

EASHW TIPS – RESEARCH WITH VULNERABLE PARTICIPANTS

Whether or not participants are vulnerable depends on the target population in relation to the theme of your study.

9. VULNERABILITY: DO YOU RECRUIT VULNERABLE PARTICIPANTS?

At EASHW, we do not have a **fixed definition of 'vulnerable participants'**: as an expert, you have to assess for yourself whether or not your target population is vulnerable given the theme of your study. Children, refugees, prisoners, people from (extreme) poverty, people with disabilities: they *can* be extra vulnerable by participating in research, but they are not always. As a researcher, you must judge for yourself whether your target group consists (partly) of vulnerable groups and/or individuals.

- We ask **you to be careful, but also not to be too quick to** label individuals/groups as "vulnerable".
- You can also add a motivation in the application why your target population does not consist of vulnerable participants. Especially if there is any doubt, we recommend that you briefly motivate this.
- **Ultimately, you are the expert** and as a committee we ask that you explain in the application why it is or is not about vulnerable participants.
- If you recruit participants from countries/territories that fall under "Resource Poor Settings" **according to the [Global Code of Conduct](#)**, it is best to consider the participants as 'vulnerable'.

VULNERABLE PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE WILLLESSLY COMPETENT

With regard to information about and permission to participate in the study, you should only leave the informed consent to a curator for vulnerable persons who are incapacitated

- Inform the curator, and he will have to grant the permission
- See <https://www.vlaanderen.be/bescherming-en-bewind-voor-meerderjarigen>

(EXTRA) PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE PARTICIPANTS

We provide extra protection for socially vulnerable groups and/or individuals in every scientific study. If you plan to work with vulnerable groups and/or individuals, **we ask for a reflection** and to explain **how you can possibly protect them extra**. Think of every step in the study. It is also appropriate to cooperate with or refer to organisations that can assist vulnerable participants if necessary. We list a few organizations here, but you mainly rely on your expertise as a researcher to select the most appropriate organizations for collaboration/referral.

- The Flemish Government gives an overview of various aid agencies such as TeleOnthaal or the Suicide Line, see overview: <https://www.zorgvoormorgen.be/hulplijnen>
- The Onlinehulp-Apps website screens interesting apps that can be used for well-being and mental health: <https://www.onlinehulp-apps.be/>
- Focal point for combating poverty, insecurity and social exclusion <https://armoedebestrijding.be/>
- Centre for Equal Opportunities <https://steunpuntgelijkekansen.be/>
- Transgender infopunt <https://www.transgenderinfo.be/nl>
- ZORROLA informs about the harmful effects of negative representations in advertising and communication. <https://zorrola.be/nl/>