

NEUROSCIENCE NEWSLETTER

Georg-August-Universität Göttingen · International Max Planck Research School



JULY
2026

The Neuroscience Program...

... in celebration and transition.

The 25th anniversary of the Molecular Biology and Neurosciences Programs in September has been the undisputed highlight of our program in 2025. The event brought more than 500 students, alumni and faculty members to Göttingen, celebrating our programs by looking back with friends and colleagues.

The anniversary ceremony on Friday was preceded by a keynote lecture from Nobel Laureate R. Schekman and featured contributions from the University's president A. Schölmerich, UMG Board Spokesperson W. Brück, Lower Saxony's Minister for Science and Culture F. Mohrs, and the president of the Max Planck Society (MPG) P. Cramer highlighting the impact of both programs in the development of doctoral education in Göttingen. Personal reflections on the programs have been shared by the IMPRSs spokespersons M. Rodnina and N. Brose as well as students and alumni inspiring many lively discussions during the reception dinner.

The Alumni Career Forum on Saturday hosted more than 150 alumni from both programs showcasing the various career paths lying ahead of current stu-

dents. Vision talks and a panel discussion addressed the challenges of the next generation before the evening program included musical contributions as well as very personal experiences and anecdotes from various participants.

The anniversary weekend was concluded by an Alumni Brunch which sparked an initiative to further professionalise the extraordinary alumni network of our programs and, ultimately, in founding the **Molecular Biology And Neurosciences Göttingen Alumni Organization (MANGO, see p. 36)**. Several regional alumni chapters have been started over the past year in the UK, NE USA and Munich as well as, most recently, Berlin and SW Germany. The first annual meeting of MANGO is scheduled for 11-12 Sep. 2026 in Göttingen – consider joining if you have not registered yet!

Following this meeting, the Neurosciences Program will welcome the first cohort of MSc students not supported by a stipend from the MPG, representing a pivotal moment in the development of our program. We also welcome several new faculty members and students that joined the program as part

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of the merger with the GGNB Program Cellular and Molecular Physiology of the Brain (CMPB) (see p. 11). After the very first intake to the Neurosciences Program in 2000, the former CMPB students will be the first graduates not taking part in the MSc program, pioneering the new possibility to join the program for doctoral studies directly.

Looking back on the success of the Molecular Biology and Neurosciences programs during the 25th anniversary highlighted the importance of continuing to further develop and support the Neurosciences Program while addressing future challenges.

by Jonas Barth



Building the first Auditory Synapse

How a single synaptic adhesion molecule coordinates hearing by Nare Karagulyan

Hearing in mammals relies on precision wiring inside the inner ear. In the cochlea, specialised sensory receptor inner hair cells (IHCs) transform mechanical sound vibrations into electrical signals. These signals are then handed off to spiral ganglion neurons (SGNs), which carry the auditory signal directly to the brain. This flawless handoff relies on a highly specialised junction called a ribbon synapse between IHCs and SGNs. Here, every presynaptic structure inside the IHC must tightly align with the postsynaptic receptors on the neuron. If this structural bridge breaks, the result is hearing impairment.

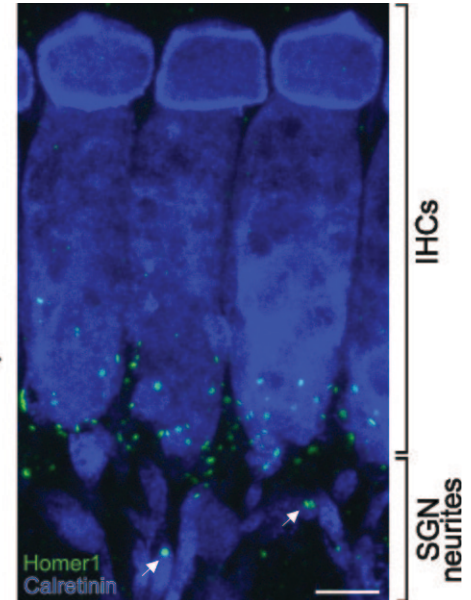


Figure: Mice lacking RTN4RL2 exhibit hearing impairment and synaptic defects at the first auditory synapse. Confocal microscopy image of the RTN4RL2 KO cochlea stained to visualise IHCs and SGN neurites (Calretinin, blue), as well as PSDs (Homer1, green). White arrows highlight "orphan" postsynaptic densities on SGN neurites that seem to have failed to engage the IHCs. Scale bar: 5 μ m.

The exact molecular players involved in making the synapse between IHCs and SGNs are poorly understood. In the brain's standard, conventional synapses, this assembly is usually managed by well-known synaptic adhesion proteins like neuroligins and neuroligins. While a few other specialised molecules have been linked to cochlear connectivity, the role of the synaptic adhesion molecule RTN4RL2 had remained unknown until now.

Our paper, published recently in *eLife* (Karagulyan et al., 2025), managed to identify RTN4RL2 as a key molecular player behind the precise structural blueprint of the IHC-SGN synapse. The

research was a collaborative effort involving the Moser group at the Institute for Auditory Neuroscience (University Medical Center Göttingen), the Hua group at the Shanghai Institute of Preci-

PhD- and MSc-related publications 2025 (bold: students; underlined: faculty members)

Ainatzis S, Kaufmann SV, Silbern I, **Georgiev SV**, Lorenz S, Rizzoli SO, Urlaub H (2025) Ca²⁺-Triggered (de)ubiquitination Events in Synapses. *Molecular and Cellular Proteomics* 24(4):100946

Amann LK, Casasnovas V, Gail A (2025) Visual target and task-critical feedback uncertainty impair different stages of reach planning in motor cortex. *Nature Communications* 16(1):3372

Antal A, **Ramasawmy P**, Rubal-Otero L, Chakalov I, Rodríguez MA, Hunold A, Schellhorn K, Carrillo-de-la-Peña MT (2025) PAINLESS: protocol for a triple-blinded randomized sham-controlled multicenter trial of home-based transcranial electrical stimulation for pain management in patients with cancer. *BMC Cancer* 25(1):1692

Büschgens L, Hempel N, **Methi A**, Fischer A, Siering N, Piepkorn L, Jahn O, Meyer T, Wirths O (2025) Behavioral assessment and gene expression changes in a mouse model with dysfunctional STAT1 signaling. *Cell Communication and Signaling* 23(1):305

Chen H, Cretu C, **Trebilcock A**, **Evdokimova N**, Babai N, Feldmann L, Leidner F, Benseler F, Mutschall S, **Esch K**, Szabo CZK, Pena V, Pape C, Grubmüller H, Strenzke N, Brose N, Wichmann C, Preobraschenski J, Moser T (2025) Structure and function of otoferlin, a synaptic protein of sensory hair cells essential for hearing. *Science Advances* 11(42)

Building the first Auditory Synapse (continued)

sion Medicine, and the Bandtlow group at the Medical University of Innsbruck.

Decoupled Connections and "Orphan" Postsynaptic Densities:

To discover how RTN4RL2 influences our hearing, we studied genetically engineered mice lacking the molecule RTN4RL2 (RTN4RL2 KO). First, we checked the expression of RTN4RL2 in the cochlea and found that it is expressed in both IHCs and SGNs. Upon deletion of the molecule, we observed something striking: "orphan" postsynaptic densities (PSDs) around IHCs that did not seem to engage the cell (Figure). While this was not accompanied by a major decrease in the total synapse number per IHC, presynaptic ribbons showed increased sizes, and the juxtaposing PSDs, contrary, were reduced in size compared to the wild-type mice.

When we peered closer using advanced immunostaining and serial block-face scanning electron microscopy, we found structural chaos at the ribbon synapses: in addition to the SGN neurites contacting IHCs, there were neurites that failed to reach and engage the IHCs. This result provided a plausible explanation

for the observed "orphan" PSDs.

The Vanishing Receptors: The most dramatic structural changes occurred among the AMPA receptors of SGNs, which catch the incoming glutamate signal released by the IHCs. Normally, mature auditory synapses commonly express GluA2 and GluA3 receptor subunits. In the mice lacking RTN4RL2, we discovered a severe reduction in these vital GluA2/3 receptor patches, which was also not compensated by GluA4 receptor subunits. The few receptor

patches that remained were disorganised and completely failed to align with the presynaptic ribbons. Interestingly, when we checked the mRNA levels of GluA2 (*Gria2*) in SGNs, we saw that the neurons were still actively expressing *Gria2*, indicating that the glutamate receptor subunit simply couldn't anchor at the synapse due to the lack of RTN4RL2.

Physiological Changes: In addition to the pre- and postsynaptic structural changes, we found that RTN4RL2 deletion affects voltage-gated calcium channels on

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Building the first Auditory Synapse (continued)

the presynaptic side of the IHC. These channels are essential for hearing, acting as the triggers for glutamate release. In mice lacking RTN4RL2, calcium channels required significantly more electrical stimulation just to activate. *In vivo*, this impaired activation likely translates to decreased glutamate release and elevated hearing thresholds.

To see how the combination of the observed structural and physiological defects impacted actual hearing, we turned to *in vivo* Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) recordings. An ABR measures the synchronised electrical firing of neurons as an auditory signal journeys along different relay stations from the ear to

the brain stem. The results were stark: the mutant mice exhibited heavily increased hearing thresholds, requiring significantly louder sounds to evoke a coordinated neural response.

Why This Matters: We show that RTN4RL2 is a required puzzle piece that coordinates the synaptic assembly between sensory receptor IHCs and primary auditory afferent SGNs, and its deletion results in a major hearing impairment.

This discovery holds exciting, long-term therapeutic potential. Many forms of human hearing loss, including age-related hearing decline and noise-induced trauma, stem not from the death of hair

cells themselves, but from the gradual uncoupling of these very synapses. By understanding the molecular glue that keeps our auditory pathways aligned, future gene therapies and molecular treatments could target molecules like RTN4RL2 to repair broken circuits.

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Counting cells in the mouse CNS

How a side project for whole-brain mapping turned into the LightSuite pipeline by *Dimokratis Karamanlis*

My postdoc project studies how the mouse brain integrates social information into decisions. When two mice perform a visual decision-making task in front of one another, one will sometimes copy the other's choice, and it does so most often when the sensory evidence is weak. In the search for neural correlates of such socially-driven decisions, the literature pointed us to the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC), so we began recording there. But modern

systems neuroscience suggests that task-relevant signals show up across many regions, not just the ones a textbook would predict. Before committing years of recordings to the mPFC, we wanted an unbiased map of where activity differs between social and solo decisions.

