MIRROR

Migration-Related Risks caused by misconceptions of Opportunities and Requirements

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Disclaimer

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Executive summary

This deliverable aims to present and discuss the ethical ground rules within the work package, the only work package within the MIRROR project that directly talks to and deliberates with irregular migrants. In particular, the following pages will present ethical considerations and a self-assessment concerning the fieldwork with irregular migrants expected to take place within the next year.

Among others, we discuss the concept of "Do No Harm" and underscore that at all times during fieldwork, the physical and psychological safety of research participants has to be our highest priority. We discuss the rights of participants and how they have to be safeguarded, particularly when it comes to confidentiality. A key emphasis is then put on the informed consent and its process character. Informed consent will not always be in written form alone, but will have to be negotiated, discussed, and re-discussed at different stages of the fieldwork with irregular migrants. We also discuss the importance of respect, reciprocity, and equity in the interaction with research participants, which leads to considerations of when and how (former) irregular migrants may be involved in the research process. This safeguards the interests of irregular migrants towards external interests from researchers. Of course, the competence of researchers is argued to be a prerequisite of any type of fieldwork but even more so of fieldwork with vulnerable groups of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. Finally, we also go into detail about more organizational decisions such as the type of remuneration for research participants, the guiding principles for interview location selection, as well as the imperative of data protection and data security.

The interview guide itself has been attached as an Annex to this document. The informed consent form, which will be used, has been submitted as deliverable D12.1 in all languages relevant for our fieldwork.

1   Introduction

The study at hand takes place within the broader scope of the EU-funded project "Migration-Related Risks caused by misconceptions of Opportunities and Requirements" (MIRROR). MIRROR deals, among other things, with (irregular) migrants' perceptions of the EU and the connection of these perceptions with media use and media content.

While most parts of MIRROR are based on an external view into migration processes, using quantitative data from traditional and social media, the study at hand, in particular, sheds light on the perspective of irregular migrants. The role of information, communication, and the media during the process of irregular migration, as well as communication-induced perceptions and misperceptions of the migration process and potential destination countries, are the centerpiece of our research interest. The applied research methods are qualitative semi-structured individual and group interviews with irregular migrants and on-site experts on the above-mentioned topics.

Thereby, we aim at allowing irregular migrants to voice their own views on their media use, recount their media routines in their own words, describe its impact on their migration decisions and perceptions of potential destination countries. The relevance of our fieldwork lies, on the one hand, in its inclusion of the research "subjects" of MIRROR's project framework, expanding its scope from "research *on* irregular migrants" to "research *with* irregular migrants." On the other hand, we pursue the goal that our results – at least to some extent – will lead to an improvement of the situation of the studied group. Thereby we pursue the primary goal to enable irregular migrants to make informed migration decisions, to avoid arriving in Europe unprepared or misinformed – according to scholars, unfulfilled expectations and social pressure can lead to or increase already existing psychological suffering (Schapendonk & van Moppes 2007, p. 2). These project aims can only be achieved by adhering to the highest possible standards when conducting the fieldwork (see also ALLEA 2017), as any other behavior may risk not only the data quality but may endanger the participants.

As irregular migrants, especially those who are still on the move, are in highly vulnerable situations, we, as researchers, have to be mindful and need to address this group with due sensitivity. To that end, the document at hand discusses particularly relevant literature in the field, reflects on ethical considerations and discloses our concrete approach for the semi-structured interviews with experts and irregular migrants along frequented migration routes, including transit countries outside the EU as well as within EU-borders, and potential European destination countries. Our considerations are furthermore based on the proposed ethics self-assessments for research on refugees, asylum seekers and migrants by the European Commission (European Commission 2013) and were aligned to the Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice of the Refugee Studies Centre (2007), as well as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, see General Data Protection Regulation 2016).

2   The concept of "Do No Harm" and beyond

In our research, we focus on adult irregular migrants. In line with Jordan & Düvell (2002) and the International Organization of Migration (IOM), we define an irregular migrant as someone who crosses borders without proper authority. By this rather broad definition, the investigated group includes refugees, people who may have experienced smuggling or trafficking, but also migrants who are not in the process of forced migration. In general, however, all members of this diverse group are legally in limbo and face great uncertainty regarding their future.

