

LUCA M. LEISTEN



📍 Zurich, Switzerland

@luca.leisten

@gess.ethz.ch

🏠 lucamleisten.com

🌐 Luca Marie Leisten

🔗 [orcid.org/0000-](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8330-5007)

0002-8330-5007

GRANTS

2026

ROBERT GNEHM

GRANT

Travel grant

2025

MONTEBELLO

FOUNDATION

Co-applicant, 50K\$

ROBERT GNEHM

GRANT

Travel grant

2024

ROBERT GNEHM

GRANT

Travel grant

2022

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

Travel grant

2021

ERASMUS+

SCHOLARSHIP

Radboud University

2019

DAAD RISE

SCHOLARSHIP

Internship support

Profile

- Interdisciplinary HRI Researcher and Behavioral Scientist combining expertise in psychology, user experience, and computer science to evaluate and shape human interactions with embodied AI.
- Proven background in investigating how humans perceive, trust, and engage with artificial agents across physical and digital platforms.
- Skilled in using mixed-methods research, behavioral analytics, and user-centered design to translate foundational insights into intuitive, engaging, and impactful human-robot interactions.

Education

2023 – 2026

Dr.Sc. in HRI and Learning Sciences

ETHZ & EPFL · Zurich, Switzerland 📍

Thesis: Envisioning the future of social robots in K-12 education – Supervisors: Josie Hughes, Nathan Caruana & Emily S. Cross

2020 – 2022

M.Sc. Behavioural Sciences (Research)

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY · Nijmegen, Netherlands 📍

Thesis: Reciprocity and relationship formation in child-robot interaction – Supervisors: Ruud Hortensius, Evelien Heijse-laar & Tibor Bosse – Grade average: 8.9/10

2017 – 2020

B.Sc. Psychology

PFH GÖTTINGEN · Göttingen, Germany 📍

Thesis: Voice assistants' response strategies to sexual harassment and their relation to gender – Supervisors: Verena Rieser & Stephan Weibelzahl – Grade average: 1.1/6

Experience

Sep 2026 – Now

Postdoctoral Researcher, 50%

SBS LAB, ETH ZURICH · Switzerland 📍

Social Human-Robot Interaction for Education

AWARDS

2026

ETH Medal
Outstanding Thesis
Nomination

SKILLS

Quantit. methods	●	●	●
Qualitat. methods	●	●	●
R	●	●	●
MaxQDA	●	●	●
GitHub	●	●	●
Qualtrics	●	●	●
Gorilla	●	●	●
Python	●	●	●
fNIRS	●	●	●
fMRI	●	●	●
ELAN	●	●	●

OUTREACH

2026

SCIENTIFICA
Zurich
Workshop on AI

2025

REALSCHULE
TIENGEN
Presentation at
teacher conference

2022

BREINBREKKER
SCIENCE FESTIVAL
Outreach presentation

2021

INSCIENCE
SCIENCE FESTIVAL
Outreach presentation

Sep 2026 – Now

Postdoctoral Researcher, 50%

CITEC, UNIVERSITY OF BIELEFELD · Germany 
Social Human-Robot Interaction for Children's Well-Being

Nov 2022 – Jun 2023

Medior UX Researcher & Development Lead

CONNECTEDCARE R&D · Netherlands 
Designing and testing social robots for health care

Oct 2021 – July 2022

Research Assistant

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY · Netherlands 
Child-robot interaction; Child-parent dyads; Trust in AI – Supervisors: Ruud Hortensius, Reine van der Wal & Baptist Liefhooge

Jul 2021 – Sep 2021

Research Internship

INRIA PARIS · France 
Rapport in child-agent interaction – Supervisor: Justine Cassell

Oct 2019 – Jun 2021

Student Research Assistant

GERMAN CENTRE FOR UNIVERSITY AND SCIENCE RESEARCH (DZHW) · Germany 
Team science and collaboration problems – Supervisor: Malte Hueckstaedt

Jun 2019 – Aug 2019

Research Internship

SOCIAL BRAIN IN ACTION LAB, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW · UK 
Theory of mind – Supervisors: Anna Henschel & Emily S. Cross

