ILAS

Report Academic Year 2025-2026

Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Natural Sciences and Humanities

International School for Advanced Studies



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PERSPECTIVES

In 2026, the Interdisciplinary Laboratory celebrated two important anniversaries: in January, the 40th birthday since its inception, and in May, the tenth edition of our flagship science communication event, the Scienza e Virgola scientific book festival. Both have been opportunities to reflect on the journey thus far, and to celebrate with current and past members, friends and supporters of **ILAS**. It was particularly moving to gather many of the former directors of the Lab for the 40th anniversary party, and to hear their recollections about how **ILAS** came to be and about its activities in the olden days - spiced by more than the occasional funny story.

Marking these special anniversaries also meant looking ahead, and reflecting collectively on what **ILAS** wants to be in the future. The original values remain strong and foundational for us today - the attention to interdisciplinarity, the welcoming stance towards different modalities of knowing, the pursuit of dialogue across cultures and domains - while others are coming ever more to the fore: from reflecting on the impact of AI, to the importance of experimenting with new modalities of exchange between science and society.

This year also marked the loss of a great scientist and a wonderful human being: Professor Daniele Amati, former **SISSA** director and a staunch supporter of **ILAS**, passed away in August 2026, aged 94. Daniele lived an incredible life, and witnessed from a ringside seat the historical events that defined the science and culture of the 20th century. Through it all, he

became a major figure in physics, brought the research on neurosciences to SISSA, and remained curious about all sorts of other subjects right to the end of his life. Daniele has been and remains an inspiration for all of us.

Roberto Trotta
Director of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory
for Natural Sciences and Humanities
Trieste, September 2026

MISSION

The mission of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Natural Sciences and Humanities (ILAS) is to create a space where science, the humanities and the arts can engage in dialogue with one another and with society, in order to imagine, inspire and help shape a shared future.

Within the context of excellence of **SISSA**'s cutting-edge research, the Laboratory is a meeting place for diverse knowledge, questions and perspectives, which cross-fertilise and enrich one another.

The Laboratory addresses diverse audiences: it offers scientists a space for exchange with complementary knowledge, different perspectives, and humanistic and artistic approaches, fostering new ways of interpreting their own work and research practice.

For citizens, it offers opportunities for active participation in scientific research, making it more accessible, closer and more inclusive. For communication professionals, it offers innovative models of dialogue and cultural mediation, together with training opportunities and the development of transversal skills. Finally, for institutions, it stands as a point of reference where frontier research is integrated with communication, critical reflection and the promotion of scientific culture in dialogue with humanistic culture.

VISION

ILAS intends to strengthen its role as a leading cultural and scientific hub, capable of generating unsuspected connections and launching high-impact projects. We will experiment with new formats, languages and modes of interaction, in line with contemporary transformations, fostering the emergence and consolidation of interdisciplinary collaborative networks at national and international level.

Activities will be further developed in the areas of data-driven investigative journalism, critical analysis of science communication, and the strengthening of collaborations with cultural, civic and social organisations.

Particular attention will be devoted to reflecting on the role, development and impact of artificial intelligence on science and society, a theme that will become one of the Laboratory's main strategic axes. In this area, **ILAS** intends to promote dialogue among the public, the scientific community and policymakers, fostering an open, informed and responsible exchange.

Through an inclusive, critical and change-oriented approach, **ILAS** aims to be a driver of reflection and active participation, making a significant contribution to **SISSA**'s public engagement mission and to building a more aware, better informed and inclusive society.

HISTORY

ILAS - the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Natural Sciences and Humanities of **SISSA** - was established in 1986 to help link research, culture, institutions, communication and public participation. Its foundation is intertwined with the launch, in 1993, of the Master in Science Communication “Franco Prattico” (MCS), the first postgraduate course in Italy dedicated to training science communication professionals. More recently, the establishment of the Master in High Performance Computing (MHPC) and the Master in Data Management and Curation (MDMC), which reflect the Laboratory’s evolution towards new areas of education and research.

Over time, ILAS has broadened its role, establishing itself as a reference centre for the interaction between research, citizenship and culture. Its teaching activities include summer schools aimed at expert audiences and advanced training programmes.

In the past, the Laboratory ran several masters and advanced courses that have been including the Master in Modelling, the Master in Digital Science Journalism, the Master in Complex Actions and the Course in Financial Mathematics.

At the international level, **ILAS** takes part in numerous European and PNRR (Italy’s National Recovery and Resilience Plan) projects dedicated to science communication and the promotion of scientific culture, strengthening its network of collaborations.

In parallel, it carries out a rich programme of outreach through exhibitions, publications, conferences and events open to the public, in collaboration with public and private bodies. Among the most significant initiatives the *Scienza e Virgola* festival, reached in 2026 its tenth edition and each year turns the city into a meeting space for science, media, literature and the public.

Over time, ILAS has been led by prominent figures of the academic and scientific scene, including Paolo Budinich, Stefano Fantoni, Roberto Iengo, Vincent Torre, Giuseppe Mussardo, Andrea Gambassi and, currently, Roberto Trotta.

Today **ILAS** is a cultural and scientific hub that connects research and society, promotes informed scientific citizenship and stimulates reflection on emerging topics such as artificial intelligence, research ethics and the impact of science on our collective future. With an eye to innovation, the Laboratory continues to explore new languages and modes of interaction, consolidating its role within **SISSA** as a space for education, exchange and cultural transformation.

The Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Natural Sciences and Humanities was established by Law no. 26 of 29 January 1986 within SISSA and regulated by Ministerial Decree no. 405 of 11 July 1989. It celebrated its 40th anniversary in January 2026.

40 years of ILAS!

In 2026 **ILAS** celebrated forty years of activity: four decades devoted to research, education and the dissemination of scientific culture, through a path that has been able to renew itself over time while keeping the dialogue between science and society at its centre.

For forty years **SISSA** has promoted, through **ILAS**, an experience of education and research that looks beyond disciplinary and geographical boundaries. Over these four decades, **ILAS** has been a privileged meeting space for young researchers, lecturers and scholars from all over the world, helping to build an international scientific community founded on curiosity, exchange and the sharing of knowledge.

