

FALLING WALLS SCIENCE SUMMIT



KEY RESULTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

“ENHANCED SCIENCE: AI TALENT, SOVEREIGNTY AND SKILLS”

— *Europe’s universities race to embrace AI while trust, skills and sovereignty lag behind.*

AI tools have moved from curiosity to daily companion for researchers, yet institutions are struggling to keep up. Around six in ten researchers already use AI in their work, but only a minority feel well governed or properly trained, and many describe AI systems as unreliable. The panel called for a coordinated push to build trusted infrastructure, embed critical AI skills, rethink the role of universities and use AI to broaden – not cheapen – participation in global science.

AI now touches every part of the research cycle: literature reviews, data analysis, coding, grant writing and communication. Europe is responding with initiatives such as a new AI-and-science strategy, dedicated resources like RAISE and investments in supercomputing. But major questions remain: What counts as “real” scientific work when models can generate text and even hypotheses? How should universities act as gatekeepers of standards in an age of zero-marginal-cost knowledge? And how can funders, publishers and institutions distinguish excellent research from fake science in an AI-saturated information space?

THE PANEL CALL TO ACTION:

1 — Build a trusted, sovereign AI stack for European science.

Create vertically integrated “from chip to model” infrastructures that guarantee researchers access to secure compute, high-quality data and genuinely transparent models. Sovereignty should mean open information about training data, methods and updates, so scientists know what they are using and can reproduce results.

2 — Make AI literacy and critical thinking core research skills.

Treat AI tools as standard scientific instruments and train every researcher across disciplines and career stages to use them safely, critically and efficiently. Curricula should cover prompting, verification, source provenance and limitations, reinforcing the principle that there is no co-pilot without a pilot.

3 — Redesign university education around experiential, interdisciplinary AI practice.

Move beyond lecture-only models towards project-based learning, “bridge groups” linking AI experts with domain scientists and stronger roles for humanities and social sciences. Universities should position themselves not as content dispensers but as institutions that cultivate ethical intelligence, judgment and social cohesion in an AI-rich research culture.

4 — Use AI to democratise participation in science without lowering standards.

Leverage AI to help non-native English speakers, under-resourced institutions and early-career researchers access, understand and communicate research



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more effectively. At the same time, invest in peer networks, mentoring and transparent tools so that broadened access goes hand in hand with rigorous methods and maintained scientific standards.

This event is supported by Elsevier 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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