Research with irregular migrants, especially with those still in the process of migration, therefore, calls for special attentiveness and sensitivity, as this group is characterized by a particularly high vulnerability. They may have been confronted with traumatic incidents, inhuman treatment, or deprivation of human rights. Vulnerability generally refers to being exposed to a particularly high risk of facing physical or emotional harm and indicates "inadequate means or ability to protect oneself from external influence" (Düvell et al. 2010, p. 232). Taking this notion of vulnerability as a basis, the utmost imperative when conducting research with irregular migrants must be not to worsen their situation further.

In fact, previous research in refugee centers has shown that interviewees are not only in potential danger if certain personal interview data may become public (i.e., breach of anonymity; Jacobsen & Landau 2003, p. 193). Instead, interviewees may oftentimes also fear consequences from government actors, military, or camp authorities – solely based on their decision to participate in the interviews or actually when declining participation (Pittaway & Bartolomei 2013, p. 155).

This line of argument is not aiming at depicting refugees and irregular migrants more generally as "helpless victims." However, researchers working with vulnerable groups have to bear in mind that research participation can – under certain circumstances – worsen the situation of the interviewees, as they may be exposed to additional stress factors. Research with irregular migrants is therefore only justified and ethical if it is essential to answer a research question and if it is carried out by researchers who have acquired the required know-how and training (Krause 2017, p. 3-4). In this context, time and again, researchers dealing with ethical considerations in migration research have referred to Turton's (1996) even more critical stance on this matter:

> *I cannot see any justification for conducting research into situations of extreme human suffering if one does not have the alleviation of suffering as an explicit objective of one's research. For the academic, this means attempting to influence the behaviour and thinking of policy-makers and practitioners so that their interventions are more likely to improve than worsen the situation of those whom they wish to help (Turton 1996, p. 96).*

While Turton emphasizes that one's research approach should actually go beyond the notion of doing no further harm, Krause (2017, p. 5) points out, that the concept of "Do No Harm" has served as "part of the ethical code of conduct and a golden rule for field research which scholars widely agree on." Nevertheless, researchers have criticized the concept for its lack of definitions and applicable approaches, rendering it a mere "guiding ideal or desirable mantra" (Krause 2017, p. 6).

To counteract this vagueness, Krause (2017) introduced Anderson's (1999) framework of "Do No Harm" analysis (which was originally designed for the planning, implementation, and monitoring of aid programs) to the field research context. The framework provides a systematic way to evaluate the research design, the context, and the participating population as well as potential tensions and benefits arising from the fieldwork. Guided by the questions why, where, what, when, with whom, by whom and how, the objective, context, location, research question, time and timeframe, population and participants, research team and methods are assessed not only prior to the fieldwork but also throughout it (for example, when unforeseen events influence fieldwork).

In the course of a "Do No Harm" analysis, dividing and connecting factors (e.g., regarding values, interests, and attitudes as well as effects) are also evaluated, leading to a more holistic approach and reflection of the fieldwork. Although the framework for a "Do No Harm" analysis does not guarantee the elimination and prevention of all

risks and possible hazards, "it facilitates structured reflection processes and contributes to wide understandings, not only of difficult settings influencing research but also of harm that may unintentionally be triggered by research(ers)" (Krause 2017, p. 7).

We, therefore, aim to conduct a "Do No Harm" analysis, as presented above, throughout the entire process of the fieldwork, to provide an evaluation of the specific situation and particular vulnerabilities occurring in each interview location. Concerning the specific vulnerability of the group, which may have been confronted with human rights violations and ill-treatment, we aim to avoid exposing them to further stress through our interviews.

As our questions focus on participants' media routines and perceptions of potential destination countries, we hope that our topic of research will not by itself burden them with reliving difficult experiences. However, even with such a seemingly harmless research topic, we, as researchers, must always be prepared and consider that for some participants, even the topic of media use may also have some problematic or even traumatic facets. Interviewers will be trained in identifying such instances early-on and will be advised to pause or terminate the interview immediately. The "Do No Harm" analysis mentioned above is also intended to evaluate these kinds of risks.

To further ensure that the questions are phrased in a way that does not expose participants to stress, the interview guide was evaluated and discussed with former irregular migrants, to whom the research team already has a trusting relationship. In this way, the perspective of irregular migrants is already considered in the first steps of the research process.