That is why we turned to whole-brain c-Fos mapping using the TRAP2 system¹, which permanently labels neurons active during a defined time window. By

comparing TRAP-labelled brains from mice performing the task alone or with a partner, we can survey activity brain-wide and build a case for targeting specific regions. To read out labelled cells everywhere, we first make the whole brain transparent through tissue clearing, then image it intact. Lightsheet microscopy makes this practical: it illuminates an entire plane at once instead of scanning point by point, so a full brain is captured in hours rather than

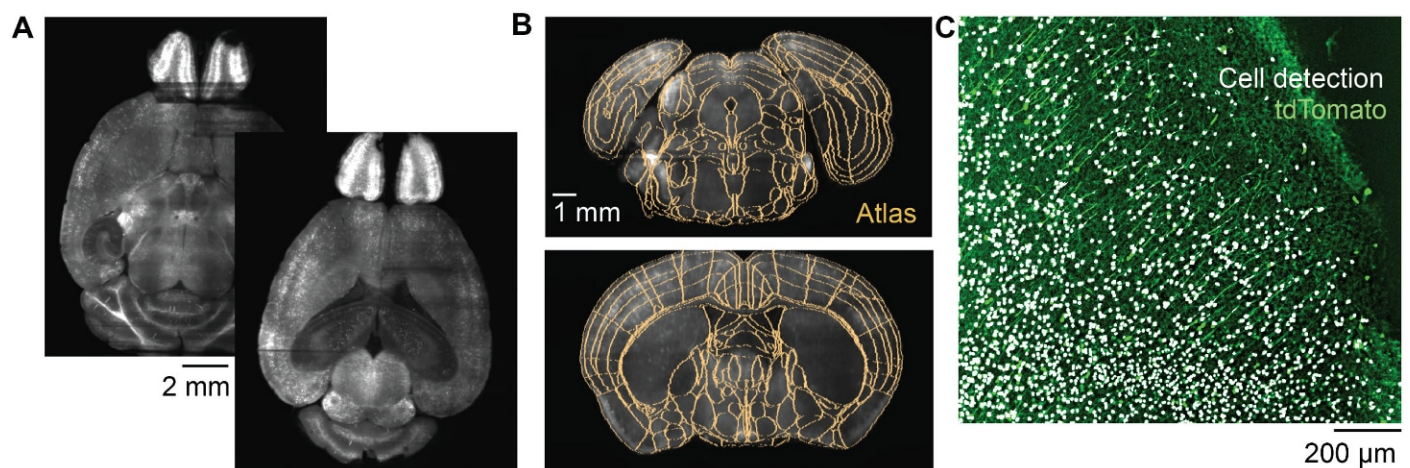


Figure: **A** Two example axial slices from a whole-brain lightsheet scan. The LightSuite pipeline performs high-throughput analysis of 3D lightsheet microscopy data, with 3D registration to the Allen Mouse Brain Atlas (**B**) and automated cell detection (**C**).

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Counting cells in the mouse CNS (continued)

days, and with far less photobleaching. Nothing is physically cut, so no tissue is lost between sections: the brain stays a single, continuous 3D volume of nearly half a terabyte. Every such volume must be registered to a standard atlas² and searched for individual cells. Since the mapping is only one arm of a larger project, the analysis had to be fast and cheap to run.

My first move was to use what already existed. A rotation student and I tested several registration pipelines, and none survived contact with our samples. A cracked olfactory bulb or a missing cerebellum was enough to throw off the alignment, and with it two months of behavioural training. The detection tools were no better: they either demanded high-memory servers or were too slow to sweep a whole brain. I had no computational collaborators and an ordinary desktop workstation, not a server, not a cluster, and nowhere near enough memory to hold a full brain at once. So, one brain at a time, as each new sample came off the microscope, I built my own pipeline. That became LightSuite.

LightSuite registers cleared brains to standard atlases and detects labelled cells across regions, end to end. The hardest part is registration. Fitting an atlas to a cleared brain is a nonlinear optimisation problem, and a poor initialisation can cause the algorithm to warp the atlas in the wrong places, bending structures into regions where they do not belong. LightSuite sidesteps this by initialising from a 3D point cloud rather than raw image similarity: the software finds points of high structural saliency across the sample, assembles them into a cloud, and matches that cloud to the atlas with Bayesian coherent point drift. Because the algorithm is robust against outliers, local damage no longer breaks the fit. The final registration then combines both the point-cloud initialisation and image-intensity information in a single B-spline optimisation.

Where the automated fit falls short, the user corrects it by placing corresponding landmarks on the sample and the atlas. Choosing landmarks in a 3D volume sounds daunting, but this is the part I most want to stress: LightSuite makes it simple. The interface uses

active learning to present the most informative slices, and the landmarks themselves are visually obvious once the right slice is in front of you. I say this as someone who came to whole-brain work from the retina, with essentially no background in brain-wide anatomy: if I could place these points reliably, an inexperienced user can too. Benchmarked against brainreg³, an established automated tool, LightSuite gave higher pairwise correlations of regional fluorescence and cell counts across animals.

For cell detection, I borrowed an idea from extracellular electrophysiology. Spike sorters pull candidate spike events out of a noisy voltage trace by band-pass filtering and thresholding on signal-to-noise. LightSuite does the same thing at the scale of cell bodies: it band-pass filters the 3D volume, converts raw intensities into signal-to-background ratios, and picks out local maxima. That conversion is what lets detection hold up across regions where background fluorescence varies three-fold. The work runs in GPU batches sized to fit in memory, and a small

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Counting cells in the mouse CNS (continued)

convolutional network clears out false positives from bubble edges and stray neurites. Against Cellpose⁴, a widely used segmentation tool, LightSuite runs roughly 600 times faster per batch and produces more reproducible detections.

The pipeline then outgrew its original purpose. A collaboration within our lab prompted a slice module for conventional wide-field microscopy, which orders serial sections, aligns them, and reassembles them into a 3D volume in atlas coordinates, bridging classical histology and whole-brain analytics. A spinal-cord module grew out of a conversation at the mesoSPIM symposium in Zurich. Cleared cords bend and twist severely, and no general registration tool could handle them. That exchange turned into a collaboration, and I extended LightSuite to virtually straighten spinal-cord samples before registering them to an atlas. Although LightSuite was built around the Allen Mouse Brain Atlas, the framework is atlas-agnostic: any reference volume and annotation can be plugged in, making it straightforward to extend to other species or atlas versions.

LightSuite is freely available at github.com/dimokaramanlis/LightSuite. If you work with cleared tissue or brain-wide imaging, give it a try!

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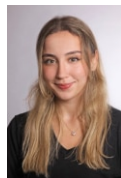
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Master's class of 2025/26



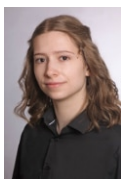
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<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700847.html>

Master's class of 2025/26 (continued)



Subean Min
South Korea
Ewha Womans University, South Korea
BSc in Life Sciences, Brain & Cognitive Sciences
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700848.html>



Thomas Tsiopanis
Cyprus
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece
BSc in Biology
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700853.html>



Mireia Salut Puig-Segui
Spain
Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain
BSc in Biotechnology
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700849.html>



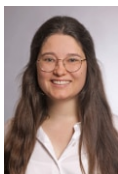
Yuxiao Wu
P.R. China
ShanghaiTech University, P.R. China
BSc in Biological Science
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700854.html>



Carlos Angel Ruelas Montes
Mexico
University of Guadalajara, Mexico
BSc in Biology
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700850.html>



Nikhil Yadav
India
Tilburg University, Netherlands
BSc in Cognitive Science & Artificial Intelligence
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700855.html>



Anna Ryschka
Germany
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg, Germany
BSc in Psychology
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700851.html>



Amy Zhang
United Kingdom
University of Bristol, United Kingdom
BSc in Neuroscience and Psychology
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700856.html>



Gaia Serra
Italy
University of Padua, Italy
BSc in Cognitive Psychology & Psychobiology
<https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/700852.html>

Application Statistics 2025

In the year 2025, the Neuroscience program received 610 applications from 73 countries.

Germany	46
other Western Europe	48
Eastern Europe	21
North America	23
Central/South America	25

North Africa	25
Central/South Africa	31
Asia / Near East	161
Central Asia / Far East	229
Australia	1

PhD projects started in 2025/2026



Mohamed Alebeed

The noradrenergic system control of neural activity in the brain
Emilie Macé, Simon Weigert (extern), Oliver Barnstedt



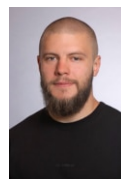
Stergios Kolovos

Mapping glial dysfunction of progression in Multiple Sclerosis
Martin Weber, Christine Stadelmann-Nessler, Lukas Cyganek



Damayanti Dasgupta

Cellular and Circuit Mechanisms of Brain-wide Chemosensory Valence Encoding
Thomas Frank, Tim Gollisch, Viola Priesemann



Andrii Lysenko

Neurobiology and Psychology of War Trauma: A Prospective Study of PTSD
Marcella Lydia Woud, Peter Dechent, Igor Kagan



Burak Irfan Göloğlu

The role of OVOL2 in early brain development
Michael Heide, Gregor Bucher, Maria Patapia Zafeiriou



Bohan Meng

Molecular physiology of sound intensity encoding
Tobias Moser, Valentin Nägerl, Nils Brose



Yerin Kim

Reciprocal Neuron-Microglia Signaling: Network Activity & Functional Microglia States
Nils Brose, Thomas Dresbach, Anne Schäfer



Candela Ximénez de Olaso Coronado

Decoding high-level action goals in free moving *Rhesus macaques*
Alexander Gail, Hansjörg Scherberger, Andrew Lehr

Neurosciences Program Changes

The Scientific Advisory Board of the Göttingen Graduate Center for Neurosciences, Biophysics and Molecular Life Sciences (GGNB) suggested during its visit in 2024 to consolidate the program structure within GGNB to decrease the number of programs. Several GGNB programs have become very specialised and thereby comparably small. To consolidate the program sizes, the GGNB programs *Microbiology and Biochemistry*, *Genes in Development, Disease and Evolution*, *EIDIS*, and *PROTECT* will be closed and merged with the programs *Biomolecules: Structure – Function – Dynamics* and *Molecular Biology of Cells* (renamed to *Cells and Organisms: From Genes to Evolution*) resulting in two pro-

grams with a clear thematic focus and appropriate number of students. Additionally, and more relevant to our program, the *Molecular Physiology of the Brain (CMPB)* program merged with our *MSc/PhD Program Neurosciences*: All members of CMPB, faculty and students alike, could opt for joining the Neurosciences program while CMPB will be closed. Even though the two programs had a very large overlap in faculty members, some former CMPB members have joined our faculty in 2025 (see p.14).

Additionally, several former CMPB doctoral students officially changed from CMPB to Neurosciences over the winter semester 2025/26, and became full

members of our program (see next page). Students from both programs have been invited to activities organised by each of the programs (such as Culture Nights and CMPB seminars) over the course of the last year to get to know each other and explore various networking formats. The Neurosciences PhD Retreat 2026 served as a great opportunity to further include the new program members into our community. The student representatives will continue to organise activities bringing the students of the program together and boost the integration of all new students in our program.

Additionally, the admission requirements for the new program have been

Neurosciences Program Changes (continued)

adapted: In the past, completion of the intensive MSc program was mandatory to enter the Neurosciences Program. Doctoral studies could only be started after the intensive year has been passed. After the merger of the programs, qualified applicants with an MSc degree might be able to directly join the program for the doctoral studies. Additionally, students applying directly to the departments of our faculty mem-

bers will be able to join our program without participating in the selection process of the MSc Program. The candidates will be assessed by an admission panel consisting of members of the Neuroscience Program Committee instead.

