



RESEARCH CENTER  
**TRUSTWORTHY DATA SCIENCE  
AND SECURITY**

# RC Trust Newsletter – June 2026

Dear readers,  
dear colleagues,

this issue opens with a major strategic development for the Ruhr region: the on-site review of the Ruhr Innovation Lab within the Excellence Strategy. Beyond this top story, the past weeks brought awards, new publications, international conferences, research visits, public engagement, and upcoming opportunities across RC Trust.

## Two universities, one mission



### **Ruhr Innovation Lab reviewed in the Excellence Strategy**

From 19 to 21 May, an international panel visited TU Dortmund University and Ruhr University Bochum to review the Ruhr Innovation Lab, their joint application in the Excellence Strategy of the federal and state governments. The proposal aims to create space for new research ideas, strengthen networks for a future-proof society, and connect research areas around prosperity, trust in the digital age, and democratic values. Researchers from RC Trust contributed to the preparation and on-site visits.

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# Awards & Recognition



## Washington Post features RC Trust AI research

RC Trust researcher Anna Neumann was featured in the Washington Post discussing hidden system prompts in AI chatbots and their impact on transparency, and user control. The article builds on the team's award-winning CHI 2026 research on how invisible AI instructions shape user experiences.

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## Leia Betting receives award for outstanding master's thesis

Leia Betting, supervised by RC Trust PI Markus Pauly, received the 2026 award for outstanding master's theses from the Alumni Association of Dortmund Statisticians and Data Scientists. Her thesis developed forecasting models for material flows in the returnable bottle sector, connecting statistical methodology with sustainability and industrial recycling processes.

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## Paula Lorenz brings student research to international scientific exchange

Supervised by Markus Pauly, Paula Lorenz presented research from her bachelor's thesis at the international CEN conference. Her work on variable selection in meta-regression shows how early-career statistical research can grow into internationally visible scientific contributions.

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## Jan-Bernd Igelmann receives Bernd-Streitberg-Prize

At the 6th Central European Network Conference in Warsaw, Jan-Bernd Igelmann received the Bernd-Streitberg-Prize of the German Region of the International Biometric Society for his master's thesis on optimal designs for non-linear segmented regression. The

recognition adds to a strong CEN presence from Markus Pauly's research environment.

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### Ivan Habernal nominated for Excellent Teaching Award 2026

Ivan Habernal has been nominated for the Excellent Teaching Award 2026 for his course “Natural Language Processing with Deep Learning.” The nomination highlights teaching that helps students understand not only how AI methods work, but also why trustworthiness matters in modern language technologies.

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### Ivan Habernal also receives Computational Linguistics Distinguished Reviewer Award

Ivan Habernal has been selected as one of the recipients of the 2026 Computational Linguistics Distinguished Reviewer Award, recognizing his outstanding contributions to the journal over the past year. The award will be presented during ACL 2026.



### Award-winning research involving Giulia Barbareschi at DIS 2026

Research involving Giulia Barbareschi will be represented at ACM DIS 2026 in Singapore with three international contributions, including work selected for a **Best Paper Award** and an **Honorable Mention Award**. The contributions explore soft floating robots, disability-led digital art, and generative AI in aging communities, highlighting how inclusive design can shape socially meaningful interactive systems.

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## People & Team News



### Sven Mayer appointed Technical Program Chair of CHI 2027

Sven Mayer will serve as Technical Program Chair for CHI 2027 together with Rosta Farzan from the University of Pittsburgh. The role is one of the central scientific leadership positions in the CHI community and reflects the international visibility of Human-AI Interaction research at RC Trust and TU Dortmund University.

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### **ELLIS Unit NRW strengthens AI research across the region**

The European Laboratory for Learning and Intelligent Systems has approved a new ELLIS Unit NRW, bringing together leading AI researchers and infrastructures across North Rhine-Westphalia. RC Trust researchers contribute expertise to the network, including Alexander Marx, whose work connects causality, machine learning, and reliable AI systems.

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### **Sabine Wehnert successfully defends dissertation on legal AI**

Sabine Wehnert has successfully defended her dissertation at Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg. Her work on justifiable legal AI connects Legal NLP, information retrieval, knowledge graphs, and human-centered AI to make legal search more transparent, inspectable, and trustworthy.

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### **Gabin Agablé joins Reinforcement Learning Summer School**

Gabin Agablé from Alexander Marx's research environment will attend the 2026 Reinforcement Learning Summer School.

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### **Two new interns join Daniel Neider's group**

Daniel Neider's Chair of Verification and Formal Guarantees of Machine Learning welcomes two new interns, Zeedan Khan and Yu-Chung Wang. Their stay strengthens the group's international and early-career research exchange.

# Research & Publications



## **Meltem Aksoy presents AI-assisted code review research at ICST 2026**

Meltem Aksoy presented the paper “When Less Is More: Monolingual Fine-Tuning of Language Models for Industrial C# Code Review” at ICST 2026 in Daejeon, South Korea. Co-authored with Igli Begolli and Daniel Neider, the work shows how domain-specific fine-tuning can support industrial code review while keeping human judgment central.

