

# FALLING WALLS LAB



# REPORT 2025

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2025, Falling Walls Lab continued to bring together outstanding early-career researchers and innovators through its global pitch competitions. Across **82 Lab locations in 60 countries**, renowned academic institutions hosted local Labs and collectively received **over 2,750 applications from 103 countries**. From these international Labs, **100 finalists** travelled to Berlin to compete in the Global Finale at the Falling Walls Science Summit.

During their week in Berlin, participants were welcomed by the Italian Embassy, took part in targeted training and career-development workshops, and joined the **Research Insights Day** — an exclusive visit to leading research institutions in and around the city, hosted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the German Research Foundation (DFG).

At the Global Finale, the finalists presented their ideas on the main stage before a distinguished interdisciplinary jury from science, business, and policy, who selected the **Breakthrough Winner in the Emerging Talents category**.

In addition, 2025 marked the successful introduction of a new format: the **Next Generation Science Meet-Up**, where companies and institutions presented themselves to the finalists in concise five-minute reverse pitches — creating a highly efficient exchange and clear benefits for both sides.

FALLING WALLS LAB

# INTERNATIONAL LAB SEASON



2750+ APPLICATIONS

1000+ INTERNATIONAL LAB PITCHES

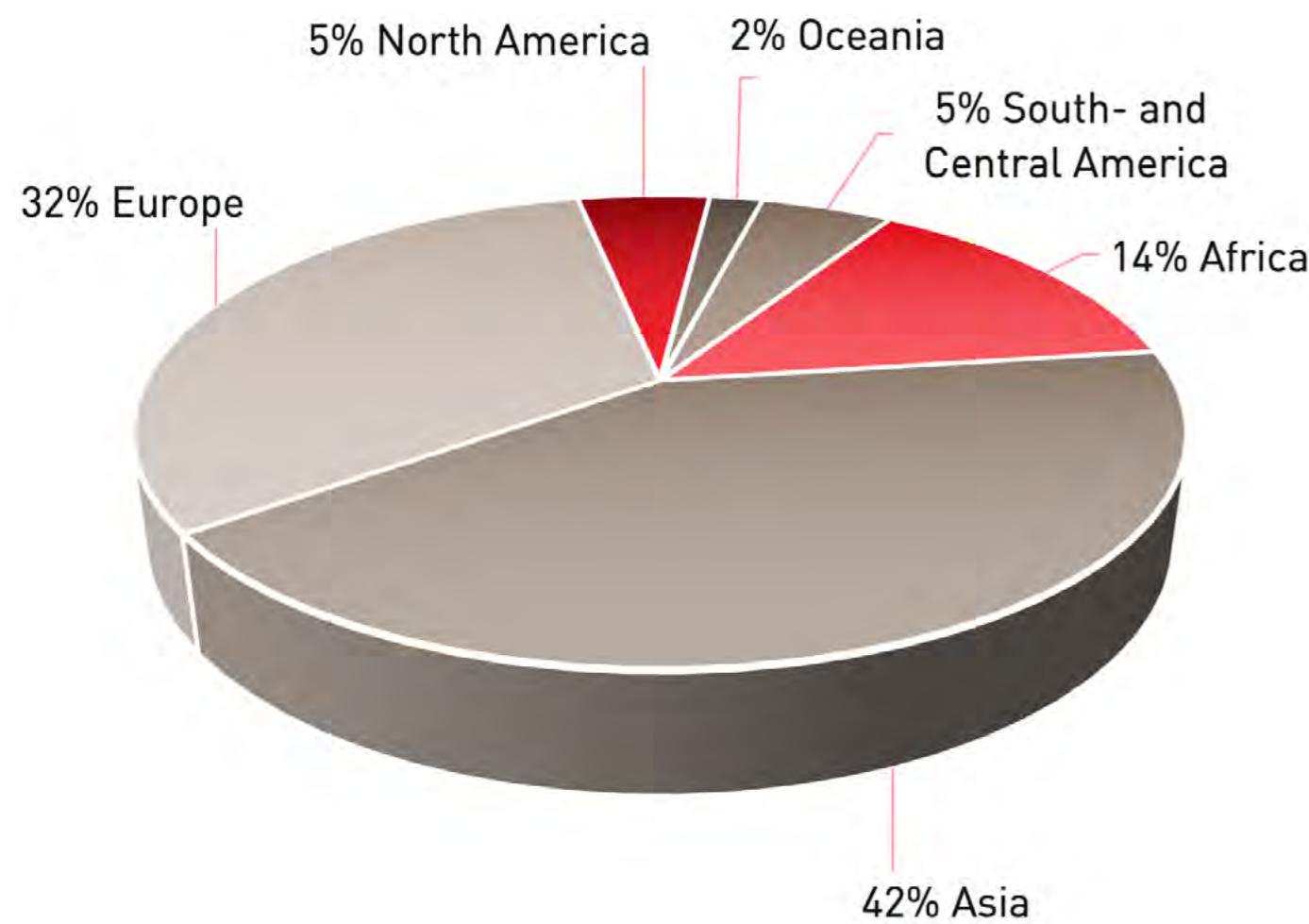
82 INTERNATIONAL LABS

60 COUNTRIES

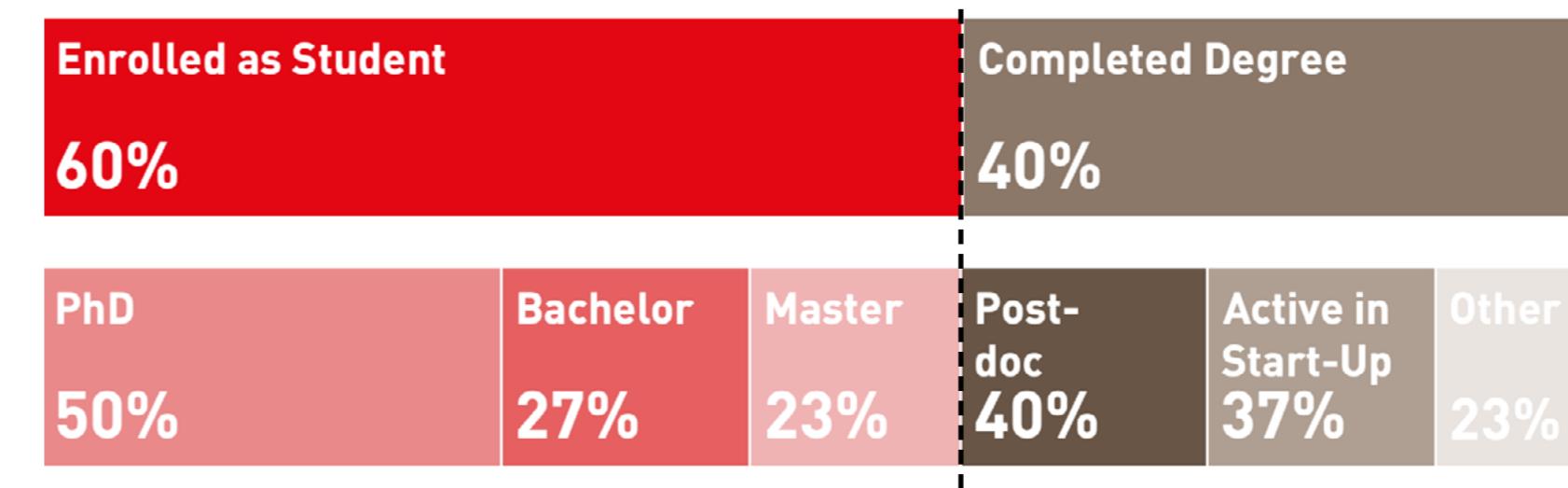
# THE FINALISTS

Ranging from cancer therapy to clean hydrogen, the 100 international Lab finalists –comprising of 59% women and 41% men– demonstrated exceptional disciplinary diversity and presented ideas with the potential for significant future impact.

