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**Digital Nomadism in Europe: A Scoping Review of Prevalence,  
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## Digital Nomadism in Europe: A Scoping Review of Prevalence, Spatial Patterns, and Policy Implications

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** To examine the prevalence, geographical distribution and key determinants of digital nomadism across Europe in order to clarify its socio-economic implications.

**Methodology:** This study adopts a scoping review methodology using PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines to systematically map the extent, nature, and characteristics of research on digital nomadism in Europe, highlighting prevalence patterns, demographic and socio-economic profiles, motivations, and urban and economic implications.

**Findings:** Final synthesis show that 12 studies published between 2016 and 2024 were included from major electronic databases and relevant grey literature. Findings indicate that digital nomads are concentrated in European cities like Portugal, Malta, Spain and the Netherlands that offer robust digital infrastructure, international accessibility, and high quality of life, with Southern European destinations increasingly positioning themselves as attractive hubs. Motivations for adopting a digital nomad lifestyle centre around autonomy, flexibility, and the integration of work and leisure, while coworking spaces and digital platforms facilitate sustained mobility and professional networking. Potential challenges to digital nomadism identified by not limited to housing pressures, urban transformation, and socio-economic inequalities in host destinations

**Unique Contribution of Theory, Practice and Policy:** Synthesising interdisciplinary evidence, this study highlights gaps in empirical understanding, particularly regarding long-term socio-economic impacts and regional variations across Europe. The findings provide a foundation for policymakers, urban planners, and scholars to develop strategies that support sustainable digital nomad mobility while maximising benefits for local communities.

**Keywords:** *Europe Digital Nomads, Remote Work, Coworking Spaces, Urban Transformation, Lifestyle Mobility, Scoping Review*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The diffusion of digital technologies and the widespread of remote working arrangements have profoundly reshaped patterns of labour and mobility across Europe. This transformation was intensified during the COVID 19 pandemic in response to lockdowns and workplace closures (Zhou et al., 2024; Samek Lodovici et al., 2021). Although before the pandemic, remote work was mainly viewed as an optional practice for a limited number of employees, as organizational cultures in Europe favoured traditional office attendance (Eyiolawi & Aremu, 2026). Within this evolving context, digital nomadism has gained prominence as a form of work in which individuals rely on digital tools to perform their professional activities while remaining geographically mobile over extended periods (Rainoldi et al., 2025; European Commission, 2024).

Europe has emerged as an appealing region for digital nomads due to its advanced digital infrastructure, high quality of life, cultural diversity and the freedom of movement enabled by the Schengen Area (Curin & Leopoli, 2025; Lutz & Miguel, 2024). In response, various European cities and national governments have developed targeted policies, including digital nomad visas, fiscal incentives and destination branding strategies, aimed at attracting mobile professionals (Lutz & Miguel, 2024; Rossi, 2025; Abreu & Sampaio, 2024). Despite the increasing policy attention and public visibility of digital nomads, empirical evidence on their prevalence and spatial distribution across Europe remains fragmented. Existing studies tend to concentrate on individual countries or high-profile destinations such as Portugal and Estonia, which limits comparative understanding across Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western Europe (Zhou et al., 2024; Boluda Chova & von Ehrlich-Treuenstätt, 2023).

Also, participation in digital nomadism is strongly influenced by demographic and socio-economic factors. Earlier research characterises digital nomads as predominantly young to middle aged, highly educated individuals employed in knowledge intensive sectors, like information technology and digital services (Myskiv, 2025; Christiansen et al. 2023; Mancinelli 2020; Reichenberger 2018). However, emerging evidence points to increasing heterogeneity encompassing differences in gender, income security and long-term mobility intentions, thereby challenging simplified representations of digital nomads (Nash et al., 2018). Motivations underpinning the adoption of a digital nomad lifestyle are similarly complex and extend beyond economic considerations to include aspirations for autonomy, flexibility, enhanced work life balance and opportunities for cultural engagement (Demircioglu & Yoruk, 2025; Kirakosyan et al., 2025; Kim, 2024).