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## **VAMPIR investigates video-based disinformation among young people**

Nicole Krämer’s research environment contributes to VAMPIR, an interdisciplinary project on how TikTok, deepfakes, and video-based disinformation affect adolescents. The project combines media psychology, communication science, technical detection methods, and legal perspectives to strengthen resilience and media literacy.

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## **KIKI helps pre-school children learn critical thinking about AI**

The UDE-led KIKI project, involving Nicole Krämer’s chair, develops age-appropriate learning materials to help children aged four to six understand basic AI concepts. The project focuses on safe, critical, and independent use of AI applications from an early age.

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## **Jessica Szczuka discusses AI intimacy at CPDP 2026**

At CPDP 2026 in Brussels, Jessica Szczuka discussed intimacy, trust, and risks in human-AI relationships. The panel “Intimacy-by-Design” explored how emotionally responsive AI systems raise new questions for privacy, vulnerability, platform responsibility, and regulation.

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### **Trustworthy AI enters the classroom**

Meltem Aksoy discussed calibrated trust in AI education at HAYEF AI4EDU 2026 in Istanbul. Her contribution addressed transparency, fairness, ethics, and responsible AI practices in educational settings.

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### **AI talking science**

Bianca Nowak co-authored the JCOM publication “AI talking science: Experimental studies on the perception of AI-based chatbots as sources of science-based information.” The study examines how AI-based chatbots are perceived as sources of science-related information.

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### **Changing Tunes accepted at ICML workshop**

A paper from Bilal Zafar’s group, “Changing Tunes: A Longitudinal Study of Political Drift in LLMs,” was accepted at the Pluralistic Alignment workshop at ICML 2026. The paper was authored by Bruno Nogueira, Leon Swazinna, Jost Große Perdekamp, Elisabeth Kirsten, Nils Köbis, Juhi Kulshrestha, Markus Pauly, and Bilal Zafar.

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### **Magdalena Wischnewski publishes on agentic framing of generative AI**

Magdalena Wischnewski and Dennis Nguyen published “Generative AI, Large Language Models, and their agentic framing in news media” in *AI & Society*. The article examines how media framing shapes public understanding of generative AI and large language models.

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### **Accepted CUI paper on humanizing chatbots and voice shopping**

A full paper titled “Does Humanizing Chatbots Promote or Hinder Voice Shopping?” was accepted at the ACM Conference on Conversational User Interfaces (CUI), taking place in Bremen in August. The paper was authored by Marisa Tschopp, Chen Cheng, Magdalena Wischnewski, Miriam Gieselmann, Johannes Schöning, Shyam Sundar, Kai Sassenberg, and collaborators.



### **Nils Weitzel on plant responses to carbon dioxide concentrations**

Nils Weitzel gave a talk at the EGU General Assembly 2026 in Vienna titled “A multi-model assessment of the plant-physiological response to high and low carbon dioxide concentrations.” The EGU General Assembly is one of Europe’s largest geoscience conferences.

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### **Ivan Habernal and collaborators publish on judicial formalism**

Tomáš Koref, Lena Held, Mahammad Namazov, Harun Kumru, Yassine Thlija, and Ivan Habernal have had the article “Mining Legal Arguments to Study Judicial Formalism” accepted in Artificial Intelligence and Law.

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## **Conferences, Talks & Research Exchange**



### **Strong presence from the Compliant and Accountable Systems group at FACcT 2026**

Prof. Jat Singh’s Compliant and Accountable Systems group will contribute six research papers and host two tutorials to ACM Fairness, Accountability & Transparency (FACcT) 2026 - one of the leading international conferences on responsible computing. The contributions address topics ranging from AI governance and transparency, to accountability and responsible AI development.

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### **Jessica Szczuka at FACcT 2026**

Jessica Szczuka will present work at FACcT 2026 on vulnerability and relational accountability in human-AI relationships. The paper “Regulating Artificial Intimacy: From Locks and Blocks to Relational Accountability,” co-authored with Henry L. Fraser and Raffaele F. Ciriello,

argues that governance must address not only harmful outputs, but also the emotional relationships AI systems are designed to cultivate.

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### **RESPOND meeting advances anti-corruption research**

Nils Köbis and Carolina Gerli from the HUAM lab joined the General Meeting of the EU-funded Horizon project RESPOND in Lisbon. The consortium discussed research on political corruption, democratic participation, digital technologies, and AI-based anti-corruption tools.

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### **Reliable evidence needs reliable statistical methods**

Co-initiated by Markus Pauly, the symposium “Recent Advances on Statistical Methods for Meta-Analyses” in Göttingen brought together international researchers to discuss methods for meta-analyses with few studies, small samples, and complex evidence structures.

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### **HAI Women at the 5th Women in Computing Workshop\***

Members of Sven Mayer’s Human-AI Interaction group attended the 5th Women\* in Computing Workshop in Berlin. The workshop focused on balancing academic work, personal obligations, working domains, and well-being, with contributions from speakers including Neha Kumar and Giulia Barbareschi.

