

Ethics & Data Management Statement TransCrisis

The members of the TransCrisis consortium are committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and research ethics that apply to social science research.

1. The TransCrisis management committee will take lead responsibility to ensure that the ongoing research is conducted at the highest level of integrity, quality and transparency. Each work package is embedded within institutional research ethics frameworks and committees. Where these bodies do not exist, the research ethics framework that applies to the co-ordinator, the London School of Economics, will apply. All partners are expected to conduct their research in keeping with the principles of the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.¹
2. The primary responsibility for the conduct of the research lies with the individual leader of a research package (sub-package). Each package is required to identify risks to researchers and research participants and identify ways of mitigating these risks. The co-ordinator will ensure that TransCrisis-related research follows ethical guidelines and is approved by the appropriate institutional oversight and ethics committees. The initial ethics reports regarding each package (sub-package) will be collated.
3. Concerns regarding the ethical conduct of research conducted under the TransCrisis project should be raised, in the first instance, with the TransCrisis Project Manager. Contact information will be provided on the project website.
4. The biannual consortium meetings will devote time for the consideration of emerging research ethics issues that may not have been foreseen at the outset of the research.
5. Unethical research behaviour will not be tolerated and will be raised as part of consortium meetings. Depending on severity, failure to comply may lead to the exclusion from the consortium, after consultation with the funder. The process of such investigation will be guided by the principles of integrity, fairness, uniformity, confidentiality and no detriment. All members of the TransCrisis consortium are committed to co-operate and support such investigations. They are also committed to consent to the conclusions of such processes and to take appropriate actions (subject to appropriate appeal processes).
6. Research staff will seek opportunities to train in research ethics as part of their activities in the TransCrisis consortium. Such opportunities will be encouraged as part of career development opportunities.

The following principles guide the TransCrisis project:²

7. All research is designed, undertaken and reviewed as part of the consortium to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.

¹ http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/Public_documents/Publications/Code_Conduct_ResearchIntegrity.pdf

² The provisions follow the UK ESRC Framework for Research Ethics 2015, http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/framework-for-research-ethics_tcm8-33470.pdf

8. Researchers and research participants will be fully informed about the purpose, method and intended usage of the research, what their contribution to the research is and what risks, if any, may arise from participation.

9. Confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected. The dignity and autonomy of research participants will be respected at all times.

10. Research participants must participate voluntarily, without any form of coercion.

11. Harm to researchers and research participants must be avoided at all times.

12. The independence of the research must be transparent and any potential conflict of interest must be declared.

13. Risks must be minimised.

Across the diverse work packages, TransCrisis research shares the following characteristics:

14. All primary research will be conducted under the principle of informed consent; participants will not contribute without their knowledge and consent. Participants will have the right to withdraw at any time. (These principles will be set out in the project information sheet and (where applicable) consent form for participants.)

14. It generally does not involve vulnerable individuals who are not in a position to give informed consent.

16. The research methods across the different packages vary. They rely on the analysis of documentation of different kinds (for example, statutory provisions, budget data, voting records, public speeches). Other research will involve elite interviews, surveys and secondary survey data.

17. The research may, at times, involve sensitive topics. This research, especially in the case of elite interviews, will be conducted under the principle of 'informed consent' and under conditions of non-attributability of information so as to protect the anonymity of the participant. The conditions will be explicitly set out in the information sheet and letter requesting the meeting with a research participant and the conditions will be reiterated at the outset of the conversation. The letter will also illustrate why the individual's participation is being sought. As most of the research will involve elite interviews, participants should be aware of the nature of academic research and the conventions and rules that govern social science research. Participants will be granted the opportunity to comment on transcripts and draft papers in order to correct factual information. The right to comment does not affect researchers' rights to interpret and analyse. The principle of critical social science research shall not, however, deflect from the commitment to treat all participants respectfully.

18. Research involving survey methods will be governed by the academic conventions governing this methodology. Individual level data will be anonymised so as to protect participants, participation will be voluntarily and the purpose of the research will be made transparent to participants so as to enable fully informed voluntary choice as to whether to participate.

19. No financial inducements will be offered for research participation.

20. The research is not expected to expose researchers to any particular risks. However, leaders of individual work packages (sub-packages) and the overall consortium will continuously monitor potential emerging risks.

21. Research may establish incidental findings. The likelihood of such findings is low as TransCrisis does not directly cover areas where incidental findings have caused primary concern, namely medical ethics. Such unlikely incidents (unlikely given the nature of research) will not be used for the purposes of the research. Data will be anonymised where appropriate. The primary research across all TransCrisis research activities is to trace data and processes that are 'open', namely it is about investigating phenomena that are in the public domain. In the unlikely event of incidental findings, such a finding may also lead to issues regarding limits to confidentiality (i.e. evidence of severe risk to the participant or (planned/committed) criminal behaviour, corruption). In these cases, national legislation and professional guidelines will determine when confidentiality has to be breached. The participants will, where possible, be informed about the steps undertaken, without placing researchers at risk of harm.

22. Data for the individual project will be stored at host organisations. The data of relevance for the wider TransCrisis project will be stored on a secure internal project platform, managed by the coordinator. The primary responsibility for the security of data storage therefore lies with the leaders of the work packages (sub-packages). Therefore

i) All participants are bound by their institutional policies towards data management and secure data storage, including back-up facilities. All partner organisations have frameworks in place that provide for back-up facilities and wider system robustness. and The broader approach towards intellectual property rights is set out in the consortium agreement.

ii) The different data collected in the context of the TransCrisis project will be securely stored. Data that is relevant for the whole consortium will be securely stored on the internal consortium website. Data includes anonymised interview transcripts and notes, survey information, institutional analysis, computer-coded analysis of speeches, and bibliographic research. The consortium management committee will decided on a harmonised approach towards data storage in order to facilitate joint working.

iii) The co-ordinator and the individual work package leaders are responsible versioning of the data.

iv) Work-package leaders are responsible for decisions regarding data retention, the co-ordinator is responsible, in co-operation with the management committee, for questions about the retention of data beyond the life-time of the project and the transfer of the data to a data archive.

v) Data will be made available for wider dissemination at the conclusion of the project, or as soon as feasible thereafter. Data will be anonymised to protect the identity of participants.

23. The TransCrisis will explore data archives for the long-term storage of research materials and ensure that the external project website will be archived. In line with the principle of Open Access to research data, the management team will consider depositing any data arising from the project – in anonymised form - in a suitable repository such as the UK Data Service³ - at the end of the project. (Participants in the research will be informed of this).

24. Data collection will be conducted in compliance with Article 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the European Union, specifically the provisions concerning the protection of personal data. In addition, the collection of data will be conducted in compliance with data protection acts, legislation, and directives, both at the European and national level (for example, Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 24 October 1995 on the protection of

³ <http://ukdataservice.ac.uk/>

individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data). Data will be secured safely throughout the duration of the project and beyond.

23. To ensure ethical rigour and that the ethical requirements of each country is met respective work-package leaders will be responsible for obtaining the appropriate institutional ethics approval for any collection of personal data.

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