

ITFLOWS TRAINING WORKSHOP

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IT TOOLS AND METHODS
FOR MANAGING
MIGRATION FLOWS

Ethics Handbook for the interviewing team

The aim of this ethics handbook is to highlight the most relevant ethics issues that must be taken into account before conducting the interviews with migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers in ITFLOWS. This handbook also provides general ethical tips to address ethical concerns that may arise during the interviews. The ultimate goal is to ensure the ethical compliance of this research activity.

This handbook only contains basic information regarding some relevant ethical requirements previously identified in the context of ITFLOWS interviews. This means that you must be familiar with the content of the documents referenced in this handbook: Deliverable 2.1 (Section 5), Recruitment plan, Incidental Findings Policy, Gender Action Plan, Informed consent procedures and template and the Anonymisation techniques document.

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Ethics Handbook

Ethical principles governing the interview research activity

1. Integrity
2. Reliability
3. Honesty
4. Respect
5. Accountability

General ethical principles

- All research activities foreseen within the Project should be conducted in strict compliance with the **general principle of integrity**.
- In addition to the principle of integrity, the following principles must be applied: **reliability, honesty, respect and accountability**.

(See Deliverable 2.1, Section 5, p. 157)

Ethical principles governing the interviews

ITFLOWS researchers involved in conducting qualitative research activities should also adhere to specific ethical principles. These principles have been identified and translated into ethical guidelines to be implemented by ITFLOWS interviewing teams in order to ensure that ITFLOWS interviews are conducted ethically.

1. Autonomy
2. Doing no harm
3. Equity
4. Diversity
5. Competence
6. Voluntary participation
7. Confidentiality & privacy
8. Transparency & accountability

- **Autonomy:** You should ensure the right of people to make their own decisions concerning their lives and particularly their participation in the Project.
- **Doing no harm:** You should prioritise the dignity, safety and well-being of participants as well as that of all members of the team. Individual or collective actions that may increase racism, discrimination, the criminalisation of migration or retraumatise migrants, refugees and asylum seekers should be avoided.
- **Equity:** You should take proactive actions to minimise potential negative impacts that may occur due to unbalanced power relationships.
- **Diversity:** You should respect cultural, ethnic, gender and sexual orientation differences. Ethnocentric research perspectives and behaviour must be avoided.
- **Competence:** Adequate training should be provided to the interviewing team. Profiles with expertise and empirical background in the field of migration should be prioritised.
- **Voluntary participation:** You must obtain participants' informed consent before their involvement in the interviews.
- **Confidentiality and privacy:** Processing of personal data must be compliant with the European and national data protection legal framework.
- **Transparency and accountability:** You should present the interview in a clear and accurate manner, avoiding biased and misleading information that makes it excessively attractive for the participants.

(See Deliverable 2.1, Section 5, p. 160-161)

Ethics Handbook

Human participation

Ethical guidelines to conduct the interviews

- You should **comply with the Guidance note on Research of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants** of the EU Directorate-General for Research and Innovation.¹
- Do not create **unjustified expectations** in research participants about their future residence in the EU Member States, their status as asylum seekers or reward for their participation. Nevertheless, all research participants in the interviews will be provided with a small compensation with the aim of recognizing their time, effort and valuable participation.
- You should present the interview in an **unbiased manner** and free of misleading emphasis that makes it excessively appealing.
- Interviews must be conducted in a **comfortable and private setting** to favour the well-being of the research participant. Questions that could potentially cause distress, discomfort or fear should be carefully managed. If the described feelings are detected, the principles of autonomy and dignity should guide the actions to be taken by the interviewing team, e.g., to take a break or to avoid insisting on specific questions.
- Authorisations from national/local/reception centres authorities must be obtained before conducting the interviews.

(See Deliverable 2.1, Section 5, p. 162-164 and 'The roadmap of Human Rights and your Interview')

Recruitment plan: interviewing team

- NGOs will be responsible for ensuring the **adequate background and expertise** of the interviewing team. It is recommended to prioritise people with a refugee or migrant background, or from the same culture as the research participants, or with experience in communicating with migrants and refugees. The quality of translators is crucial to ensure fluid communication, fully informed consent, accurate and precise interpretations, and that research participants' voice is heard.
- **Under no circumstances external organisations will conduct interviews.** However, in case of necessity, NGOs can rely on their contact networks with other associations in search of support. If support from external organisations was needed, prior communication to the ITFLOWS Ethical Lead Partner (UAB) and its corresponding approval will be required to ensure ethical and legal compliance.
- You can resort to **trustworthy contacts** in the field, such as community leaders, to enable the recruitment of participants and to set fluid communication channels with them.
- Anyone involved in any way in the interviews must sign a **confidentiality agreement**.
- When the research participant is a woman, the presence of **female interviewers** is strongly recommended. Nevertheless, you must take into consideration the opinion and preferences of the research participant.
- **Public health directions** will be followed at all times when conducting interviews. This may imply avoiding quarantine areas or any place that could entail any sort of risk for the interviewing teams and research participants. All interviews will be conducted following all **sanitary measures** to protect interviewing teams' and research participants' health. Particular emphasis will be placed on COVID-19 given the current global pandemic.
- Interviewing teams will fully adhere to the **internal guidelines and best-practices codes** of their organisations.

