

EAWOP Small Group Meeting

Dark Personalities in Organisations



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Meeting overview

The EAWOP Small Group Meeting (SGM) *“Dark Personalities in Organisations”* took place from 17th to 19th July 2024 at Seeburg Castle University, Seeburg, Austria. The local organisers, Prof Sandra J. Diller and Prof Clemens Hutzinger (both Seeburg Castle University, Austria) and their team were supported by two external organisers, Prof Peter K. Jonason (Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie, Poland) and Prof Susanne Braun (Durham University Business School, United Kingdom), who supported the local team with the review of abstract submissions and delivered the two keynote talks. Prof Rebecca Jones (Henley Business School, UK) delivered an impact-focused workshop on the Dark Triad and inclusion, and Prof Birgit Schyns (Neoma Business School, France) delivered a workshop for future research development on dark personalities in organisations.

In total, 28 participants (12 men and 16 women) attended the SGM representing leading academic institutions from eight different European countries: Germany (9 participants), Austria (4 participants), United Kingdom (4 participants), Italy (2 participants), the Netherlands (4 participants), France (2 participants), Poland (2 participants), and Portugal (1 participant). In addition, 15 of the 27 participants were EAWOP members. The diversity of participants, institutions, and countries represented a key strength of our SGM, contributing to the international visibility of the SGM and the diversity of submissions received.

2. Key Highlights

Our SGM brought together new and established researchers in the dark personality field spanning multiple disciplines such as personality psychology, applied and basic social psychology, and business and management. This rich disciplinary environment facilitated insightful conversations, opened new perspectives, and opportunities for collaboration. Notably, as elaborated below, the academic perspectives also fed into practical implications. Participants addressed in a designated workshop how to tackle applied the challenges of dark personalities for inclusion in workplaces with evidence-based recommendations.

The following activities constituted the key highlights of our SGM: Two keynotes, two workshops, five thematic research talk & discussion sessions, and a range of social, award, and networking activities aimed at forming new connections, the development of research and impact skills, and the wellbeing of participants.

Keynotes

Prof Peter Jonason delivered the opening keynote *“Motives and values: What makes ‘dark’ people tick”*, presenting the latest advancements of his research into the Dark Triad (DT) with several large-scale empirical studies. Prof. Susanne Braun delivered the closing keynote *“The many faces of narcissism in organisations”*, challenging common assumptions of the field and shedding new light on the role of organisational and cultural contexts for narcissism. Both keynotes are discussed in detail below.

Workshops

Prof Rebecca Jones (Henley Business School, UK) delivered the impact workshop *“Inclusion and the Dark Triad”*, which engaged participants in the reflection of their research from an applied

perspective. Prof Birgit Schyns (Neoma Business School, France) delivered the research development workshop “*The Future of Dark Personality Research in Organisations*”.