A major challenge of this new possibility will be to integrate new incoming PhD students into the Neuro family: While the large majority of our students

will get to know each other very well during the MSc year, some students will join for the PhD directly and have to be “admitted” into a well-established group structure. The Culture Nights and other social and scientific activities organised by members of our program will contribute to mastering this challenge and welcoming new members in our fast-growing network.

by Jonas Barth

PhD projects of former CMPB students



Angelika Sabine Bader

Establishing waste clearance markers of the glymphatic system associated with cognitive impairment
Mathias Bähr, Peter Dechent, Dagmar Krefting



Ka Yin Law

Discovery and Characterization of Synaptic Microproteins
Olaf Jahn, Silvio Rizzoli, Christine Stadelmann-Nessler



Sarthak Banerjee

Dissecting the molecular and ultrastructural organization of cholecystokinin-releasing enteroendocrine cells in the gut
Nils Brose, Thomas Dresbach, Hauke Werner



Lisa Louws

Unravelling a Tick's Mind: Neural Architecture and Sensory Mapping of the Ixodid Synganglion
Carola Städele, Gregor Bucher, Ralf Heinrich



Sushovan Chanda

Deep Learning Tools for Protein Identification and Reconstruction in Super-Resolution Fluorescence Imaging
Silvio Rizzoli, Thomas Dresbach, Constantin Pape



Nesrine Melliti

Investigation of the Interaction between Basal Ganglia Loops and Cerebellar Network in the 6-OHDA Model of Idiopathic Parkinson's syndrome
Christoph van Riesen, Tiago Outeiro, Silvio Rizzoli



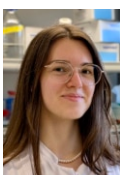
Sophia Hartmann

Deciphering the Multi-Scale Dynamics of Synapses
Silvio Rizzoli, Carolin Wichmann, Stefan Jakobs



Magdeline Sanjana Ira Nathan

Diagnostics and function of protein aggregates involved in neurodegeneration
Christian Griesinger, Tiago Outeiro, Jeong Seop Rhee



Yevheniia Kyriachenko

Biological fluid derived Extracellular Vesicle Proteome as a Potential Biomarker for Diagnosis and Prognosis of Parkinson's Disease
Brit Mollenhauer, Tiago Outeiro, Henning Urlaub



Yusheng Tan

Deorphanization and Functional Characterization of Olfactory Receptors in Ticks: Unraveling the Molecular Basis of Host Detection
Carola Städele, Ernst Wimmer, Gregor Bucher

Students

Graduated

The Masters of 2025

**Laura Alacán Ricardo**

Visual attention in patients with Parkinson's disease: a behavioral and EEG study
Melanie Wilke

**Ece idil**

Representation of Reach Goals in Variable Workspaces
Alexander Gail

**Ruchi Modgekar**

Investigating signal transduction and mitochondrial dynamics in vestibular hair cells
Tina Pangrsic

**Mohamed Alebeed**

Functional characterization of synapse localized microRNAs
André Fischer

**Sophie Köber**

Role of Orexin / Hypocretin circuitry on ocular dominance plasticity and visual signals in the visual cortex of adolescent mice
Siegrid Löwel

**Malak Nasr**

Why we see differently: neurophysiological fingerprints reflect inter-individual subjectivity of perceptual consciousness
Lucia Melloni (extern), Melanie Wilke

**Büşra Ayar**

Courtship Dynamics in Four *Drosophila* Species: Evolutionary Diversification of Mating Strategies
Jan Clemens

**Hannah Luksch**

Characterization of constructs for advanced spiral ganglion neuron activation by dual-color optogenetics
Tobias Moser

**Antonios Ntolkeras**

Enhancing NanoSIMS Resolution through Integration with Expansion Microscopy Techniques
Silvio O. Rizzoli

**Andrea Campos Perez**

Reshaping Representational Spaces through Statistical Learning Investigated with Intracranial Electroencephalography in Humans
Casper Schwiedrzik

**Andrii Lysenko**

The comprehensive impact of multiple factors on psychedelic experience outcomes
Igor Kagan

**Aruna Nyssanbay**

Detecting brain state changes during naturalistic free-viewing in humans
Susann Boretius

**Wing Sum "Blossom" Cheung**

Increasing Visual Cortex Plasticity by Inhibiting Synapse Stabilization
Oliver Schlüter

**Sage Martineau**

Structural studies of synaptic actin by cryo-electron tomography
Rubén Fernández-Busnadiego

**Ross Oglesby**

Exploring the Effects of Lithium on Glial Cells Using Multinuclear MRI
Susann Boretius

**Esther Grewe**

Large Scale Screening of Red-Shifted Green Algae *Channelrhodopsins* for Use in the Future Optical Cochlear Implant
Tobias Moser

**André Mendes Costa**

Non-invasive analysis of the heart-brain axis in zebrafish larvae
Thomas Frank

**Beatriz Rodrigues Apgaua**

Whole-Brain Dynamics Evoked by Somatosensory Stimulus in Awake and Anesthetized Mice
Emilie Macé

The Masters of 2025 (continued)



Shreshth Shekhar

Brain wide correlates for
motion perception in mice
Emilie Macé

The Doctors of 2025/26



Hebatallah Abdelrasol

Deciphering the effects
of alpha-synuclein aggregation in the physiology
of excitable cells
*Tiago Outeiro, Mathias Bähr,
Wolfram-Hubertus Zimmermann*



Svilen Georgiev

Astrocyte-neuron molecular sharing as a novel
mechanism of extracellular
matrix remodeling
Silvio Rizzoli, Thomas Dresbach, Nils Brose



Varsha Ramakrishna

Investigating visual coding
by retinal ganglion cells in
optogenetic models for vision restoration
*Tim Gollisch, Jochen Staiger,
Tobias Moser*

Honors and Awards

Nare Karagulyan and **Perianen (Krishna) Ramasawmy** have been awarded the prestigious *Otto Creutzfeldt Award*. The prize handed out every two years is recognising outstanding graduates of the MSc/PhD Program Neurosciences, who graduated with distinction in a field of basic research.



Summa cum laude distinction for his doctoral thesis has been awarded to **Svilen Georgiev**.

Congratulations!

Joining the program in 2024



Jan Huiskens joined the Faculty of Biology and Psychology with a Humboldt Professorship for Multiscale Biology in 2021. The Huiskens lab has developed and perfected non-invasive biomedical imaging techniques that offer unique possibilities for systematically studying developmental processes in living organisms. Advanced, customized light sheet microscopy (LSFM, SPIM) is the primary tool to study the heart, brain and developmental blueprint of zebrafish as well as other less known model organisms.

Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/671120.html>



Christoph Körber joined the Institute for Neuroanatomy at the UMG in 2025. He received his PhD from the University of Heidelberg in 2011 and continued there as postdoc and independent group leader at the Department of Functional Neuroanatomy. His research focuses on the synaptic processing of auditory signals in the auditory brainstem and the inferior colliculus and how the activity of distinct neuronal populations influences auditory perception and behaviour.

Further information: <https://neuroanatomie.umg.eu/en/neuroanatomie/translate-to-englisch-forschung/research-group-koerber/>



Anne Petzold joined the ENI Göttingen as an Emmy Noether Group Leader on Neural Circuits for Behavioral Adaptation in 2024. Specialized in single-photon microendoscopy, Anne and her team uncover how peripheral signals from the body inform subcortical networks of the brain to modulate essential innate behaviors according to physiological needs and environmental opportunities. Anne hosts this year's lab rotation seminars for the first-year students and has offered several lab rotation projects.

Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/699327.html>



Martin Weber is heading the group Translational Neuroinflammation at the Institute of Neuropathology of the UMG since 2018 and joined the Neurosciences Program in 2025. Martins's research focuses on the role of antigen-presenting cells and B cells in Multiple Sclerosis and its experimental models. His primary interest is to elucidate the functional diversity of different phenotypes of B cells and antigen-presenting cells and to understand how these findings can be harnessed to accelerate therapeutic innovation in Multiple Sclerosis.

Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/597498.html>



Maria Patapia Zafeiriou is an associate professor on "3D excitable cell networks" at the Clinic of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine with a research focus on the molecular mechanisms underlying electrically excitable cell network function and connectivity. With a special interest in the communication between brain and heart, her group investigates how common channelopathies can lead to network imbalance in both organs and how miscommunication due to autonomic dysregulation can lead to cardiac dysfunction. Employing new approach methodologies, her group envisions to contribute to the development of novel therapies for neuropediatric disorders (DZKJ) as well as optogenetic therapies for sensory function restoration (EKFS). Patapia hosted lab rotation seminars and has been advisor of MSc students and reviewer of MSc theses.

Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/646382.html>

In the course of the merger of the GGNB program Neurosciences and Cellular and Molecular Physiology of the Brain, the following **CMPB faculty members joined our Neuroscience Program**:

Eugenio Fornasiero, Group Leader, Dept. of Neurosensory Physiology. Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/640630.html>

Sebastian Kügler, Head of the Viral Vector Laboratory. Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/127758.html>

Michael Müller, Apl. Professor of Molecular Neurophysiology. Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/58011.html>

Valentin Nägerl, Managing Director of Center of Anatomy. Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/698723.html>

Christine Stadelmann-Nessler, Professor of Neuropathology. Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/88817.html>

Oliver Wirths, Apl. Professor, Division of Molecular Psychiatry. Further information: <https://www.uni-goettingen.de/en/529281.html>

Current Faculty Members

Georg August University

Prof. Gregor Bucher, Developmental Biology
 Prof. Hannelore Ehrenreich, Clinical Neuroscience
 Dr. Thomas Frank, Olfactory Memory & Behavior
 Prof. Martin Göpfert, Cellular Neurobiology
 Prof. Ralf Heinrich, Cellular Neurobiology
 Prof. Jan Huisken, Multiscale Biology
 Prof. Siegrid Löwel, Systems Neuroscience
 Prof. Annekathrin Schacht, Cognition, Emotion & Behavior

University Medical Center

Prof. Andrea Antal, Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation Lab
 Prof. Mathias Bähr, Neurology
 Prof. Thomas Bayer, Molecular Psychiatry
 Prof. Wolfgang Brück, Neuropathology
 Dr. Lukas Cyganek, Stem Cell Unit
 PD Dr. Peter Dechent, Cognitive Neurology
 Prof. Thomas Dresbach, Anatomy & Cell Biology
 Prof. Rubén Fernández-Busnadiego, Structural Cell Biology
 Prof. André Fischer, Epigenetics in Neurodegenerative Diseases
 Prof. Alexander Flügel, Neuroimmunology & Multiple Sclerosis
 Prof. Niels Focke, Clinical Neurophysiology
 Dr. Eugenio Fornasierp. Neuro-sensory Physiology
 Prof. Tim Friede, Medical Statistics
 Prof. Tim Gollisch, Sensory Processing in the Retina
 Prof. Christian Körber, Neuroanatomy of Sensory Systems *
 Dr. Sebastian Kügler, Neurology
 Prof. Emilie Macé, Brain-wide Networks
 Prof. Tobias Moser, Auditory Neuroscience & InnerEarLab
 Prof. Michael Müller, Neurophysiology
 Prof. Valentin Nägerl, Anatomy & Cell Biology
 Prof. Tiago Outeiro, Experimental Neurodegeneration
 Prof. Tina Pangršič, Experimental Otology *
 Prof. Silvio Rizzoli, Neuro- & Sensory Physiology
 Prof. Oliver Schlüter, Psychiatry & Psychotherapy
 Prof. Christine Stadelmann-Nessler, Neuropathology
 Prof. Jochen Staiger, Neuroanatomy
 Prof. Christian Tetzlaff, Computational Synaptic Physiology
 Prof. Martin Weber, Translational Neuroinflammation
 Prof. Carolin Wichmann, Molecular Ultrastructure of Synapses
 Prof. Melanie Wilke, Cognitive Neurology
 Prof. Fred S. Wouters, Molecular & Cellular Systems
 Dr. Maria Patapia Zafeiriou, Pharmacology & Toxicology

MPI for Multidisciplinary Sciences

Prof. Nils Brose, Molecular Neurobiology
 Prof. Gregor Eichele, Genes & Behaviour
 Prof. Stefan Hell, NanoBiophotonics
 Prof. Olaf Jahn, Neuroproteomics *
 Dr. Oleksiy Kovtun, Molec. Mechanisms of Membrane Trafficking
 Dr. Wiebke Möbius, Electron Microscopy Core Unit *
 Prof. Klaus-Armin Nave, Neurogenetics
 Prof. Luis Pardo, Oncophysiology
 Prof. Jeong Seop Rhee, Neurophysiology
 Prof. Michael Sereda, Translational Neurogenetics
 Prof. Hauke Werner, Neurochemistry Group
 PD Dr. Sonja Wojcik, Neurotransmitter Systems

MPI for Dynamics & Self-Organization

Prof. Viola Priesemann, Neural Systems Theory
 Prof. Fred Wolf, Theoretical Neurophysics

German Primate Center

Raymundo Báez-Mendoza, PhD, Social Neurobiology
 Prof. Susann Boretius, Functional Imaging Laboratory
 Prof. Alexander Gail, Sensorimotor Neuroscience & -prosthetics
 Dr. Michael Heide, Degenerative Diseases
 Prof. Marcus Jeschke, Cognitive Hearing in Primates
 Dr. Igor Kagan, Decision & Awareness Group
 Prof. Hansjörg Scherberger, Neurobiology
 Prof. Stefan Treue, Cognitive Neurosciences

European Neuroscience Institute

Dr. Oliver Barnstedt, Multiscale Circuit Analysis
 Brett Carter, Ph.D., Synaptic Physiology & Plasticity
 Prof. Jan Clemens, Neural Computation & Behavior
 Dr. Anne Petzold, Neural Circuits for Behavioural Adaptation
 Prof. Caspar Schwiedrzik, Neural Circuits & Cognition

* Associated Lecturer

An Ode to the People

Romanticising the first year of the Master's before it is even over by Amy Zhang

"I have been a stranger in a strange land" (Moses, Book of Exodus). I felt this entirely when I arrived in Göttingen in those first sunny days in September. There was little time to adjust to this quaint circular city before being thrust into the Horizons conference and the 25th anniversary celebrations. Life became a continuous cycle of introductions, scientific discussion, and free food.

