



**International Symposium:**

**“When the taboo gets in the way of ethics: racism in biomedicine”**

**Location: Hanover, Germany, Castle “Herrenhausen”**

**September 17-19 2025**

**Scientific organizers & coordination:**

Prof. Dr. Silke Schicktanz (Department of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine, University Medical Center Göttingen, Germany);

Dr. Brenda Bogaert and Prof. Dr. Ralf J. Jox (Institute for Humanities in Medicine, Lausanne University Hospital and University of Lausanne, Switzerland)

**Practical organization:** Dept. Of Medical Ethics and History of Medicine, Göttingen, contact: [sschick@gwdg.de](mailto:sschick@gwdg.de), [marco.tessmann@med.uni-goettingen.de](mailto:marco.tessmann@med.uni-goettingen.de), funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung

**This workshop is part of the VW Foundation Theme Week: The (De)tabooing of Science and Research**

**September 17 – 19, 2025, Hanover, Xplanatorium Herrenhausen**

Some information about the venue can be found here: <https://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/faqservice>

However, this event is a closed workshop and therefore the information publicly available seems to be yet limited.

Please check all travel information send by Silke Schicktanz and Marco Tessmann for details.

**Summary and important information about the format:**

The subject of racism in biomedicine, and in particular in Europe, remains taboo. While increasing research attention – in particular post-COVID – has been given to the subject in the North American context, in Europe this research still remains underdeveloped, underfunded, and underdiscussed. The purpose of this symposium will be to start breaking this taboo by bringing together an interdisciplinary group of scholars to discuss and debate the subject in the European context from three different dimensions:

- 1) epistemological (concepts and term used in biomedical and public health theories),
- 2) normative (its relationship to ethical principles that exist or need to be elaborated);
- 3) practical (possible applications in research, education, and practice).

The ambitious outcome of the workshop aims at jointly composing an interdisciplinary position paper that will help guide research and practice and the setting-up of an EU-wide forum to develop the normative frameworks and practical ethical strategies to break the taboo. We are aware that the workshop program is tight, but fine-tuning can be done later on. We encourage, however, everyone to actively contribute to all discussions in a constructive way

Over 25 scholars from different fields such as medical ethics, public health (ethics), medical education, sociology and clinical practice will take part. The workshop is conceptualized as a moderated group discussion. Short inputs and a poster session will provide starting points, but the main parts will be structured along moderated deliberative sessions by the whole panel or in small groups.

Please note: the internal workshop program is marked in **BLUE**. The VW Foundation has also additional program for all participants across the parallel symposia – these are marked in **BLACK**.

## Final Program

### **Wednesday, 17th Sept 2025:**

**9:00 – 10:00 – Registration at the Castle Herrenhausen and welcome coffee**

**10:00 – 12:30: Panel meeting in Seminar room (SR) 3**

**10:00 – 10:30: Welcome by the organizers, introduction round**

**10:30 – 11:30: First explorative discussion round:**

- Discourse rules, aims
- Starting discussion by collecting ideas, thoughts

**11:30 – 12:30: Brief inputs with discussion** (each max. 10 min input statements)

**Epistemic aspects:** *Race in medicine – bioethics as ideology critique?* (Mirjam Faissner, Berlin)

**Normative aspects:** *Racial Health Disparities in the U.S. and the Role of Medical Racism* (Mary Crossly, Pittsburgh)

**Practical issues:** *Challenges of exploring racism and anti-racism in health care in the Netherlands* (Saskia Duijs, Amsterdam)

**12:30 – 13:15: Lunch**

**13:15 – 14:00: Guided Poster session in the Foyer (each poster should be introduced by an elevator pitch of max. 2 min)**

**14:00 – 15:30: 3 discussion groups in parallel** (Coffee breaks are flexible held by each group)

**A. Epistemic aspects:** *Is there a clear definition of ‘racism’ – what does it mean (and what not)? – exploring working definitions, consensus and controversies* (moderators: Silke Schicktanz, Nitzan Rimon-Zarfaty) Room: Bar OG