To celebrate this important milestone, **ILAS** organised an event in January 2026 that brought together staff, several former directors, lecturers, representatives of institutions and representatives of various organisations that have collaborated with **ILAS** over the years, creating a valuable opportunity to retrace its history, remember the people who have accompanied its growth and look to future prospects.

STRUCTURE

ILAS staff is an interdisciplinary group that includes **SISSA** lecturers and researchers, research fellows engaged in scientific and cultural projects, and technical-administrative staff, supported the Laboratory's organisational and logistical activities. Following an internal reorganisation, the technical-administrative staff have been assigned to **SISSA**'s Student Registrar's Office and Events Office, while continuing to play a supporting role in the management of **ILAS** activities.

28 PEOPLE, OF WHOM 11 MEN AND 17 WOMEN

ILAS Director: Roberto Trotta

MHPC Master Co-director: Stefano de Gironcoli

Director of Physics: History and Epistemology activities: Giuseppe Mussardo

MDMC Master Co-director: Eugenio Piasini

MCS Master Director: Nico Pitrelli

Neuroethics: Raffaella Rumiati

MCS Deputy Director: Anna Menini

Research Fellows: Giulia Casasole, Francesca de Ruvo, Beatrice Millo

Secretariat until 31/05: Mila Bottegal, Sabrina Morena, Andrea Odorico, Claudia Parma

Collaborators: Stefano Canali, Andrea Gambassi, Rachele Mazzaracca, Donato Ramani, Chiara Saviane, Carolina Stera, Alessandro Tavecchio, Manuela Valta

Institutional collaborators: Irina Dayydenkova, Mariarita De Luca, Ivan Girotto, Manuela Schipizza Logh, Nicola Seriani

Intern: Chiara Meriani Merlo



Internship of Chiara Meriani Merlo

CAN WE TRUST ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

Master's in Philosophy of the Digital and Ethics of Artificial Intelligence University of Udine, academic year 2025-2026

Chiara Meriani is a freelance journalist who has been investigating various aspects of artificial intelligence and its impact on society. In an effort to get to the bottom of this often misunderstood technology, she spent several months at SISSA working on her Master's thesis in collaboration with the Data Science group and ILAS. Her central question is: can we trust artificial intelligence?

The question becomes particularly relevant because we are confronting systems that produce increasingly effective results, while research does not yet possess a general theory capable of fully explaining how they work. In her thesis, Chiara investigates the grounds on which we build trust in AI and, more generally, in the processes of knowledge production in which machine learning systems intervene. The starting point is the state of the art of scientific research. A first core examines some work developed at SISSA, with particular attention to Sebastian Goldt's group, and the themes that emerged during the ICTP international school "Youth in High-Dimensions": learning and generalisation, error, memory, internal representations, training stability and the conditions for the reliability of machine learning models. The thesis therefore proceeds progressively: understanding what we know today about machine learning systems; observing on what grounds scientists trust their results; questioning the concept of trust; and finally analysing what happens when Artificial Intelligence is narrated to the public, identifying useful criteria for AI communication that is accessible without becoming superficial.

ILAS ACTIVITIES
OCTOBER 2025
SEPTEMBER 2026

Training and research

MASTER IN SCIENCE COMMUNICATION “FRANCO PRATTICO” (MCS)

The Master in Science Communication “Franco Prattico” is an annual postgraduate advanced course that trains specialised professionals able to tell the story of science in a clear, accurate and engaging way: journalists, institutional communicators, science popularisers, museum curators, editors and event organisers, with an interdisciplinary and international approach. Founded in 1993, it is the first in Italy and among the first in Europe in terms of history and longevity. Modern and innovation-oriented, MCS teaching integrates theory and practice across a range of professional fields that are now indispensable for operating competitively in an increasingly digital communication ecosystem. The curriculum ranges from social studies of science to communication studies, from the fundamentals of entrepreneurship to the analysis of frontier scientific topics, from creative writing to multimedia production.

CAREER PROSPECTS

95.5% of MCS students find employment within one year, and 98% within three years of graduating. The main career paths include publishing, science journalism, education and teaching, institutional communication, museums, event organisation and European projects. The curricular internship in national and international organisations facilitates entry into the job market and the building of professional networks.

34 EDITIONS
20 STUDENTS - ANNUAL AVERAGE
450 HOURS OF LESSONS
40 HOURS OF INTERNSHIP
DIRECTOR: NICO PITRELLI

CURRICULAR REVIEW

During the 2025/2026 academic year, a review of the MCS Master was launched, which will take effect in 2026/2027. The curriculum has been revised with the aim of making it more flexible, practical and closer to the educational and professional needs of students. One of the main innovations is the introduction of optional courses, which allows students to build a personalised path according to their individual interests and goals.

The review also led to a simplification of the educational offer, reducing it to three thematic modules (Social Studies of Science, Scientific Foundations, Communication Studies and Practices) and introducing dedicated coordination roles, tasked with ensuring teaching consistency and organisational support throughout the programme.

Finally, a central element of the review is the integration of teaching and final product: the traditional academic thesis is superseded in favour of a more practical final project, which has immediate practical relevance in the job market.

From the 2026/2027 academic year, the MCS programme will comprise a total of about 450 hours of teaching and laboratory activities and a curricular internship lasting between three and six months.

MASTER IN HIGH PERFORMANCE COMPUTING (MHPC)

Co-organised by **SISSA** and International Centre for Theoretical Physics, the Master in High Performance Computing (MHPC) is a postgraduate advanced course featuring an innovative specialisation programme that prepares students for stimulating careers in the field of high-performance computing (HPC).
The programme focuses on complex scientific and technological problems; lectures are given by **SISSA** and ICTP lecturers and researchers, supported by high-profile international experts.
Both institutions boast a long tradition and consolidated experience in the development and application of computational models for scientific research. The master's program is also supported by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region through a grant.

CAREER PROSPECTS

Career opportunities are many, in academia as well as in industry and consultancy. Within one year of completing the programme, 66% of graduates find employment in academia, while 34% find it in private companies.