On the 19th of September, I wrote in my journal, *"Today, I have been in Göttingen for two weeks. One more, and this will be the longest I have ever been outside of the UK. I have climbed mountains, listened to Nobel Prize winners, carried flowers, taken the wrong bus, laughed for no reason and cried for all the reasons. Everything is still so new, and I am constantly learning how it all works."* My displacement was both soothed and intensified during the 25th anniversary. I didn't know anyone, but I was repeatedly told that we would become like family. Or as Adeebah told me when I met her in German class, *"Welcome to the cult."*

The city is so small that you regularly bump into people from the program (my high score is four in one hour). Everyone is interconnected, and you start to wonder whether there isn't enough funding for new characters in the Göttingen universe. But despite spending so much time together during lectures and methods courses, we always had time for more. I browsed Saturday morning markets with Ayan, Frieda, and Louana, and infiltrated random parties with Yağmur and Florian.

In November, the days became shorter, and the nights grew longer. Classes started at 8:15 instead of 9am, and I could feel the difference of forty-five minutes in my bones. Even though we all walked through the forest, I almost never saw Ceylin, Carlos, Mireia and Diego on the way to university. Probably because I always left way too late, but it felt like a sighting of a rare bird whenever I bumped into them.

Gaia and I had the privilege of planning

the first Culture Night: A British Murder Mystery x Afternoon Tea. People took the *"Chavs and Aristocrats"* dress code seriously, and the dancefloor was flooded with tracksuits and blazers. I am grateful for all the actors that sabotaged and seduced each other, the bartenders serving Bailey's hot chocolate and baby Guinness shots, and Subean for letting us burn several scones in her oven.

December was a whimsical time, and we drank copious amounts of Glühwein across Germany. My favourite Christmas Market was actually on Nord Campus, where I saw my first Feuerzangerbowle, and I was given a Bratwurst ohne Bratwurst (a bread bun filled with crispy onions and ketchup). When the rain started, we huddled from tent to tent like penguins.

In January, I started my first lab rotation with Anna and Başak. We were there for each other, shouting over the noise of the fMRI machine and sighing softly when the analyses went wrong.



An Ode to the People (continued)

At the end of the month, I celebrated my birthday with a “B” theme, and everyone dressed creatively. From Eja’s Bee outfit to Brides, Bavarians, Bureaucrats and the cast of the Big Bang Theory, I felt so much gratitude for these Beautiful people.

When the snowed finally thawed, the Lunar New Year arrived. We spent hours before the Culture Night making dumplings and sticking Yuxiao’s well-crafted riddles around the room. In a spiritual sense, the Year of the Snake symbolised endings – the loss of everything that no longer served you, while the Year of the Horse symbolised beginnings – the complete unknown but having the courage to align with whatever was meant for you. It felt fitting to start afresh in a different country with different people, and even though I was ailed by homesickness, I felt better sharing hotpot in Kim’s flat and sweating from the kilograms of meat and vegetables we consumed.

One week later, we celebrated the end of the first lab rotation with cocktails. Chandra crafted up gin basil smashes, and he did more than smash the basil, as he violently attacked a bag of ice with a frying pan. The celebrations continued as Thomas planned a lovely weekend in Dresden and Leipzig



(Nikhil woke up at 4am to also go to Meissen before the rest of us had even woken up). We admired the Gothic architecture and ran for our lives to catch a train from platform 2 to 22 in less than five minutes.

Before Easter break, Carlos brought in an Osterlamm cake. It was a pure hearted thing, yet it did not stop me from ceremoniously decapitating it (the cake, not Carlos) before we all dug in. In my second lab rotation, I worked together with Eva, and we often discussed language and its constraints in our lunch breaks. I wondered how differently I would know the people on this program if I understood their native language.

We are taught about the brain from a molecular, cellular level up to a systems level for an integrated understanding of structure, function, and mechanisms. The same logic applies to my lived experience of this program. I have a huge library of photos, text messages, Google Calendar events, diary entries, poems, and BeReal (everyone knows what time it is). From vague appointments to small details of conversations, each level has been documented. Perhaps I want to understand everything, or perhaps I am addicted to collecting data.

In a mechanical sense, this article is a (partial) analysis of all the data I have collected from September. In a sentimental sense, this article is an ode to the people on this program. I could probably write a whole PhD thesis on all the memories I have attached to everyone, but I don’t think I should be allowed to do that.

So, what are my preliminary findings? Everyone is as multidisciplinary as the science, and their skillsets go far beyond their time in the lab. Nine months down the line, I’m still a stranger, but because of these people, it doesn’t feel so strange anymore.



Back in Göttingen for the 25th Anniversary

On coming back, finding inspiration and reconnecting 6 years after graduating by *Anna Liashenko*

The opening ceremony of our 25th anniversary, I sat down with my 2018 Neurosciences classmates. We'd all gone our own ways since graduation, but six years apart hadn't really changed how we were together. We were still us, ready to have fun and reflect on our studies and paths.

Six years ago I was on a train to Göttingen, nervously rehearsing answers for the interviews. Out of around 800 applicants, 20 of us were selected for the Neurosciences MSc. When I got an acceptance email, it felt like a door opening into a whole new world, and it indeed it was – Nobel laureates lecturing us, lab rotations across some of the best research groups in Europe, classmates from every continent who became some of the closest friends I'd make.

On 25th anniversary, the Aula on Friday afternoon was full. Randy Schekman opened the anniversary with a talk on genes, cells and discovery, drawing on the work that won him the 2013 Nobel for uncovering the molecular machinery of vesicle traffic, a process whose failure is important across neurological disease, diabetes and immune disorders. Marina Rodnina, Nils Brose and Martin Göpfert spoke about the program itself, and sitting in the room, I could feel how much work and passion goes into keeping a gradu-



ate program like this running for 25 years. And how lucky I am to be a part of it.

Unlike most of my cohort, I didn't stay for a PhD. I went back to Ukraine, joined an edtech startup, and started building products that translated what I'd learned about how the brain learns into how people actually learn online. That path eventually led me to Amazon in London, and from there into AI product work. It turns out the neuroscience training is transferable to a tech (AI) career more directly than it seems. When I'm reason-

ing about how a model handles a long context window, I'm thinking about working memory and attention. When I'm designing how an AI tool fits into some-one's workflow, I'm thinking about effort, motivation, and the feedback loops that get people to actually use the tool – productively and responsibly. Sure, none of that was in the syllabus formally, but the program taught me the basics of critical and scientific thinking which are highly valued and transferable to the tech industry.

And it wasn't just me who managed to transfer what the program taught them to an interesting career. The Alumni Career Forum included eight thematic clusters – impressive how widely the program's graduates have spread. I sat in Cluster A, Manager non-R&D, alongside people running biotechs, leading product teams and running projects – ultimately, doing things none of us could have predicted six years ago. The clusters next door covered industry research leadership, academia, consulting, self-em-



Back in Göttingen for the 25th Anniversary (continued)

ployment, science communication and patent law: every reasonable career a person with a Molbio/Neuroscience degree might end up in, and unconventional career paths, too.

The Vision Talks made the same point through specific careers, and all speakers were program alumni: Christian Stegmann (MB 2004) spoke about Absci, where generative AI designs antibody candidates *in silico* and pushes them toward the clinic, Bettina Goerner (MB 2005) spoke about Eterno Health, where the company is building the data infrastructure behind medical practices in Berlin, Florian Hauer (MB 2004) spoke about MyImmune and the ambition of decoding the adaptive immune system to predict who will respond to immunotherapy, and Yaisa Andrews-Zwilling (N 2000) and Daniel Zwilling (MB 2000), both from the program's very first cohort, came back from the US together – 25 years from their own graduation.

On Saturday night, Reinhard Jahn told the program's origin story, which is also partly his own, and Steffen Burkhardt walked us through the program's evolution from its early experimental years to where it sits today. It definitely sounded like they had fun sourcing the very

Anna LIASHENKO completed her MSc at the IMPRS for Neurosciences in Göttingen in 2020. Unlike most of her cohort, she did not pursue a PhD; instead, she returned to Ukraine to work in edtech, translating her neuroscience training into building learning products. She built an instructional design team in a Ukrainian startup, after which she moved to Germany to continue her career in edtech, and afterwards joined Amazon in London. She is now a Senior Product Management at GSK building a GenAI platform for scientists, having previously scaled generative AI to 60,000+ users at Amazon. In 2024, she co-founded a community for Ukrainian educators on AI upskilling, and has grown it to 1,200 members to date. In 2026, she and Vlad Dembrowskyi kicked off the UK alumni chapter for IMPRS Molecular Biology and Neurosciences alumni.



<https://www.linkedin.com/in/anna-liashenko/>

first students, and they continue having fun with the program until this very day, 25 years after it all started. Georg Hafner spoke about what a research life teaches you – in his case, it taught him to get out of the library and have fun. Important life skill! The evening ran close to 11pm, and I wouldn't have left a minute earlier. Across coffee breaks, late dinners, and conversations with classmates I hadn't seen since graduation day, I realised how many of these people had been quietly there all along, living lives I'd find fascinating, working on things I'd love to know

more about, often just a message (just one message!) away. The alumni network had been kind of dormant in my life, and the anniversary woke it up.

I want to keep it awake, and I know I'm not alone. A few months later, in February, Vladyslav Dembrowskyi and I held the first brunch of a new UK alumni chapter in London. Around the table sat people who graduated in 2001 chatting with recent grads, professors next to biotech folks next to product managers and medical writers. The studies were the same starting point for all of us, even when life turned out wildly differently afterwards. We're going to meet again soon, and I know for a fact, there're more alumni chapters emerging all over the world.

UK Chapter Meetup in London!

Six years out, the science I learned still serves me, the prestige of the program opens doors, and I am incredibly grateful for the friends I made and inspirations I found throughout the years of studies and afterwards.

Grateful for the experience so far and excited for what's next.



What a Magical Event

by Svilen Georgiev

It has been several months since the 25th Anniversary took place, and it still fills me with positive emotions when I think about it. As all attendees know, the celebration spanned three days.

It began with an official ceremony. Seeing the aula buzzing with people from all around the world, connected by a shared beginning in our careers, was truly energising. I must admit, I was extremely nervous before my brief speech. I remember clearly how, after the incredible lecture by Nobel Prize laureate Prof. Randy Schekman, my heart rate steadily rose to around 100 beats per minute. The wonderful performance by Prof. Nils Brose, revealing his unexpected rapping skills and accompanied by the marvellous choir,



helped me forget the stress for a few minutes. Once my part of the ceremony was over, I could finally relax and fully appreciate the event. That same evening, I reconnected with some of my lovely classmates and met many new people – it was a fantastic start to the celebrations.