**B. Normative aspects:** *What role should bioethics play in addressing racism in health care and biomedical research? What are open normative questions regarding racism in biomedicine?* (moderators: Ralf Jox, Brenda Bogaert): Room: Auditorium

*C. Empirical aspects: What do we know and what do we need to know about racism in biomedical education, care, and research?* (moderators: Kristina Würth, Kevin Dzi) Room: SR 3

(results are documented on metaplan boards)

15:30 – 17:00 **VW Foundation – cross-symposia event** (there are 3 more symposia dealing with “taboo” as topic): Welcome from the foundation, interactive get-together, Introduction of individual symposia

17:00 – 18:00 **VW Foundation organised’ talk** “Sexual harassment and violence in higher education” by Dr. Heike Pantelmann Managing Director, Margherita von Brentano Center for Gender Studies, Freie Universität Berlin

18:00-18.30 **Group meetings** – short summary and outlook for tomorrow (same rooms as in the morning)

18:30-22:00 Dinner at the Castle (venue will be closed at 10 pm)

#### **Thursday, 18th Sept 2025:**

8:00 – 9:00: Welcome coffee

9:00-10:30: **Plenary session** in Room SR 3: **Presentation of results of 1<sup>st</sup> round group discussions** (moderation by Silke Schicktanzt/Nitzan Rimon-Zarfaty) plus **plenary discussion** to set priorities for further discussion about the following two topics:

A) What is a shared working definition of racism (and anti-racism) we can work with?

B) Which challenges and aims should we address first in the next discussion?

C) Who is interested in which practical areas (research, care, and education)?

10:30-11:00 Coffee break (2<sup>nd</sup> chance to have looks at the poster)

11:00-12:30 **2<sup>nd</sup> round of 3 group discussions in parallel**

1. How should we address racism in research from a bioethical perspective: Visions, hurdles to be overcome, approaches to reach the vision (moderation by Silke Schicktanzt, Nitzan Rimon-Zarfaty)
2. How should we address racism in medical education from a bioethical perspective: Visions, hurdles to be overcome, approaches to reach the vision (moderation by Brenda Bogaert, Kevin Dzi)
3. How should we address racism in care contexts from a bioethical perspective: Visions, hurdles to be overcome, approaches to reach the vision (moderation by Ralf Jox, Kristina Würth)

(results will be documented on metaplan boards)

12:30-13:30: Lunch

13:30-15:30: **Plenary discussion: Presentation of interim results by each group – feedback by the other groups’ members** (moderation: Silke Schicktanzt, Nitzan Rimon-Zarfaty) Room: SR3

- clarification of unclear positions / argumentations

- complementation of missing topics / alternative views

15:30 - 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 - 16:20: *Joint Picture* by the Volkswagen Foundation

16:20 – 18:00: **Garden walks with mixed groups across all symposia** (topics will be announced and allocated by the VW Foundation)

18:00-19:00: **Continuation of the 3 discussion groups in parallel** (facilitated each by two moderators, same rooms as in the morning)

- each group summarize its discussion results plus feedback in a short draft version as text version – kind of bullet-point working thesis / using google doc

19:00-22:00: Dinner at the castle

### **Friday, 19th Sept 2025**

9:00-10:00: **Continuation of the 3 discussion groups in parallel** (facilitated each by two moderators, same rooms as yesterday)

- each group summarize its discussion results plus feedback in a short draft version as text version – kind of bullet-point working thesis / using google doc (1-2 pages per group)

10:00-11:00 **Presentation of draft text version of each group** (moderation by S. Schicktanz, B. Bogaert): Room SR3

- aim to achieve: a “Points to consider” - publication / baseline for joint research project(s)

- question and feedback round

- open issues, consensus and disagreement areas about statements

- definition of further working tasks and allocation of tasks (writing group, comments, layout, reference search)

11:00 - 11:50 **Conclusions and joint outlook** (Moderation: Ralf Jox, Brenda Bogart) Room: SR3

- timelines for finalizing a draft of the joint paper

- Establishing a European-wide forum or platform planning

- modes of communication, data collection

12:00 – 13:00 Foundations’ **Joint closing session** with highlights from each symposium (Room: Auditorium)

13:00 – 14:30: Farewell lunch

14:30: End of event