13 EDITIONS
15 STUDENTS - ANNUAL AVERAGE
1476 HOURS OF LESSONS AND INTERNSHIP
CO-DIRECTOR: STEFANO DE GIRONCOLI

MASTER IN DATA MANAGEMENT AND CURATION (MDMC)

Co-organised by **SISSA** and Area Science Park, the Master in Data Management and Curation (MDMC) is a postgraduate advanced course positioned between cutting-edge scientific research and practical application. The programme stands out for its focus on the FAIR principles and Open Science practices, elements that are increasingly central to the transformation of research and data management processes. It is part of the NFFA-DI project, funded under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), and unfolds in a highly qualified context that integrates advanced training and applied experience, with a strong link between research and innovation. The master's program is also supported by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region through a grant.

CAREER PROSPECTS

The Master prepares students for highly sought-after professions such as Data Steward, Data Curator, Data Engineer and Research Data Manager, key figures both in the research world and in data-intensive public and private organisations.

2 EDITIONS
15 STUDENTS - ANNUAL AVERAGE
250 HOURS OF LESSONS
500 HOURS OF INTERNSHIP
CO-DIRECTOR: EUGENIO PIASINI

STUDENT BODY, ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/2026 43 STUDENTS, 15 MCS - 15 MDMC - 13 MHPC



SCHOOL OF NEUROETHICS

SISSA's School of Neuroethics is an interdisciplinary advanced training initiative. It is a space for exchange among neuroscience, philosophy, psychology and clinical practice, dedicated to the critical analysis of the ethical, epistemological and social implications of knowledge about the brain and human behaviour. The School is aimed at neuroscientists, philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, addiction physicians and scholars of neuroethics and bioethics.

Through lectures, seminars and discussion sessions, the School fosters dialogue between scientific research and clinical practice, with particular attention to the themes of autonomy, responsibility and the forms of vulnerability associated with addiction. The programme integrates theoretical contributions and applied perspectives, involving researchers, clinicians and professionals in an interdisciplinary exchange.

The School is coordinated by Prof. Stefano Canali, University of Roma Tre, and has become established over time as an international context for training and in-depth study, contributing to an integrated reflection among science, ethics and society on the applications of neuroscience in the study and treatment of addiction.

SCHOOL OF NEUROETHICS 2025: NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND ADDICTION

The 2025 edition of the School had as its theme the role of narrative identity in substance use disorders and behavioural addictions, with particular attention to the processes by which the Self is constructed and the relationship with emotional regulation and vulnerability.

15-16 DECEMBER 2025
35 PARTICIPANTS
18 SPEAKERS
ROMA TRE UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND COMMUNICATION, ROME

SCHOOL OF NEUROETHICS 2026: NEUROETHICS OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRACTICES IN ADDICTION

The 2026 edition explored the relationship between contemplative practices and addiction from a neuroethical perspective, with particular attention to the effects on craving, stress and emotional regulation. The discussion also addressed the main ethical questions raised by neuroscientific research, by the safety of interventions and by the possible implications for people's autonomy and agency, including a comparison with Twelve-Step models and with processes of identity transformation. The initiative fostered an interdisciplinary dialogue among neuroscience, philosophy and clinicians, highlighting the potential, limits and implications of contemplative neuroscience in the field of addiction.

21-23 SEPTEMBER 2026
20 PARTICIPANTS
10 SPEAKERS
SISSA, TRIESTE

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM GRANTS

Starting in 2021, SISSA has awarded research and advanced training grants in the field of Data Journalism. **SISSA** has issued a comparative evaluation call for the award of two research and advanced training grants dedicated to Data Journalism.

The initiative aims to promote investigative journalism grounded in the scientific method and data analysis, making use of data mining techniques and artificial intelligence tools for the acquisition, selection, analysis and interpretation of information. The grants support the development of investigative projects on topics of significant public interest, with particular attention to issues related to science, health and the environment. Projects dedicated to the ethical and social aspects of artificial intelligence, as well as to its impact in areas such as scientific research, society, politics, the economy and other sectors of collective interest, are also considered.

The aim is to foster rigorous, innovative and evidence-based journalistic investigations, contributing to high-quality products capable of making complex data and phenomena of great relevance to public debate accessible and understandable.

INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM GRANTS 2025-2026

ILAS teamed up with FACTA, an independent Italian non-profit media outlet that applies the scientific method to investigative and data journalism, to set up and run two investigative journalism fellowships. This new round followed previous experiences, that have promoted data-intensive investigative journalism since 2021, but this time with the added benefit of a collaboration with young researchers from **SISSA**'s Theoretical and Scientific Data Science group.

Two proposals were selected among the many received from international applicants. The first fellowship was awarded to Anita Fallani, with her project "Detained: the data on compulsory psychiatric treatment (TSO) in Italy", looking at the real numbers and impact of TSO in selected regions across the country; the second fellowship went to Jelena Ptoric, for her project "Who owns our farmland? Land grabbing in Europe", which examined who owns EU farmland, how EU policy shapes access to land, and what corporate concentration means for agriculture, soil, water and food supply. The journalists were supported by data science PhD students Marco Giunta and Christopher Erazo from **SISSA**.

Both project were highly successful, and interim results were presented in May at the "Data and Satellite Journalism" workshop at **SISSA**. Several publications are planned on national and international media for Fall 2026.

MASTERCLASSES

ILAS supports training in the Masterclasses project promoted by **SISSA** Medialab. The project offers science communication courses aimed at researchers, teachers, journalists and other professionals. The courses are designed taking into account the different needs of participants and draw on original and innovative teaching methodologies, based on a participatory approach and peer learning. Through interactive and interdisciplinary modules, **ILAS** helps to develop tools and practices to improve the dialogue between science and society.