In addition, it is our priority to ensure that the interviews are conducted in a safe setting so that participants are not exposed to increased risks. This means that the interviews will be carried out in a place where the participants feel safe and where confidentiality is guaranteed. Especially with regards to the intended group interviews, we will assess very carefully, if the necessary confidentiality can be provided. Participants will always be enabled to decide on their own if they rather like to talk alone with the interviewer or if they would like to be part of a group interview. Furthermore, participants will be informed about the composition of the respective group in detail and are given the option to suggest further participants to take part in the group interview. Note that there will be no mixed-gender interview groups if not explicitly requested so by all participants of a respective group. Moreover, interviews with women participants will be conducted by women interlocutors whenever possible.

3   Rights of participants

Concerning the rights of vulnerable research participants, several researchers highlight their relation to universal human rights. Defining research participants first and foremost as holders of general human rights has proven to be a useful approach, especially for groups that may already have been confronted with deprivation of fundamental rights. This emphasizes that research participants should never be seen as mere research objects, but, instead, as subjects with rights and an agency (Krause 2017, p. 8); irrespective of their role in the specific research project.

Even though the concrete legal claims of research participants depend on national laws of the country in which the fieldwork takes place, some fundamental rights have to be ensured throughout the fieldwork. This includes, for example, the right that **participation must be voluntary and that participants consistently have the right to withdraw their participation** (Krause 2017, p. 8). In this context, Clark-Kazak (2017) refers to the *right to Self-Determination*, the Refugee Studies Centre (2007) refers to the principle of *avoiding undue intrusion*. The basic premise here is that **the will of the participants must prevail over any research interests**. Participants always have the right to make their own decisions, and they should have sufficient support and information to make informed decisions. For this reason, the participants must always be provided with information about the respective research project, its sponsors, and all involved interests. Furthermore, the presentation of the participants should be determined by their own wishes, and their dignity always needs to be respected (Clark-Kazak 2017, p. 12).

Regarding **participants' rights to confidentiality and privacy**, researchers have to make sure that no information referring to specific personal characteristics that may compromise anonymity is disclosed. It should be carefully evaluated what type of (personal) information needs to be recorded in the first place (if any at all). So as not to raise false hopes, we will, furthermore, explain to participants before they may consent to participate in our interviews that interview participation is completely detached from any legal asylum procedures in the future and will, therefore, neither have a positive nor negative impact on such processes.

During as well as after fieldwork, we will take appropriate measures to safeguard secure data storage have to be a primary objective (see Section 9). In line with that, a confidentiality agreement has to be signed by every person involved in the research process, including potential interpreters or other highly involved intermediaries. In addition to ensuring privacy concerning data, the right to privacy in relation to space must also be respected at all times. For example, at no point may researchers invade the property of participants uninvited (Refugee Studies Centre 2007, p. 166).

In case that research participants share information on human rights violations (including information on human and sexual trafficking, domestic violence, forced marriage, female genital mutilations, trading of human organs, child pornography, and related issues) or illegal activity that goes beyond the criminalization of irregular migration with us, we will offer confidential mediation to competent authorities or aid organisations if the participant should wish so; in line with the "Do No Harm" approach.

4   Informed consent

As mentioned before, certain information, including, for example, funding bodies, research methods, and publication plans, must be provided to participants prior to their involvement so that they are enabled to give their consent to participate in the research knowingly and voluntarily. The practice of informed consent is usually done in written or oral form and has been a common and generally accepted practice in the social sciences for many years (Düvell et al. 2010, p. 234; Krause 2017, p. 9-10). However, informed consent alone should not be mistaken for a guarantee that research is conducted to high ethical and moral standards (Krause 2017, p. 10). The underlying assumption of informed consent is "that participants are autonomous, understand the implications of giving consent and are in relatively equal positions of power with researchers" (Mackenzie et al. 2007, p. 302).

Especially in the context of research with irregular migrants in reception and refugee centers, informed consent may be difficult to guarantee, as some interview partners may be illiterate and not able to read the relevant forms; others may misinterpret their meaning. If asylum seekers are not familiar with research procedures, they may even associate interviews with their legal asylum procedure, in which the meaning of "wrong" and "right answers" comes with harsh consequences (Krause 2017, p. 10). Furthermore, researchers have experienced that people in precarious camp situations are sometimes so desperately struggling for any form of help that they seem to agree to the participation requests in the hope to receive any form of assistance (Hugman et al. 2011, p. 1278).

One way to overcome the challenges in acquiring traditional forms of informed consent is *process consent* (Hugman et al. 2011, p. 1280; Lahman et al. 2011, p. 316) or *iterative consent* (Mackenzie et al. 2007, p. 306). In line with these concepts, the guidelines of the Refugee Studies Centre also define consent as a process that may occasionally require renegotiations (Refugee Studies Centre 2007, p. 165).