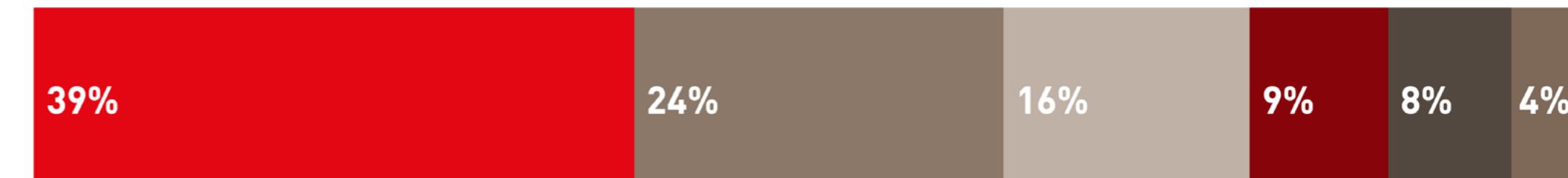
## CONTINENT OF CITIZENSHIP



## CAREER LEVEL



## PROJECT FIELD



■ Health Care & Medical Sciences	39%
■ Engineering & Technology	24%
■ Ecological & Environmental Sciences	16%
■ Social Sciences/ Education	9%
■ Mathematics & Natural Sciences	8%
■ Other	4%

## FALLING WALLS LAB

# FIVE DAYS TO CELEBRATE INNOVATION

**5 NOV**

EXTENDED PROGRAMME



**WELCOME EVENT AT THE ITALIAN EMBASSY IN BERLIN**

The finalists meet the Ambassador, Lab organisers, partners, and the Lab team, and fellow participants. The day kicks off with inspiring workshops hosted by Springer Nature.

**6 NOV**

SCIENCE SUMMIT DAY 1



**FALLING WALLS LAB GLOBAL FINALE**

The 100 international Lab finalists take the stage to present their groundbreaking ideas in 3-minute pitches, competing for the prestigious title “Breakthrough of the Year in the Emerging Talents category”.

**7 NOV**

EXTENDED PROGRAMME



**EXCURSION DAY FOR THE INTERNATIONAL LAB FINALISTS**

The German Academic Exchange Service and the German Research Foundation host the “Research Insight Day”. Finalists embark on a visit to local academic institution and cutting-edge research facilities to explore Germany’s vibrant research landscape.

**8 NOV**

SCIENCE SUMMIT DAY 3



**NETWORKING AT NEXT GENERATIONS SCIENCE MEET-UP, PUBLIC DEBATES AND SCIENTIFIC SYMPOSIA**

In addition to the many opportunities at the Science Summit to engage with global leaders in science, business, and policymaking, the Next Generation Science Meet-up offers finalists dedicated time to connect with fellow finalists and a curated network of companies and institutions.

**9 NOV**

SCIENCE SUMMIT DAY 4



**FALLING WALLS SCIENCE BREAKTHROUGHS OF THE YEAR**

The top three winners of the Emerging Talents category pitch their ideas once again on the Falling Walls “Breakthroughs of the Year” stage, joining Nobel laureates, Leibniz Prize winners, and leading experts in celebrating scientific breakthroughs.

# BREAKTHROUGHS OF THE YEAR



### KAREN DE LA VEGA-HERNÁNDEZ, 1ST PLACE BREAKING THE WALL OF MOLECULAR MONOTONY

Karen de la Vega-Hernández, a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the *Institute of Chemical Research of Catalonia (ICIQ)*, ES, has developed a reagent and skeletal-editing strategy that enables late-stage diversification of drug molecules. **Her approach accelerates drug discovery by allowing rapid, sustainable modification of molecular cores, opening new routes to improved therapeutic candidates.**



### ELENA BARBA SARASUA, 2ND PLACE BREAKING THE WALL OF SOLID TUMOR SHIELDS

Elena Barba Sarasua from the *Complutense University of Madrid, ES*, is advancing immunotherapies for hard-to-treat solid tumours. **Her STAb-T platform engineers T cells to secrete bispecific antibodies that recruit and activate immune cells, offering a scalable path toward multi-targeted cancer treatments.**



### HARRY WILTON-CLARK, 3RD PLACE BREAKING THE WALL OF RARE DISEASE THERAPIES

Harry Wilton-Clark from the *University of Alberta, CA*, develops splice-modulating therapies for Duchenne muscular dystrophy mutations with no current treatment options. **He has designed small molecules that act as genetic “band-aids,” masking harmful mutations to restore healthy gene expression, offering a new approach to patient-specific therapies for rare genetic disorders.**