Likewise, digital nomadism brings about a range of regulatory and socio-economic challenges, particularly in relation to taxation, residency rights and housing pressures in host destinations (Lutz & Miguel, 2024; Macinelli & Germann Molz, 2024). Against this backdrop, this scoping review aims to examine the prevalence, geographical distribution and key determinants of digital nomadism across Europe in order to clarify its socio-economic implications. It focuses on mapping regional patterns, identifying demographic and socio-economic characteristics, exploring

motivational drivers, and synthesising evidence on regulatory and social challenges, thereby informing future research, policy development and strategic planning.

## 2.0 CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Digital nomadism has evolved in parallel with broader transformations in digital work, global mobility, and lifestyle driven migration, thereby positioning the phenomenon at the intersection of labour studies, migration theory, and tourism research (Dreher & Triandafyllidou, 2025). Conceptually, digital nomads are understood as location independent workers who utilise digital technologies to perform paid work while engaging in sustained geographical mobility, frequently across national borders (Hannonen, 2020). In contrast to conventional migrants, expatriates, or tourists, they combine employment, leisure, and travel in ways that disrupt established distinctions between work and mobility (Kozak, 2024). Recent scholarship further portrays digital nomads as pioneers of emerging work life configurations shaped by platform economies, the normalisation of remote work, and post pandemic restructuring of global labour markets (Kellerman, 2025; Van den Broek et al., 2024).

Although digital nomadism is closely related to remote work and telecommuting, it remains conceptually distinct. Remote workers often operate from a fixed home location, whereas digital nomads intentionally integrate continuous or cyclical travel into their professional routines (Ilyina, Teor, & Kulibanova, 2025; Pandurska et al., 2024). This sustained cross border mobility is central to understanding their uneven spatial distribution and regulatory positioning. Consequently, digital nomadism represents not merely a technological shift in work organisation but a reconfiguration of spatial attachment and labour market participation.

From a theoretical standpoint, early interpretations of digital nomadism drew extensively on lifestyle migration theory, which emphasises individual agency, self-realisation, and the pursuit of preferred ways of life rather than exclusively economic imperatives (Peña, 2025; Benson and O'Reilly, 2016). Within this perspective, digital nomadism is conceptualised as a voluntary and identity driven form of mobility in which paid work operates primarily as an enabler of autonomy, flexibility, and geographical independence (Henkens, 2025; Hermann & Paris, 2020). Consequently, mobility is framed as a means of attaining a better quality of life characterised by leisure opportunities, favourable climates, and comparatively lower living costs (Kim, 2024; Pandurska et al., 2024). In this sense, work is embedded within broader lifestyle aspirations, and migration decisions are interpreted as expressions of self-development and personal fulfilment.