The second day was particularly engaging. It began with an incredibly informative career fair, where we not only explored different professional paths but also met the people behind them – who they are, how they got there, and how they feel about their journeys. In every conversation, there was always a story or experience that connected us. The career fair was followed by a series of inspiring talks and discussions by alumni, covering

topics from drug development and AI security to startup management. A highlight of the evening, and perhaps the entire weekend, were the talks by Prof. Reinhard Jahn and Dr. Steffen Burkhardt. Both were deeply personal and moving. Learning about the history of both graduate schools through archival documents and photographs was fascinating, and the personal stories shared by Steffen about so many students were especially powerful. At that moment, I felt an overwhelming surge of emotions – difficult to put into words: gratitude, inspiration, and energy for the future, all intertwined with a strong connection to the past, both my own and that of our community.

The third day offered a more relaxed atmosphere with a brunch at Weender

What a Magical Event (continued)

Strandhaus. From the moment I entered, I could feel the excitement, laughter, and positive energy in the air. I am beyond grateful to be part of such a vibrant, kind, intelligent, and creative community. I would like to express my deepest thanks to Steffen, Jonas, Sandra, Kerstin, and all those who have contributed – whether I met you or not – to building and sustaining these two graduate schools over the years. Your dedication and passion will be remembered. I very much look forward to the 30th jubilee – hope to see you there!

Svilen GEORGIEV has been a PhD student in the lab of Prof. Silvio Rizzoli since 2022 and by the time this article is published, will have just earned his doctoral degree. He is looking for new exciting and challenging opportunities. If you have some, please do not hesitate to reach out to him. 😊

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Campus

Events

Anniversary Impressions



Anniversary Impressions (continued)



Caps Off, Minds On

The Master's Class of 2023 Graduates by *Andrea F. Campos-Pérez*

The Master's Class of 2023/24 celebrated its graduation on October 2, 2025, in a ceremony held at the Max Planck Institute for Multidisciplinary Sciences on the Faßberg campus.

The event brought together graduates, their families and friends, and members of the IMPRS Neuroscience community to celebrate the end of an unforgettable chapter. Filled with joy, gratitude, and excitement, the ceremony highlighted not only the academic achievements of the class but also the friendships and sense of community that grew throughout the Master's journey.

The ceremony began with welcoming remarks from our coordinator, Dr. Jonas Barth, followed by an inspiring speech from graduate Shreshth Shekhar, who reflected on his experience in the program and his hopes for the future. Prof. Silvio Rizzoli, selected by the graduating class to address the students, reminded us that this achievement marks not an end, but the beginning of scientific careers that will become increasingly challenging, rewarding, and fulfilling.



A retrospective of photographs then captured the moments that shaped our time together: from long study sessions and scientific meetings to travels, celebrations, and everyday life in Göttingen. These memories reminded us of the experiences that shaped us, not only as scientists, but also as friends.

Following the retrospective, each graduate received their diploma and graduation cap. We warmly congratulate the IMPRS Neuroscience MSc Class of 2023/24: Laura Alacán Ricardo, Mohammed A.S. Alebeed, Büşra Ayar, Andrea F. Campos-Pérez, Wing Sum "Blossom" Cheung, Esther Grewe, Ece İdil, Sophie



Caps Off, Minds On (continued)



Köber, Hannah Luksch, Andrii Lysenko, Sage Martineau, André Mendes Costa, Ruchi Modgekar, Malak Nasr, Antonios Ntolkeras, Aruna Y. Nyssanbay, Ross Oglesby, Beatriz Rodrigues Apgaua, and Shreshth Shekhar.

The ceremony also recognised three graduates who chose to continue their academic journey through the IMPRS Neuroscience PhD Fast Track program. Andrea Alcaraz Ramírez, Tsun-Kai Chang, and Anushka Deb were honoured with flowers and a well-deserved round of applause as they embark on the next stage of their scientific careers.

The celebration concluded with a heartfelt speech by graduate Andrea Campos, who expressed her gratitude to everyone who contributed to the Master's experience: from faculty, coordinators, and staff to friends, families, and classmates. She congratulated her fellow graduates and wished them success, curiosity, and fulfilment as they continue contributing to science and society.

The ceremony concluded with the introduction of the incoming Master's Class of 2025/26, reminding us how every journey begins. Not long ago, the

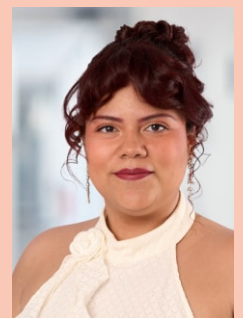
Class of 2023/24 also arrived in Göttingen carrying big dreams, a few suitcases, and the support of family, friends, and mentors. Now, it is their turn to begin writing their own story.

The new class also prepared an international buffet featuring dishes from their home countries, adding a warm and memorable touch to the celebration. On behalf of the graduating Class of 2023/24, we warmly welcome them

to the IMPRS Neuroscience family and wish them every success, lasting friendships, and a journey as meaningful and unforgettable as ours.

Congratulations to the Master's Class of 2023/24. May your curiosity continue to guide you, your passion inspire others, and your scientific journey be filled with discovery, collaboration, and purpose.

Andrea Fernanda CAMPOS-PÉREZ is a doctoral student of the IMPRS for Neurosciences at the University of Göttingen. She completed her MSc through the IMPRS for Neurosciences, where her research focused on how statistical learning reshapes neural representations in the human brain using intracranial electrophysiology. She is now a member of the Cognitive Neurobiology Group led by Prof. Caspar M. Schwiedrzik. Currently, her research investigates the neural and network mechanisms underlying statistical learning, predictive coding, and adaptive flexibility across species using electrophysiology and computational neuroscience approaches.



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From Lab Benches to Finish Lines

Reflections by the IMPRS Neurosciences Running Team by *IMPRS Neurosciences Running Team*

Nikhil Yadav: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Anna! I still remember the exact moment when she suggested jogging together to me and Thomas. I was thoughtful at the time of the past, for habit has never been my strength, but the novelty of it all pushed me to affirmation. In the evenings, when we were done with the our lectures and new learnings, jogging became a way of stepping outside into an easier and intimate kind of social world. Since then we have been running along the city walls, carrying with us memories of it in the rain, autumn leaves and snow. Doing the quarter marathon with Frieda and Thomas was not just about en-durance; but it felt like a culmination of that shared experience, especially when so many of our friends from the program came to support us. I hope to keep jogging also through my thesis time and eventually take part in a half marathon.

Thomas Tsiopanis: My personal story with running officially started during my internship, when I asked a German guy (is that a coincidence?) in my dorm, who was training for a marathon, to give me running tips. When I joined the program, running was one of the first common interests we discovered with my batch mates, which led to the creation of our jogging group. Running with my fellow students served as a way to socialize and exercise in the limited time we had after the lectures, courses and lab rotations: refreshing and rewarding moments. In order to keep the spark alive and commit to dedicate some time systematically for training, Frieda, Nikhil and I signed up for a ¼ marathon in Göttingen. Crossing the finish line of my first ¼ marathon holding hands with these admirable and dedicated people,



while receiving the support of the rest of the batch, as well as people who were kind enough to cheer for everyone passing in front of them, filled me with gratitude and pride. I hope that many races await for the team in the future!

Muhammad Reza “Eja” Hamid: I had been a runner even before joining the IMPRS running team. I was part of a cross-country team in high school, and I also ran quite frequently throughout my bachelor’s year. However, despite how often I ran, I always felt so slow. How can I run faster? How can I run longer? Every run felt like a competition, and disappointment followed as I checked the numbers on my running app. Without knowing it, I had slowly lost my joy in

running. Joining the IMPRS running group has steadily improved my relationship with running. Despite everyone having different running goals, the group always felt so accommodating. When we run together, we match our pace and chat all the way to the finish line. In the end, with the running group, running no longer feels like something I have to do, but something I want to do.

Carlos Ruelas: Running for me started as a way of rediscovering my hobbies. I come from a long-lasting lifestyle of killing yourself at work and between jobs to survive; my days would start at 6am and finished around 12 at night – or later –, and I would juggle activities related to my studies, teaching and then

From Lab Benches to Finish Lines (continued)

managing a business. Certainly, holding a lifestyle like that demands a lot of mental and physical energy, at a cost of your personal time and self-care. Now, running has slowly become something that I can rely on to pause from the routine, to pay attention to my body and breath, to enjoy nature, clear my mind and get me ready to start a new week. On top of that, running is an activity that I can share with friends, feel accompanied and supported; something to engine community building. Running with the IMPRS people had been doing a lot for me, to keep me focus, motivated, relentless and integrated. I'm glad that something started as self-exploration ended up being a life-changing activity, from which friends and colleagues from the program are a big part of it.

Tala Al-Rubaye: I started running after I went to a race to cheer for Frieda, Thomas, and Nikhil. The excitement I felt while cheering for them made me realise how much more exciting it would be if I actually participate and run, and so I started running. I think Frieda is my main



motivator because she has been a long-distance runner for some time now, and she encouraged me to also start once I shared with her that this is something I would like to do. I started training 3 weeks before my first quarter marathon (May 31st), and at first, I could barely run 3 kms without feeling exhausted. Then, I started running for longer distances as I built stamina, and it felt so thrilling and liberating to run 11 km in under an hour just days before the race. The race day was nothing short of incredible even though there were warnings of a rainstorm and it was pouring rain. I had an incredible time and it only motivated me to keep on running and participating in races.

Frieda Friedemann: When Jonas asked me whether I would like to contribute to this newsletter, we had just unpacked the first delivery of our running shirts. As you can see, it features a running neuron – illustrated by our incredibly talented batch mate Subean. The running neuron idea came from Ayan and Chandra. The final order and payment

was carried out by Jonas. Despite having relatively little to do with the making of the shirts, I felt beyond proud. For being part of this program, for this team effort we had just accomplished, and for crossing finish lines with my friends. Of course I was going to contribute! When I think about it, this program and long distance running actually have a lot in common: You prepare, you train, you get in, you run the race, you start out on a rush, are extremely excited, everything is amazing, eventually the distance / study material catches up to you, you get tired, and it seems to go on forever. But you stick to it. You keep running. Lecture, Lab Rotation, Short tests every Friday. You just don't give up. And then, all of the sudden, its June and you see the finish line. You realise: You're gonna make it. And the best part: You're not alone.

The authors are part of the IMPRS Molbio / Neuro batches 2025/26 and would like to welcome all runners, with or without experience, to join the IMPRS Neurosciences Running Team.



IMPRS Neurosciences Retreat in Weimar

by Klara Esch & Natalia Evdokimova

Small groups of students sit around on the sunny Bahnhof square, chatting idly while waiting for the train back to Göttingen. Surprisingly, it is only five minutes delayed. The end of the retreat always evokes mixed feelings: by now, the group feels close and familiar, yet soon we will step off the train and be thrown back into our busy PhD lives.

The 2026 retreat marks the 15th one since the first one back in 2012 in Hanover. Since then, IMPRS Neurosciences students visited Uslar, Hann. Münden, Lychen, Goslar, Spiekeroog, Bad Salzdetfurth, Hamburg, Bremen, Durbach, Berlin, and Leipzig. This time we went to Weimar, one of Germany's culturally rich cities located in Thuringia.