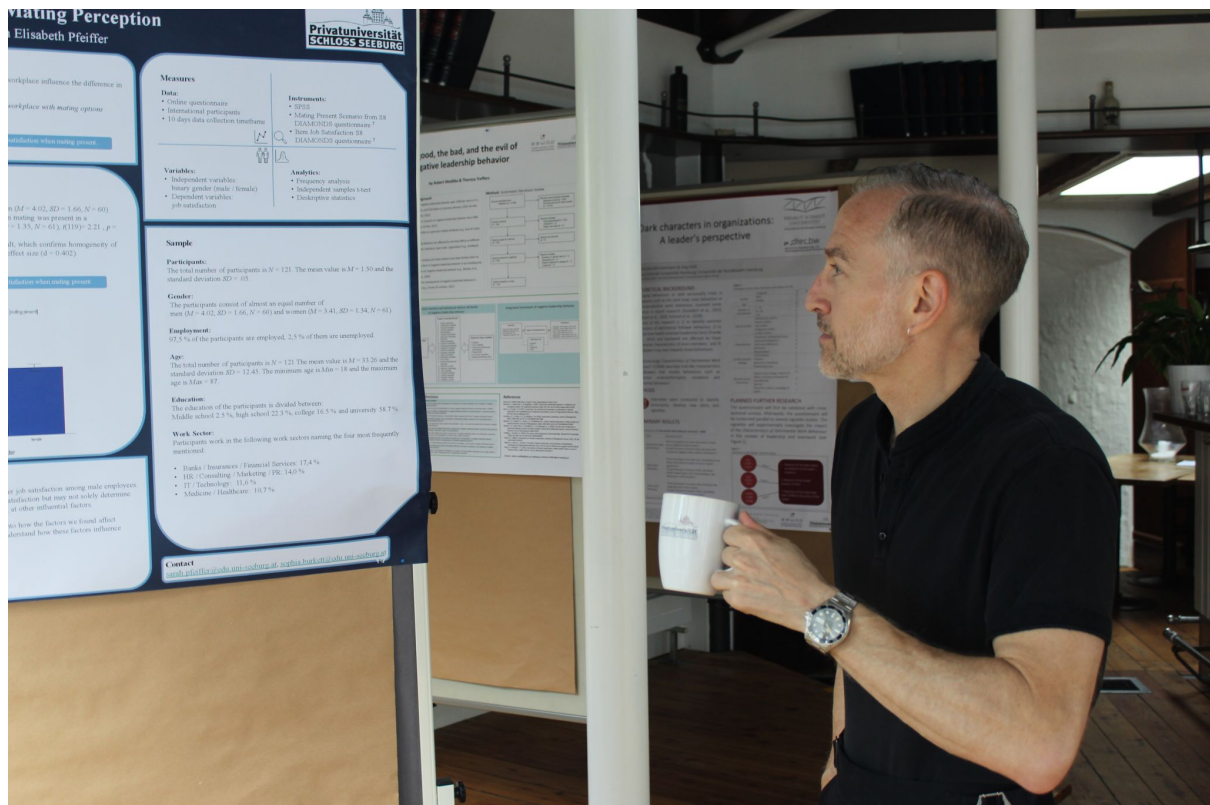
Thematic research talk & discussion sessions

The participant presentations at our SGM were grouped into five thematic sessions: (1) *Dark personalities and organisational behaviour*, (2) *Dark personality traits and social dynamics*, (3) *The workplace environment*, (4) *DT traits in selected fields*, (5) *Interventions*. Each session included between 2 and 4 presentations during which SGM participants had the opportunity to present, discuss, and receive feedback on their current work in progress. Each session was moderated by a different organising team member to include diverse perspectives.

Social, award, and networking activities

An exciting range of other activities enriched the facilitative environment of our SGM, including six posters presented by PhD students from participating institutions during coffee and lunch breaks, welcome drinks with classical music around Europe, a dinner with food from different European regions, a morning yoga session at the lake, and two awards - one for the best presentation and one for the best paper of the SGM. A key highlight for many participants was the meeting location, a beautiful historic castle, home to the Seeburg Castle University, close to the lake Wallersee. Many participants used the opportunity to explore the surroundings during the lunch breaks and in the mornings and evenings after dinner with walks, swimming, and exercise, which contributed to an inclusive and wellbeing-oriented atmosphere.





3. Meeting Outcomes

The meeting was very well-received as reflected in participants' feedback (65% of 5-star ratings, 35% of 4-star ratings for the quality of the SGM overall). Open text comments described the meeting experience as 'fantastic', 'interactive', 'great exchange, idea generating', and the atmosphere as 'very friendly' with opportunity for 'meaningful discussions'. An important outcome that we achieved is therefore participant satisfaction, the ability to make new connections between highly experienced and emerging researchers across Europe, and providing a conducive platform for the development of research ideas and collaborations in the area of dark personalities in organisations.

In the final workshop, we derived new ideas for collaboration along six key themes (detailed in the full activity report). The meeting participants agreed that information will be circulated in relation to these themes and that individuals from the group would volunteer to contribute to the development of the themes in subgroups to be formed by individual interests. One theme that received particular attention from the wider group was a project around consensus building for the conceptualisation and measurement of dark personality traits.

Finally, and noteworthy, a special issue proposal "Heros or Villains? Advancing the Understanding of Dark Personality Traits in Organizations" spearheaded by two members of the organising team had been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* and SGM meeting participants were invited to present their work.

ACTIVITY REPORT

1. Event General Information

Date and Location: 17th – 19th July 2024, Seeburg Castle University, Seeburg, Austria

Organizers: Prof Sandra J. Diller and Prof Clemens Hutzinger (both Seeburg Castle University, Austria) as members of the local organising team. Prof Peter Jonason (Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego Warszawie, Poland) and Prof Susanne Braun (Durham University Business School, United Kingdom) as external organisers and keynote speakers.

Workshop Facilitators: Prof Rebecca Jones (Henley Business School, UK) and Prof Birgit Schyns (Neoma Business School, France) delivered impact and research workshops.