(See Recruitment plan)

¹ European Commission (2020). Guidance Note – Research on Refugees, Asylum Seekers & Migrants. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/hi/guide_research-refugees-migrants_en.pdf

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Human participation

Recruitment plan: research participants

- **No minors will be interviewed.** You will rely on the personal documentation of the candidates (for example, C3 for asylum seekers in Italy) or any other reliable mean to assure the legal age of the research participants. You can resort to trustworthy contacts in the field and community leaders to verify the age of the research participants. In doubtful cases in which the verification of the age is impossible, the candidate will necessarily be excluded from participation in the interview.
- People who are already identified as **especially vulnerable groups** will also be automatically excluded from participation in the interview. Especially vulnerable people includes people with evident health concerns and psychological traumas, as well as victims of human trafficking and genital mutilation, among others. See the Incidental Findings Policy (see below), which establishes action protocols for you to react to unexpected findings of this type. (See [Incidental Findings Policy](#))
- Ensure **gender representativeness** in the interview sample. Gender parity will be guaranteed by ensuring a proportion of 1 woman per every three or four men. The objective is to ensure a proportion as close as possible to 1/3. (See [Gender Action Plan](#))
- Participation must be **voluntary** and based on **free and informed consent**. You will inform research participants about the nature of the project and the interview, and about their rights. They will be able to withdraw their consent at any time or to momentarily interrupt the interview without any detriment. (See [Informed consent procedures and template](#))
- Personal data from interviews will be **anonymised**. (See [Anonymisation techniques document](#))
- Research participants in the interviews will be provided with a **small compensation**. In this regard, an acknowledgement of receipt proving the transmission of the small compensation must be signed. Each NGO partner in charge of conducting the interviews must decide and specify the type of compensation (monetary compensation, voucher or some gift) that will be offered to all research participants. This compensation will be subject to the approval of the Ethics Lead Partner (UAB). **As a general rule monetary compensation is highly discouraged.** In this respect, if one of the NGOs decides to consider monetary compensation, a specific request in this respect - justifying the suitability of this compensation - must be sent to the Ethics Lead Partner of the project (UAB). This request will be subject to the specific approval of the Independent Ethics Board (IEB) and the Data Protection Advisor (DPA).

(See [Recruitment plan](#))

Incidental findings policy

- Incidental Findings refer to risks that may emerge in any research activity involving human participants, which are unrelated to the purpose of the research activity. In the context of the interviews, incidental findings may comprise indications of criminal activity and human rights violations. NGOs have evaluated **sexual and gender-based violence and trafficking in human beings** as **highly likely** to be incidental findings in the context of the interviews to be conducted in ITFLOWS.
- You must be familiarised with the **ITFLOWS Incidental Findings Policy** and strictly follow the **applicable national referral system**.
- You must **respect the autonomy of the research participant** to freely decide on the next steps to take, if any.
- You must comply with the ethical principles that govern the Incidental Findings Policy and its procedure: i) **protection of migrant's best interests**; ii) **do no harm**; iii) **zero-tolerance approach**; iv) **procedural fairness: accountability and transparency**; v) **fair benefit-sharing**; and, vi) **shared responsibility**.

(See [Incidental Findings Policy](#))