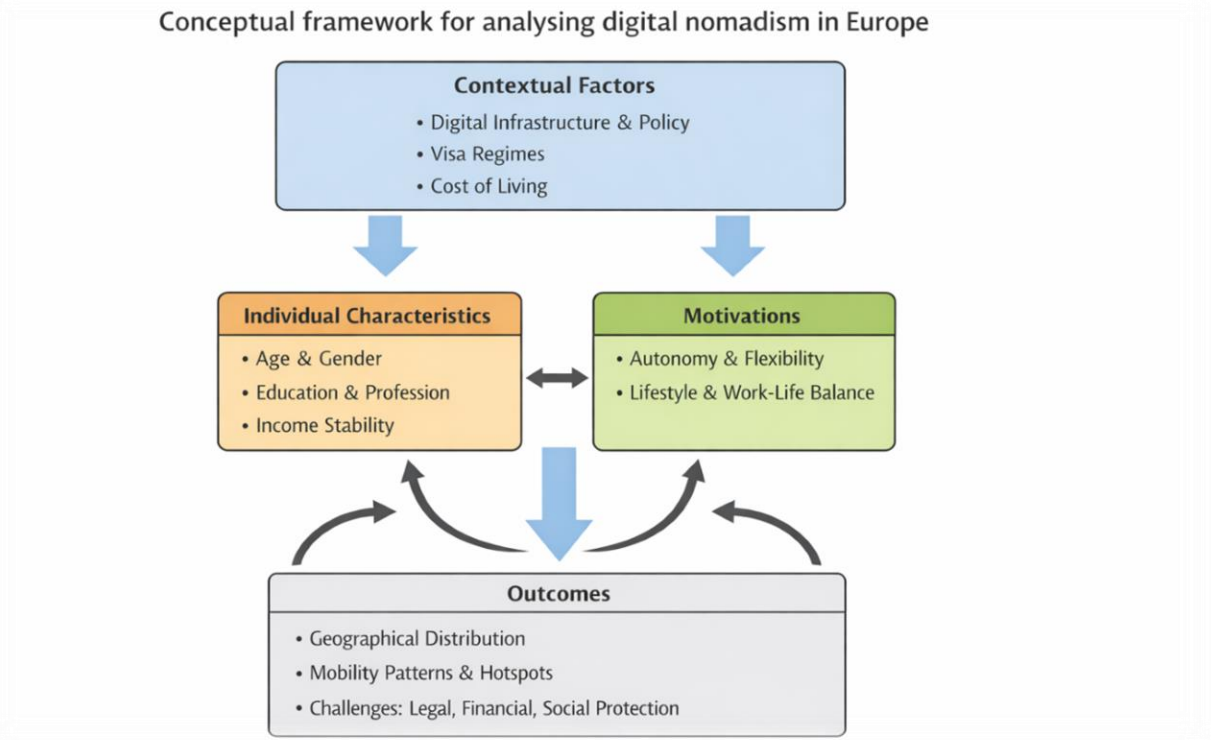
However, scholars have questioned the sufficiency of lifestyle migration theory in explaining the full complexity of digital nomadism. Although the framework illuminates aspirational mobility, it tends to understate structural constraints such as inequalities in citizenship status, income security, and access to stable digital infrastructure, all of which condition who can realistically participate in location independent work (Başaran, 2025; Bozzi, 2024; Webb, 2024; Mancinelli, 2020). Furthermore, critics argue that lifestyle-oriented explanations overlook the broader neoliberal and

postcolonial dynamics that shape global mobility regimes and labour hierarchies (Dreher and Triandafyllidou, 2025; Webb, 2024; Mancinelli, 2020). As a result, digital nomadism cannot be reduced to an individualised quest for freedom, since it is simultaneously structured by regulatory, economic, and geopolitical forces.

In response to these limitations, labour process theory and digital labour perspectives have gained prominence. These approaches situate digital nomads within wider transformations of contemporary capitalism, emphasising precarity, self-exploitation, and the erosion of boundaries between work and non-work time (Mancinelli, 2020). From this standpoint, digital nomads are not only autonomous lifestyle seekers but also workers embedded in platform mediated labour markets that frequently lack social protection and regulatory oversight (Hermann & Paris, 2020). The reliance on freelance, project based, and digitally intermediated income streams often exposes them to income volatility and legal uncertainty, thereby complicating celebratory narratives of flexibility and independence (Pandurska et al., 2024).

Additionally, labour mobility theory further deepens this structural analysis. The theory refers to the capacity of workers to move across occupations, sectors, and geographical locations, thereby influencing wage dynamics and employment patterns within modern economies (Yadin et al., 2024). In digitally mediated contexts, such mobility is shaped by globalisation, technological connectivity, and regulatory frameworks that facilitate or constrain cross border work arrangements (Szymczak, 2024; Oltean and Taylor, 2023). Digital nomads exemplify this reconfiguration of labour mobility, as they strategically respond to expanding global labour markets and policy instruments such as specialised visa regimes and favourable taxation systems (Erdoğan, Aslan, & Gök, 2025; Bednorz, 2024).

Complementing this perspective, migration and mobility governance theories demonstrate how destination state policies, including digital nomad visas and remote work friendly urban strategies, actively shape spatial clustering and circular mobility patterns (Hari & Triandafyllidou, 2025; Mancinelli & Germann Molz, 2023). Accordingly, digital nomadism may be interpreted not merely as a lifestyle choice but as an outcome of structural economic transformation and evolving governance regimes.