In total, 28 participants (12 men and 16 women) attended the SGM representing leading academic institutions from eight different European countries: Germany (9 participants), Austria (4 participants), United Kingdom (4 participants), Italy (2 participants), the Netherlands (4 participants), France (2 participants), Poland (2 participants), and Portugal (1 participant). In addition, 15 of the 27 participants were EAWOP members.

Participant details with institutional affiliations, EAWOP membership status, and countries are detailed in Annex A.

2. Program Overview and Course of the meeting

The SGM ‘Dark Personalities in Organisations’ was held over three days:

On Day 1, participants met for the opening keynote after lunchtime, followed by the first research talks & discussion session “Dark Personalities and Organizational Behaviour” (moderator: Prof Birgit Schyns). A reception with welcome drinks and classical music from around Europe offered a wonderful welcome and an initial opportunity for networking and discussions and completed the day.

On Day 2, most sessions were devoted to research talk & discussions: “Dark Personality Traits and Social Dynamics” (moderator: Susanne Braun), “The Workplace Environment (moderator: Melanie Vilser), and “Dark Triad Traits in Selected Fields” (moderator: Peter Jonason). The afternoon, incorporated Workshop 1 “Inclusion and the DT” with an emphasis on impact from the perspective of inclusion in organisations, which provided a useful opportunity and engaging environment to translate the research discussions into practical implications and evidence-based recommendations. The informal and relaxed conference dinner was another opportunity for further discussion and networking.

On Day 3, the opening keynote was followed by Workshop 2 “The Future of Dark Personality Research in Organisations”, delivered in a dynamic groupwork format that facilitated the development of six themes, providing new research avenues. Finally, the organising team shared the award winners of the best presentation and best paper, time for the completion of the feedback survey, and appreciation of the local organising team.

The detailed programme, including abstracts, can be found on the homepage: https://www.uni-seeburg.at/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/EAWOP_Program_100724.pdf

Opening Keynote:

Prof Peter K Jonason: “Motives and values: What makes ‘dark’ people tick”

A world-leading scholar of DT research, Prof Jonason introduced participants to the most recent and exciting developments in the field as well as providing a critical take on issues such as: the problems arising from controlling for the other DT sub-dimensions when analysing only one of them or using one overall DT score; the (lack of) added value of a sadism dimension (i.e., the Dark Tetrad), the

problems arising from Likert-scale measurement of DT traits, and how to overcome such issues with alternative measures (e.g., forced-choice format). The talk then specifically centred on values and motives as possible drivers of the impact that DT traits have in organisational and other contexts (e.g., mating). He shared insights into the differential empirical relationships between DT traits, competence, autonomy, relatedness motives, and the implications. Empirical results also highlighted novel insights into motives such as status, mate seeking, or self-protection. An experimental approach to manipulating work conditions following the DIAMONDS (Duty, Intellect, Adversity, Mating, Positivity, Negativity, Deception, Sociality) model illustrated the differential preferences predicted by DT traits. An innovative empirical analysis of the cross-cultural relationships between differences in time use (e.g., for paid work, sleep, personal care, eating/drinking) and DT traits gave participants food for thought around the breadth of possible implications that these traits have for people and organisations. Finally, building on life history theory, Prof Jonason gave compelling examples of how DT scores might be sensitive to ecological conditions and thus insightful for future cross-country comparisons. Overall, the keynote excelled in setting the stage for the importance of DT traits.



Closing Keynote:

