
Contents

[Upcoming Events](#)[Latest News](#)[New Publications](#)[About JICE](#)

Upcoming Events

Fri, 22 May 11:15	NC³ Seminar Series Ruth Archer (Evolutionary Ecology, University of Münster) <i>Lecture Hall HHü, Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity, University of Münster</i> » More details
Fri, 12 Jun 11:15	NC³ Seminar Series Elina Takola (Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research) <i>Department of Animal Behaviour, Bielefeld University</i> » More details
Fri, 26 Jun 11:15	NC³ Seminar Series Ahana A. Fernandez (Behavioural Biology, Universität Münster) <i>Department of Animal Behaviour, Bielefeld University</i> » More details
Thu, 16 Jul– Fri, 17 Jul	NC³ Closing Symposium <i>Bielefeld University</i> » More details
Tue, 1 Sep– Thu, 3 Sep	ZiF Workshop »Individuality in Social Behaviour of Human and Non-human Animals« <i>Center for Interdisciplinary Research, Bielefeld University</i> » More details

Latest News

Fish parasites influence the freshwater food chain

27 April 2026

There are many studies on how parasites influence their host animals, e.g. in terms of growth, behaviour or survival rate. However, far less is known about how these effects impact food webs. A research team led by Dr Jaime Anaya-Rojas and Prof Dr Joachim Kurtz from the Institute for Evolution and Biodiversity has now found experimental evidence of how tapeworm infections in three-spined sticklebacks alter several levels of a food web. In the experiment, behavioural changes caused by the infection had massive consequences on the food chain while also reducing the stickleback population, creating converse effects.

[» Publication in *Functional Ecology*](#)

[» Press release by the University of Münster](#)

Talks on cooperation, conflict and social identity

9 April 2026

Why do some individuals cooperate more, while others compete? The Individualisation Symposium 2026 brought together leading international researchers from various disciplines to explore how individual differences shape social relationships. The event focused on how cooperation, competition, and social identity emerge and evolve in humans and animals. Two of the talks from the symposium are now available online:

Evolutionary psychologist Athena Aktipis (Arizona State University) examines in her talk 'Organisms, algorithms, and alignment: old problems in new systems' how fundamental challenges of cooperation recur across biological and technological systems – from human behaviour to cancer research.

In 'The evolution of social identity: insights from animal societies', evolutionary biologist Michael Cant (University of Exeter) explains how social identity and behavioural differences can be understood from an evolutionary perspective. His work combines theoretical models with field research to uncover key principles of cooperation and conflict.

[» Article by Bielefeld University](#)

[» Individualisation Symposium 2026](#)

Narcissism runs in families due to genetics

2 April 2026

Narcissistic personality traits tend to run in families. A recent study led by JICE members Prof. Dr Mitja Back and Prof. Dr Christian Kandler suggests that these familial similarities are primarily explained by genetic factors. In contrast, shared environmental factors within the family, such as general parenting styles or the social environment shared by siblings, contributed little towards explaining differences in narcissism. The study was published in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

» [Publication in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*](#)

» [Press release by Bielefeld University \[de\]](#)

» [Press release by the University of Münster \[de\]](#)

Individuals in social interactions

27 March 2026

On 24 March 2026, the fifth Individualisation Symposium took place at Bielefeld University, focusing on the intricate interplay between individual differences and social relationships. Leading international researchers from various disciplines shared their insights on how individuality emerges and evolves through interactions with the environment, how it manifests in social relationships, and how these processes influence cooperation and conflict. They covered topics ranging from neurobiological foundations of individuality to social dynamics across species, including fish, mice and humans.

We would like to thank all speakers and participants for the stimulating exchange and look forward to hosting the next Individualisation Symposium in 2027!

» [Individualisation Symposium 2026](#)

Melanie Dammhahn takes over from Jürgen Gadau

26 March 2026

The members of the JICE elected Prof. Dr Melanie Dammhahn from the University of Münster as new co-director. She succeeds Prof. Dr Jürgen Gadau, who stepped down after five years as JICE founding co-director. Melanie Dammhahn will head the JICE alongside Prof. Dr Barbara Caspers from Bielefeld University, who has been confirmed in her position as JICE co-director.

