



RESEARCH CENTER  
**TRUSTWORTHY DATA SCIENCE  
AND SECURITY**

## Newsletter 2026\_01 (January )

Dear readers,  
dear colleagues,

over the past years, this newsletter has become an established channel for internal communication at RC Trust, offering insights into our research activities, people, and ongoing developments. With this issue, we are taking the next step: alongside our colleagues, we are now also addressing readers who are interested in the research, chairs, and people shaping RC Trust.

Complementing our website and social media channels, the newsletter provides a concise overview of selected highlights from the Center—bringing together research results, new team members, events, and projects in a clear and accessible format.

We hope you enjoy reading and discovering what is currently happening at RC Trust.

## From the Research Alliance

*Strategic developments and leadership updates.*



### **New Leadership within the Research Alliance Ruhr**

With Dr. Nina Lemmens taking office as Managing Director, the University Alliance Ruhr is sharpening its focus on coordinated research support. Since 15 January 2026, she has headed the newly established Management Office, which brings together central administrative and strategic functions of the Research Alliance Ruhr.

[Read more](#)

## People & Team News

*New colleagues, new roles, and growing teams across RC Trust.*



### **Learning Inclusion through Virtual Worlds: Dorina Rohse**

Dorina Rohse has been working as a PhD researcher and research assistant at the Chair of Inclusive Technology and Collective Engagement led by Giulia Barbareschi. Her research explores how virtual environments can support inclusive learning practices.

[Read more](#)



### **New Postdoctoral Researcher: Rachel Griffin**

Rachel Griffin joined RC Trust as a postdoctoral researcher for a two-year appointment in the group of Jat Singh. Her work focuses on shaping fair digital rules in socio-technical systems.

[Read more](#)



### **Welcome to RC Trust: Zoe Kahn**

Zoe Kahn joined the Compliant and Accountable Systems group led by Jat Singh on 1 January 2026 as a postdoctoral researcher for a one-year appointment.

[Read more](#)



### **New PhD Researcher: Leon Swazinna**

Leon Swazinna has joined RC Trust as a PhD student in the *Artificial Intelligence and Society* group led by Bilal Zafar. His research contributes to the Center's work at the intersection of AI systems and their societal implications.



### **New PhD Researcher: Lepakshi Venkatraman**

Since 15 January 2026, Lepakshi Venkatraman has been a doctoral researcher in the Compliant and Accountable Systems group led by Jat Singh. Her research examines how AI systems are understood and applied in practice.

[Read more](#)



### **New PhD Researcher: Ankur Bhatt**

Ankur Bhatt has joined the Human-AI Interaction group led by Sven Mayer as a PhD researcher, strengthening research on human-centered and trustworthy AI systems.

[Read more](#)



### **New Technical Research Assistant: Iheb Dridi**

RC Trust welcomes Iheb Dridi as a technical research assistant in the team of Nils Köbis, supporting research on human understanding of algorithms and machines.

[Read more](#)

## **Publications & Research Results**

*Recent papers and studies advancing trustworthy AI and data science.*

### **Unfair Mistakes on Social Media**

A paper by Rebekah Overdorf was accepted at ICWSM. The study examines how demographic characteristics influence authorship attribution on social media, highlighting systematic biases in AI-supported analysis. [A preprint version of the paper is available.](#)

### **New Multiple Contrast Tests for Time-to-Event Data**

Dormuth, I., Herrmann, C., Konietschke, F., Pauly, M., Wirth, M., & Ditzhaus, M. (2026). Beyond Bonferroni: new multiple contrast tests for time-to-event data under non-proportional hazards. *Lifetime Data Analysis*, 32(1), 8.

### **Confidence Intervals for Random Forest Permutation Importance with Missing Data**

Föge, N., & Pauly, M. (2026). Confidence Intervals for Random Forest Permutation Importance with Missing Data

Computational Statistics, to appear.

### **General Multiple Tests for Functional Data**

Munko, M., Ditzhaus, M., Pauly, M. et al. General multiple tests for functional data. *ASTA Adv Stat Anal* (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10182-025-00549-y>

### **Which Imputation Fits Which Feature Selection Method?**

Romero, A., Schwerter, J., Dumpert, F., & Pauly, M. (2025). Which Imputation Fits Which Feature Selection Method? A Survey-Based Simulation Study. *Data Science in Science*, 4(1), 2562209.

### **Tricking into Trusting?**

Nicole Krämer, Ivana Lamia, Hanne Siegert, Florian Wenda, and Lovis Suchmann examine how social cues used by generative AI systems influence perceived trust. The paper was published in *ACM Transactions on Interactive Intelligent Systems*.