Prof. Susanne Braun: The many faces of narcissism in organisations

A leadership expert working at the intersection of cognitions, identity, and narcissism in organisations, Prof Braun challenged the audience to critically reflect on their assumptions about narcissism as a DT trait in organisations and the implications for research and practice. She followed a counterfactual reasoning approach, guided by ‘What if...?’ questions. The counterfactual approach addresses the concern that while guiding conceptual frameworks are important and necessary to develop and implement empirical research, where these are implicit and not discussed, they can limit the scope of new discovery in a field. Prof Braun’s keynote illustrated the counterfactual reasoning approach for a deeper understanding of narcissism in organisations by challenging two assumptions. The first assumption “Narcissists in organisations are grandiose and self-loving” was critically reflected in light of her current research on the relationship between leaders’ vulnerable narcissism and abusive supervision, showing consistently across three empirical studies (a correlational survey with two timepoints, a scenario experiment, and an experiment with event recall) with almost 1,000 individuals in supervisory positions in Germany and the UK that vulnerable rather than grandiose narcissism predicted abusive supervision as a consequence of the leader’s internal attribution of failure and perhaps shame. The second assumption “Narcissists are bad – it doesn’t matter where they are” was challenged with evidence from one published and one working paper suggesting that organisational mastery climates can help to rein in the self-serving tendencies of leaders high in (grandiose) narcissism and that those individuals higher in (grandiose) narcissism are motivated to lead in individualistic and collectivistic cultures, but that initial evidence points to the role of different reasons why this may be the case (i.e., individual level identity in individualistic and collective level identity in collectivistic cultures). In sum, Prof Braun’s talk inspired participants to question their own assumptions about narcissism and other dark personality traits, their conceptualisations, and implications for organisations. Her talk also fed into the following workshop to create new avenues for dark personality research in organisations.



Workshop 1:

Prof Rebecca Jones: “Inclusion and the Dark Triad”

Prof Jones’ work straddles the intersection between academic and applied approaches to inclusion in organisations. As professor at Henley Business School and in her role as consultant with the Inclusive Leadership Company, she is an expert in the translation and application of academic knowledge. Her engaging and thoughtful workshop on the – not easy to solve – challenges that DT traits pose for inclusion in organisations, was much enjoyed by the participants. It also changed our modus operandi from presentation and discussion to groupwork and casework. Prof Jones challenged participants to think critically about the application of their academic knowledge and derive evidence-based answers to several questions, also working interactively on applied case studies. Prof Jones also introduced the Inclusive Leader System Model, a practitioner model based on the extant literature, with leader wellbeing, drivers of inclusive leadership, and inclusive leadership behaviours at its core. Intriguing questions emerged from and were discussed during the workshop: Can deeper values of individuals with DT traits be changed? If there is change, is it instrumental and perhaps superficial in nature? Do DT trait leaders split ingroups from outgroups and create competitive (non-inclusive) situations? Which role do organisational structures and reward systems play? If strong coalitions are created, can they facilitate the introduction of inclusive leadership? In sum, Prof Jones engagingly delivered workshop pushed participants to go beyond research perspectives and engage in ideas for the translation of their academic work into practice.

Workshop 2:

Prof Birgit Schyns: “The Future of Dark Personality Research in Organisations”

Prof Schyns has been at the forefront of the field of personality research and the dark side of leadership and organisational behaviour for many decades. Her expertise in quantitative and experimental research methods as well as her extensive scholarly networks made her the ideal facilitator for this workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to take stock of current knowledge and blind spots in the research of dark personalities in organisations. The workshop featured a dynamic, small group discussion format. Group members rotated three times during the session and thus knowledge was generated and exchanged. Groups discussed questions such as: Do we have the same knowledge about all dark personality traits? Are we looking at the full spectrum of dark traits or are there others that we should cover? Do we know enough about the consequences of dark personality at different levels of the organisational hierarchy? Should we do more research on followers? How can we prevent dark personalities from causing damage in organisations? What empirical evidence is there for effective measures? After returning to the plenary, participants shared six key themes and ideas for future research in these areas (see section 3 below for details about the themes and related research ideas).

3. Short description of the SGM topic discussion

The breadth and depth of perspectives on dark personalities in organisations was a key feature of our SGM. With a multitude of leading academic institutions from eight European countries and a range of disciplinary perspectives being represented, our discussions brought out many fruitful conclusions which at the same time offered avenues for future research. Participants shared and synthesized knowledge in key areas including but not limited to:

- Definitional issues of dark personality traits and related concepts for the purposes of systematic consensus building such as, for example, leadership (as role, identity, influence process), destructive leadership, and trait/state components of DT traits and related constructs (e.g., empathy).
- Similarities, differences, and the added value of personality models including: Dark Triad, Dark Tetrad, Nightmare (Nonnormative) Traits, HEXACO, and the toxic triangle.
- Explanatory mechanisms that explain the impact of dark personality traits on organisations and their members, including: self-regulatory theory, trait activation theory, ego depletion, theory of planned behaviour, and social identity theory.
- The integration of rigorous methodological approaches that allow exploratory insights and theory testing such as experiments, case studies, topic modelling, or situational judgment tests. These discussions also included critical reflection of the limitations originating from primarily Likert-scale based self-ratings of dark personality traits.
- The role of contexts and the impact of dark personalities beyond work, for example, narcissistic rivalry and admiration in spousal relationships, how individuals high in DT traits benefit from work-pet (family) enrichment, or how non-normative traits affect liking and disliking in work vs non-work contexts.
- The importance of person-situation approaches for understanding dark personality traits in context, for example, contextual factors that moderate the relationship between DT traits and performance or career success. Relatedly, questions about how contexts shape personality by placing demands on individuals to 'survive' in a given system.