WRITING A SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE
Online course for the staff of RSE S.p.A. (Milan)
SISSA lecturers involved: Chiara Saviane and Donato Ramani
Two editions: 15-16 October and 10-11 November 2025
12-15 participants per edition

SPEAK & PERFORM: PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR IMPACTFUL COMMUNICATION
In-person course for researchers at Area Science Park
SISSA lecturers involved: Chiara Saviane and Donato Ramani
20 and 22 January 2026 (Area Science Park)
About 20 participants

FROM IDEA TO EVENT: TOOLS AND PRACTICES FOR COMMUNICATING SCIENCE TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES
In-person course for the technical-administrative staff of the Schools of Advanced Studies (Scuole Superiori) belonging to the Educating Future Citizens network
13-14 January 2026 (SISSA)
20 participants

AI, QUO VADIS?
In-person course for students, PhD students, researchers, lecturers and technical-administrative staff in the academic field. Carried out as part of the Educating Future Citizens project.
SISSA lecturers involved: Roberto Trotta
2-6 February 2026 (Bertinoro University Residential Centre, FC)

COMMUNICATING KNOWLEDGE:
Tools and practices for university orientation
In-person course for undergraduate and PhD students of the Schools of Advanced Studies belonging to the Educating Future Citizens network
SISSA lecturers involved: Nico Pitrelli, Chiara Saviane, Donato Ramani, Alessandro Tavecchio
11-13 February 2026 (SISSA)
17 participants

PEER-TO-PEER COMMUNICATION IN STEM AND SSH
In-person course for PhD students of the Schools of Advanced Studies belonging to the Educating Future Citizens network and of other universities
SISSA lecturers involved: Nico Pitrelli, Chiara Saviane, Donato Ramani, Alessandro Tavecchio
9-12 March 2026 (Bertinoro University Residential Centre, FC)
44 participants: 25 from STEM and 19 from SSH

WRITING A SCIENTIFIC ARTICLE
Online course for the staff of RSE S.p.A. (Milan)
12-15 participants per edition
SISSA lecturers involved: Chiara Saviane and Donato Ramani
Two editions: 22 and 24 June and 26-27 October 2026

SPEAK AND PERFORM: DYNAMIC PRESENTATIONS IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
Course for members of the Data Management and Statistics group at Chiesi Farmaceutici S.p.A.
SISSA lecturers involved: Chiara Saviane and Donato Ramani
September-November 2026
35 participants



Science Policy and Institutional collaboration activities

THE IMPACT OF AI ON SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

ILAS contributed to the ongoing reflection of the impact of AI on science, society and higher education with several high-profile contributions. ILAS' Director, Prof. Roberto Trotta, published a commentary piece in Nature Astronomy (Vol 9, 1748-1749, Dec 2025) on the risk that an indiscriminate adoption of AI poses for academia. ILAS also contributed to several training events and public debates on the subject of AI.

MEETING WITH THE CANADIAN DELEGATION AND THE FVG REGION

On 26 May 2026, ILAS took part as an invited guest in a meeting with the Québec Delegation, hosted by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region at the Palazzo della Regione in Trieste. The meeting followed up on the Region's mission to the 7th Canada-Italy Forum on Artificial Intelligence in Montréal (November 2025). That mission itself built on the 2024 Italy-Canada agreement on technology cooperation, which also set up a bilateral AI advisory board, and on the Joint Statement signed at the 2025 G7. The Québec Delegation was led by Laurence Fouquette-L'Anglais, Delegate of Québec in Rome, with Ralph Christian Maloumby Baka, Research and Innovation Attaché, and Vanessa Antoniali, Senior Attachée for Public and Institutional Affairs. The meeting brought together research and innovation bodies from Friuli Venezia Giulia and Québec

to discuss collaboration on AI, including links with Montréal's research and industry ecosystem, and discussion on ethical use of AI systems.

INTERNSHIP IN COLLABORATION WITH THE UNITED WORLD COLLEGE OF THE ADRIATIC

In the 2025-2026 academic year, **SISSA** once again hosted a curricular training and orientation internship, as part of its collaboration with the United World College of the Adriatic (Onlus). The experience was an important training and orientation opportunity for the students Teodora Hancu and Teresa Morando, allowing them to get a concrete taste of the scientific research environment and of **SISSA**'s academic activities, under the supervision of Prof. Roberto Trotta.

Outreach events

Every year **ILAS** organises a wide-ranging calendar of public events, including conferences, seminars, book presentations and cultural initiatives, with the aim of creating opportunities for dialogue among scientific research, culture and society. The activities, held at **SISSA** and in other venues around the city of Trieste and the Friuli Venezia Giulia region, encourage exchange between the academia and the public, promoting the sharing of different knowledge and perspectives.

Scholars, science communicators, writers, journalists and communication professionals take part in in-depth sessions dedicated to themes that cut across science and its communication, philosophy, the history of scientific thought, the evolution of information and the ethical implications of contemporary research. With this set of initiatives, **ILAS** strengthens **SISSA**'s vocation as an open space for exchange, critical analysis and cross-fertilisation among disciplines, fostering dialogue with the community and contributing to the understanding of the cultural and scientific challenges of the present.

seminar

ITALO CALVINO AND COMPLEXITY: BETWEEN PALOMAR AND PARISI

with Gian Italo Bischi, introduced by Giuseppe Mussardo and Riccardo Cepach

The seminar takes its cue from the volume co-written by Gian Italo Bischi and Giovanni Darconza entitled Calvino e la limpidezza della complessità. Tra Palomar e Parisi (Calvino and the Clarity of Complexity: Between Palomar and Parisi) (Aras Edizioni, 2023).

29 November 2025
Museo LETS-Letteratura Trieste, Spazio Forum

exhibition

SUPERCHARGED BY AI | SYNTHETIC AND OUT OF CONTROL

International exhibition produced by IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) and EMIF (European Media Information Fund), together with Tactical Tech and the DensityDesignLab of Politecnico di Milano, and promoted in Italy by AIB - Associazione Italiana Biblioteche (Italian Library Association).

12-19 December 2025
SISSA

seminar

AGENTIC AI, LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS AND RESEARCH: PANEL DISCUSSION

with Domenica Bueti, Antonio Lerario and Roberto Trotta

A discussion on the role of artificial intelligence in society, between new opportunities for learning, work and research and the challenges related to regulation, control and responsibility.