Conference talks

2025

IEEE RO-MAN

PAPER PRESENTATION · Netherlands 
Teachers perceive distinct competency profiles in hard and soft social robots

ICSR + AI

PAPER PRESENTATION · Italy 
Empathy in child-robot interaction (CRI)

Joint Doctoral Programm Learning Sciences Summer school

POSTER PRESENTATION · Switzerland 
Social robots in education

SUPERVISION

MASTER THESES

Marine Bruttin
ETH Zurich
Oct - April 24

BACHELOR THESES

Joschua Prieß
ETH Zurich
Jul - Sep 26

INTERNS

Joschua Prieß
ETH Zurich
Apr - Jun 26

Pranati Chalasani
ETH Zurich
Mar - Apr 26

Valentina Jordan
ETH Zurich
Mar - Apr 26

Olga Muss
ETH Zurich
Aug - Feb 26

Jonas Graw
ETH Zurich
Jun - Aug 25

Paula Vondrlik
ETH Zurich
Jun - Aug 24

2023

2022

2021

Joint Doctoral Programm Learning Sciences Summer school Fall school

RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATION · Switzerland 
Soft robots

Behavioral Sciences Conferences

MASTER THESIS PRESENTATION · Netherlands 
Reciprocity and relationship formation in CRI

FRIAS Human Perspectives on Spoken Human-Machine Interaction

PAPER PRESENTATION · Germany 
Gender in voice assistants

Behavioral Sciences Conferences

POSTER PRESENTATION · Netherlands 
Maternal stress and childhood obesity

Invited talks

2026

Educational Commission, Social party (SP) Kanton Zurich

INVITED TALK · Switzerland 
Opportunities and barriers of educational social robot deployment

2025

ETH Day

INVITED TALK · Italy 
Social robots in education

2024

R Ladies Zurich

INVITED PANEL TALK · Italy 
The role of gender in data collection and analysis

2023

European Robotics Forum

INVITED PANEL TALK · Denmark 
Practical deployment of social robots in health care settings

PEER REVIEW

ACM/IEEE HRI 2026

ACM/IEEE CHI 2024

International Journal
of Social Robotics

Journal of Education
and Information
Technology

Scientific reports

Empirical Studies
of the Arts

Frontiers in
Robotics and AI

Teaching

2026

Mind Meet Machines

ETHZ, PROF. DR. EMILY CROSS · Switzerland 
Co-teaching (30%) of course

HONORARY ROLES

2025 - NOW

SCIENTIFIC STAFF
ASSOCIATION (ASST)
Treasurer

2025 - NOW

ASST
Teaching commission

2026

Human-Centered IT Security and Privacy

ETHZ, PROF. DR. VERENA ZIMMERMANN · Switzerland 

Guest lecture on autonomy in AI-mediated learning

Social Robotics

FHNW, PROF. DR. OLIVER BENDEL · Switzerland 

Guest lecture on PhD research

Mind Meet Machines

ETH ZURICH, PROF. DR. EMILY S. CROSS · Switzerland 

Guest lecture "Barriers and opportunities of social robots"

2025

Mind Meet Machines

ETH ZURICH, PROF. DR. EMILY S. CROSS · Switzerland 

Guest lecture "Benefits of robot deployment across age"

2024

Mind Meet Machines

ETH ZURICH, PROF. DR. EMILY S. CROSS · Switzerland 

Guest lecture "Benefits of robot deployment across age"

Organized Workshops

2026

Designing for Autonomy in Technology-Enhanced Learning

JTEL SUMMER SCHOOL · Bulgaria 

Workshop on how to design technology to support autonomy and transparency in students' learning interactions

Journal Articles, Peer-reviewed

Leisten, L. M.*, Moffat, R.*, Caruana, N., & Cross, E. S. (2026). Children's Understanding of Sustainability and Social Equity of Educational Robots: Advice for Educators and Policymakers. Accepted at TEchnology, Mind, and Behavior. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/8jmn7_v2