Contributions to Research Agenda

The new avenues for research and collaboration that emerged as an outcome of the meeting, especially Workshop 2, include developments in relation to six key themes:

(1) *Cross-cultural comparison* of DT and other dark personality traits with a specific focus on the fascination with dark personality traits from an identity perspective.

(2) *Consensus building* around terminology, conceptualisation, and measurement of dark personalities; specifically, the group discussed a consortium to agree on a standard set of measures and conceptualisations. Examples from clinical psychology of such consensus building approaches were discussed and will be shared with participants after the meeting.

(3) *Ecological perspectives* on the persistence of dark personality traits in organisations and society; specifically, if they are maladaptive, then why are DT traits still prevalent in organisations? What perhaps is adaptive about them and when? Do different levels (organisational, team, societal) matter?

(4) *Methodological advancements*, especially the integration of quantitative, experimental, and qualitative research; the value of multi-method papers and challenges in the publication process;

showing shared and unique variance explained between dark personality constructs; the possibility of forced-choice formats for measurement.

(5) *Group and team dynamics*, especially the relative balance of dark personality profiles.

(6) *Inclusion* in organisations in the face of dark personality traits; especially the ‘risk of omission’ when organisational structures, procedures and policies do not explicitly require compliance with inclusion principles (‘policy gaps’).

Importantly, as an overarching theme, ethical perspectives on the research and dissemination of research on dark personality traits formed a further area for discussion and development. For example, labelling individuals as ‘Narcissists’ or ‘Psychopaths’, which can cause definitional confusion between personality traits and diagnostics of clinical personality disorders. Another example was the critical discussion of advantages (and risks) of feeding into popular debates about dark personality traits in the non-academic literature and popular press.

4. Meeting implications/outcomes

A key scientific outcome is at least one special issue that was successfully proposed and will appear in the *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. Additionally, discussions with the Editor in Chief of the *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology* are ongoing. Furthermore, ideas for review and position papers were discussed and will feed into follow-on discussions with those participants who would be interested in leading and contributing to such papers, again with the possibility of submission to the *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*.

In terms of applied outcomes, meeting participants will follow-up to discuss the possibility of forming a consortium for common measurement standards and conceptualisations of dark personality constructs. Information about a similar initiative in the clinical psychology sector will be circulated to all SGM participants.

Several key outcomes for network development have already been achieved with a designated LinkedIn group where SGM participants can exchange information, and invitations to attend workshops and symposia organised in 2024 and 2025 (e.g., pre-conference workshop on neuropsychological research, Academy of Management 2025, Copenhagen; Neoma Business School research conference in Spring 2025; caucus of the Cognition, Identity, and Leadership Network, Durham University Business School, Academy of Management 2024, Chicago).

5. SGM Evaluation

5.1 Self- assessment of the SGM

Our SGM organising team worked together closely, held regular virtual meetings before the SGM, and coordinated key responsibilities and questions in advance to ensure a positive and engaging SGM experience. All roles and responsibilities were distributed collaboratively, and decision-making was transparent. In this regard, the external organisers, Prof Jonason and Prof Braun, supported with the evaluations of a) the submitted abstracts, b) the submitted papers (best paper award), and c) the final presentations (best presentation award). The local organising team ensured a smooth procedure during the SGM regarding the information desk / welcome, the program, the coffee / lunch breaks, and other parts, such as the conference dinner, the musical welcome drinks, or the yoga class. Hereby, a WhatsApp group (for all local organizers) and a LinkedIn group (for all participants) ensured an easy coordination of the tasks and swift reactions to questions from the participants. The local organising committee was supported by one PostDoc, two PhD, and one

postgraduate students from the participating institutions who offered their voluntary help before and during the event. We would herewith express our deepest gratitude for this voluntary support and decided to give a small thank you present to them. In addition to the voluntary work, the Seeburg Castle University supported the local organising committee with resources through their Marketing and IT team (e.g., posting photos live about the SGM on LinkedIn, helping with technical difficulties). In addition, the external organisers constructively supported decision-making where relevant.