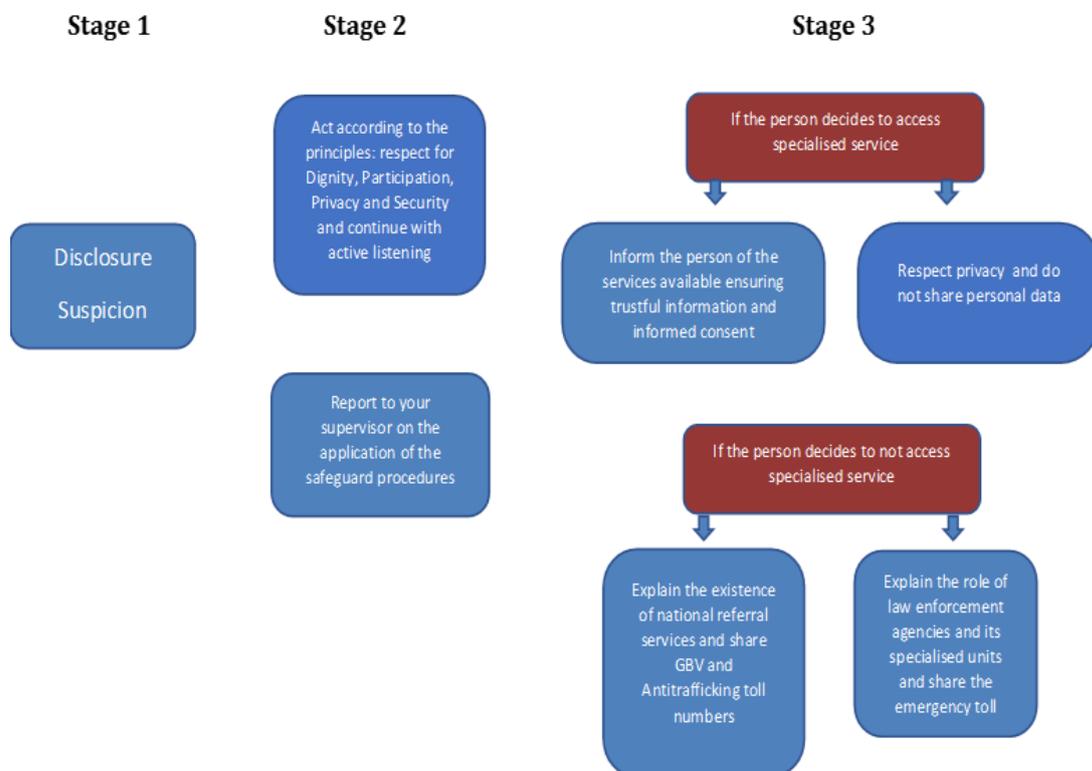
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Incidental findings policy: procedure

- You must follow the **ITFLOWS Incidental Findings Procedure**:

- **Stage 1:** You must **immediately report any disclosure or suspicion** of an incidental finding, or at least within the first 24 hours to the line manager. Such information can be provided verbally or in writing.
- **Stage 2:** You will comply with the principles of respect **for dignity, participation, privacy and security** and continue with **active listening**. Safeguarding procedures must be applied and the action/decision to be taken in protecting the person is achieved within the team, considering the specific circumstances of the research participant and the **referral system of each country** where the interview is taking place.
- **Stage 3:** You will provide **detailed information** to the research participant on the **specific services available** in the territory (following the applicable national referral system) and will maintain open communication with the research participant. Additionally, the **relevant phone numbers** within the applicable National Referral System must be provided to the research participant. **As a general rule**, you must **respect the autonomy of the research participant** to freely decide on the next steps to take, if any. The purpose of this approach is to avoid putting the research participant in danger and allow them to exercise their personal judgement as to the best course of action. Nevertheless, if the interviewing team considers that the **research participant is in concrete danger**, emergency services will be contacted to ensure their immediate protection and wellbeing.



(See Incidental Findings Policy)

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Protection of personal data

Anonymisation techniques to be applied to interviews

- NGOs and interviewing teams must **respect and preserve** the **anonymity** of all research participants.
- Interviewing teams will record the **audio** of the interviews **to facilitate its transcription**, and for this sole purpose.
- The recording will be **deleted as soon as the transcript is finished**, and in any case, no later than **24 hours** after the transcription.
- The transcript of the interview will not contain research participants' **direct identifiers**, such as names. Additionally, **other types of personal data** that clearly enables identification must be erased.
- Transcribers will receive training on what types of data must be erased.
- Interviews will be associated with a **unique code** and **indirect markers** (date, place, gender, age group, educational/professional background, and country of origin), whose combination must not lead to the identification of the participant.
- Informed consent forms gathered from research participants will in no way be associated with the interview's unique code and will be kept on the NGOs premises in an **encrypted** form.
- NGOs will evaluate if any of these interview markers combined with the information disclosed during the interview itself can lead to the identification of the research participant. In such a case, interview markers will be **generalised**.
- These anonymised transcripts will be safely stored on the NGOs premises using **encryption**, will not be shared with any third party, and will be destroyed at the end of the project. The **anonymised transcripts** will only be shared with IAI and UAB in a format that is **encrypted**. NGOs must also send, in an **encrypted** way, the **table compiling all interviews** with the corresponding indirect markers.