*Figure 1. Conceptual framework for analysing digital nomadism in Europe.*

In Figure 1 above, the arrows indicate the influence of contextual factors on individual characteristics and motivations, and their combined effect on outcomes such as geographical distribution, mobility patterns and challenges.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a scoping review methodology in order to systematically map the extent, nature, and characteristics of existing research on the prevalence and dynamics of digital nomadism in Europe. Scoping reviews are widely used to explore emerging and interdisciplinary topics because they allow researchers to identify key concepts, map available evidence, and highlight gaps within the literature (McLeod, 2024). This methodological approach is particularly suitable for the present study because digital nomadism remains an evolving and conceptually fluid phenomenon that spans several academic fields including migration studies, tourism research, labour economics, and digital work scholarship (Henkens, 2025; Bozzi, 2024; McLeod, 2024). In order to ensure transparency and methodological rigour throughout the review process, the study follows the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA ScR) framework, which provides structured guidance for conducting and reporting scoping reviews (Tricco et al., 2018).

The review process followed a series of systematic stages including the identification of relevant studies, screening and selection of eligible literature, data charting, synthesis of findings, and

reporting. A comprehensive search strategy was developed to capture relevant academic and grey literature examining digital nomadism within European contexts. Searches were conducted across several major electronic databases including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar because these platforms provide extensive interdisciplinary coverage of research related to digital work, tourism mobility, and remote employment practices. The search strategy combined key terms such as digital nomad, digital nomadism, remote work, location independent work, Europe, mobility, and prevalence. Boolean operators including AND and OR were applied to refine search combinations and improve the relevance of retrieved results. In addition, the reference lists of selected publications were manually examined in order to identify additional studies that may not have appeared in the initial database searches.

Clear eligibility criteria were established before the screening process to ensure consistency with the study objectives. Studies were included when they focused explicitly on digital nomads or location independent workers within European contexts and examined issues such as prevalence, geographic distribution, demographic characteristics, motivations, or structural challenges associated with digital nomadism. Eligible sources included peer reviewed journal articles, scholarly book chapters, and policy reports published in English.

Given the relative scarcity of peer-reviewed literature addressing the spatial distribution of digital nomads, this study also included credible grey literature to provide current evidence where academic studies are limited. This inclusive strategy reflects the exploratory nature of scoping reviews and enables a broader mapping of available knowledge (Peters et al., 2020). Studies focusing solely on non-European regions or those discussing remote work without a mobility dimension were excluded.

The search process initially identified 180 records across the selected databases and supplementary sources. After removing 32 duplicate records, 148 studies remained for title and abstract screening. During this stage, 102 records were excluded because they did not meet the relevance criteria or did not address digital nomadism within Europe. The remaining 46 articles were subsequently assessed through full text review. Following detailed evaluation, 34 studies were excluded primarily because they lacked a mobility dimension or did not provide sufficient empirical or conceptual relevance to the European context. As a result, 12 studies met the inclusion criteria and were retained for the final synthesis, as illustrated in the PRISMA ScR flow diagram in figure 2 below.

Data extraction was conducted using a structured charting framework designed to capture key characteristics of each study, including authorship, publication year, research design, geographic focus, indicators of digital nomad prevalence, demographic characteristics, motivations, and identified challenges. The extracted data were then synthesised using a descriptive and thematic analytical approach that enabled the identification of recurring patterns, key themes, and gaps in the existing literature on digital nomadism in Europe.