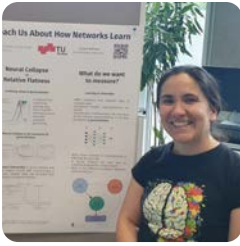
[Read more](#)



### **Javier Aguilar to present at Nordstat 2026**

Javier Aguilar from Alexander Marx’s Causality Chair will give a talk at Nordstat 2026 in Helsinki titled “Priors for Grouped Variance Decomposition in High-Dimensional Regression.”

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### **Linara Adilova presented at BIFOLD and ELLIS workshop**

Linara Adilova presented RC Trust research at the BIFOLD and ELLIS workshop “AI to Accelerate Scientific Understanding.” Her poster explored what information theory and geometry can teach us about how neural networks learn.

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### **Sven Mayer joined student conference panel on cognitive science and AI**

Sven Mayer joined the panel discussion at the Cognitive Science Conference of Students (CosCos) 2026 in Tübingen alongside Prof. Dr. Esther Kühn, Prof. Dr. Evelyn Ferstl, and Prof. Dr. Volker Franz. Carlotta Ruths, a Bachelor's student from Osnabrück University, moderated the panel. The panel focused on the future of cognitive science and its growing intersection with artificial intelligence, society, and interdisciplinary research.

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### **Asja Fischer visited Bilal Zafar’s group**

Asja Fischer visited Bilal Zafar’s Chair of Artificial Intelligence and Society on 18 May for research discussions and brainstorming.

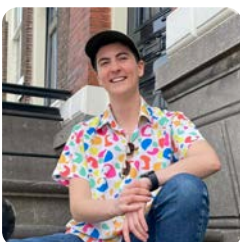
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### **Giulia Barbareschi at ACM Europe Summer School**

Giulia Barbareschi will speak at the 3rd ACM Europe Summer School on Accessible and Inclusive Technologies in Milan on 17 June.

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### **Inês Terrucha presented IAS Fellowship talk**

Inês Terrucha gave her IAS Fellowship talk to an interdisciplinary audience of around 20 participants. The talk connects her research on AI, social interaction, and human behavior with broader discussions at the Institute for Advanced Study.

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### **Inês Terrucha also gave lightning talk at ma+be 2026**

Inês Terrucha gave a lightning talk at the Machine and Behavior conference. Her submission with Nils Köbis, “All Agents, All Dilemmas, Everything, All at Once! A Mega-Study on Delegation to AI in Social Dilemmas,” was selected from the best poster submissions.

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### **Nils Weitzel at PalMod International Open Science Conference**

Nils Weitzel gave an invited talk at the PalMod International Open Science Conference “Lessons for next-generation Earth system science” in Bremen. His talk focused on spatial patterns of temperature, hydroclimate, and vegetation variability across timescales.

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### **Ivan Habernal gave keynote at LREC workshop**

Ivan Habernal gave a keynote talk at an LREC workshop connected to privacy, anonymization, and legal and ethical issues in language technologies.

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### **Ivan Habernal gave invited talk at CALD-pseudo 2026**

On 12 May, Ivan Habernal gave an invited talk at CALD-pseudo 2026 in Palma de Mallorca. His talk, “Privacy and anonymization in NLP: Are we barking up the wrong tree?”, addressed sensitive data, anonymization, and the assumptions behind current privacy practices in language processing.

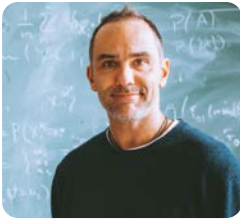
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### **Ivan Habernal co-organizes Privacy in NLP workshop at ACL 2026**

Ivan Habernal co-organizes the Seventh Workshop on Privacy in Natural Language Processing, co-located with ACL 2026 in San Diego. The workshop addresses privacy challenges in one of the most important international conferences for NLP.

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# Calls, Events & Community Notes



## Thomas Alexander Gerds visits TU Dortmund for lecture on causal inference

Doctoral researcher Maria Thurow, from Markus Pauly's chair and the RC Trust Graduate School, invited biostatistician Thomas Alexander Gerds from the University of Copenhagen to TU Dortmund. His lecture "Causal Inference in Continuous Time" will take place on 10 June and focuses on statistical methods for dynamic health data.

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## ICRN Forum 2026 to be hosted in Duisburg

Oksana Huss and Nils Köbis are involved in the International Corruption Research Network. The 10th ICRN Forum 2026 will be jointly hosted by the Research Center Trustworthy Data Science at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the University of Cologne in Duisburg from 25 to 27 June 2026.

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## DoDaS Young Researchers Colloquium

The DoDaS Young Researchers Colloquium will take place in the summer semester on 23 June and 21 July, 16:00–18:00. The format invites doctoral researchers, postdocs, young project leaders, and ambitious master's students to present work in progress, discuss open problems, and connect across research interests.

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## Mensch und Computer 2026 comes to Duisburg

The international HCI conference *Mensch und Computer 2026* will take place from 30 August to 2 September at the University of Duisburg-Essen, Campus Duisburg. The conference is expected to bring together 600 to 800 participants from academia and industry.

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Thank you for reading. We hope you enjoy exploring these highlights from RC Trust.