12 December 2025
SISSA

book presentation

DIO GIOCA A DADI CON IL MONDO (GOD PLAYS DICE WITH THE WORLD)

with Giuseppe Mussardo and Luca Morici

Presentation of the new comic-book version of “Dio gioca a dadi con il mondo”. From the fracture opened by Max Planck in classical physics to the confrontations between Einstein and Bohr, up to Schrödinger, Heisenberg and Pauli, the birth of quantum mechanics has become a visual and ironic tale guided by the voice of John Stewart Bell.

24 January 2026
Ubik Bookshop

seminar

FORGING A NEW HIGH-ENERGY COSMOS: THE EMERGENCE OF THE ASTROPARTICLE PARADIGM, 1930S-1990S

with Luisa Bonolis

The seminar analysed the birth and evolution of astroparticle physics, showing how, between the 1930s and the 1990s, it emerged from the interaction among particle physics, relativistic astrophysics, cosmology and the study of cosmic rays.

26 January 2026
SISSA

seminar

THROUGH DISTANT EYES

with Lisa-Maria Gruber

The event explored the relationship between observing the Universe and a sense of responsibility towards the Earth, asking how astronomers’ gaze on the cosmos can help develop a new ethical and planetary awareness in the face of the ecological crisis.

20 April 2026
SISSA



Thematic sessions on current scientific topics

The *Thematic Sessions* are a seminar-based activity included in the Master in Science Communication “Franco Prattico” (MCS), designed to offer students opportunities for in-depth study and discussion on current scientific topics and on the issues that run through the world of research and science communication. The meetings involve experts from the worlds of research, journalism and science communication, who are called upon to share perspectives, experiences and skills and to stimulate reflection on the state of the art and on the main challenges related to the topics addressed.

The project is carried out in collaboration with the Friuli Venezia Giulia Order of Journalists. The sessions are moderated by Francesca Iannelli (Area Science Park).

WHEN SCIENCE BECOMES COMICS
with Andrea Plazzi, Giuseppe Mussardo, Fabio Chiarello

How complex concepts such as physics and mathematics can be told and understood through cartoons and illustrated stories.

10 April 2026
Online session

BEYOND THE INVISIBLE: A LOOK AT UNRECOGNISED ILLNESSES
with Cesare Siragusano, Rossana Agliozzo, Gloria Di Gregorio, Alessandra Maestro, Sonia Manente

The event addressed the topic of invisible illnesses, exploring their complexity, gender-related differences and the ways in which these conditions were communicated and represented.

28 April 2026
Online session

Conferences

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

SISSA's National Conference on Science Communication was launched in 2002 with the aim of fostering exchange between scholars and professionals in the field and of offering a space for discussion on science communication in Italy. The Conference has established itself over time as one of the main national reference points for strengthening the dialogue between science and society.

With over 350 delegates, the 14th edition was the best attended ever; it took place from 2 to 5 December 2025 and offered science communicators an up-to-date overview of current trends in the sector, of science communication strategies and of opportunities for exchanging ideas and good practices between researchers and professionals.

The next appointment is already on the horizon: in 2027 the Conference will again bring together the science communication community, renewing an event that has for very many years brought ideas, skills and perspectives into dialogue.

48 EVENTS
125 ITALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL VOICES
350 PARTICIPANTS
74 PRESS/WEB/RADIO/TV MENTIONS

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

On 23 and 24 April 2026 ILAS promoted the conference "Intersections between Science & Literature", dedicated to exploring the relationships between scientific culture and literary imagination. The two days, hosted at **SISSA**, brought together scholars from a range of disciplinary fields, from physics to cosmology, from mathematics to the philosophy of science, and from literary criticism to literary history.

The conference, held in Italian and open to the public, fostered dialogue between authors and the great questions of the literary tradition. At the centre of the discussion was the thought of figures such as Leopardi, Paul Valéry, Musil, Gadda, Lewis Carroll, Jules Verne and Calvino, in order to investigate how the ideas of science have found in literature a space for comparison, interpretation and imagination.

4 MAIN THEMATIC STRANDS:
LITERATURE AND COSMOLOGY
LITERATURE AND MATHEMATICS
WRITING AND THE NATURAL SCIENCES
LITERATURE AND THE LIFE SCIENCES

12 SPEAKERS: *Vincenzo Barone; Claudio Bartocci; Novella Bellucci; Marco Bersanelli; Gian Italo Bischi; Luciano Boi; Vincenzo Crupi; Franco D'Intino; Elena Ioli; Filippo La Porta; Giuseppe Mussardo; Silvio Perrella; Gaspare Polizzi; Roberto Trotta*



