

Rights on the Move Project

Exchange with the Columbia Law School (New York) and the Refugee Law Clinic Hamburg

Since 2018, the Refugee Law Clinic Hamburg has been running an exchange program with Columbia Law School, in which the University of Münster has also been participating since 2021: For one week each, students work in the host city – Hamburg or New York – on a **pro bono project** that addresses issues related to asylum and refugee law and is proposed by an NGO active in this field. On the German side, five students each from Hamburg and Münster participate.

The exchange will take place in **two phases in the spring of 2027**: During the first phase, from **March 15-20, 2027**, students from Columbia Law School will visit Hamburg, where they will be hosted by students from Hamburg and Münster. During the week of **March 27 - April 4, 2027**, the German students will travel to New York, where the program will be organized by the Columbia students.

Schedule: An initial online meeting with the Hamburg students in December will serve as an opportunity to get to know one another and to clarify organizational questions regarding travel, housing, and the stay. From that point on, the students from Hamburg and Münster will work together to develop the program for the New York students' stay in Hamburg.

Visits to the partner universities will take place in March and April 2027: In Hamburg, the German and U.S. participants will work in small groups on their respective pro bono projects. These projects will be assigned by a partner NGO that works in the field of asylum and refugee law and can use the research findings directly in its work. During this project week, the main part of the substantive work will take place under close supervision. In addition, the students will participate in a jointly planned social program and receive an introduction to the structures of U.S. asylum law.

During the exchange week in New York, participants finalize the projects they developed in Hamburg, working largely independently. In addition, there are discussions and lectures featuring renowned U.S. experts in the field of asylum and immigration law. German students are also expected to take a course at Columbia Law School.

Afterwards, there will be a follow-up meeting in Münster for the students from Münster, where they can reflect on the project together and possibly on the chance to publish their project work. The exchange is offered as a **seminar** in Münster; accordingly, participants can develop their research project further and have it graded as a seminar paper.

Date	Program
November 4, 2026, 6:15 p.m.	Information meeting (hybrid)
November 9, 2026, 11:59 p.m.	Application Deadline
November 30, 18:15 p.m.	Get-together for German students (Wilmergasse 28)
January 2027 (TBD)	Preparation meeting (online/hybrid)
March 15-20, 2027	Project week in Hamburg
March 27-April 4, 2027	Project week in New York
May - July	Debriefing, revisions, publication of the final report, etc.; completion of seminar papers, if applicable

Your Commitment: You will plan the supporting program for the New York students in Hamburg and participate in it; you will prepare thoroughly for the exchange using the provided materials (reading list); You will actively and enthusiastically participate in the pro bono project; if necessary, you will continue any ongoing pro bono work after the project period until its completion (e.g., follow-up meetings, revisions, publication of the final report, etc.).

Eligibility requirements: You are a student enrolled at the University of Münster for the 2026/27 winter semester in one of the following programs: Law, Politics and Law; Economics and Law; International and Comparative Law; or in the master's program in German Law, and you are in at least your third semester; You have a strong command of the English language, both spoken and written; You have a basic knowledge of immigration law and international law (e.g., through attending a relevant course and/or through volunteer work in this field and/or through your own experience with migration or personal involvement with immigration law). We also note that the project phase is labor-intensive and that participation in the entire program requires a high degree of personal responsibility and commitment.

Additional desirable skills (optional): Ideally, you also have counseling experience (this includes, for example, counseling experience in a family or community context based on your own experience as a refugee or migrant, counseling experience at a law clinic, or volunteer work); advanced language skills (especially Arabic, Farsi, and Spanish) are also beneficial; Knowledge of the U.S. legal system and experience with common law are desirable. In your motivation letter, we look forward to seeing a substantive exploration of the project topic and value a thoughtful and personal perspective.

Perhaps you don't meet all the expectations we've outlined here? Don't hesitate to apply anyway.

Funding: We aim to cover the project's costs entirely through grants. However, due to the current financial constraints at the university and among supporting foundations, we cannot make a binding commitment to this this year. Therefore, you may have to cover a portion of your travel expenses, up to a maximum of 300 €. Please let us know well in advance if this would pose a real obstacle for you. We strongly encourage you to apply, and we will find individual solutions in such cases.

If we are unable to secure sufficient funding and the individual contribution cost exceeds 300 €, there will be no return exchange to New York. In this case, the research projects will be conducted entirely in Hamburg, with a joint follow-up session in Münster and, if necessary, digital exchange formats.

On the Current Situation in the U.S.: As critical legal professionals and legal scholars, we are observing the current political developments in the U.S. with great concern. From a legal perspective, we particularly criticize the erosion of the rights and protections of LGBTIQ* individuals, migrants, and other minorities; the restrictions on freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and academic freedom; as well as the political pressure on independent courts, attorneys, and civil society.

Despite – or perhaps precisely because of – these politically tense times, we remain committed to carrying out this exchange. We see ourselves as part of a solidarity-based international legal community and view the exchange as an opportunity to promote emancipation through the means of the law. We stand alongside our cooperation partners – the NGOs, judges, and professors who advocate for the rights of migrants and refugees – and aim to demonstrate this support in practical ways through pro bono projects.

Nevertheless, we are aware that we must take the political circumstances and the dynamic situation into account when planning the trip. We are evaluating the travel conditions in constant consultation with our project partners in the U.S. and will prepare you, as students, as best as possible for your entry into the country. Ultimately, however, we also understand individual decisions not to participate due to the current situation in the U.S.

Should you have any specific concerns regarding entry into the country or how to personally navigate the political situation, we encourage you to contact [Lena Straub](#) or [Sarah Isabel Pfeiffer](#) directly. We are available to answer your questions and provide individual consultations both during the application process and as you prepare for the program.

Information Meeting: On Wednesday, **November 4, 2026, at 6:15 p.m.**, you'll have the opportunity to learn about the project and ask questions. The event will take place both in person, in the **Karl-Bender-Saal (Juridicum, room 322)** and **hybrid via Zoom**.

Link to Zoom-meeting: <https://uni-ms.zoom-x.de/j/63942227405?pwd=I7Bh3baKDVtbrXZJ8zsHXfS0wuinTH.1>
Meeting-ID: 639 4222 7405
Code: 310643

Your application (compiled into a single PDF!) should include a statement of purpose (max. 1.5 pages) and your resume (both in **English**), your WiLMA transcript (or Transcript of Records), and any other relevant supporting documents.

Deadline: Monday, November 9, 2026, at 11:59 p.m., to imr.kontakt@uni-muenster.de;
Subject: "Application for the Rights on the Move Project 2027."

Contact Information: The project is supervised by Prof. Nora Markard and Research Associate Sarah Isabel Pfeiffer, LL.M. (VU Amsterdam). In the spirit of student leadership, Lena Straub is serving as the student coordinator in Münster. She is happy to answer any questions: lstraub@uni-muenster.de.

All important information and an updated version of this call for applications can be found on the [chair's website](#).