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3771844>

### **Cross-Cultural Patterns in AI Literacy**

Meltem Aksoy, Dilara Arzugül Aksoy, Elif Polat, Sinan Hopcan, and Annika Bush present a large-scale study on AI literacy among pre-service teachers in Germany and Türkiye, revealing significant country and gender effects.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.70454>

### **Recent Publications from the Group of Bilal Zafar**

Three papers were accepted at major international conferences:

Do LLM hallucination detectors suffer from low-resource effect? (EACL), by Debtanu Datta [Do LLM hallucination detectors suffer from low-resource effect?](#)

Rote Learning Considered Useful (ICLR), in collaboration with MPI-SWS [Rote Learning Considered Useful: Generalizing over Memorized Data in LLMs](#)

The Algorithmic Self-Portrait (WWW), in collaboration with MPI-SWS

### **Two Papers Presented at AAAI 2026**

- Benjamin Bordais and Daniel Neider: Learning DFAs from Positive Examples Only via Word Counting
- Faried Abu Zaid, Daniel Neider, and Mustafa Yalçın: VeriFlow: Modeling Distributions for Neural Network Verification

### **Campus AI vs. Commercial AI**

Lena Hannig, Annika Bush, Meltem Aksoy, Steffen Becker, and Greta Ontrup compare perceptions of a university-developed LLM chatbot with commercial

systems like ChatGPT. The paper was conditionally accepted at CHI; a preprint is available.

<https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2505.10490>

### **New Statistical Research Contributions**

Several recent publications involving Markus Pauly and collaborators address multiple testing, confidence intervals for random forests, and functional data analysis.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10182-025-00549-y>

## **Projects & Grants**

*New funding and research directions.*

### **New DFG Project Accepted**

Rebekah Overdorf received approval for a new DFG-funded project titled Advancing the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Forensics, strengthening RC Trust's research at the interface of AI and security.

## **Talks, Outreach & Public Engagement**

*Research in dialogue with society, policy, and practice.*



### **AI Colloquium with Prof. Jin Xu**

Prof. Jin Xu visited RC Trust as part of the AI Colloquium series, presenting recent research and engaging in discussion with Center members.

[Read more](#)



### **Disinformation Shapes Minds, Societies, and Democracies**

A FactCheck Thailand project led by Nicole Krämer highlights how disinformation influences individual attitudes and democratic processes.

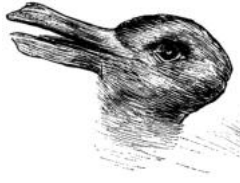
[Read more](#)



### **Presentation at the Landtag NRW**

On 26 January 2026, Nicole Krämer presented on the effects of social media on political discourse during a meeting of the CDU parliamentary group at the Landtag of North Rhine-Westphalia.

[Read more](#)



### **Optical Illusions and Artificial Intelligence**

Carina Newen explores how optical illusions can help explain - and improve - artificial intelligence systems.

[Read more](#)

## **Center Life & Academic Exchange**

*Teaching, retreats, and collaborative formats.*



### **Winterschool 2026: Human-AI Interaction Meets Alpine Research Retreat**

The Human-AI Interaction group led by Sven Mayer participated in the Winterschool 2026, combining intensive academic exchange with interdisciplinary discussion in an alpine retreat setting.

[Read more](#)

## **AI Colloquium & Graduate School**

*Recent and upcoming lectures at RC Trust.*



### **Safe Learning Systems - AI and Formal Methods**

On 15 January 2026, Prof. Nils Jansen discussed how AI can be combined with formal methods to build systems we can truly trust.

[Read more](#)



### **Inclusive Research Practices**

On 21 January 2026, Giulia Barbareschi offered a concise introduction to inclusive approaches in AI and HCI research.

[Read more](#)



### **Synthetic Health Data Generation**

On 4 February 2026, Prof. Allan Tucker will present lessons on fidelity, privacy, and augmentation in synthetic health data generation.

[Read more](#)



### **Environmental Data and Trustworthy Decisions**

Also on 4 February 2026, Nils Weitzel will introduce the research agenda of the Environmetrics group at TU Dortmund University.

[Read more](#)

## **Internship Program**

*Highlighting how the RC Trust Internship Program connects curious minds with real-world interdisciplinary research.*



### **Internship Program Spotlight: Akif Emre Sula**

When Akif Emre Sula joined the RC Trust Internship Program, he brought a strong interest in trustworthy AI and a desire to deepen his research skills in an interdisciplinary setting. His experience demonstrates how hands-on

engagement with real research problems can enrich both personal development and the Center's work.

[Read more](#)

## Workshops & Upcoming Events

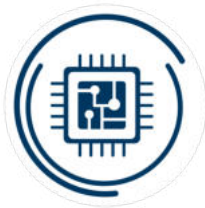
*Opportunities to connect research, practice, and society.*



### **AI Workshop: Trustworthy AI at Work**

Register now for the AI Workshop on 17 March 2026, connecting research and practice around trustworthy AI in the workplace.

[Read more](#)



### **HARRIS 2026 - Hardware Security Workshop**

HARRIS 2026 will take place on 24 - 25 March 2026, with optional tutorials on 23 March. The workshop is co-organized by Steffen Becker.

[Read more](#)