We thank Jürgen Gadau for his substantial contribution to the development and success of the JICE, and we wish Melanie Dammhahn all the best in her new role!

» [Website of Prof. Dr Melanie Dammhahn](#)

» [Website of Prof. Dr Barbara Caspers](#)

» [Website of Prof. Dr Jürgen Gadau](#)

Why no individual is like another

25 March 2026

Why do animals behave differently, and what are the consequences of this? A research team from the Collaborative Research Centre NC³ at Bielefeld University and the University of Münster now provides a new explanation: epigenetic processes – chemical markings on DNA – may play a key role. The study links individuality, environmental adaptation, genetics, ecology, and evolution in a novel way.

» [Publication in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*](#)

» [Press release by Bielefeld University](#)

» [Collaborative Research Centre NC³](#)

The power of the individual

17 March 2026

Why do some individuals cooperate more, while others compete more strongly—and what does this mean for our society? At the Individualisation Symposium 2026, leading international researchers will gather at Bielefeld University to explore how individual differences shape social relationships in humans and animals.

» [Article by Bielefeld University](#)

» [Individualisation Symposium 2026](#)

Advancing cross-species personality research

13 March 2026

From 9 to 12 March 2026, the JICE hosted a follow-up workshop as part of the ongoing collaborative initiative 'Integrating Human and Animal Personality Research' in Münster. The meeting enabled leading international researchers from various fields to continue developing and advancing interdisciplinary approaches to personality research in human and non-human animals. Led by Prof. Dr Melanie Dammhahn (Behavioural Biology) and Prof. Dr Mitja Back (Personality Psychology), the initiative is funded through the Topical Programme 'Animal Personality Meets Personality Psychology' by the University of Münster.

» [Collaborative initiative 'Integrating Human and Animal Personality Research'](#)

» [More details about the Topical Programme](#)

Wissenschaftlich belegt: What makes us unique?

6 March 2026

What's on the menu for 'Wissenschaftlich belegt: Bielefeld's Smart Dinner' by the Wissenswerkstatt Bielefeld on Thursday, 16 April 2026? Ideas and perspectives from the world of science to whet your appetite. And a topic with real bite. This time: What makes us unique?

Our guests are Marie Kaiser and Oliver Krüger. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, they explore what makes individuals unique. Do animals, as well as humans, have individual 'personalities'? How does each individual find its niche in the environment? What role do decisions, behaviour and adaptation play in this?

[» More details by the Wissenswerkstatt Bielefeld \[de\]](#)

Shared perspectives for the study of individuality

27 February 2026

The Individualisation Retreat, funded as a Bielefeld Focus Group by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF) at Bielefeld University, took place from 23 to 27 February 2026. The participants spent the week working together intensively to further develop interdisciplinary research on individuality at conceptual, structural and strategic levels. A particular focus was given to strengthening collaboration between the universities of Bielefeld and Münster in this field as well as realising collaborative research projects and publications.

[» Centre for Interdisciplinary Research \(ZiF\) at Bielefeld University](#)

[» Focus Group 'Individualisation in Changing Environments' at ZiF](#)

'We need laws to protect animals'

20 February 2026

Both wild and domestic animals, including farm animals, are capable of adapting to changing environmental conditions. However, the scale of human-induced change is so great that their ability to adapt is insufficient, despite the remarkable resilience and clever strategies of some species. In an interview with Christina Hoppenbrock, behavioural biologists and authors Prof. Dr Norbert Sachser and Dr Niklas Kästner provide insights into the capabilities of animals and their limitations.

[» Interview by the University of Münster with Prof. Dr Norbert Sachser and Dr Niklas Kästner \[de\]](#)

Are we heading towards a mass extinction event?