(See Anonymisation techniques document)

Two-step incidental findings transcription procedure (I)

This general procedure applies to all interviews in which information regarding an incidental finding emerges. The purpose of this procedure is to establish clear guidelines for NGOs, interviewers and the partners involved in the analysis of the interview transcripts on **how to proceed when information regarding an incidental finding is disclosed during the interviews**.

This procedure does not revolve around the Incidental Findings Policy but **whether information disclosed during the interview related to an incidental finding should be included in or removed from the transcript**, and in case of including it how to proceed from an ethical and data protection perspective. The procedure consists of two steps.

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Protection of personal data

Two-step incidental findings transcription procedure (II)

Step 1: Determining whether the information about the incidental finding is relevant for analysis purposes within ITFLOWS. This step is divided into two stages:

1. Before the transcription of the interview, you must produce a **general summary** that should not contain any personal data and must send it to IAI and UAB. Under no circumstances will the original transcript be sent to IAI and UAB.

The following recommendations must be observed:

- a) All interviewers must be properly trained in:
 - Ethics Handbook for the interviewing team and the ethical documents referred to in the handbook.
 - The ITFLOWS Incidental Finding Policy designed for the interviews.
 - The applicable referral system to deal with incidental findings in the country where interviews are conducted.
 - The anonymisation procedure to ensure that the general summary (if an incidental finding emerges) and the transcript does not contain personal data.
 - b) You must draw up the general summary **following the anonymisation procedure** in place to minimise the risk of including personal data.
 - c) You must submit jointly with the general summary **your personal opinion** on the relevance/irrelevance of the information related to an incidental finding disclosed during the interview.
2. Based on the general summary, **IAI and UAB will determine the relevance/irrelevance** of the information and will inform the NGO and the interviewer about their decision.

IAI and UAB assessment on the relevance of such information should be properly documented. The evaluation must take into consideration the opinion of the interviewer that conducted the interview. This decision-making process should be performed following a cautionary approach. This approach entails that if the relevance of the disclosed information cannot be determined, the information should be deemed irrelevant and should thus not be included in the transcript.

In case there is no unanimous assessment on the significance of the information disclosed in terms of relevance and necessity for the research purpose of the interviews: IAI decision, as leader of this task, will prevail. Dissenting opinions and the rationale behind the final decision must also be properly documented.

If the “do no harm” ethical principle is compromised in a particular case, the relevance/irrelevance check does not longer apply, and the information should not be included in the transcript.

Step 2: There are two possible outcomes:

1. If IAI and UAB consider that the information is **relevant** → The two-step anonymisation approach applicable to all transcripts will be followed, i.e., you must anonymise the information related to the incidental finding, and IAI/UAB will double-check it.
2. If the information is deemed **irrelevant** → You should not include this information in the transcript.

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Gender

Gender policy

ITFLOWS is committed to considering gender and sexuality as a major priority in project design, methodology, analysis, and dissemination of outputs, acknowledging that gender and sexuality are central to an intersectional analysis of migration flows. In addition, gender equality and balance among its participants forms part of this commitment.

- **Intersectionality:** Pursue an intersectional approach to migration research and analysis in order to understand the manner in which the EU migration and asylum systems create dynamics of in- and exclusions along lines of gender, race, ethnicity, social group, or sexuality – taking into consideration colonial legacies.
- **Gender-based violence and gender stereotyping:** Remain sensitive to migrants' experiences with gender-based and sexual violence (trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM), rape or sexual assault, forced marriages etc.) and how gender stereotyping contributes to the marginalisation and stigmatising of women, girls as well as men, boys and LGBTQI+ persons.
- **Gender discrimination within the EU:** Be aware of gender and sexuality discrimination within the EU in the area of migration policies, laws, employment, education, health and with respect to COVID-19.
- **Gender and Technology:** Recognise that technology can intensify gender inequalities because women and girls may have less access to technological literacy due to socioeconomic disadvantages. The development of the EMT must be taken to actively mitigate bias, ensuring that (a) gender equality is considered a key principle in the research, (b) gender is included as a variable in the study design, and (c) data are presented in disaggregated fashion at all levels of intersectional analysis.

Useful resources:

- OECD: Addressing Emerging Human Trafficking Trends and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://www.osce.org/odihr/human-trafficking-COVID-19-report>
- Key types of sexual and gender violence from UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence>
- Council of Europe Fact Sheet, Protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls. <https://edoc.coe.int/en/refugees/8053-protecting-the-rights-of-migrant-refugee-and-asylum-seeking-women-and-girls.html>

(See Gender Action Plan)