

# FALLING WALLS SCIENCE SUMMIT



## KEY RESULTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

### “DEEP TECH: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SMES”

— *How deep tech can finally work for SMEs, not just the giants*

Deep tech and AI promise major productivity gains, but SMEs still face slow approvals, fragmented data and a culture that discourages experimentation. Ensuring that smaller firms can benefit requires streamlined pathways for testing new technologies, shared data infrastructures that lower individual costs, and innovation practices built around rapid, user-centred learning.

At the same time, fast-moving advances in AI and robotics risk deepening divides between firms that can access research infrastructures, high-quality datasets and expert partners, and those that cannot. Many family-owned and regionally dispersed companies lack the means to experiment safely or to validate new ideas with real users early. Modernising rules, incentives and support structures is therefore essential to make deep tech adoption easier, safer and aligned with the practical needs of diverse businesses.

### THE PANEL CALL TO ACTION:

#### 1 — **Cut bureaucracy and legalise rapid experimentation.**

Create an innovation freedom law with regulatory sandboxes and short pathways so SMEs and startups can trial and scale deep tech without months of approvals. Align tax and infrastructure-access rules so transfer institutes can offer fair access to labs and small-scale production.

#### 2 — **Launch a national SME data cooperative.**

Pool privacy-preserving datasets from SMEs under neutral governance and return shared baseline models and algorithms to all members. Co-fund the cooperative publicly to de-risk participation and establish clear contribution, audit and benefit-sharing standards.

#### 3 — **Make fast, user-centred learning the default delivery model.**

Embed AI into microscopes, scanners and sample-handling workflows to improve speed, resolution and reproducibility, making capabilities once limited to specialised centres widely accessible.

#### 4 — **Build deep-tech ecosystems that reach mid-sized cities.**

Support ambidextrous models where family businesses protect core operations while exploring new opportunities with universities, transfer institutes and startups. Use shared hubs and mobility schemes so geography and local infrastructure no longer determine who can participate.

*This event is supported by Technical University of Munich (TUM) and assembled in the framework of the Falling Walls Science Summit 2025 in Berlin. The Falling Walls Science Summit is a leading international, interdisciplinary, and intersectoral forum for scientific breakthroughs. It commemorates the fall of the Berlin Wall and aims to promote dialogue between science and society.*



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