Muss, O.*, **Leisten, L. M.***, & Bardyn, C. E. (2026). Scaffolding students-AI dialogue for safe educational interactions. Sci Rep (2026). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-026-69820-9>

Leisten, L. M., Heyselaar, E., Bosse, T., & Hortensius, R. (2024). Children's Reciprocity and Relationship Formation With a Robot Across Age. Technology, Mind, and Behavior, 5(2: Summer 2024). <https://doi.org/10.1037/tmb0000131>

LANGUAGES

German
Native

English
Level C2

French
Level A2

Dutch
Level A1

van der Wal, R. C., Nijhof, S. L., **Leisten, L. M.**, ... & Nap-van der Vlist, M. M. (2024). A dyadic perspective on parent-child dyadic coping in children with a chronic condition. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 111668. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2024.111668>

Hückstädt, M. & **Leisten, L. M.** (2024). Internal factors promoting research collaboration problems: an input-process-output analysis. *Scientometrics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-024-04957-w>

Liefooghe, B., Oliveira, M. J. B., **Leisten, L. M.**, Hoogers, E., Aarts, H., & Hortensius, R. (2023). Faces Merely Labelled as Artificial are Trusted Less. *Collabra: Psychology*, 9 (1): 73066. <https://doi.org/10.1525/collabra.73066>

Leisten, L. M., Findling, F., Bellinghausen, J., Kinatader, M., Probst, T., Lion, D., & Shibani, Y. (2021). The Effect of Nonlexical Verbal Signals on the Perceived Authenticity, Empathy and Understanding of a Listener. *The European Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 10(1), 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.46853/001c.27434>

Conference Proceedings, Peer-reviewed

Leisten, L. M.*, Moffat, R.*, Caruana, N., & Cross, E. S. (2026). Children with Greater Sustainability and Equity Understanding Demand More from Educational Robots. Accepted at ECTEL 2026. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/xzubd_v1

Leisten, L. M.* & Toth, A.* (2025). Towards Hands-On Learning for Supporting AI Literacy Education Across Age. In Proceedings of the D-SAIL Workshop-Transformative Curriculum Design, CEUR-WS, Palermo, Italy (pp. 60-69).

Leisten, L. M., Caruana, N., & Cross, E. (2025). Teachers perceive distinct competencies profile in soft and hard social robots to support learning. In Proceedings of 34th IEEE International Conference on Robot and Human Interactive Communication (RO-MAN), Eindhoven, Netherlands, 2025, pp. 1685-1692. <https://doi.org/10.1109/RO-MAN63969.2025.11217892>

Bruttin, M.*, **Leisten, L. M.***, & Cross, E. (2025). Empathy in Child-Robot Interaction: The Role of Narrative Framing, Age, Gender, and Baseline Empathy. In Social Robotics+ AI: 17th International Conference, ICSR+ AI 2025, Naples, Italy, September 10–12, 2025. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-95-2382-5_4

Leisten, L. M., & Rieser, V. (2021). "I Like You, as a Friend": Voice Assistants' Response Strategies to Sexual Harassment and Their Relation to Gender. *FRIAS Human Perspectives on Spoken Human-Machine Interaction*. <https://doi.org/10.6094/UNIFR/223817>

Preprints

Leisten, L. M. (2026, August 18). Envisioning the Future of Social Robots in Education: Perceptions, Applications, and AI Literacy for the Public Good. https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/r5utf_v1

Leisten, L. M., Graw, J., Vondrlik, P., Caruana, N., & Cross, E. S. (2026). Multi-stakeholder insights for designing and implementing safe, effective, and accessible social robots in K-12 Education. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/ck69a_v1

Leisten, L. M., Moffat, R., Caruana, N., & Cross, E. S. (2025). "If we are good friends, AI doesn't spy so much": Children's knowledge and misconceptions of AI safety. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/jva7z_v1

Henschel, A., Kent, M., **Leisten, L. M.**, Seelemeyer, H., Timmerman, R., Hortensius, R., & Cross, E. (2020). A manual to digitising fNIRS probes with photogrammetry as described in Clausner et. al. (2017). Zenodo. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4146985>