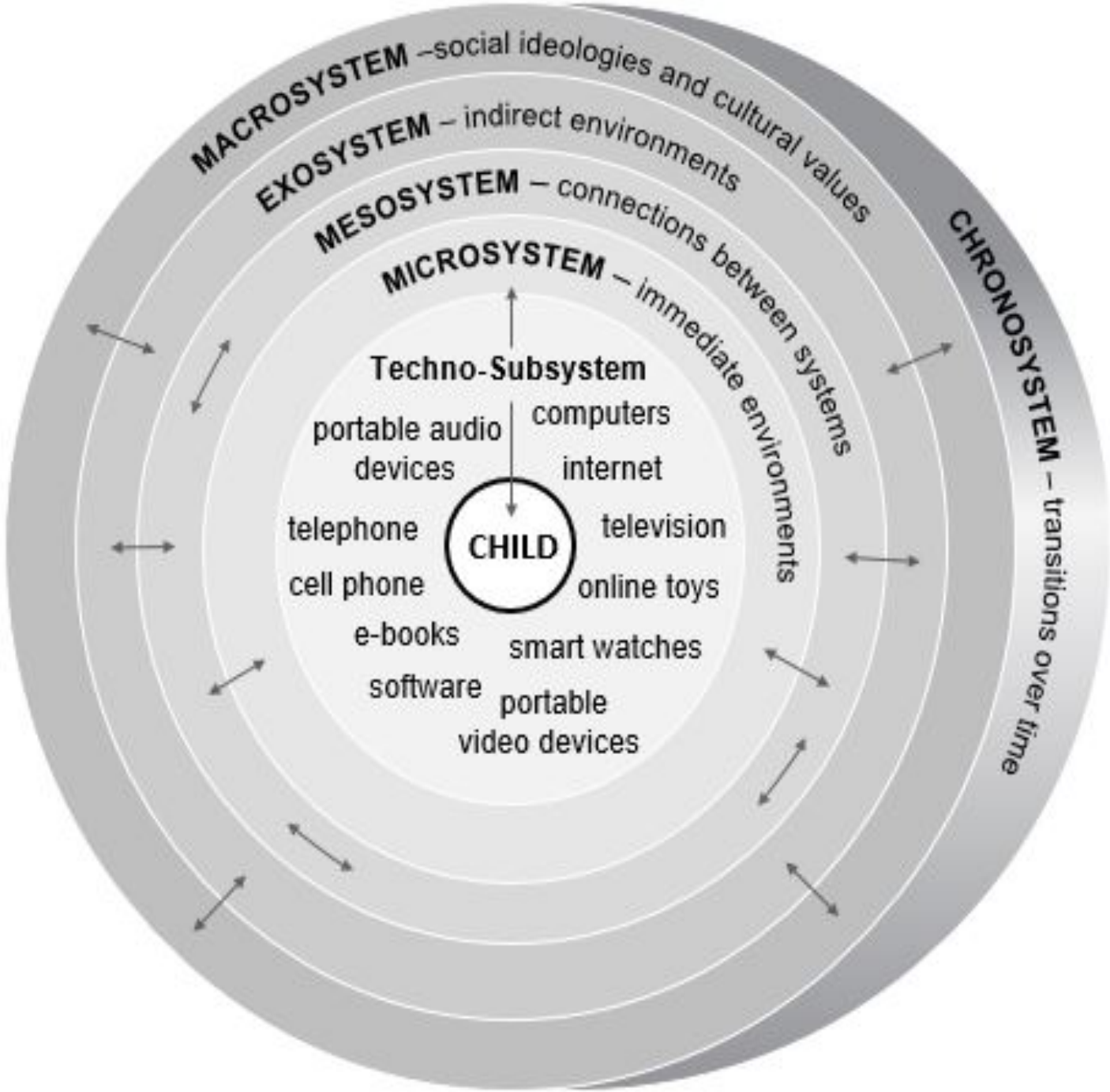
- The specific objectives of DigiGen are detailed in eight work package descriptions.
- The overall objectives aim to contribute to the achievement of a number of child-focused SDGs, more specifically
  - improving health and wellbeing (SDG 3)
  - expanding educational opportunity and quality education (SDG 4)
  - achieving gender equity (SDG 5)
  - decent work and economic growth (SDG 8)
  - tackling inequality (SDG 10) and
  - sustainable, safe and inclusive cities (SDG 11)

Risks, safety, security and super-users?