Process consent is characterized by group discussions and meetings, in which the implications of research participation are discussed in depth. Due to its process-oriented character, individuals can withdraw their consent at any time. Researchers can thus ensure that participants still feel comfortable with their decision to participate also at a later point in time (Hugman et al. 2011, p. 1280; Lahman et al. 2011, p. 316).

Going one step further, the idea of iterative consent also "enables the establishment of ethical relationships between researchers and participants that are responsive to the needs, concerns, and values of participants" (Mackenzie et al. 2007, p. 306). Through joint discussions throughout the entire research process, it can be ensured that any adaptations to the research objectives will continue to be in the interest of the participants

(Mackenzie et al. 2007, p. 306-308). Krause (2017) refers to Mackenzie's iterative consent as a relational approach, stating that the nature of an oral agreement allows for deeper conversations and protects the identity of the participants, as the names were neither listed nor stored (Krause 2017, p. 11).

We, as researchers, acknowledge that informed consent should always have a certain process character, and participants should always be able to withdraw their consent. We will, therefore, discuss our research interest, our funding partners, possible research outcomes, and its potential impacts with the participants in detail and, above all, discuss the meaning of their consent and its revocability. Regarding the specific form of the declaration of consent, we will always comply with the GDPR and the respective national laws. In general, whenever possible, we will seek to obtain written consent in combination with an open discussion on the meaning of consent and revocability. If participants cannot read and write, we will, if permitted by national law, ask to obtain consent orally and keep a record of it to demonstrate consent as set out in the GDPR (see also European Data Protection Supervisor, 2020).

5   Reciprocity & equity

In its 2007 guidelines, the Refugee Studies Centre lists the principle of "protecting research participants and **honouring trust**" as the first responsibility towards research participants (Research Studies Center 2007, p. 164). Building a trusting atmosphere and relation with research participants should, therefore, be seen as a researcher's obligation (Krause 2017, p. 12).

Furthermore, researchers should strive for a **respectful relationship** with participants. In the context of field research, respect also particularly underlines the limits of research and the avoidance of inappropriate intrusion into respondents' personal space. For example, it is vital that too personal questions are being avoided, and respondents are given the opportunity to decide for themselves how openly they are willing to answer proposed questions (Krause 2017, p. 13).

Mackenzie and colleagues (2007) furthermore extend the principle of mutual respect between researchers and participants to the idea of **reciprocity**. In a reciprocal relationship with interviewees, their autonomy and capacities should be promoted (Mackenzie et al. 2007, p. 301). Reciprocity counteracts the risk of further enhancing strong hierarchies between researchers and participants and follows the basic notion that both researchers, as well as participants, should derive benefit from the fieldwork (Krause 2017, p. 15).

The benefit for respondents is, however, not always immediate and depends on the specific approach of the researchers and the aim of the research. In our research project, too, the concrete benefit for the group of participants, for irregular migrants, will not be directly tangible. Nevertheless, we would like to point out that, in the long term, the results of the MIRROR project are also planned to benefit the group of irregular migrants. MIRROR is designed to provide those involved in shaping EU migration policies with a better insight into irregular migrants' perceptions of Europe so that they can better tailor their information campaigns to their target groups. In this sense, MIRROR also aims to ensure that future irregular migrants are enabled to make better-informed migration decisions and do not arrive in Europe misinformed or unprepared.

Not referring to the term reciprocity, but introducing **equity** as one of the guiding principles, Clark-Kazak (2017, p. 12) emphasizes that research relations should be as equal as possible, attention should be paid to power dynamics and risks of abuse of power should be averted. In this respect, reference is made in particular to the **sampling of participants**. Every individuum should have the same opportunities to express their perspectives within the research project regardless of gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture, or ethnicity. Several researchers have pointed out that the sampling of research participants is often problematic in this context (Jacobsen & Landau 2003, p. 194).

In fact, it is usually difficult to gain full access to the target group of research in the context of migration. Often researchers are dependent on speaking with those who volunteer; in other cases, contact with community leaders is sought (Jacobsen & Landau 2003, p. 194-196; Mackenzie et al. 2007, p. 303). However, such approaches usually

give those already holding more power the opportunity to express their point of view, while other members of the subgroup remain silent. In this context, Mackenzie and colleagues (2007, p. 304) refer to the following quote of an interviewee in Thailand: "They come in and just talk to the leaders and their wives—they never hear what it is really like in the camps." While it is not possible to completely circumvent this problem and not feasible to talk to all members of a community, researchers should be aware of the central role of selecting interviewees and approach this task with the necessary care and sensitivity (Krause 2017, p. 9).

