

***Talk on Tuesday, 4. November 2025******Start: 10:15 till 11.30 Uhr******in HS 424******The talk will be presented in English***

# **Social Disconnection, Social Media, and the Adolescent Brain**

**Dr. Livia Tomova****Cardiff University**

Social interactions are proposed to be a basic human need and particularly important during adolescent development (Orben 2020). Yet loneliness and isolation are increasing in societies all around the world (Twenge 2021). Simultaneously, many social interactions have shifted into digital environments, challenging traditional views of socialising. My research investigates how a lack of social connection impacts cognition and brain function during adolescent development and examines the effects of digital media use on teenagers.

In my talk, I will present a series of fMRI and behavioural studies that seek to determine (i) how a lack of social connection is represented in the brain, (ii) how social disconnection impacts reward seeking and reward learning in adolescence, and (ii) how social media use interacts with effects of social disconnection and impacts adolescent reward processing. The implications of this research in the light of adolescent loneliness and mental health problems will be discussed.