It is also the first retreat after the Cellular and Molecular Physiology of the Brain (CMPB) and the IMPRS Neuroscience program merged (Box 1). *"What I wanted to see and what worked very well – I didn't have to do anything – was the further integration of the CMPB students into the community"* says Jonas when we interview him and Sandra (Box 2) on our last day and prevent them from having their lunch on time. *"The connection between the students in the Master year is something they never experienced and I want to emphasise that they should be included. On a re-*



Figure 1: The guided tour through the city of Weimar.

treating, there's a natural advantage of 'inter-batch' communication. This has been a challenge before but it worked and is working now very nicely as well."

Due to organisational constraints, this year's retreat runs from Sunday to Tuesday. While the early Sunday start isn't everyone's favourite, any grumpiness quickly fades in the warm Weimar sunshine, helped along by coffee and snacks at the hotel. We kick things off by meeting alumni and alumnae. A special feature: this year all of them are from the same batch. *"Another part that I like a lot about the retreats is the alumni coming"* Jonas laughs, *"Giving the students the opportunity to interact with them and giving me the opportunity to reconnect. It's great to see how they develop, in which different directions they are going."* Both Olga Babaev and

Hugo Curces Solis now work for Boehringer Ingelheim as a Senior Medical Writer and Senior Scientist, respectively. Dennis Nestvogel shares insights into academic life as a Research Group Leader of the Neural Dynamics and Behaviour Group at the Max-Planck Institute of Psychiatry.

In the afternoon, we split into two groups. One explores Weimar on a guided city tour that takes them from the Goethe & Schiller statue in front of the historic theatre to the "Park an der Ilm" (Fig. 1). The other group visits the Buchenwald memorial, learning about



Figure 2: A pleasant surprise in form of an acrobatics session organised by Angelika.

Box 1: What will change after the IMPRS Neuroscience and CMBP merge?

- Both internal and external master students will be able to apply for the Neurosciences PhD program.
- Annual PhD retreats will serve as one of the platforms to integrate new PhD students into the community.
- Traditions of both programs are kept, so culture nights and regular PhD meetings will still be organised

IMPRS Neurosciences Retreat in Weimar (continued)

the stark contrast between Germany's crimes during the Nazi era directly next to Germany's cultural history represented by the city of Weimar.

Over the next two days, we learn about each other's PhD projects. While second and third year students give 20-minute progress reports, the first year students share their Master's thesis work and plans for their PhDs in shorter talks on Tuesday. Monday afternoon brings two lively and interactive poster sessions in a room quickly filled to capacity. For us, hearing about the wide range of projects and methods is inspiring and sparks new ideas and perspectives.

The long Monday of talks is pleasantly interrupted by a self-organised acrobatics workshop led by our fellow PhD student Angelika Bader (Fig. 2). We round off the night with a pub quiz hosted by Jonas and are happy to announce the winning team: The Drinking Table (Fig. 3, on the upper right)!



Figure 3: We enjoy the lively pub-quiz!

On Tuesday, before the final talks, we also elected our new PhD representatives: Andrea Campos Perez and Esther Grewe. Congratulations!

"My favourite thing about the retreat is interacting with the students and seeing how they connect and enjoy their time together", Sandra concludes.

Box 2: Interview highlights from Sandra and Jonas.



Jonas Barth
Scientific Coordinator

What was the best part about this retreat?

The poster session. It was very interactive and initiated lively discussions.

The retreats took place in many cities. Which location was your favourite?

Harnack-Haus in Berlin (historic campus that saw many scientific discoveries over the years)

What is the most important advice you can give to the current students after you have watched so many careers unfold?

Network! Everyone in every alumni talk says this. It will help you to find out your way in the highly diverse collection of career options that our program opens.



Sandra Drube
Administrative Coordinator

The acrobatics master class. It was new and refreshing.

The location doesn't make too much of a difference. The main point is being together.

Be true to yourself, listen to yourself, and find something that fits you. But also, be patient when things don't turn out exactly how you imagined because in the end it will all work out great.

NEURIZONS 2026

by Esther Grewe & André Mendes Costa

From the 19th to 22nd of May, Faßberg was buzzing with people attending the 12th edition of Neurizons. As a small, PhD student-organised conference, it was full of the fresh faces of early career researchers; it was delightful to see them taking centre stage.

A year earlier, 21 PhD students of the IMPRS for Neurosciences got together to start organising the 2026 edition of our biennial conference. From very early on, we focused on representation. We wanted to have at least equal representation of female speakers. We also wanted to bring speakers from outside Europe, USA and Canada. Finally, we wanted to provide opportunities for fellow early career researchers to present their work and connect with each other. We quickly realised that improving representation is not easy in the face of systemic issues. Family responsibilities were often a concern for female invitees, but never for their male counterparts. For speakers from further away, travel costs and potential visa issues made this difficult. Nevertheless, we were able to host a speaker from Mexico, one from Japan and one from



often underrepresented Portugal, and our speakers were gender-balanced.

The path to the conference was not without issues. Some funding sources were lacking, but a number of local RTGs, SFBs, research centres and graduate colleges very kindly stepped up to help us. Last-minute health issues hit some invitees, resulting in a cancelled career fair workshop and some talks being delivered via

Zoom. A bus strike was also announced two working days before the start of Neurizons. Fassberg is quite inaccessible without local busses, but our participants did not disappoint and still made it on those two days, arriving tired and out of breath, but still in a cheerful and positive mood.

Suddenly, it had been a year since we had started preparing for Neurizons, and it was time to see the fruits of our work! On the first day, the career fair, aimed at early career researchers, took place. We hosted professionals with careers in and out of academia, including data analysis, publishing and medical affairs, to talk about how they built their careers. Simultaneously, some participants attended a workshop focused on entering the non-academic job market. Afterwards, we went on a guided tour of the German Primate Centre, where the mar-mosets were a very cute highlight!

On the following day, our scientific talks started, with Frank Winkler delivering the keynote speech about cancer neuro-



NEURIZONS 2026 (continued)



science, mechanisms and potential therapies. This was followed by the clinical neuroscience session, featuring sensorimotor neuroprosthetics, auditory hallucinations, and retinal organoids in space, with Ilka Diester, Ana Pinheiro and Volker Busskamp. In the afternoon, the emerging techniques session took place, with Benjamin Judkewitz, Noa Lipstein and Pieter Roelfsema highlighting social communication in tiny fish, the molecular nature of synapses, and vision restoration. Noa Lipstein also told us that she and her husband met at Neurizons 2007 as participants, and now have a teenage daughter! A lovely Neurizons success story. To end the day, a poster session, preceded by 5-min-long Flash Talks, by three selected poster presenters, who were all MSc students! The participants voted on the best poster for this session, as well as the one on Thursday, which were both accompanied by wine and cheese and very good chats, to the point where we had to shoo people away in order to clean up!

On Thursday, we began with our systems and cognitive neuroscience session, which featured Helen Blank, Andreas Nieder and Uta Noppeney, speaking about sensory ambiguity, numerical

cognition and multisensory stimulus binding. The three went on to score our Young Scientist Talks, by PhD and post-doctoral researchers, which were a chance for them to showcase their research. In the afternoon, we welcomed two young PIs, our very own Frederic Römschied, and Ivana Jaric, who presented their research on social dynamics in flies, and the ovarian cycle and memory. The two then joined Andreas Nieder and Maria-Patapia Zafeiriou on a panel discussion about the future of animal experiments, which was moderated by Roman Stilling. In the evening, we hosted our conference dinner, with all the participants and many of the speakers, at the Deutsches Theater, which was a great celebration of the conference.

And then it was the last day! It started with our cellular and molecular neuroscience session, starring Michael Grange, Susana Castro Obregón and Christian Rosenmund and featuring electron microscopy and neurodegeneration, autophagy mechanisms, and synaptotagmins. In the theoretical and computational neuroscience session, we heard from Sheila Nirenberg, Jakub Vohryzek and Pascal Fries, about a drug with unexpected potential, brain state transition and visual

cortex synchronisation. After this, keynote speaker Yukie Nagai explored how computational models and developmental robotics can help us better understand the human mind and learning. With that done, it was time to close the conference! We handed out the Otto Creutzfeldt award to the best PhD graduates of the IMPRS for Neurosciences, Nare Karagulyan and Krishna Ramasawmy, as well as the poster prize to Niklas Alvar Laasch and Muhammad Reza Hamid, our very own IMPRS MSc student; we also awarded Shashwat Sridhar for his exciting Young Scientist Talk. Finally, our very kind sponsors generously gave away some exciting merch to participants by random draw. After the closing, many participants stayed around for a laid-back happy hour with snacks and drinks, to relax after a busy, fun-filled conference.

The organising team would like to thank everyone that helped bring Neurizons 2026 to life. There are way too many people to mention by name, but we would like to emphasise Jonas and Sandra from the IMPRS Neuroscience office and the ENI's Christiane Becker. With that, we bid you a tired but satisfied goodbye.

Here's to 2028 being even better!



'Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises' ¹

Some reflections on how geopolitics can influence lives and careers by *Marcin Barszczewski*

"Well, at 20 minutes to 5 we can now say the decision taken in 1975 by this country to join the Common Market has been reversed by this referendum to leave the EU" was not the message I wanted to hear early on June 24th 2016.

What followed afterwards were years of gloating along the lines of "The people have decided", "no more diktats of Brussels" followed by what continues in the UK to this day: never-ending recriminations, largely pointless debates, echo chamber politics and tribalism. What was clearly lacking was a moment of reflection on the fact that an incredibly complex issue – spanning countless layers of lives, identities, histories, economies, policies, mindsets, social classes and decades-old grievances should not, perhaps even must not be decided in a vote offering only a binary outcome.

And yet, there we were, early in the morning in June 2016. By then, I thought I

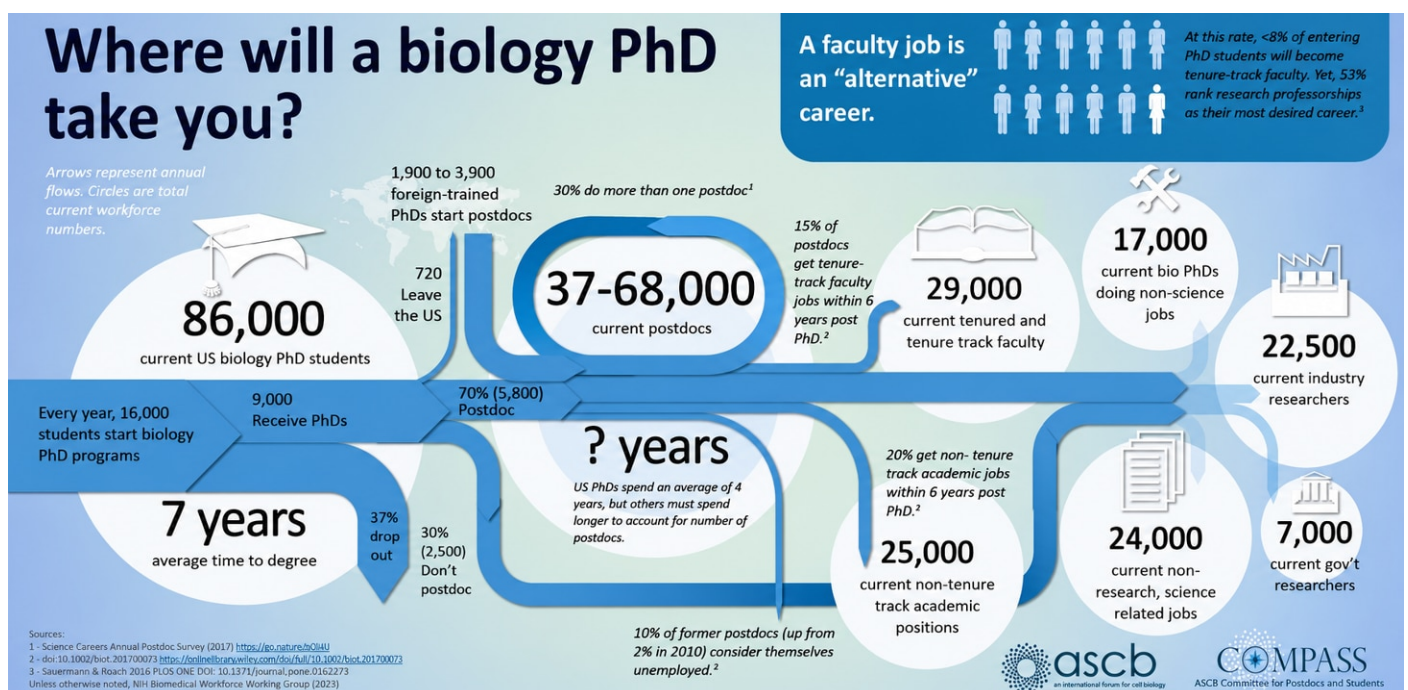
was on some sort of mid-life cruise control: my partner – from the MolBio program by the way, a cheeky four-year-old boy, a baby girl on her way into the best of worlds, a newly purchased house and last but not least, thoroughly amazing job at a camera company based in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