- DigiGen cautions that overgeneralizations can easily be misleading and give the impression that **all** young people today are **super-users** and **highly competent** or that **safety** and **security** are the major concerns.
- To understand the effects of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (and technology in general), DigiGen aims to understand **the conditions under which harmful versus beneficial effects occur** as it relates to ever-increasing ICT use in the daily lives of children and young people across a **range of systems** in Europe.
  - These systems are found within our theoretical framework

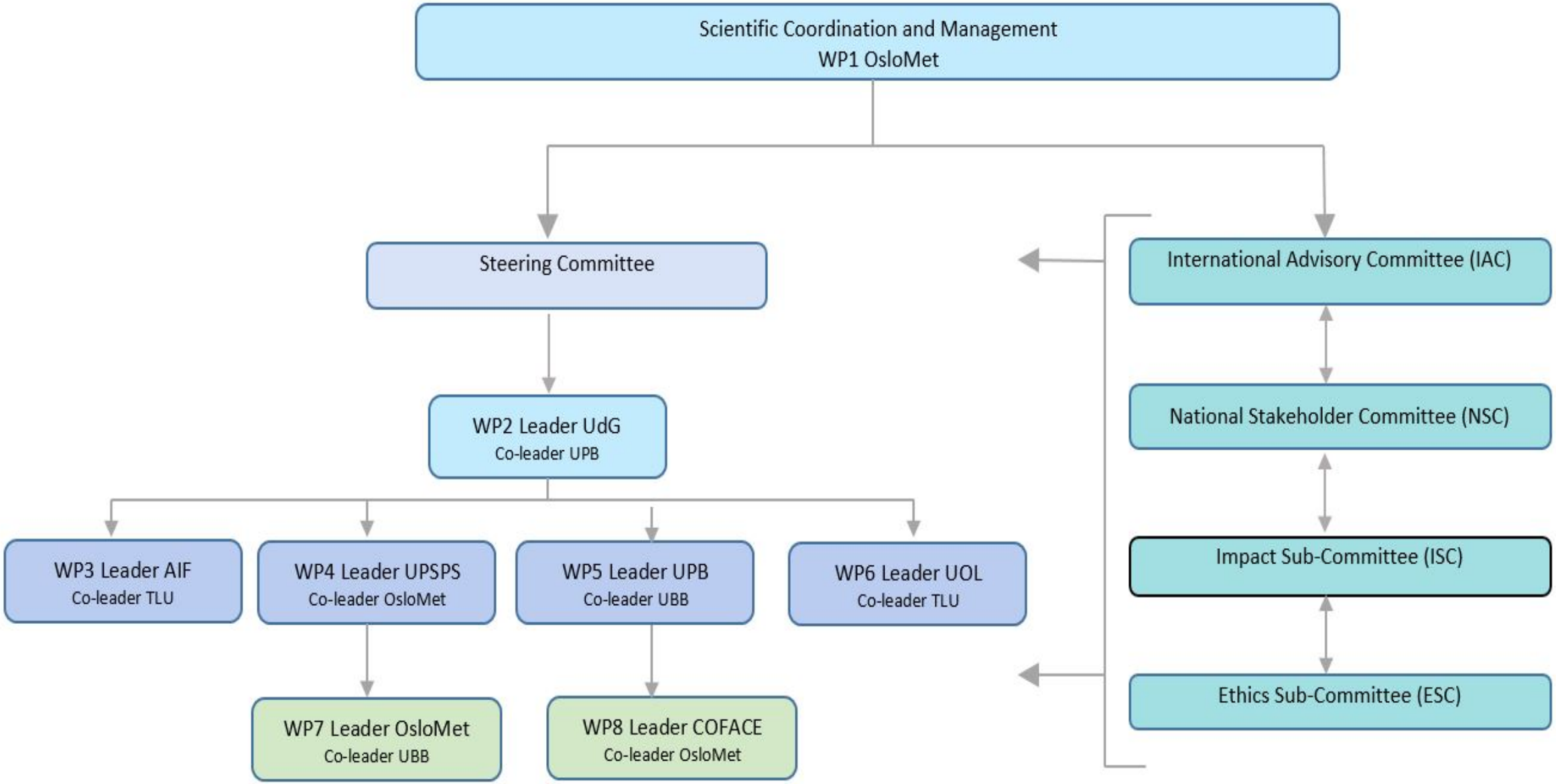
Conceptual framework and approach

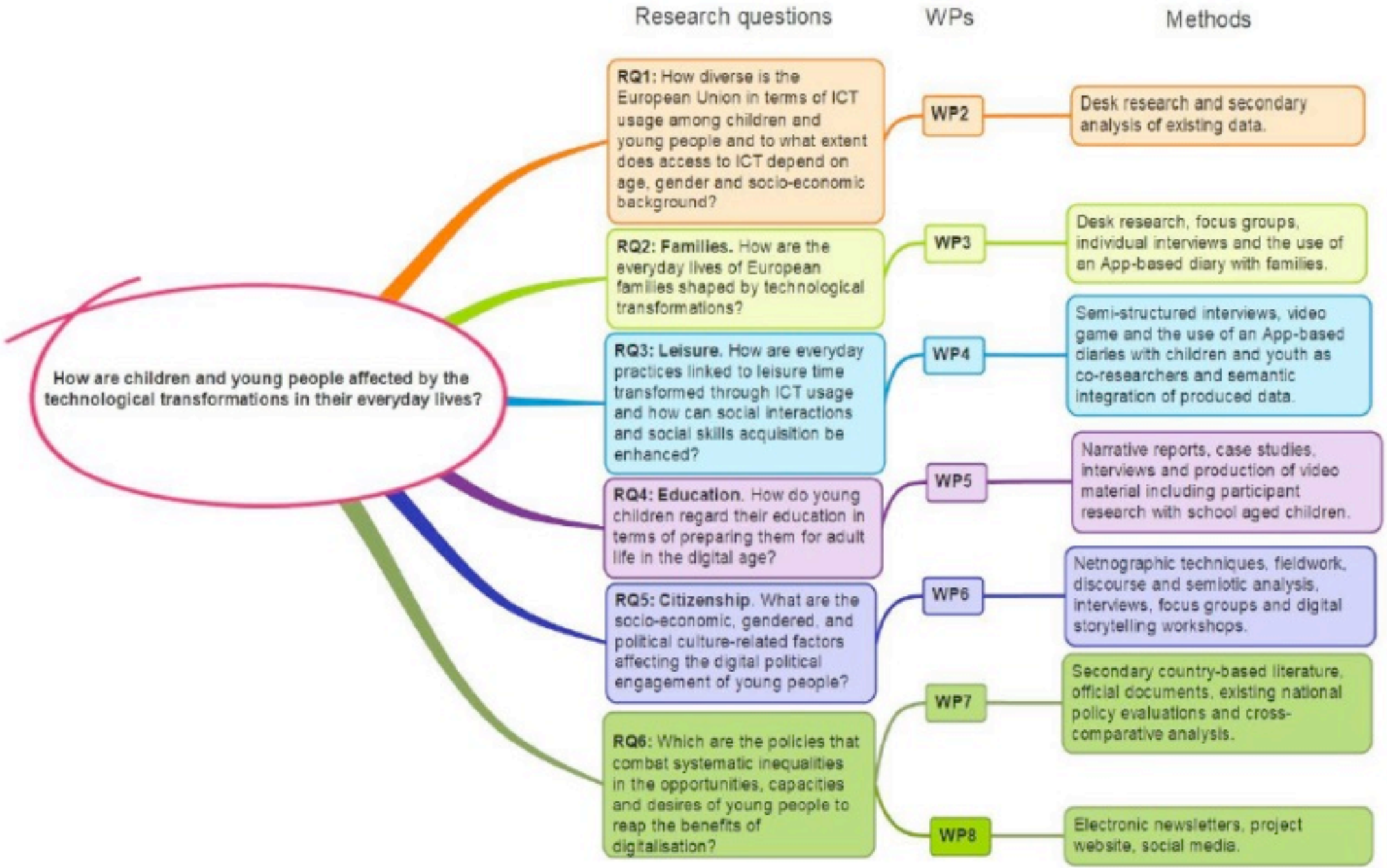
- The concept and approach of the DigiGen project are embedded in a theoretical framework with a focus on:
  - the ecological system and techno-subsystem theory (the range o systems the project will focus on)
  - the life-course perspective with its different transitions
  - a view of children and young people as independent and active social actors in their own development
  - a rights-based approach to equality, ICT and inclusion/exclusion
  - understanding of risk, resilience and enhancing factors of technological transformations in the lives of children and young people


MACROSYSTEM –social ideologies and cultural values
EXOSYSTEM – indirect environments
MESOSYSTEM – connections between systems
MICROSYSTEM – immediate environments
CHRONOSYSTEM – transitions over time
Techno-Subsystem
portable audio devices
computers
internet
telephone
CHILD
television
cell phone
online toys
e-books
smart watches
software
portable video devices

