

# Ethics in Forced Migration Research

Workshop and Lecture

June 26, 2025, 3-7 pm, Munich, Germany

As a research field, forced migration is characterized by pronounced power dynamics and complex ethical questions. These include, among others, the risks associated with researching forced migration for all parties involved, the potential vulnerability of refugees' situations, as well as the ascriptions of vulnerability that can be paternalistic and lead to unjustifiable limitations on autonomy. Topics such as epistemic justice, partnership, and reciprocity in research are also actively debated.

Ethical guidelines play an important role in providing orientation in this context. In addition to international guidelines (e.g., Clark-Kazak 2017), the [“Ethical Guidelines of the German Network for Forced Migration Studies,”](#) published in 2024, mark the first contribution from the German-speaking world. These guidelines emphasize, for instance, the need to reflect on the ethical implications of research before a project begins and to examine any moral obligations that may arise from the project. To ensure a power-sensitive approach, research methods must be adapted to actively counter potential harm and exploitation. Research can go beyond a “do no harm” approach by foregrounding the question of how it can be designed to create added value, including for refugee communities. The perspective of conducting reciprocal research, which aims to make epistemic justice methodologically visible—if not realized—presents particular challenges. The German guidelines explicitly caution that incorporating people with lived experiences of forced migration into projects and designing research collaboratively “is not automatically more ethical and requires thorough reflection on the scope of collaboration and accompanying power imbalances, hierarchies, and decision-making processes” (Krause/Zanker/Fröhlich 2024: 8).

Researchers are not only encouraged to reflect on power dynamics and ethical principles but also to ensure that these are practically implemented in all phases of research. To minimize potential risks for refugees involved in the research, researchers must go beyond legal requirements for data protection and adopt strict security measures to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and the well-being of research participants. Given the diverse aspects that ethical reflexivity encompasses in this field of research, critically engaging with principles, trade-offs, and concrete proposals for implementation in research practice is essential.

The workshop “Research Ethics in Forced Migration Research” provides a space for such reflection and professional exchange. We invite activist and academic researchers to share experiences, explore projects, and discuss ethical aspects and developments in forced migration research together. The workshop combines interactive, open formats with a keynote lecture.

The workshop will take place on **June 26, 2025:**

- **3:00–5:00 PM:** Networking, short presentations, and discussions in a World Café format.
- **5:00–7:00 PM:** Lecture by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Krause (University of Münster): *“Navigating Ethical Frontiers: Ethical Risks, Gender Dynamics, and the Pursuit of Epistemic Justice”*.

**Accessible venue:** Evangelischer Handwerker-Verein, Mathildenstraße 4, 80336 Munich.

### **Short presentations:**

You can propose your own short presentation (5 min presentation followed by a discussion at a table in the World Café). If you would like to propose a short paper on research ethics aspects of your work in forced migration research, please submit a short abstract (max. 300 words) with your registration. We will provide space for 4-6 short presentations. Presentations can be given in either German or English.

Participation is free of charge, but places and the number of contributions for the interactive part are limited.

### **Meeting of the Network of Ethics Committees in the Social Sciences (neks):**

On the morning of June 27, 2025 (9:30-01:00 PM), a meeting of the Network of Ethics Committees in the Social Sciences (neks) (<http://neks.info>, website under construction) will also take place on the premises of the Evangelischer Handwerker-Verein. All persons interested in research ethics reviews in the social sciences are cordially invited to attend the networking meeting. The meeting will be held exclusively in German.

### **Registration (for workshop and/or neks meeting):**

By **April 15, 2025 via email to [workshop@soziologie.uni-muenchen.de](mailto:workshop@soziologie.uni-muenchen.de)**. Please write in the email:

- whether you want to participate in the workshop “Ethics in Forced Migration Research” (June 26, 2025),
- whether you want to submit an active contribution (please attach an abstract),
- whether you would like to participate in the neks meeting (June 27, 2025),
- at which email address we can contact you and, if applicable, at which institution or facility you are employed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us via the above email address.

The workshop is organized by the team of the Teaching and Research Unit for Qualitative Methods in Social Research at the Institute of Sociology, LMU Munich (Prof. Dr. Hella von Unger). Further information on the teaching and research unit can be found at:

<https://www.en.qualitative-sozialforschung.soziologie.uni-muenchen.de/index.html>