How did I get there, you may ask? This goes back to my time in Göttingen and the Neuroscience Program where I started back in 2000 and had the time of my life until my Gänseliesel smooch in July 2005. However, having started my PhD in late 2001, a couple of years later I realised that that I didn't fancy 15-hour long days in the lab and a significant portion of each weekend spent on PC12 cell passaging and transfection. On top of that, I started seeing regular updates from more determined/talented/lucky friends and colleagues showing that their often stellar publication record and/or scientific pedigree of their PhD

labs, were not always enough to secure a stable postdoc and, later, tenure-track role. Good-quality, current data on PhD students' employment pathways is difficult to obtain but the figure below seems a reasonable approximation².

More recent data from the US and Germany suggest that low- to mid- single-digit percentage of people starting PhD end up with a tenure track within 6 years after graduation, while over 50% listed professorship as their most desired career^{3, 4}.

This was an unexpected feeling for me; after all, many of us came to the program with lofty ideas of solving fundamental mysteries of nature or at least establishing a new research field. I abandoned these ambitions at some point and settled instead for free food after seminars and those canapés in the MPI-bpc canteen were indeed excellent.



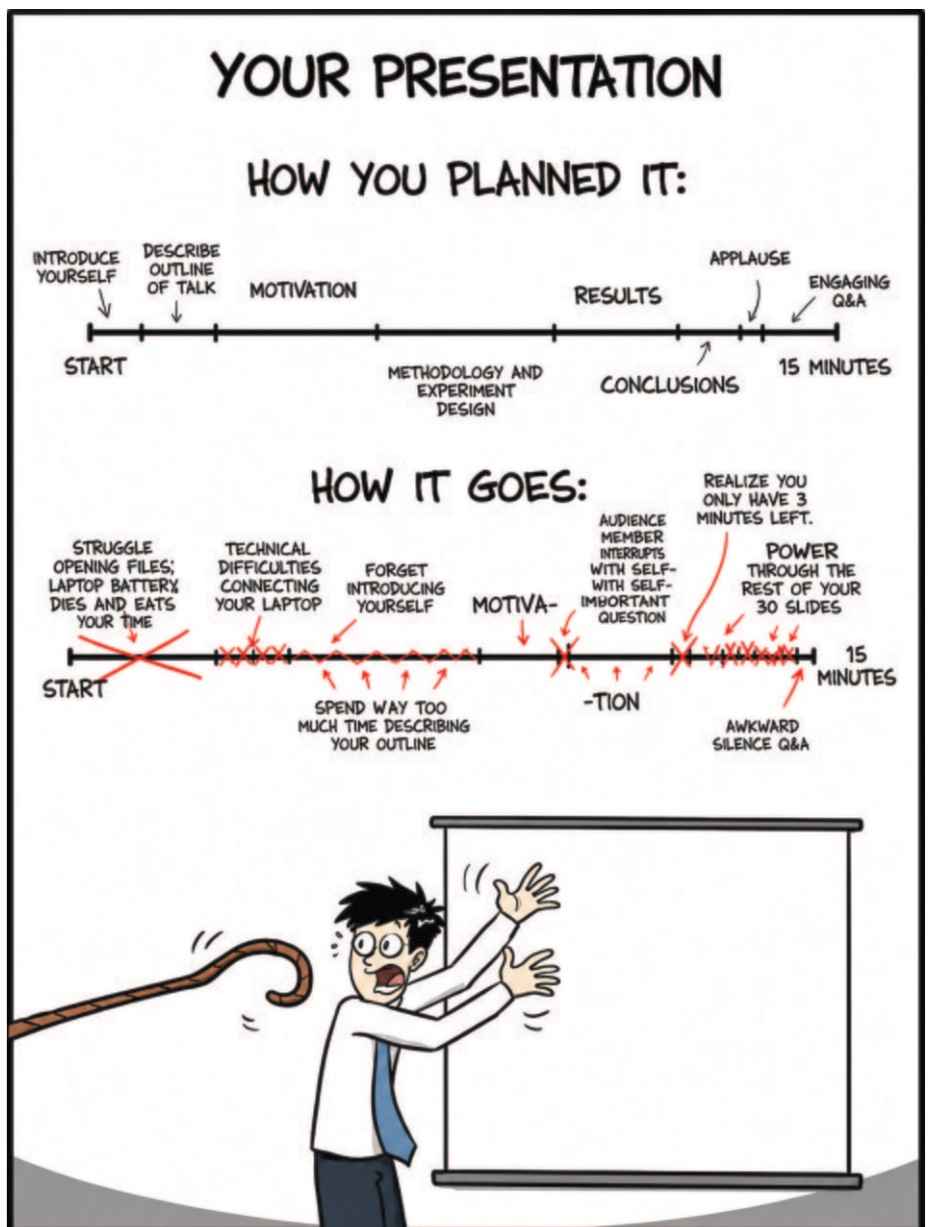
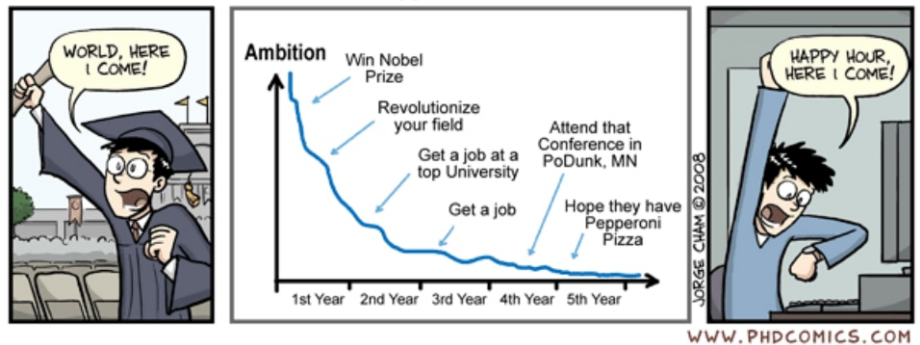
'Be not afraid. The isle is full of noises' ¹ (continued)

Food aside, such “an academia perception distortion field” was very much present throughout my PhD remained noticeable years later. What I mean is the existence of implicit and explicit biases towards staying in academia, alongside portraying careers outside it as falling short of expectations – or, in more extreme cases, demonising such career choices as selling oneself out or going over to the dark side (!). I recall many such conversations at our coffee machine. While it is entirely possible that they were impacted by Star Wars Episodes II and III coming out around that time, many were meant in earnest, often with an extra sprinkle of contempt.

For my part, I didn't know what to do after my graduation, apart from sleeping a lot and catching up on Game of Thrones books. I didn't want to pursue a series of postdocs while trying to figure out whether that was something I actually wanted. What I didn't realise until much later, after starting work for a Northern Irish company, was how many transferable skills we had gained during our PhD years. We all had regular PhD committee sessions, our very irregular catch-ups with our supervisor, countless seminars, poster sessions and presentations at conferences.

Some of us wrote or edited grant applications, reviewed manuscripts or visited the excellent mechanical workshop in the bowels of MPI-bpc to explain the need for a specialised microscope stage insert or tube coupler – often without a technical drawing or a STEP file. All those often multilingual communication skills, along with training and supervision experience, analytical thinking and problem-solving abilities, and a typically high tolerance for failure, tend to be gold dust in commercial roles. This is well

YOUR LIFE AMBITION - What Happened??



Alumni

Outside Academia

'Be not afraid. The isle is full of noises' ¹ (continued)

captured in a short exchange from the film "Margin Call": "I hold a doctorate in engineering... speciality in propulsion from MIT... It's just numbers, really. Just changing what you're adding up... the money here is considerably more attractive."

Only later did I realise I lacked awareness of these skills. Now, thanks to the efforts of both programs' administrative teams, there are numerous courses and workshops to help students prepare for life outside academia – whether through GAUSS/GGNB or Career Impulse Sessions, counselling, retreats, or career fairs sessions at Horizons/Neuriozons. A fair portion of all this – programs funding, administrative cost, infrastructure as well as Horizon, ERC, MSCA grants and stipends came either directly or indirectly from the EU.

And this brings me to Brexit and its impact on me, my family, Northern Ireland, the UK, and ultimately our own Brexit though this requires a brief historical preamble and very abridged historic context. Ever since the premiership of Margaret Thatcher, the UK has been marked by a sense of exceptionalism within the EU. For many years, all Conservative governments portrayed the EU as a hotbed of financial waste and cost overruns: "the French" receiving free money through allegedly absurd farming subsidies; Brussels dictating shapes of bananas; and Germany conniving by selling decent quality cars. This narrative later morphed into Schrödinger immigrant trope: Poles and Romanians simultaneously taking British jobs, while also living on benefits, with the EU taking British fish from the waves Britannia used to rule.

In the run-up to Brexit referendum these topics dominated the airwaves. The

WHAT CHRISTMAS USED TO LOOK LIKE BEFORE THE EU BASTARDS TOOK ALL OUR FISH!



fact that the EU has been extraordinarily successful in achieving its Primary Objective – preventing another major war in Europe, was largely absent from public debate, dismissed as negligible

and laughable because, you know, Jacques Delors and bananas.

A few months after my Gänseliesel moment in 2005, I moved to Belfast to



'Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises' ¹ (continued)

start working at company producing specialised scientific cameras and spectrographs. True to form, my lab mates prepared a farewell "Have fun in Belfast!" poster with images like these⁵.



My first non-academic role was Applications Scientist for Imaging, a position I obtained thanks to skills I acquired during my PhD. My move, settlement in Belfast and employment were made significantly easier by Poland joining the EU in May 2004. I would argue that EU accession was the best decision my "Old Country" had made since the early 1600s.

Northern Ireland, however is a complex place. It experienced "The Troubles" – a brutal, ethno-nationalist conflict from the early 1970s until the late 1990s. Following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, things have settled into a fragile and still somewhat sectarian equilibrium.

Post 1998, Northern Ireland has uniquely benefited from its geopolitical ambiguity – remaining part of the UK while also being physically located on one of the island of Ireland. This ambiguity has

been woven into laws underwritten by both Irish and British governments, with the entire framework guaranteed by the European Union.

The Brexit referendum in 2016 triggered the unravelling of much of this. The isle indeed became full of noises and, unlike Shakespeare's "Tempest" characters, I became afeared. What will happen to us – EU citizens? What about employment, pension, residency rights? Questions like "are you going home soon then?" and comments like "oh we didn't mean you – you are OK, it is the others, you know" became commonplace. Over time, this begins to wear one down. Politicians washed their hands of the situation, despite the evident impossibility of reconciling Brexit with Northern Ireland's legal foundations. I became fluent in terms like "Northern Irish backstop", "Windsor Framework", SPS, CTA and Article 50. Looking back, I see now that on the morning of June 24th, 2016, my world's clockwork shifted and our departure from Northern Ireland became a question of when, not if.