The selection of participants in the study at hand will vary depending on the concrete settings at the interview locations. We will always seek to take the most appropriate way to approach potential interviewees. In general, interviewees will be selected through an open multilingual call in each reception center. However, we are aware that, through this approach, it is not ensured that all inhabitants of the center have the same chance to voice their perspectives, especially those with less power might remain silent. The research team will, however, reflect on these issues not only during the fieldwork but also during the analysis of the data. Nevertheless, in line with our research interest, we want to particularly take into account the perspective of irregular women migrants and aim to include many of them in our sample.

Furthermore, by clearly subordinating our research interests to the interests of our research participants, we aim at establishing a relationship that is characterized by equity and respect. To gain the trust of participants, we want to disclose all relevant information regarding our research and always want to provide participants with enough time to discuss the research aim and their participation. After all, we want to give them the time and attention to tell their stories without putting them under pressure or stress.

6   Participants' involvement in research / Research with irregular migrants

Following the Refugee Studies Centre's ethical guidelines (2007, p. 167), research participants should be involved in the research process, from its planning to its execution, as much as possible. The involvement of irregular migrants and refugees in research processes centers around questions of power and representativeness. By considering these questions, a duality between the research *of* and research *with* vulnerable groups or between speaking *about* and speaking *for* vulnerable groups emerges (Krause 2017, p. 19). On this subject, Maillet and colleagues (2017, p. 934) warn that if the community under research is not regularly involved in research processes, research participants are under the risk of being objectified and dehumanized. Consequently, Maillet et al. (2017) conducted their research under the premise that the voices of migrants and refugees are particularly valuable when researching and trying to understand processes related to migration.

Although participatory approaches represent an option, to tackle "some of the ethical issues that are raised in research involving marginalized and disenfranchised groups" (Block et al. 2012, p. 72), power asymmetries cannot be completely eliminated. Even so, these approaches allow at least to recognize differences in power and hierarchies and subsequently to dismantle them more easily. The research involvement of irregular migrants can be carried out at different stages and already begins by giving people a voice and making room for their perspectives and stories in the research. In addition, there is the possibility of involving (former) irregular migrants in the research process (Krause 2017, p. 20).

In addition, the academic literature suggests the involvement of research participants in the research process or recruitment of research assistants from the same ethical or cultural background. This approach can have a vital effect on facilitating relationships across different cultures, can help in terms of communication with participants, and alleviate hierarchical tendencies and power distance between interviewers and interviewees (Düvell et al. 2010, p. 234). Thereby this strategy also has the potential to increase the reliability and validity of the data (Jacobsen & Landau 2003, p. 193).

Nevertheless, such a strategy needs to be applied with a certain amount of sensitivity and caution. On the one hand, it is essential to ensure sufficient compatibility between the language of the research assistant and that of the migrants or refugees, and, on the other hand, it is crucial to ensure that – if the research assistant comes from

the same region or country as the respondents – there are no lines of conflict between the assistant and the participants (Jacobsen & Landau 2003, p. 193).

Due to the many advantages for the participants as well as the research team, we want to involve (former) irregular migrants into the research process. As outlined below, this specifically refers to the interview process, but is not limited to it. However, we are aware that we cannot formally employ or pay people who are currently living in the centers and do not have legal status. Nevertheless, we see great added value in including in our research people who have themselves fled or migrated to Europe not too long ago. Therefore, we, for example, already discussed our interview guide with a former irregular migrant on its context applicability and social acceptability. Furthermore, if there are contact persons, translators, or even persons with experience in the field of social sciences at the interview locations, we would be happy to discuss our research with them. In these cases, as mentioned above, we cannot offer any remuneration, but we will try to find a material return in the form of small gifts. Finally, we are planning on also discussing our analysis and results with former irregular migrants on a regular basis. However, whenever involving (former) irregular migrants in the research process, data protection and anonymity of participants will always have the utmost priority. We will, furthermore, take great care to ensure that this does not lead to additional conflicts or difficulties for the participants. Finally, whoever will be involved in the research process, will additionally have to sign a confidentiality agreement.