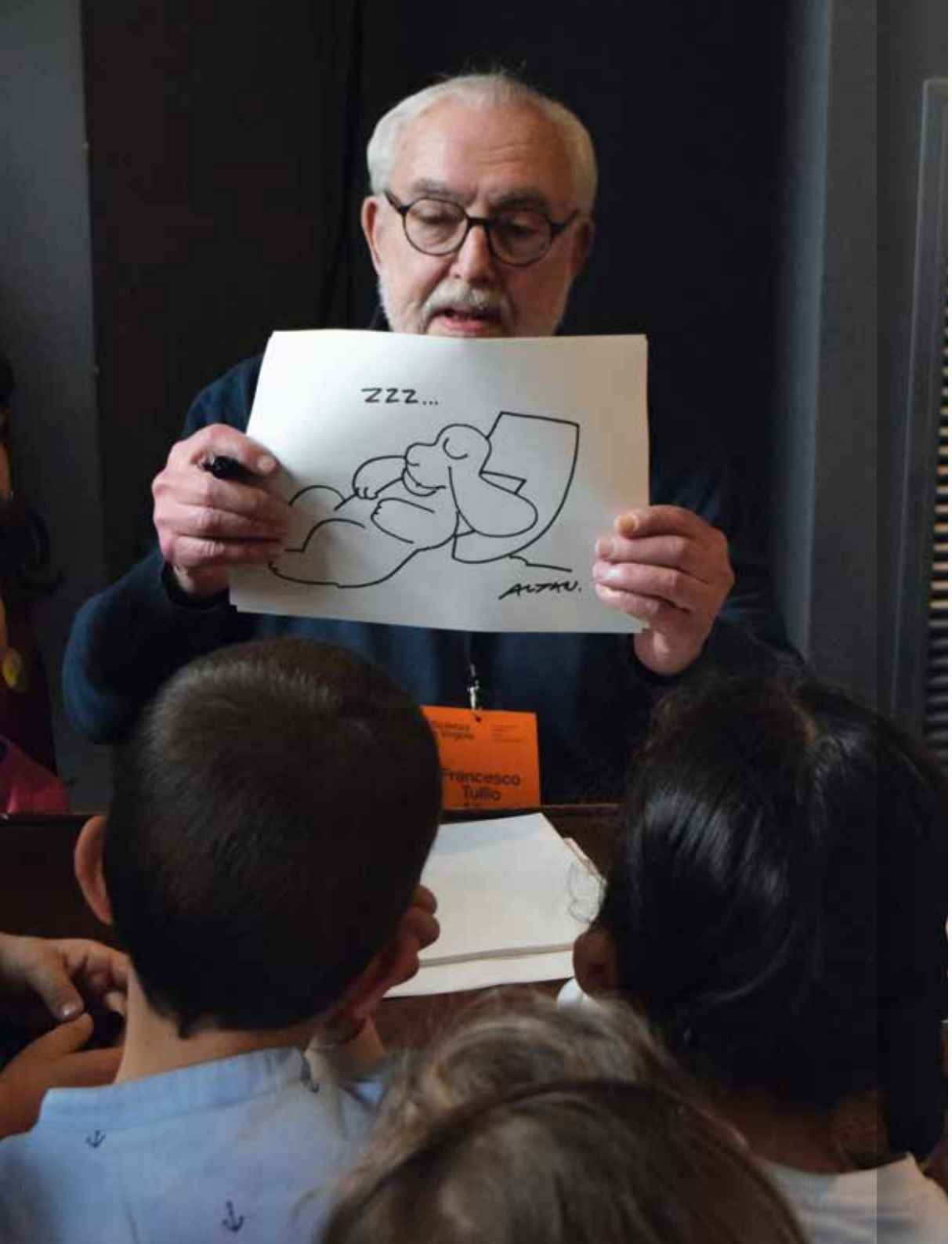
Scientific book festival: Scienza e Virgola 2026

Scienza e Virgola is the scientific book festival organised by **SISSA**, with writer Paolo Giordano as artistic director.

Since 2016 it has offered a rich programme that weaves together literature, theatre, cinema, workshops and debates, in order to recount the story of science through different, accessible and engaging languages. The festival takes place in numerous venues across the city, including bookshops, libraries, schools and theatres, and pays particular attention to social engagement through events hosted in the city's penitentiary, in residences for the elderly and at the Burlo Garofolo maternal and children's hospital (IRCCS).

Through diverse formats and perspectives, *Scienza e Virgola* investigates the relationship between science and society, promoting critical thinking and the active participation of the public. The initiative draws on the collaboration of cultural, scientific and institutional partners, helping to make science communication an integral part of the city's cultural life.

The tenth edition of the festival took place May 7-10th, 2026, on the theme Umano. The theme invited reflection on what defines our species today: from our relationship with artificial intelligence to the transformations of the Anthropocene, by way of bodies, brains, vulnerabilities, differences and technologies. A journey that explored the human as a space of research, experience and shared exchange.



This year the presence across the territory was extensive, reaching audiences and places not only in Trieste but throughout the region. Thanks to the collaboration with **SISSA** Medialab, the *Scienza e Virgola* workshops involved 21 municipalities in Friuli Venezia Giulia, reaching almost 400 students.

With this edition, *Scienza e Virgola* confirmed its vocation to be a place of dialogue and critical reflection, open to engaging with the challenges and questions of the present, while keeping books as the starting point and inspiration of its journey.

THE PROGRAMME OF SCIENZA E VIRGOLA 2026

16 BOOK PRESENTATIONS
15 EVENTS5 WORKSHOPS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
2 SCREENINGS
4 THEATRE PERFORMANCES
1 CONCERT
22 EVENTS RESERVED FOR SCHOOLS
1 EVENT IN THE PRISON
1 EVENT AT THE BURLO GAROFOLO CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
1 EVENT IN A RESIDENCE FOR THE ELDERLY OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF TRIESTE

THE NUMBERS OF SCIENZA E VIRGOLA 2026

65 EVENTS
3,300+ ATTENDEES
39 BOOKS PROMOTED
5 FOREIGN AUTHORS
55/93 FEMALE GUESTS
195 PRESS/WEB/RADIO/TV MENTIONS (OF WHICH 38 AT NATIONAL LEVEL)
21 MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVED IN THE FVG REGION



PARTNERS AND COLLABORATIONS

MAIN PARTNER:
Agorai

WITH THE CONTRIBUTION OF:
Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Fondazione CRTrieste, Fondazioni Casali ETS, Fondazione Pietro Pittini, SISSA Medialab, Educating Future Citizens.

WITH THE SUPPORT OF:
Municipality of Trieste, Festival dell'Acqua of Staranzano, ICTP, Immaginario Scientifico, Scenasonica, Festival vicino/lontano.

PROJECT PARTNERS:
Antico Caffè and Libreria San Marco and Teatro Miela Bonawentura.

TECHNICAL PARTNERS:
Nonino and The Modernist Hotel.

MEDIA PARTNERS:
Rai FVG, Radio 3 and Nord Est Multimedia.

GIULIO REGENI

On 25 January 2016 the young Italian researcher Giulio Regeni was abducted in Cairo; about a week later, his body, bearing signs of torture, was found along a road on the outskirts of the city.

As part of the national initiative "Universities for the Freedom of Research, ten years after the death of Giulio Regeni", in which **SISSA** took part, *Scienza e Virgola* featured a screening of the documentary *Giulio Regeni - Tutto il male del mondo (Giulio Regeni - All the Evil in the World)* followed by a conversation with Paola Deffendi, Claudio Regeni and the lawyer Alessandra Ballerini, connected remotely. The meeting was moderated by Nico Pitrelli.