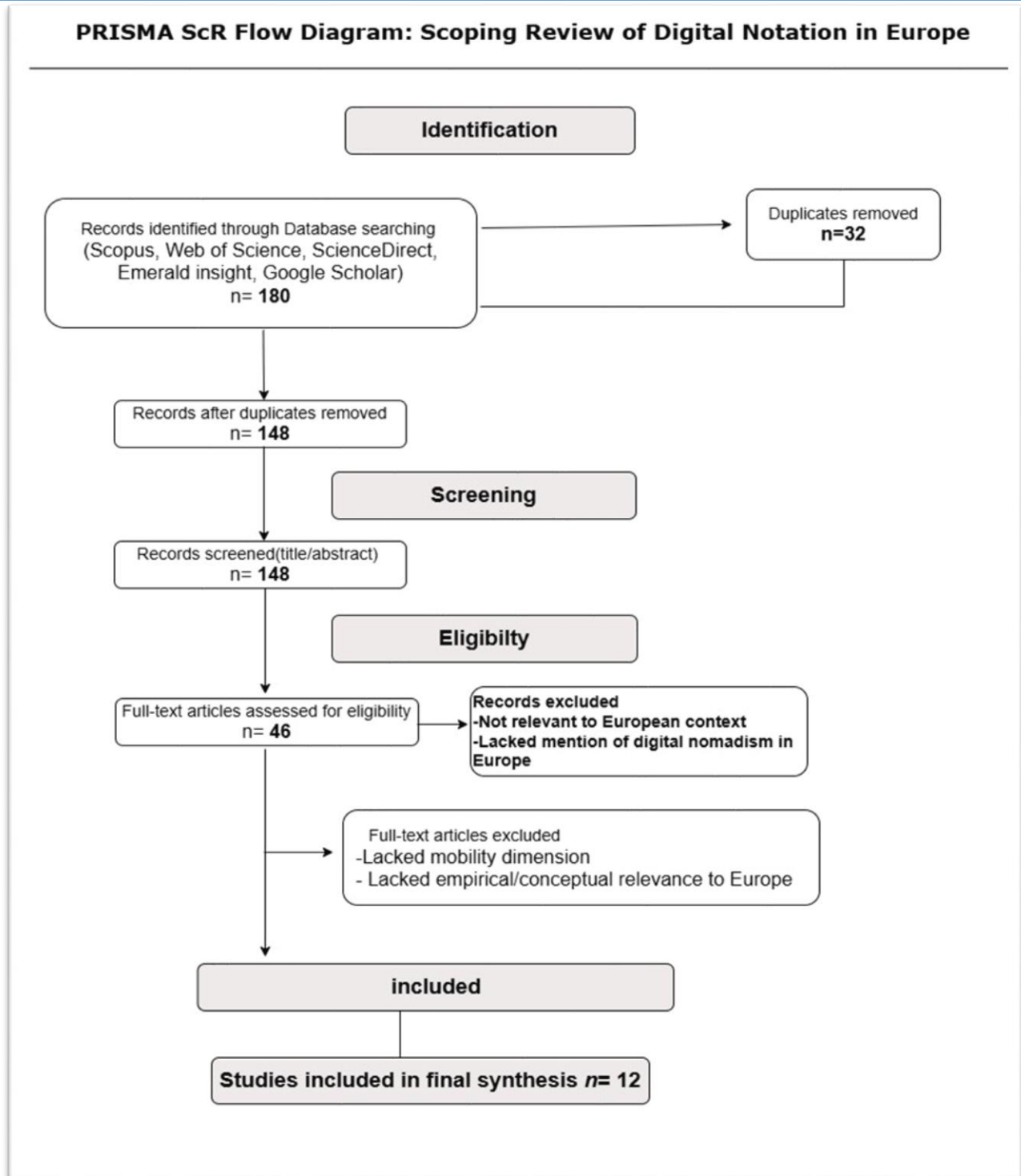


Figure 2: PRISMA-ScR flow diagram of the study selection process

#### 4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### 4.1 Characteristics of Included Studies

The 12 studies included in this scoping review varied in design, scope, and focus, encompassing empirical research, conceptual analyses, and policy briefs addressing digital nomadism across Europe (Cook, 2023; Bozzi, 2024). Several studies examined urban and economic impacts, while others explored coworking spaces, digital infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of digital nomads were reported in multiple sources, highlighting diversity in age, nationality, and occupational profiles (Baptista, 2024). Collectively, these studies provide comprehensive, regionally contextualized insights into motivations, mobility patterns, and socio-economic implications of digital nomadism in Europe.

#### 4.2 Demographic, Socio Economic Characteristics and Spatial Distribution

The findings demonstrate that digital nomadism in Europe has transitioned from a marginal lifestyle into a structurally embedded component of the contemporary labour market, reflecting its growing economic and social relevance (Miguel et al., 2025). This transformation is further reinforced by notable demographic shifts, as participation now extends beyond younger freelancers to include Millennials and Generation X individuals, with a median age ranging between 34 and 39 years (Amélie, 2025; MBO Partners, 2023).

Table 1 below shows that younger cohorts remain dominant, comprising 58 per cent (Gen Z, 21% and Millennial, 37% ) of the population, while the gradual increase in older participants indicates rising professional maturity, income stability, and long-term career integration within the digital nomad workforce (Krasteva, 2025; MBO Partners, 2023).