7   Competence of researchers as a prerequisite

As described in Clark-Kazak's (2017) paper on ethical considerations, competence should also be listed as one of the guiding principles of research with refugees and irregular migrants. Therefore, it is our duty, as researchers, to act competently – not only in regards to the **implementation of adequate research methods** but also when it comes to **handling the needs and requests of research participants**. Of course, researchers, research assistants, and interpreters need to have sufficient training and supervision before going into the field (Clark-Kazak 2017, p.12; Krause 2017, p.3). Furthermore, researchers are required to obtain **decent knowledge on the culture observed**, as well as a proper understanding of cultural diversity (Clark-Kazak 2017, 12).

Scholars have also pointed out that there is a high risk of lack of trust when participants feel that researchers do not have sufficient cultural knowledge. Such a lack of trust may eventually even jeopardize the validity of the data (Pittaway & Bartolomei 2013, p. 155). Moreover, researchers should be aware of the political realities in the research context but have to act apolitically. Still, while "(b)eing familiar with the culture of the people with whom one works will reduce the chances of unaccepted behavior or ethical misconduct [, it] does not eliminate the risk" (Kabranian-Melkonian 2015, p. 717). Through intensive preparation and training of all persons involved in our research process, we aim at reducing these risks as far as possible.

8   A fair return for assistance

The issue of return or compensation for research participation "polarizes and provokes wide-ranging debates among scholars" (Krause 2017, p. 16). While the Refugee Studies Centre (2007, p. 166) clearly points out in its guidelines that there should be fair (economic) compensation for participation and research assistance for informants, translators, and research participants, Clark-Kazak explains in her ethical considerations (2017, p. 12) that financial compensation can, in fact, be quite problematic ethically and for the success of the research itself.

People experiencing financial difficulties should not feel compelled to participate in studies because of financial compensation. Besides, it would be problematic if financial compensation depends on the completion of participation. However, in the academic literature, it is argued that an expense allowance for time, travel, or childcare is appropriate if done reasonably and that material compensation or gifts may represent a practical way in this matter (Clark-Kazak 2017, p. 12; Krause 2017, p. 16). Krause (2017, p. 16) explains that her own approach regarding compensation for participation was to cover the travel expenses, that may have occurred because of the research participation, and to always provide drinks and snacks during the interviews and discussions.

In this study, participants who complete the interview and those who terminate their participation or withdraw their consent will, therefore, be treated equally. Efforts will be made to avoid exerting any kind of pressure on potential participants. For this reason, there will be no monetary compensation for participation. Instead, we will try to demonstrate reciprocity through material things (snacks and drinks during the interviews) and help those who voice specific needs during the interview (e.g., by referring them to competent agencies).

9   Selection of interview locations

In line with our research aim, the selection of the specific countries and reception centers is based on their geographic location along frequented migration routes to the European Union. Thereby, we aim at conducting research in transit countries as well as in EU neighboring countries and potential destination countries within the European Union. Specifically, fieldwork is planned in the following countries: Jordan, Libya, Turkey, Bosnia Herzegovina, Greece, Italy, and Austria.

Most of our research sites will be located within refugee reception centers. The specific locations will be selected in terms of their accessibility for our interviewers, the authorization of the authorities of the centers as well as in terms of the relative security of the inhabitants of the centers. Although we are aware that the situation for irregular migrants in no reception center is pleasant and perfect security cannot be guaranteed to the participants, we want to focus our research on places where the concerns of our respondents are kept as low as possible. In doing so, we want to avoid confronting people in dire situations, who are in a particularly vulnerable state of mind with academic research that would likely not seem relevant to them.

10 Data protection and data security

We follow the logic of data protection by design. This means that we will, first, keep the recorded amount (written and/or audio) of personal data collected during the interviews to an absolute minimum (e.g., gender, age, country of origin). Such information will not allow for the identification of the research participants. Second, all data will be anonymized as soon as possible during the data collection process (see below). Third, we communicate our process of data usage and data protection as transparently as possible.

While we cannot enforce the anonymization of audio-recordings by default, transcripts of audio-recordings will be anonymized in the transcription process. All researchers, research assistants as well as translators that may have to be in contact with the original audio-recordings to properly transcribe and translate the interviews will have to sign a confidentiality agreement. At no point will un-anonymized or personal data collected from irregular migrants within the EU be transferred outside of the EU.