Partners

- 9 partner institutions with Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) as coordinator
  - Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences (UPSPS)- Greece (Ethics sub-committee leader)
  - University of Leicester (UOL)- UK
  - Austrian Institute of Family Studies, University of Vienna (AIF)- Austria
  - Universitat de Girona (UdG)- Spain
  - Paderborn University (UPB)- Germany
  - Babes–Bolyai University (UBB)- Romania
  - Tallinn University (TLU)- Estonia
  - Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)- Belgium (Impact sub-committee leader)


Scientific Coordination and Management
WP1 OsloMet
Steering Committee
International Advisory Committee (IAC)
WP2 Leader UdG
Co-leader UPB
National Stakeholder Committee (NSC)
WP3 Leader AIF
Co-leader TLU
WP4 Leader UPSPS
Co-leader OsloMet
WP5 Leader UPB
Co-leader UBB
WP6 Leader UOL
Co-leader TLU
Impact Sub-Committee (ISC)
WP7 Leader OsloMet
Co-leader UBB
WP8 Leader COFACE
Co-leader OsloMet
Ethics Sub-Committee (ESC)


Research questions
WPs
Methods
How are children and young people affected by the technological transformations in their everyday lives?
RQ1: How diverse is the European Union in terms of ICT usage among children and young people and to what extent does access to ICT depend on age, gender and socio-economic background?
WP2
Desk research and secondary analysis of existing data.
RQ2: Families. How are the everyday lives of European families shaped by technological transformations?
WP3
Desk research, focus groups, individual interviews and the use of an App-based diary with families.
RQ3: Leisure. How are everyday practices linked to leisure time transformed through ICT usage and how can social interactions and social skills acquisition be enhanced?
WP4
Semi-structured interviews, video game and the use of an App-based diaries with children and youth as co-researchers and semantic integration of produced data.
RQ4: Education. How do young children regard their education in terms of preparing them for adult life in the digital age?
WP5
Narrative reports, case studies, interviews and production of video material including participant research with school aged children.
RQ5: Citizenship. What are the socio-economic, gendered, and political culture-related factors affecting the digital political engagement of young people?
WP6
Netnographic techniques, fieldwork, discourse and semiotic analysis, interviews, focus groups and digital storytelling workshops.
RQ6: Which are the policies that combat systematic inequalities in the opportunities, capacities and desires of young people to reap the benefits of digitalisation?
WP7
Secondary country-based literature, official documents, existing national policy evaluations and cross-comparative analysis.
WP8
Electronic newsletters, project website, social media.

Overall goals

1. To develop new robust participatory methodologies for including children and young people as co-researchers, co-creators and co-designers (WP4-6).
2. To understand the impact of children and young people's online behaviour and their use of digital devices with particular attention to their motivations for using ICT at home, for leisure, in education and civic participation as linked to their future world of work and as adult citizens (WP3-6).
3. To identify at-risk groups with regard to health, wellbeing and social participation (WP2-6).
4. To examine systems of social disadvantage and how they determine access taking into account diversity in terms of gender, age, culture, disability, social and economic background (WP2-6).

Overall goals

5. To develop evidence-based models to address the impact of ICT use on educational inequalities (WP2, WP7-8).
6. To investigate and test the effects of ICT use in terms of skills, competencies and wellbeing across Europe (WP4-6).
7. To enhance our understanding of why and how some children and young people use ICT and what impact it has on them by accessing viewpoints from children and young people, parents, teachers and other stakeholders (WP3-7).
8. To develop an explanatory model to inform relevant stakeholders and practitioners about the long-term effects of ICT use on child development and about practices that maximise risks, minimise risks and maximise benefits (WP7-8).
9. To contribute to better market regulation and to safer and more beneficial use of digital technologies in the context of home, leisure, education and related to civic participation through the formulation of recommendations in support of national and European policies in the field (WP7-8).

International advisory committee

- Neil Selwyn (Monash Univ.)
- Nancy Law (University of Hong Kong)
- Sian Bayne (University of Edinburgh)
- Jo Tondeur ((Vrije University)
- Lina Denick (Cardiff University)
- Catherine Williams (Google Europe)
- Ola Erstad (University of Oslo)
- Shanon Phelan (University of Alberta)
- Richard Aldrich (University of Warwick)
- Elizabeth Milovidov (eSaftey consultant)