

## **Falling Walls announces the Science Breakthroughs of the Year in the Science Engagement, Science Start-Ups and Emerging Talents categories**

Berlin, 7 November 2021. Today, the Falling Walls Foundation awarded the last “Falling Walls Science Breakthroughs of the Year”. In the Science Engagement (Falling Walls Engage) category the prize went to Mónica Feliú-Mójer and her project on promoting COVID-19 prevention and wellbeing in marginalized communities in Puerto Rico. The female-founded German bioeconomy start-up Traceless Materials won the prize in the category Science Start-Ups (Falling Walls Venture). In the Emerging Talents (Falling Walls Lab) category Ana Montalban-Arques won the prize with her novel therapy approach for treating colon cancer. The participants in each category pitched their projects to the jury on the first day of the Falling Walls Science Summit 2021 in Berlin. On 9 November, the anniversary of the peaceful fall of the Berlin Wall, ten “Falling Walls Science Breakthroughs of the Year” will present their groundbreaking research on the stage of Radialsystem Berlin.

In the category **Science Engagement**, the “Falling Walls Science Breakthrough of the Year” recognises projects that promote scientific knowledge transfer, strengthen science communication, and include society into scientific processes. This year the prize went to Mónica Feliú-Mójer and her project Aquí Nos Cuidamos (ANC), a multimedia ready-to-use educational toolkit to promote COVID-19 prevention and wellbeing in vulnerable and marginalized communities in Puerto Rico. “We initiated Falling Walls Engage to break the walls between science and society”, says Tina Stengele, Program Director Science in Society at Robert Bosch Stiftung. “We want to equip people with scientific facts and values to be able to make evidence-informed decisions. It is a pleasure to see the most innovative ways from all around the world on how scientists engage with different target groups.” During the day of pitches, 20 Falling Walls Engage winners presented their projects. The topics varied from STEM education and community engagement over co-productive and participatory approaches to immersive exhibitions, artistic approaches, and multimedia, such as video games, films and music.

In the category **Science Start-Ups**, the main prize is awarded to a start-up idea that best combines research expertise and entrepreneurial excellence. The “Science Breakthrough of the Year” was awarded to Traceless Materials, a female-founded circular bioeconomy startup from Germany offering a holistically sustainable alternative to conventional plastics. The innovative technology allows to use food production waste to produce materials that are home compostable. “The project is addressing one of the most urgent problems of pollution on Earth by substituting conventional plastic with sustainable alternatives. It’s great to see that a young female team could make it to the final round and convince the jury with this outstanding innovative idea” – says Frank Kalkbrenner, Global Head of Boehringer Ingelheim Venture Fund. Among the start-up ideas pitched by 25 winners were also point-of-need medical testing, microbial set that recycles fossil-based plastics, ink made of captured carbon dioxide, all-round quantum computing service and a software detecting early-stage deep vein thrombosis, number one cause of preventable hospital deaths.

In the category **Emerging Talents**, the “Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year” is awarded to students and early-career professionals for their innovative ideas. The main prize in the category was awarded to Ana Montalban-Arques with her pitch on Breaking the Wall of Ineffective Cancer Therapies. Her novel approach applies bacteria as a stand-alone therapy for colon cancer, a therapeutic approach that shows striking efficacy of bacteria as monotherapy. As Sarah Springman, rector of ETH Zürich and the Chair of Jury at Falling Walls Lab says: “It’s important to highlight scientific early-career researchers because they are the most creative of us all. They have far fewer walls to break down and they are the future, they deserve support and encouragement to keep on innovating”. Emmie Chiyindiko, Winner of Falling Walls Lab Cape Town, won second place for her pitch on Breaking the Wall of Darkness. Chiyindiko is working to provide affordable, abundant, and reliable clean power to build livelihoods, improve health outcomes, grow income

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and opportunity, and empower communities while tackling climate change. Christian Scharun, Winner of Falling Wall Lab Karlsruhe, won third place at the global Falling Walls Lab Finale for his pitch on Breaking the Wall of Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Scharun investigates missing greenhouse gas emissions in datasets that contain reported data from the countries and is developing a method to adjust them with the aim of better understanding climate change. A total of 75 winners from 58 countries pitched their breakthrough ideas, tackling such modern-day challenges as safe access to drinking water, plastic pollution, and disease diagnostics.

Find the full Falling Walls Science Summit program at [falling-walls.com/science-summit-2021](https://falling-walls.com/science-summit-2021). All Falling Walls Science Summit events will be livestreamed for free on the Falling Walls Foundation website.

For press and other inquiries, contact Lena Taran, Press Officer Falling Walls Foundation, [press@falling-walls.com](mailto:press@falling-walls.com).

### **About the Falling Walls Science Summit**

The Falling Walls Science Summit is part of Berlin Science Week with over 200 events from 1-10 November 2021. Since its first annual gathering on November 9, 2009, the 20th anniversary of the peaceful fall of the Berlin Wall, Falling Walls has steadily grown into a leading global forum for science. The event brings together the most important researchers and thinkers of our time to discuss scientific breakthroughs with global leaders in science, politics, business, and media, and to answer the core question of the Falling Walls Science Summit: "What are the next walls to fall in science and society?"

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