Re-identifying participants will not be necessary and thus impossible; after the anonymization process during interview transcription and translation. Furthermore, after anonymization of transcripts, audio-recordings will be destroyed. This results in the complete anonymization of the data.

Only completely anonymized transcribed interviews or quotes by irregular migrants may be made public in the process of dissemination. In the case that expert interviewees have formally and explicitly consented to it, non-anonymized quotes from their interviews may as well be made public in the process of dissemination. All collected data are expected to support resulting scientific publications.

The lists of participants' contacts that may be used for recruiting the interview-partners will be stored on a separate and secure server. Only a limited amount of personnel will have access to this server. Anyone with access will have to sign an additional confidentiality agreement. In compliance with the GDPR, we will not keep any personal identifiers of irregular migrants in our database if not necessary. Contacts of participants will not be needed in the further course of the research, and the project will not re-use them for any additional purpose. After usage, contact information will thus be destroyed.

The project team at University of Vienna (UNIVIE) is in the process of setting up a secure library for all the data collected in this study, marked with different levels of security, all anonymized or pseudonymized, encrypted and with ID coding data separately stored for expert and irregular migrant interviews. Information gathered via the informed consent form, such as a participant's name and signature will not be linked to the transcripts. Informed consent forms will be stored on a secure server, separately from transcripts and audio-recordings (the latter will be destroyed after transcription and translation). The UNIVIE's internal data processing and storage standards are aligned with the GDPR.

Finally, the data, such as anonymized transcripts, summarized responses of interviews, or CSV exports of coded interviews, will be stored within a secured MIRROR data repository at UNIVIE for three more years after the end of MIRROR to allow for adequate dissemination. UNIVIE must authorize any access to data stored within that data repository. Due to the high sensitivity of the data, no access to any raw data can be given to entities external to the project at any point.

11 Summary of planned measures to ensure ethical implementation of research

Issue	Measures
"Do No Harm" principle	– Questions phrased in a way that does not expose participants to stress – Evaluation of interview guide with former irregular migrants – Selection of safe settings for conducting the interviews – Assessment of specific situation and vulnerability in each location – Interviewers trained in identifying and managing problematic and traumatic factors – Letting participants decide which form of interview they want to do (individual or group interviews) – Letting participants decide on the group composition, if requested – Informing participants in detail about the group composition – No mixed-gender interviews, unless explicitly requested – Women participants interviewed by women interviewers whenever possible
Rights of participants	– Clearly communicating that participation is entirely voluntary – Possibility for participants to withdraw consent at any time during the interview process – Informing participants in detail about the study, its purpose, and its sponsors – Respect for privacy concerning space at all times – Ensuring the right to data security – Confidentiality agreement signed by every person involved in the research process – Informing participants about the limits of data protection in cases of suspected criminal acts
Informed consent	– Possibility for participants to withdraw consent at any time during the interview process – Informing participants in detail about the study, its purpose, and its sponsors – Declaration of consent complying with the GDPR and national laws – Discussing declaration of consent in detail with each participant – Enabling an informed decision on whether or not to participate
Reciprocity and equity	– Establishing a relationship that is characterized by equity and respect with all participants – Providing enough time to discuss the research with participants sufficiently – Aiming at ensuring that participants also benefit from participating in the study – Providing enough time for participants to express their perspectives and needs – Trying to give every potential participant the same chance to present his or her viewpoint in the interviews

	−	Ensuring that women can participate in the same way as men
Participants' involvement in research	−	Giving the investigated group the chance to voice their own opinions
	−	Evaluation of interview guide with former irregular migrants
	−	Including (former) irregular migrants into the conduction of interviews
	−	Including (former) irregular migrants in data interpretation processes
Competence of researchers	−	Implementation of adequate research methods
	−	Sufficient training and supervision of researchers, interviewers, translators
Fair return for assistance	−	Equal treatment of all participants, regardless of whether participants complete or terminate the interview
	−	Providing food and snacks at the day of the interview to demonstrate reciprocity
Selection of interview locations	−	Selecting interview locations in terms of the relative security of participants
	−	Conducting interviews at places, where concerns of participants are kept as low as possible
Data protection and security	−	Data protection by design
	−	Keeping collected personal data to an absolute minimum
	−	Immediate anonymization of transcripts of audio-records
	−	Destroying audio-records as soon as transcripts are created
	−	Ensuring that everyone involved in the research has to sign a confidentiality agreement
	−	Providing secure data storage at all time

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Annex: MIRROR: Semi-structured Interview Guide for Interviews with Irregular Migrants

Please note:

This interview guide is designed for qualitative interviews. This means that the interviews should be conducted as openly as possible. While the key questions are intended to structure the topics, the follow-up questions should only be raised if the interviewees have not yet addressed the specific aspect of the follow-up question themselves in their comments on the key question. The sequence of key questions and follow-up questions depends on the course of the conversation and can be adapted to the structure of the conversation at any time.