10 YEARS OF SCIENZA E VIRGOLA!

In 2026 *Scienza e Virgola* celebrated its tenth edition. Conceived by **SISSA**'s Interdisciplinary Laboratory, over ten years the Festival has grown into a recognised event on the science communication and science publishing scene, while at the same time consolidating a strong bond with the city of Trieste.

The tenth anniversary has been not only an important milestone but also the start of a new phase in the event's history. The award of regional funding for the next three years allows for longer term planning and the development of new projects. In 2026 a broader thematic path thus got under way, which will accompany *Scienza e Virgola* for three editions through the words Human, Nature and Artificial. After exploring the theme of the Human in 2026, the path will continue in 2027 with Nature and in 2028 with the Artificial.

To celebrate the Festival's first ten years, work was also carried out on the *Guida emozionale ai libri di scienza. Dieci anni di Scienza e Virgola (An Emotional Guide to Science Books: Ten Years of Scienza e Virgola)*, a project conceived to retrace the history and growth of the event through the books that have accompanied it. A map of readings and, at the same time, an emotional compass for finding one's way not only among topics and disciplines, but also among emotions and moods.

The Guide was produced with the contributions of authors who, over the various editions, have been protagonists of *Scienza e Virgola*, ideally returning to be part of the Festival. The graphic design was created by the Tassinari Vetta studio.

Among the new projects launched during the year is also the first artistic residency of *Scienza e Virgola*, which will take place in autumn 2026 and represents the first step of a path that, at the end of the three-year period, led to the creation of a new initiative, named Officina Editoriale. The project is made possible thanks to the collaboration with AgorAI, will support the realisation of the first edition of the residency.

EFFETTO CINEMA: AUDIOVISUAL EDUCATION AT SCHOOL TO UNDERSTAND THE PRESENT

Effetto Cinema is an audiovisual education project aimed at secondary school students in Trieste and the surrounding area, created with the aim of bringing the new generations closer to the language of cinema and, at the same time, offering them a space to tell their own point of view on the contemporary world.

The project was promoted by the Cooperativa Ghirigori, in collaboration with **SISSA**, Casa del Cinema di Trieste, International Rescue Committee, GOAP - Anti-Violence Centre, Liminal Research and Cooperativa Bonawentura. The initiative was carried out under the Cinema and Images for Schools call (Bando Cinema e Immagini per la Scuola), promoted by the Ministry of Education and Merit (MIM) and the Ministry of Culture (MIC). The programme combined film viewing and analysis, debates, masterclasses and practical workshops, guiding students from discovering the grammar of cinema to creating real audiovisual works. After an initial phase devoted to viewing and analysing films, the audiovisual literacy courses introduced the students to the tools and techniques of cinema.

Film training was interwoven with in-depth exploration of some of the great issues of the present: social inclusion, gender equality, the environment and sustainability. The students were able to discuss these topics with experts from **SISSA**, the International Rescue Committee and GOAP - Anti-Violence Centre, turning knowledge and reflections into narrative ideas.

The works created during the programme were presented publicly in May 2026 as part of the *Scienza e Virgola* festival, thus entering into dialogue with the festival audience and becoming an occasion for discussion of the themes addressed by the students through the language of cinema.

Effetto Cinema, therefore, was not limited to teaching how a film is made: it used cinema as a tool for expression, participation and citizenship, allowing students to acquire audiovisual skills and, at the same time, to speak up on issues that concern them closely.

European Projects and Projects of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)

PATTERN

In June 2026 PATTERN came to a close, a European project dedicated to promoting *Open and Responsible Research and Innovation* (Open RRI) through the development and testing of training activities aimed at the research community. At **SISSA**, the project was managed and promoted by ILAS, the Research and International Relations Office, the Communication Office and the Valorisation and Innovation Office.

PATTERN developed and tested open training pathways dedicated to eight areas: Open Access, Research Integrity, Management and Leadership, FAIR data management, Science Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation of results, Citizen Science, Gender and Inclusion in Research.

During the year, the Second Learning Cycle of the modules dedicated to *Science Communication and Dissemination and Exploitationwas* created, organising seven free training activities in English, aimed in particular at PhD students and researchers. The modules explored tools, strategies and practices for science communication, dissemination and exploitation of research results.

The training content was also reworked and finalised, preparing the materials intended for the OpenPlato and Zenodo platforms, so that the resources developed within PATTERN can remain accessible even after the end of the project activities.

Finally, during the year **ILAS** took part in three Online Consortium Meetings, contributing to coordination activities and exchanges with European partners until the project concluded in June 2026.

IN 2026, ILAS TOOK PART IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PATTERN PROJECT, HELD ON 14 AND 15 APRIL IN BRUSSELS.

EDUCATING FUTURE CITIZENS

The International School for Advanced Studies is part of the network of eight University Schools of Advanced Studies that collaborate on the Educating Future Citizens (EFC) project, funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). The initiative was launched with the aim of strengthening orientation and advanced training activities, offering new opportunities to upper-secondary school and university students.

Coordinated by the IUSS School of Pavia, the EFC project has promoted a series of innovative educational pathways, including seminars, mentoring activities and residential and online meetings, designed to support young people in choosing their own path of study and research. The initiative aims to nurture talent and merit, facilitating access to higher education in an increasingly international context.

The EFC network includes, in addition to **SISSA**:

IUSS School of Pavia (lead partner)

IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca School of Advanced Studies “C. Urbani” of the University of Camerino

School of Advanced Studies “G. Leopardi” of the University of Macerata

School of Advanced Studies “F. Rossi” of the University of Turin “di Toppo Wassermann”

School of Advanced Studies of the University of Udine Ca’ Foscari International College of the University of Venice

Within EFC, **ILAS** and **SISSA**’s Communication Office worked in an integrated way, contributing respectively to the training activities and to the communication and promotion actions of the project.

In particular, we would like to highlight the workshop “Data and Satellite Journalism”, promoted by ILAS in collaboration with FACTA, organised as part of EFC on 20-21 May 2026 at **SISSA**.