*Table 1: Share of Digital Nomads by Generation (Source: MBO Partners, 2023)*

| <b>Generation</b>   | <b>Born</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>2023</b> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Gen Z</b>        | 1997-2012   | 16%         | 21%         |
| <b>Millennials</b>  | 1981-1996   | 47%         | 37%         |
| <b>Gen X</b>        | 1965-1980   | 23%         | 27%         |
| <b>Baby boomers</b> | 1946-1964   | 13%         | 15%         |

In spatial terms, the distribution of digital nomads reveals a strong concentration in Southern and Eastern Europe, where affordability aligns with high quality of life, thereby enhancing destination attractiveness (Ade, 2025). Countries such as Malta, Spain and the Netherlands have emerged as leading destinations, while Portugal, particularly Lisbon and the Algarve, continues to function as a major hub due to its early policy support (Global Citizen Solutions, 2025; Indie Voyager, 2024). Additionally, proactive policy frameworks, including digital nomad visas introduced by Estonia and Croatia, have strengthened the region's competitiveness in attracting skilled remote workers, whereas emerging destinations such as Albania and Romania are gaining traction through cost advantages and flexible entry schemes (Alex Ledsom, 2025; Agyemang, 2024).

Despite these advancements, gender disparities persist, with men accounting for 56 per cent of digital nomads compared to 43 per cent women, indicating that full parity has yet to be achieved (MBO Partners, 2023). According to Baptista (2024), education level of Digital nomads is predominantly Bachelor's Degree (56%) while about 36% have master's degree with just 8% being high school graduate. Sectorally, participation remains diverse but is predominantly concentrated in information technology, creative industries, and knowledge-based services, highlighting the knowledge-intensive nature of digital nomadism (Krasteva, 2025).

#### **4.3 Motivations and Lifestyle Drivers**

The motivations and lifestyle drivers of digital nomads in Europe are largely shaped by the pursuit of autonomy, flexibility, and experiential living. Reichenberger (2018) emphasises that digital nomadism is strongly motivated by lifestyle aspirations, particularly the desire for freedom, authenticity, and self realisation. In comparison, Müller (2016) highlights autonomy, creativity, and the notion of “productive escape” from routine office environments as core drivers shaping the nomadic lifestyle. These perspectives collectively demonstrate that according to lifestyle migration theory, digital nomadism is not only an economic strategy but also a psychosocial response to conventional work structures.

Similarly, Cook (2023) differentiates between lifestyle-oriented nomads and economically motivated nomads. While the former prioritises cultural immersion, mobility, and personal fulfilment, the latter are driven more by cost efficiency and labour market flexibility. In contrast, Rosá (2024), focusing on European destinations such as Portugal, argues that favourable policy environments, strong digital infrastructure, and accessible coworking spaces significantly influence destination choice among digital nomads.

Furthermore, Christiansen et al. (2023) observe that digital nomads often seek destinations that combine affordable living costs, reliable internet connectivity, and vibrant social communities. Consequently, these lifestyle and infrastructural factors collectively shape Europe's attractiveness as a digital nomad destination, reinforcing the growing link between remote work, tourism mobility, and lifestyle-oriented migration.

#### **4.4 Role of Coworking Spaces and Digital Infrastructure**

The role of coworking spaces and digital infrastructure is widely recognised as a critical enabling factor for the sustainability of digital nomadism. According to Kirungi, Muhaise, & Ampumuza, (2025) digital nomads depend heavily on reliable technological infrastructure that allows them to perform professional activities while remaining geographically mobile. In this context, access to high-speed internet, digital communication platforms, and cloud-based work systems form the operational foundation that supports remote work across international destinations.

Christiansen et al. (2023) emphasise that coworking spaces perform an important role beyond providing physical workstations because they foster collaboration, professional networking, and

community building among geographically dispersed professionals. In comparison, Rosá (2024) focuses more strongly on the infrastructural dimension by arguing that stable internet connectivity, digital payment systems, and efficient digital services significantly influence the attractiveness of destinations for digital nomads. These infrastructural elements enable individuals to maintain productivity while navigating flexible lifestyles across different locations.