During the meeting, the organising team continued to coordinate tasks effectively, made decisions jointly, made small changes on the fly where relevant for a smooth running of the SGM. Prof Diller and Prof Hutzinger led the overall meeting schedule. They also coordinated and instructed the supporting students. They were available to address any questions or to point to the relevant contact on site. The help from the supporting students was of utmost importance for the smooth running of the SGM. They supported the registration desk, helped with catering, were available to support with technical issues, always had open ears for the concerns of the participants and came up with innovative solutions to spontaneous issues.

The SGM participants, of course, also contributed critically to the success with their excellent presentations, engagement in workshops and discussions, and their general openness to help each other in developing research ideas, knowledge and skills. A strong collaborative atmosphere grew over the three meeting days as participants became more familiar and comfortable with each other. SGM dog Pedro certainly made his contributions to the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of our meeting.



We learned and improved effectiveness over the three days: The first research talks & discussion session pointed the organising team to some small but nonetheless important opportunities for improvement. First, we reminded participants to send their presentation slides to the session

moderator in advance such that they could be uploaded to the computer and required no additional time during the session. Second, we made sure that all talks stayed on time with a maximum of 15 minutes for presentation to leave at least 5 minutes for discussion per talk. Third, we reminded participants of the importance to hear the feedback and questions from all voices in the room. For example, in the second research talks & discussion session, we explicitly asked those participants to contribute who had not previously asked a question and gave them a little additional time, while those participants who had already asked a question held back. This ‘nudge’ quickly established a fruitful and considerate discussion culture.

5.2 Participants assessment of the SGM

Overall, the participant feedback was very positive with 65% 5-star and 35% 4-star ratings (on a 1-5 scale). In the open text comments, respondents were particularly complimentary about the meeting atmosphere, engaged and friendly organisers, and the wide range of opportunities build and exchange knowledge and create new connections with other researchers.

In response to the question “*What did you like best about the SGM?*” participants commented on: The people, the friendly atmosphere, the meaningful discussions and exchange of ideas in a small group, the keynote speeches and formal/informal feedback opportunities, the great location and helpful and friendly members of the organising team.

In response to the question “*Do you have any suggestions / recommendations for improving future SGMs?*” many participants answered ‘No’ or ‘None’. However, a few answers in this section pointed to having more time for each presentation, some additional (warm) food for lunch, and inviting scholars from other disciplines to attend for additional variety of perspectives. The suggestions for improvement would be easy to implement in the future.

6. References

ANNEXES

Annex A. List of participants (including institutional affiliation and country)

Name	Affiliation, Country	EAWOP member	gender
Birgit Schyns	Neoma Business School, France	yes	female
Christina Eder	Seeburg Castle University, Austria	no	female
Clemens Hutzinger	Seeburg Castle University, Austria	no	male
Daniel Leising	Technische Universität Dresden, Germany	yes	male
Daniel Nunes Silva	University of Beira Interior, Portugal	yes	male
Daniel Thiemann	International School of Management, Germany	no	male
Erik Dietl	Loughborough University, UK	yes	male
Eryk Kowalski	Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Poland	no	male
Filippo Ferrari	University of Bologna, Italy	no	male
Franziska Münstermann	Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg, Germany	no	female
Iris Gauglitz	University of Bamberg, Germany	yes	female

Irmgard Mausz	International School of Management, Germany	yes	female
Jonas Haocheng Zhang	Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, Germany	no	male
Kristin Hildenbrand	University of Sheffield, UK	pending	female
Lenke Roth	Justus-Liebig-University Gießen, Germany	yes	female
Magdalena Weber	Seeburg Castle University, Austria	yes	female
Mark van Vugt	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands	no	male
Melanie Vilser	Universität der Bundeswehr München, Germany	yes	female
Minnie Heep Ching She	University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands	yes	female
Peter K. Jonason	Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, Poland	no	male
Pier Luigi Giardino	University of Trento, Italy	no	male
Rebecca Jones	Henley Business School, UK	no	female
Reinout E. de Vries	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands	yes	male
Sandra Diller	Seeburg Castle University, Austria	yes	female
Sophie Hudspith	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the Netherlands	pending	female
Susanne Braun	Durham University, UK	yes	female
Urszula Lagowska	NEOMA Business School, France	yes	female
Ute-Christine Klehe	Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen, Germany	yes	female