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Center for Responsible Research

# Einstein Foundation Award for Promoting Quality in Research

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AWARD – THE 2025 AWARDEES

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# Einstein Foundation Award 2025 – The Awardees

The Einstein Foundation Berlin awards  
€350,000 prize to advance research quality



**The Einstein Foundation Berlin honors the Australian psychologist Simine Vazire, the Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative, and the project *Erring Rigorously* with the Einstein Foundation Award for Promoting Quality in Research 2025.**

The recipient of this year's **Individual Award**, Simine Vazire, is a psychologist at University of Melbourne and editor-in-chief of *Psychological Science*. She is recognized for pioneering methodological rigor, reproducibility, and collaborative research in psychology, shaping initiatives such as the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science (SIPS) and the journal *Collabra*. The **Institutional Award** honors a nationwide effort to systematically evaluate research results in laboratory biology. The Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative is the largest coordinated replication effort in the field worldwide, showcasing the transformative potential of country-level research improvement efforts. The **Early Career Award** goes to the project *Erring Rigorously* by Maximilian Sprang, bioinformatician at the Medical Center of Mainz University. The project quantifies the impact of errors in high-throughput sequencing and, by distinguishing true biological signals from technical artifacts, aims to improve reproducibility and data reliability in functional genomics.

The €350,000 Einstein Foundation Award for Promoting Quality in Research honors researchers and institutions whose work helps to fundamentally advance the quality and robustness of research findings. The award is bestowed jointly with the QUEST Center for Responsible Research at the Berlin Institute of Health (BIH) at Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin. "The Einstein Foundation Award, now presented for the fifth time, recognizes and incentivizes forward-thinking approaches that enhance the integrity and openness of research processes," explains Martin Rennert, Chair of the Einstein Foundation's Executive Board. "Over the past years, we have seen the award's impact grow – whether by strengthening publishing standards or identifying and reducing biases in research practices. In a time of rapid technological change and persistent challenges to research quality, celebrating those who champion transparency and rigor is more important than ever." The award is presented in three categories to individual researchers, institutions, and early career researchers. Awardees are selected by a prestigious international jury of experts from various disciplines. "There is no other organization having this much positive impact on research quality,

transparency, and trustworthiness," says Marcia McNutt, president of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and president of the award jury, highlighting the significance of the award program. "The 2025 awardees demonstrate that improving research quality is both possible and powerful: through pioneering leadership, coordinated national reform, and rigorous methodological innovation," says Ulrich Dirnagl, Founding Director of the QUEST Center at BIH and Award Secretary. "Their achievements strengthen the foundations of reliable, transparent science worldwide."

Nominator Richard Lucas, Professor of Psychology at Michigan State University, says: "Against massive resistance and entrenched inertia, Simine Vazire has established rigorous new standards in the field. In doing so, they have restored the next generation's faith that psychology can truly be a science of solid, trustworthy research."

Jürgen Zöllner, Representative of the Award Benefactor Walter Wübben and jury member, explains: "The Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative proves that a coordinated, nationwide effort to strengthen research rigor and reproducibility is possible – and should inspire disciplines and funders worldwide to follow suit."

Christopher Baum, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Berlin Institute of Health at Charité, which funds the Early Career Award, says: "*Erring Rigorously* sharpens the line between real biological signals and technical noise – boosting data reliability in line with the Early Career Award's goals and the Berlin Institute of Health's commitment to patient-centered, reproducible, transparent science."

The individual and institutional awards are funded by the Wübben Stiftung Wissenschaft, while the BIH QUEST Center for Responsible Research supports the Early Career Award. Additional resources are made available by the State of Berlin. The publisher Nature Portfolio, the Public Library of Science (PLOS), the National Academy of Sciences, the Berlin University Alliance, the Max Planck Society and the Max Planck Foundation support the Einstein Foundation Berlin and the BIH QUEST Center for Responsible Research in promoting and implementing the award.

The call for international nominations and applications for the Einstein Foundation Award 2026 will be published in January 2026 at [award.einsteinfoundation.de](https://award.einsteinfoundation.de).

## About the 2025 award winners:

**Individual Award** Personality psychologist Simine Vazire is Professor of Psychology Ethics and Wellbeing at the University of Melbourne in Australia. She is a central leader in the movement to improve research quality and transparency in psychology and beyond. Vazire co-founded the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science (SIPS) and served as its inaugural president, helping establish it as a leading force for reform in the field. She also co-founded the open-access journal *Collabra: Psychology* which prioritizes methodological rigor rather than novelty or impact. Now Editor-in-Chief of *Psychological Science*, she implements innovative policies to promote transparency and rigor. Through her blog *Sometimes I'm Wrong*, her podcast *The Black Goat*, and social media engagement, she inspired countless early career researchers and shapes the conversation on research reform. The €150,000 award will enable her to continue prioritizing research rigor in her work and, importantly, she views it as a recognition of the mentors, colleagues, and students whose support has made her contributions possible.