And leave we did – it took us some time to wrap things up. Moving household of four overseas after 15 years of life to a new place in central Germany is no small task. To add further complication

to it, the Covid-19 pandemic arrived two months later, disrupting our plans for kids' daycare and school, immersion and language courses. Nevertheless, we were back in the EU with all its advantages – advantages the UK gave up in an unusual act of self-harm that is likely to reverberate for decades.

My time in Göttingen was transformative. I was fortunate to gain friendships, exposure to world-class science and technology, and the foundation for a fulfilling career – first in Northern Ireland and now back in Germany. These experiences made me aware that even the best-laid plans can be undone overnight by political and historical ignorance. As the recent war of conquest waged by Russia in Ukraine demonstrates, membership in structures like the EU – which bring us closer together and make us more prosperous and secure – is precious and worth protecting at all costs in these unsettled times.

¹ Shakespeare W., "The Tempest", ca. 1610; Stationers' Register, Nov 8th, 1623

² <https://doi.org/10.1038/472276a>

³ <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0036307>

⁴ <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0184130>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/news/picture/fiery-protests-in-belfast-idUSRTXBANLB/>

Marcin BARSZCZEWSKI completed his PhD in neurosciences in 2005 being in the first batch of IMPRS students, then moved to Belfast in Northern Ireland to work as applications specialist and product manager for 2D imaging cameras for astronomy, microscopy and x-ray. After 15 years in Northern Ireland and in the wake of Brexit referendum's fallout, he moved back to Germany just a few weeks before the European phase of the Covid pandemic in 2020 to work at Leica Microsystems as product manager for cameras and various types of light microscopes.



Announcement of MANGO

Dear Students, Faculty, Friends & Supporters,

We are delighted to share exciting news with you: the establishment of the very first **Molecular Biology And Neuroscience Göttingen Alumni Organization (MANGO)**!

For over two decades, our MSc/PhD/MD-PhD programs and IMPRS for Molecular Biology and Neurosciences have fostered a spirit of research excellence, collaboration, and support of our students. As our network of graduates continues to grow and thrive across the globe, we recognise the immense value of staying connected, sharing experiences, learning from each other, and inspiring one another.

Many of us recognise that we are part of a unique, dynamic, intellectually stimulating, driven and expansive community – this was so clearly showcased during the 25th Anniversary celebrations in September 2025. With the energy and enthusiasm renewed at this meeting,

MANGO was founded in November 2025 by graduates of the Molecular Biology and Neuroscience programs from diverse batches with the following goals:



Alumni Career Forum during the 25th Anniversary events at Stadthalle Göttingen

- To cultivate a worldwide community of Molecular Biology and Neuroscience alumni, providing a hub for our strong and supportive network that transcends borders and disciplines.
- To maintain and strengthen professional and personal ties within our network – graduates, faculty, and current students.
- To offer mentorship and support for new students joining our programs,

ensuring a smooth transition and a welcoming environment.

- To actively connect our members through meetings, career talks, networking events, and opportunities for knowledge exchange.
- To support our Molecular Biology and Neuroscience graduate school's activities, such as culture nights and other community-building events through fundraising.



MANGO Founding Members: Olga Babaev, Florian Hauer, Katharina Hoff, Lena Kutscher, Carlos Eduardo Lima da Cunha, Marija Liutkute, Simone Mayer, Dragomir Milovanovic

**1st MANGO Meeting: Save the date!
11-12 September 2026, Göttingen**

We are thrilled to announce that our first meeting will take place in conjunction with the 23rd Horizons in Molecular Biology Symposium, in Göttingen, 11-12 September 2026! Join us for inspiring talks, engaging networking events, the chance to shape the future of our alumni community, and simply meeting your friends in the lovely City

Announcement of MANGO (continued)

of Science. Stay tuned for updates regarding the meeting program and registration details.

Finally, we're excited to announce that we're looking for people interested in joining our association! If you share our passion and vision, we invite you to become a member and help us make a difference. Ready to take the next step?

Sign up now by clicking here <https://forms.gle/1dSunMZ2KKXBQHcZ6> or simply scan the QR code below.



We are looking forward to welcoming you to our growing community!

With warm regards,
Founding Members
Olga Babaev, Florian Hauer, Katharina Hoff, Lena Kutscher, Carlos Eduardo Lima da Cunha, Marija Liutkute, Simone Mayer, Dragomir Milovanovic

Regional MolBio & Neuro Alumni Chapters in Europe

UK Chapter

Following the 25th IMPRS Anniversary in September, we're launching an International Max Planck Research School Alumni UK Chapter for alumni based in the UK. The chapter already has 24 members, with plans for our first in-person meetup in London as Brunch on 8 February 2026.

We're planning a mix of events throughout the year: talks and fireside chats on career journeys (academia to pharma, tech, policy, entrepreneurship), structured networking sessions, skill-sharing workshops (grant writing,

data science, scientific communication), lab and company tours, and of course social gatherings like pub nights and dinners.

If you're in the UK and want to connect with fellow IMPRS alumni, join the [WhatsApp group](#), and you can also subscribe to our events calendar: https://lu.ma/imprs_london.

Munich Chapter

Another Alumni Chapter has been started in Munich. In December 2025, Jenifer Rachel took the initiative to

reach out to graduates of the IMPRS for Molecular Biology and Neurosciences and connect. A [WhatsApp group](#) has been started and alumni from the wider Munich area are welcome to join. The communication within the Munich Alumni Chapter have been rather quiet since connecting via WhatsApp, but Evgeniia Edeleva recently joined the organisation team and is planning a meeting, probably in a beer garden this summer. Further activities might be started in the next months.

Feel free to contact [Jenifer](#) or [Evgeniia](#) on LinkedIn for further information.



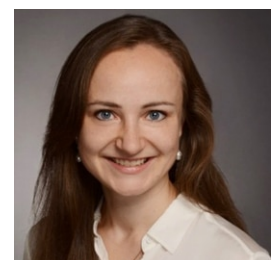
Anna Liashenko, UK



Vlad Dembrovskiy, UK



Jenifer Rachel, Munich



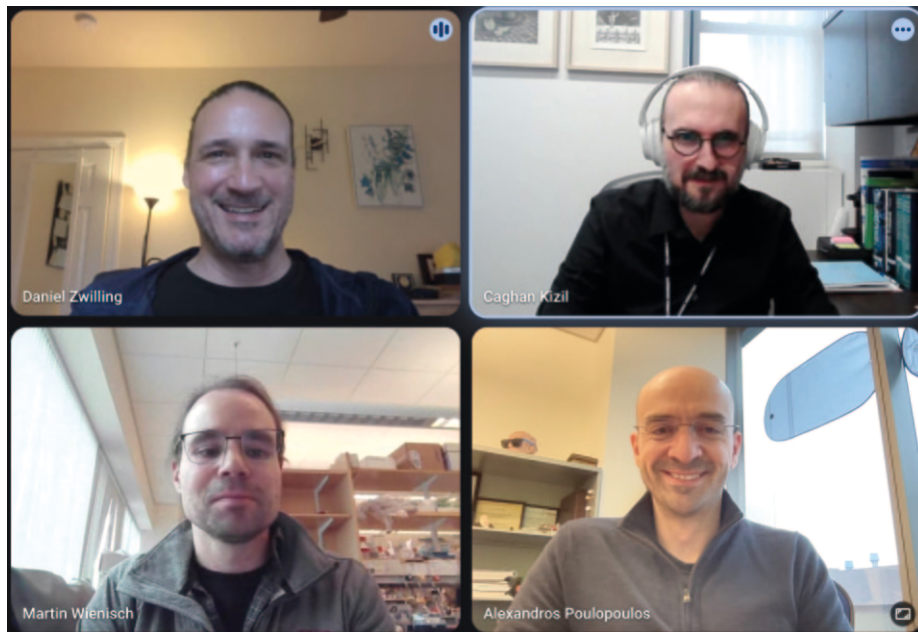
Evgeniia Edeleva, Munich

Launch of the MANGO USA Northeast Chapter

The new year opened with exciting momentum as Dan, Yaisa, Alex, Martin, and Caghan gathered for the first planning meeting to officially launch the MANGO USA Northeast Chapter. This marks the beginning of a coordinated effort to bring together IMPRS Molecular Biology and Neuroscience alumni across the US Northeast and Mid-Atlantic and strengthen the growing MANGO community in the United States. Led by Dan and Yaisa, the group met to align on goals, structure, and the shared vision for a vibrant, connected regional network.

The team outlined a chapter framework that reflects both the geographic diversity and the collaborative spirit of the alumni community, spanning Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and the Maryland/DMV (Delaware, Maryland, Virginia) region. The long-term vision centers on building meaningful alumni connections, supporting scientific exchange, mentoring and creating a welcoming, active community that brings people together across institutions and career paths.

The kickoff meeting covered plans for quarterly subchapter activities, including networking gatherings, socials, student outreach, and collaborative initiatives designed to keep members engaged through-out the year. The group also discussed coordinating and aligning with the annual MANGO in-person



gathering in Göttingen, to strengthen ties with the broader MANGO network. In addition, the chapter plans to host a regional Northeast/Mid-Atlantic meeting roughly six months after Göttingen, rotating among major cities to ensure broad participation and shared ownership.

To build momentum, the team agreed on several immediate next steps: launching a MANGO USA Slack workspace, sending a call-to-join email to all Northeast-based alumni, and formally establishing local subchapters in Boston, NYC, Philadelphia, and the DMV. Each subchapter will identify volunteer leads to help coordinate events, communications,

and outreach as the community grows.

Looking ahead, the chapter aims to host one local gathering in each subchapter during summer 2026, laying the foundation for a strong regional presence and encouraging alumni participation at the MANGO meeting in Göttingen in September.

Submitted by *Dan and Yaisa* (NE Chapter Leads) on behalf of the MANGO USA NE leadership team *Yaisa Andrews-Zwilling, Dan Zwilling, Martin Wienisch, Caghan Kizil, Adema Ribic, Jayeeta Basu, Tanvi Butola, and Alex Pouloupoulos*

Whereabouts of our Neuro PhD Alumni

Current profession		Current location	
Academia / Research	(51.7%)	Europe	(75.2%)
Professor	10.9%	Austria	3.5%
Group leader, PI	9.5%	Belgium	0.5%
Staff/ senior scientist	3.0%	Czech Republic	0.5%
Postdoc	21.9%	Denmark	2.0%
Science management, research support	6.5%	France	0.5%
		Germany	52.0%
Private & Public Sector	(31.3%)	Hungary	1.0%
Scientist, team leader, manager R&D	16.4%	Ireland	1.0%
Staff, team leader, manager non-R&D	10.0%	Liechtenstein	0.5%
Science management etc.	2.0%	Netherlands	2.0%
Consulting	3.0%	Norway	0.5%
		Spain	1.5%
Other Profession	(12.5%)	Sweden	0.5%
Media, publishing	3.0%	Switzerland	5.0%
Resident, Chief resident	3.0%	Turkey	1.0%
IT, software development	3.5%	UK	3.0%
Self-employment	2.0%		
Patent Attorney	0.5%	Americas	(17.2%)
Teacher	0.5%	Brazil	0.5%
		Canada	1.0%
Unknown	4.5%	USA	15.7%
		Africa	(1.0%)
		Ghana	0.5%
		Lesotho	0.5%
		Asia	(6.6%)
		China	2.5%
		India	1.0%
		Israel	0.5%
		Qatar	0.5%
		Taiwan	2.0%

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