The workshop speakers were: Riccardo Pravettoni, Erika Coppola, Elisabetta Tola, Roberto Trotta, Andrea Scaffidi, Paolo Villa, Marco Boscolo, Francesco Scarel, Anne Linn Kumano-Ensby, Federico Acosta Rainis, Anita Fallani, Jelena Prtorić, Eszter Polonyi.

The workshop explored the possibilities offered by satellite data and data journalism for telling the story of complex phenomena and places that are hard to access. The second day explored in depth the potential of data-driven investigative journalism and international collaborations, with examples showing how scientific research and journalism can be integrated.

Another important event organised by SISSA in collaboration with SISSA Medialab as part of EFC was “The Impact of AI on Research: A Reflection on Education, Research Evaluation and Publishing. The event took place on 29 September at the former SISSA building in Miramare, Trieste and brought together researchers and experts to discuss how AI is transforming research, teaching, evaluation and publishing.

The programme featured a panel discussion and Q&A session with Tiffany Chiu (Principal Teaching Fellow in Educational Development at Imperial College London), Alex Presani (Head of Technology at AgorAI), Giovanni Russo (Postdoc in the Mathematics Area at SISSA), Guido Sanguinetti (Full Professor at SISSA), Roberto Trotta (Full Professor and Director of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory at SISSA).

APPEARANCES AND RECOGNITION

October 2025

- Francesca de Ruvo and Beatrice Millo take part in the EFC project coordination meeting in Pavia.

November 2025

- Roberto Trotta presents his book “Il Cielo Stellato sopra di noi” (The Starry Sky Above Us) in Locarno. Event in collaboration with TICINO Turismo & Convention Bureau, Angelo Trotta, Radiotelevisione Svizzera (RSI), Lions Club Locarno, Società Astronomica Ticinese, Associazione Triangolo, Winterland Inc and **SISSA**.

December 2025

- **SISSA** hosts the 14th edition of the National Conference on Science Communication.
- Francesca de Ruvo takes part in *Più libri più liberi*, the National Small and Medium Publishing Fair in Rome.

JANUARY 2026

- The Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Natural Sciences and Humanities turns 40.
- Giuseppe Mussardo presents in Trieste the graphic novel “Dio gioca a dadi con il mondo” (God Plays Dice with the World), written together with the comic artist Luca Morici.
- Giulia Casasole is a member of the technical-scientific committee of Generazione Planet, an initiative promoted by BCC Venezia Giulia and Filippo Giorgi in support of innovative projects on sustainability.

February 2026

- Giuseppe Mussardo introduces, at the Italian Cultural Institute in New Delhi, the documentary “Chandra - Il viaggio di una stella” (Chandra - The Journey of a Star), written by him and directed by Enrico Agapito.

MARCH 2026

- Nico Pitrelli, Donato Ramani, Chiara Saviane and Alessandro Tavecchio are speakers at the advanced training course Peer-to-peer communication in STEM and SSH, held in Bertinoro with funds from the EFC project.
- Giuseppe Mussardo presents at Stroncature the graphic novel “Dio gioca a dadi con il mondo” written together with the comic artist Luca Morici.
- Raffaella Rumiati publishes “La mente delle donne” (Women’s Minds) with Laterza.

APRIL 2026

- Beatrice Millo and Chiara Saviane take part in Brussels in the final event of the European Project PATTERN.
- Chiara Saviane moderates the Scienza e Virgola press conference.
- Roberto Trotta is a speaker at the conference “The crisis of cosmic measurements: why the distance scale does not add up” at the Farra d’Isonzo Astronomical Centre, as part of the series “I venerdì con la scienza” (Fridays with Science).
- Raffaella Rumiati is a guest on the Rai programme “Quante Storie” together with the comedian Luisa Merloni in the episode devoted to male and female stereotypes.
- Giuseppe Mussardo and Roberto Trotta are speakers at the conference Intersections between Science and Literature.
- Giulia Casasole takes part as a juror in the local selection of FameLab Trieste, organised by Immaginario Scientifico.

MAY 2026

- Tenth edition of Scienza e Virgola.
- Francesca de Ruvo, Nico Pitrelli, Carolina Stera and Manuela Valta take part in the final event of the PNRR project EFC.
- Giulia Casasole, Chiara Saviane and Alessandro Tavecchio take part in Play Festival del Gioco.
- Chiara Saviane is on the jury of GiovedìScienza
- Giuseppe Mussardo wins the Cosmos Studenti 2026 prize for the graphic novel “Dio gioca a dadi con il mondo” written together with the comic artist Luca Morici.
- Nico Pitrelli is a speaker at the Turin Book Fair (Salone del Libro di Torino) in the round table, in collaboration with Feltrinelli Education, “Who does science belong to? How science communication creates value for people and territories”, together with Francesca Devescovi, Elena Domini, Anita Penati, Massimo Polidoro, and moderated by Emanuele Monterotti.
- At Scienza e Virgola Nico Pitrelli moderates the dialogue with Paola Deffendi, Claudio Regeni and Alessandra Ballerini, respectively the parents of Giulio Regeni and the lawyer who handles the family’s defence.
- At Scienza e Virgola Nico Pitrelli moderates the presentation of the book Che cos’è la salute mentale? Genealogie e prospettive critiche.
- (What Is Mental Health? Genealogies and Critical Perspectives) with Mario Colucci and Marica Setaro.
- At Scienza e Virgola Raffaella Rumiati is a speaker at the event “Women, knowledge, identity. Between neuroscience and the history of medicine”.

JUNE 2026

- Francesca de Ruvo and Donato Ramani take part in Euprio *(European Association of Communication Professionals in Higher Education)* in Metz.
- Nico Pitrelli is a speaker at the meeting *Communicating science, designing trust: research, technology and society in the contemporary ecosystem* at the Politecnico di Torino.
- Nico Pitrelli is a speaker at the meeting *Communication in public health* at the University of Udine.

JULY 2026

- Giulia Casasole joins the jury of scientists for the Mondofuturo 2026 Literary Prize, an award for the best original, untranslated science fiction book published in Italy during 2025.

SEPTEMBER 2026

- Roberto Trotta takes part as a speaker at the international conference “The humanity of the future at the boundary between art, science and technology”, organised in collaboration with the University of Nova Gorica.

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