In general, the interviewees should be given enough time to think about their answers and to mention everything that seems important to them. In a qualitative interview, the way the interviewees structure their answers and thereby the conversation is of central interest.

Before the start of the interview, the participants must have been informed about the purpose of this study, the types of information collected, and the anonymization of their answers. They must have been given the opportunity to ask all their questions about the study and must have given their consent to the participation and to the use of their information.

If the interviewer notices that certain questions or topics are emotionally difficult for the participants, the interviewer should offer to pause or terminate the interview at any time.

Introduction

Thank you for taking 30-60 minutes to talk to me. As you have already heard/read in the study information, you have the opportunity to interrupt or terminate the interview at any time without this having any consequences for you. You don't have to give any reasons. Once the interview has been anonymized, anything you may have said will no longer be attributable to you. Please answer all questions as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions.

When you're ready, we'll start with the first question.

Questions

Key Question 1: What's the role of smartphones in your life? For what purpose do you use a smartphone in your daily life?

Potential Follow-up Questions:
- Are there any particular applications you use more often than others, and why?
- To what extent did your use of media and information or specific apps change since you left your home country?
        - Do you still use the same information sources now that you also used in your home country?
- What's the role of mobile media devices in getting from one place to another?
- When you talked about your use of media and mobile devices, you haven't mentioned social media/personal contacts/mass media. Do you use that too?
        - For what purpose?
- When you talked about your social media use, what social media apps or portals do you use?
        - Can you tell me a little more about what you do on these apps?

Key Question 2: What have you heard or read about Europe so far?

Potential Follow-up Questions:
- Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
        - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?

- What about specific European countries?
        - Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
                - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?
- What information did you receive on *how people live* in Europe?
        - Maybe something about their living conditions, their jobs, earning, or culture? Etc.
        - Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
                - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?
- What information did you receive on *the situation of people who newly arrive* in Europe?
        - Maybe something about their living conditions, their jobs, earning, or how they have been received by the host country? Etc.
        - Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
                - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?
- What information did you receive about *official procedures to settle in* Europe?
        - Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
                - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?
- What information did you receive about *how people get* to Europe?
        - Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
                - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?
- Can you think of negative information you've heard about Europe?
        - Can you tell me where you have heard or read about this?
                - Traditional media, social media, personal conversations, friends, and family who live in Europe?
- From the just discussed information about Europe, what was the most important for your migration decision, if at all?

Key Question 3: Have you actively sought information on specific European countries before you left your country?
        [IF YES] How and where?

        [IF NO] Have you, for example, searched for information in newspapers, on websites, or asked relatives or other people about specific European countries or about leaving the country?

Potential Follow-up Questions:
- In general, how do you assess the quality of information or of an information source?
- How do you decide which information or information source to trust?
- Was there ever a situation where you initially trusted a piece of information or an information source but decided not to trust it any longer? If so, why?

- How do you assess whether a piece of information is relevant to you personally?
- When you find information that is relevant to you personally, what do you do with it?

Key Question 4: What kind of information do you share with others?

Potential Follow-up Questions:
- How do you decide what kind of information you share with others?
- How often do you do that, how, and with whom?
- In which cases could you imagine sharing rather positive or, instead, rather negative information with others?
        - How often do you do that, how, and with whom?
- At this point, would you suggest others to undertake the journey?
        - [IF YES] Why?
                - Which route would you advise them to take? Which countries should they cross?
        - [IF NO] Why not?
                - Would you advise them to take a different route, to cross different countries or instead stay in the home country?

Concluding Part

We have reached the end of the interview. Thank you very much for your valuable answers. In addition to what has already been discussed, would you like to add something on this topic that is important to you and has not yet been addressed?

Would you be so kind as to provide us some information about your person?
We would like to know:
- … where you are from,
- … how old you are,
- … when you approximately left your country
- … and how long it took you to arrive here.

Many thanks again! Do you still agree with your participation in the study? May we use your anonymized data for our research?