10 February 2026

In the face of climate change and the drastic loss of biodiversity, evolutionary biologist and JICE member Prof. Dr Joachim Kurtz is calling for a swift and decisive response from society. 'We know from history that there have been several mass extinction events. If we continue as we are, we are heading towards a human-made event that will be more drastic than any that have come before. We must therefore do everything in our power to prevent this,' he emphasised in the latest episode of the University of Münster's 'Umdenken' podcast, released to mark 'Darwin Day' on 12 February.

[» 'Umdenken' podcast with Prof. Dr Joachim Kurtz \[de\]](#)

Interdisciplinary insights into the diversity of individualisation research

2 February 2026

Under the title 'Individualisation around the clock', the JICE held its first Lecture Day at Bielefeld University on 30 January 2026. Focusing particularly on early-career researchers, the event provided a space for interdisciplinary exchange on key topics in individualisation research throughout the day. Scholars from various disciplines, such as behavioural biology, cognitive science and the philosophy of science, presented accessible overviews of their current research findings and discussed these with participants during panel discussions.

[» More details](#)

New BI.research: Growing together

26 January 2026

13 Focus Areas are bringing together academics from different disciplines to advance outstanding topics. These new research networks demonstrate how the university is growing together. The new edition of BI.research magazine presents them all – including the Focus Area 'Individualisation in Changing Environments (InChangE)'.

The Focus Areas emerged from university-wide dialogue as part of participatory profile building. They form a strong basis on which the university's new strategic Profile Areas will be built in the near future. Their topics range from technological developments and social challenges to fundamental scientific research questions.

'What connects the Focus Areas is the researchers' enthusiasm for their topics, an ideal prerequisite for insights whose influence extends far beyond the university', writes Professor Dr Angelika Eppele, Rector of the university, in the editorial.

[» Current issue of the BI.research magazine by Bielefeld University](#)

[» BI.research magazine by Bielefeld University](#)

[» Focus Area 'Individualisation in Changing Environments \(InChangE\)' at Bielefeld University](#)

How cities are changing social behaviour in urban animals

20 January 2026

Cities profoundly shape how animals interact with one another. A new comprehensive review by researchers at Bielefeld University shows that urbanisation alters animal social behaviour – from mate choice to group living. The findings are striking and highly relevant for conservation and urban planning.

» [Publication in *Biological Reviews*](#)

» [Press release by Bielefeld University](#)

New Publications

- Back MD, Instinske J, Rohm T, Deppe M, Kandler C (2026): Narcissism runs in families due to genetics: an extended twin family analysis. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/19485506261429556>
- Berthelsen AL, Caspers BA, Chakarov N, Childs AK, Coculla A, Dammhahn M, Moiron M, ..., Müller C, ..., Vendrami DLJ (2026): Individual variation in perceived density of conspecifics and its impacts on the realization of ecological niches. *Oikos*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/oik.11981>
- Bertram MG, Ågerstrand M, Balshine S, Brand JA, Brooks BW, ..., Moiron M, ..., Brodin T (2025): Are behavioral ecotoxicity endpoints relevant at the population level? Evidence-based insights for environmental protection. *Environmental Science & Technology*. <https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.est.5c07777>
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- Chakarov N, Kassara C, Shurulinkov P, Wink M, Barboutis C (2026): Blood parasites in Eleonora’s Falcon revisited: new insights from the eastern Mediterranean support transmission outside the breeding niche. *Journal of Ornithology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10336-026-02398-1>
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- Enne A, Venugopal V, Nabutanyi P, Wittmann MJ (2026): Individualised niches in a variable environment—Consequences for environmental change responses. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* 17, 1188–1203. <https://doi.org/10.1111/2041-210x.70263>
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- Sytnyk S, Schweiger R, Holoborodko K, Müller C (2026): Biochemical changes in Robinia pseudoacacia leaflets in dependence of leaf mining, plant age and location. *BMC Plant Biology* 26. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12870-026-08364-6>
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About JICE

The Joint Institute for Individualisation in a Changing Environment (JICE) is an interdisciplinary research centre founded by Bielefeld University and the University of Münster. It unites researchers investigating individualisation processes in changing environments and promotes interdisciplinary research bridging natural sciences, social sciences and humanities with the aim to develop a comprehensive understanding across disciplines and species.



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