Similarly, Cook (2023) observes that the expansion of coworking hubs in major cities has contributed to the formation of remote work ecosystems that support freelancers, entrepreneurs, and remote employees. Consequently, the integration of coworking environments with robust digital infrastructure enhances both professional efficiency and social interaction among digital nomads. Therefore, these elements collectively strengthen the capacity of destinations, particularly within Europe, to attract and sustain the growing digital nomad workforce.

#### **4.5 Economic and Urban Implications**

Economic and urban implications represent an important dimension in understanding the growing presence of digital nomads within host destinations. Kirungi, Muhaise, & Ampumuza, (2025) stated that digital nomads constitute a distinct tourism and labour market segment whose mobility generates both economic opportunities and urban transformations in destination cities.

Meanwhile, Cook (2023) argues that digital nomads contribute to local economic development through sustained consumption patterns because they typically remain in destinations for extended periods while spending on accommodation, food services, leisure activities, and coworking facilities. In comparison, Mancinelli (2020) highlights that digital nomads participate actively in urban creative economies, particularly within cities that promote entrepreneurial ecosystems and knowledge-based industries. This suggests that the economic contribution of digital nomads extends beyond tourism expenditure to include participation in innovation networks and digital labour markets.

Similarly, Rosá (2024) emphasises that the presence of digital nomads can stimulate urban regeneration by increasing demand for flexible workspaces, technology services, and lifestyle infrastructure such as cafés and collaborative work environments. However, other scholars cited in the review note potential urban challenges associated with this trend. For instance, Christiansen et al. (2023) observe that increased demand for housing and urban amenities may contribute to rising living costs in popular destinations. Consequently, digital nomadism simultaneously creates economic dynamism while raising important considerations for sustainable urban planning and policy development.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

This scoping review reveals that digital nomadism has become an increasingly significant phenomenon within Europe, with its prevalence and geographical distribution shaped by both

infrastructural and lifestyle factors. The evidence indicates that urban centres offering reliable digital connectivity, flexible coworking spaces, and supportive policy frameworks attract a growing population of remote professionals seeking autonomy, mobility, and cultural engagement. Motivational drivers, as highlighted by Reichenberger (2018) and Müller (2016), encompass both lifestyle aspirations such as self-realisation and experiential living, and practical considerations including economic efficiency and career flexibility, demonstrating the multidimensional nature of this labour and tourism segment.

Demographically, digital nomads are diverse yet tend to cluster in regions that provide accessible cost structures, vibrant social communities, and comprehensive urban amenities. Comparative analyses of European destinations, including Portugal, Spain, and Germany, illustrate that regulatory environments, visa schemes, and digital ecosystems significantly influence mobility patterns and the attractiveness of host cities. Scholars such as Christiansen et al. (2023) and Rosá (2024) emphasise that coworking spaces and digital infrastructure not only sustain professional productivity but also facilitate social integration and collaborative networks among nomads, thereby reinforcing the appeal of these destinations. Theoretically, this review shows that digital nomadism in Europe is more encompassing than just lifestyle migration theory, labour mobility theory encapsulates their choices and preferences with notable socio-economic and urban implications.

Extended stays by digital nomads stimulate local economies through service consumption, engagement in creative industries, and entrepreneurial activity, while simultaneously posing challenges related to housing affordability, urban planning, and social integration. Overall, this synthesis highlights the need for strategic policy development, infrastructure investment, and urban management to balance the opportunities and pressures associated with digital nomadism, offering a foundation for future research and targeted interventions.

## **5.2 Implications for Policy and Future Research**

The review highlights several implications for policy and future research regarding digital nomadism in Europe. Policymakers should develop supportive regulatory frameworks, including streamlined visa schemes, taxation clarity, and labour protections, to attract and retain digital nomads while ensuring sustainable urban development. Investment in digital infrastructure, coworking spaces, and lifestyle amenities is essential to enhance destination competitiveness.

Future research should explore longitudinal impacts of digital nomadism on local economies, housing markets, and social integration, as well as variations across demographic groups and regions. Comparative studies of policy effectiveness can inform best practices for balancing economic benefits with urban sustainability.

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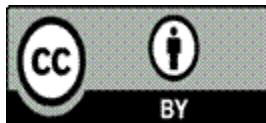
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