## FALLING WALLS LAB

# THE JURY



**WOLFGANG MARQUARDT**

Forschungszentrum Jülich  
(retired), *DE*



**NESRINE EL ABED**

RAK Art Foundation, *SA*



**ALICE AIKEN**

Dalhousie University, *CA*



**GABRIELE HERMANI**

Federal Ministry Research,  
Technology and Space, *DE*



**BARBARA ISCHINGER**

University of Cologne, *DE*



**KATHRIN KOHS**

German Research Foundation, *DE*



**PEWE KOLUBAH**

King Abdullah University of Science  
and Technology, *SA*



**VALERIE MAKOGÉ**

Institute of Medical Research and  
Medicinal Plants Studies (IMPM), *CM*



**SWATI MEHERISHI**

Springer Nature India, *IN*



**CÉLINE NAUER**

Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung für die  
Freiheit Taiwan, *TW*



**URSULA PAINTNER**

German Academic Exchange  
Service, *DE*



**EUSEBIO SCORNAVACCA**

Arizona State University, *US*



**SVEN WAGNER**

Sartorius, *DE*

# GLOBAL REACH

In 2025, Falling Walls Lab reached new audiences both online and in person. Social media channels continued to grow strongly, with [LinkedIn](#), Instagram, and Facebook seeing double-digit follower increases. The Global Finale livestream more than doubled its audience, while on-site attendance at the Science Summit also rose.

These numbers reflect a growing global interest in early-career research, innovation, and the project's mission to showcase breakthrough ideas.

**LinkedIn 7,477+ followers — +26.7% in 2025**

**Instagram 9,899+ followers — +15.1% in 2025**

**facebook 19,118+ followers — +15.9% in 2025**

**Youtube 12,300+ subscribers — +10.8% in 2025**

**Newsletter 44,000+ subscribers**

**Global Finale Livestream Viewer 8,126+ viewers — +105.3%**

**Science Summit On-site Visitors 2,270+ visitors — +17.0%**



**“The future is bright! This is my take-away from the Falling Walls Lab after 100 enlightening pitches, presented by dedicated young scientists from all around the world, conveying innovative research results which will contribute to make the world a better place.”**

— Wolfgang Marquardt, Jury Chair Falling Walls Lab 2025

**“It is truly an honour to be part of this jury. Outstanding jury members, and the privilege to listen to 100 incredibly bright young persons striving to make this world a better place for future generations!”**

— Ursula Paintner, Jury Member Falling Walls Lab 2025

**“This isn’t just an event; it’s a vital bridge connecting the brilliant, untapped potential of our youth with the global academic and innovation community.”**

— Falling Walls Lab Erbil Organiser 2025

**“My Falling Walls Lab experience was truly inspiring. It allowed me to connect with brilliant innovators from across the globe, sharpen my pitching skills, and gain new perspectives on solving urgent problems. The energy, creativity, and support throughout the journey made it unforgettable.”**

— Lucresse Adikponsi, Falling Walls Lab Benin Winner 2025

**“I clearly remember the day I was the winner Falling Walls Lab Azerbaijan and this event will always be the reminder for me that every night ends with a sunrise. From having my first solo travelling to pitching before such a large and diverse audience this event truly helped to ‘break a lot of walls’ inside me!”**

— Zarifa Asadullayeva, Falling Walls Lab Azerbaijan Winner 2025

FALLING WALLS LAB

# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



SARTORIUS



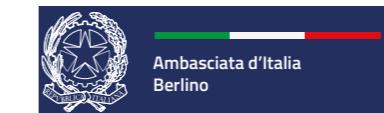
Federal Foreign Office



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst  
German Academic Exchange Service

**DFG** Deutsche  
Forschungsgemeinschaft

**SPRINGER NATURE**



DIE ZEIT

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **APPLY TO A LAB**

Are you currently enrolled at university and/or are currently a postdoc? Or did you receive a Bachelor's degree (no more than 10 years ago), Master's degree (no more than 7 years ago) or PhD (no more than 5 years ago)? Then you are eligible to apply! MDs and Dr. med. degrees are also considered equivalent. For full details, visit: <https://falling-walls.com/lab/faq>. Our local labs are excited to receive your application.

- **LAUNCH A LAB**

Are you a research organisation, or an organisation affiliated with or collaborating with a research institution, and would like to bring together talent for a pitch competition? We are looking forward to cooperating with you. For full details, visit <https://falling-walls.com/lab/launch-a-lab>.

- **BECOME A PARTNER**

Support the next generation of pioneering scientists from across the globe by becoming our partner. Together, we can create opportunities that empower emerging talent and enable collaboration on global challenges. Please contact us directly! (details next page).





## PLEASE CONTACT

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