**Institutional Award** The Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative is a groundbreaking effort to evaluate and improve reproducibility in Brazilian biomedical science. Bringing together 213 researchers from 56 laboratories, it completed 143 replications of 56 experiments, revealing replication rates of 15–45% and identifying factors that influence success. Beyond measuring reproducibility, the project highlighted challenges in lab practices and training, creating opportunities for improvement in experimental design, protocols, and data management. Its legacy includes BRISA, a collaborative platform for systematic reviews, and the Brazilian Reproducibility Network, a grassroots organization shaping national research policy and promoting open, transparent science. Despite limited funding, the Initiative is among the world's largest systematic replication efforts in laboratory biology. The €100,000 award will help sustain data analysis, educational activities, and further projects by the network.

### Early Career Award | Awardee and finalists

The project *Erring Rigorously* aims to explore how mistakes and differences in laboratory experiments can affect the reliability of scientific results. By deliberately introducing controlled errors in sequencing experiments, the project measures their impact using an advanced machine learning tool that predicts data quality. Building on previous work in functional genomics, the project connects lab experiments with computational analysis to make scientific findings more reproducible and easier to interpret in real-world research. The project led by Maximilian Sprang, Junior Group Leader at the University Medical Center of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, is awarded €100,000.

The following initiatives were shortlisted for the **Early Career Award 2025**:

#### 1. AI's Impact on Research Integrity

By investigating how scientists use tools like ChatGPT and through developing an AI-driven intervention to promote open science practices, the project aims to ensure that AI's growing role in research enhances rather than undermines scientific integrity. **Lead Researcher:** Laura Globig, New York University, USA

#### 2. Image2Model Exchange

The project fosters a global exchange where researchers trade embryonic imaging data for ready-to-use AI models. Fully FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) compliant, it democratizes access to AI tools, accelerates discovery, and builds a cross-species model of embryogenesis. **Lead Researcher:** Hernan Andres Morales Navarrete, Universidad De Las Américas, Ecuador

#### 3. High Resolution Climate Dataset for West Africa

This project fills a critical knowledge gap in West Africa's climate resilience planning by delivering the region's first high-resolution climate dataset, created through advanced modeling, regional collaboration, and a transparent, open-access approach. **Team Lead:** Aissatou Ndiaye, University of Augsburg, Germany

#### 4. Open Research Data for Musculoskeletal Ultrasound

UMUD (Universal Musculoskeletal Ultrasonography Database) is a centralized repository of musculoskeletal ultrasound datasets, offering detailed metadata, benchmark datasets, and analysis tools. It promotes reproducible research, supports clinical applications, and advances open science, transparency, and long-term findability of valuable research data. **Team Lead:** Paul Ritsche, University of Basel, Switzerland

*The Einstein Foundation Berlin is an independent, not-for-profit, science-led funding organization established as a foundation under civil law in 2009. Since then, its task has been to promote cutting-edge international science and research across disciplines and institutions in and for Berlin. To date, it has funded eight Einstein Centers, over 70 projects, and more than 240 researchers, including three Nobel laureates.*

#### Further information

[award.einsteinfoundation.de](https://award.einsteinfoundation.de)

#### Additional press materials

[einsteinfoundation.de/en/media/press-releases/2025/24112025-11/25](https://einsteinfoundation.de/en/media/press-releases/2025/24112025-11/25)

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# 2025 Individual Award Winner: Portrait of Simine Vazire

**Psychologist and Editor Simine Vazire, this year's individual winner of the Einstein Foundation Award, champions the methodological reform movement in scientific psychology.**

Transforming the way science is done takes vision and persistence. Simine Vazire, Professor of Psychology Ethics and Wellbeing at the University of Melbourne, receives the 2025 Einstein Foundation Individual Award for leading efforts to strengthen transparency, rigor, and reliability in psychological research.

Vazire began her career as a personality psychologist, earning recognition for her innovative research with numerous awards, including early career honors from the American Psychological Association and the International Society for Self and Identity, a Rising Star Award from the Association for Psychological Science, and the Sage Young Scholar Award from the Foundation for Personality and Social Psychology. But around 2013, during a sabbatical at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at UC Berkeley, she witnessed the replication crisis unfold firsthand. Weekly journal clubs analyzing published studies exposed widespread errors and biases.

**“I had already started worrying about the quality of research practices in psychology,” she recalls. “Taking a close, critical look at what our field was publishing pushed me over the edge. That year, I started my blog, shifted my research focus, and became more involved in journal editing.”**  
**(Simine Vazire)**

Her work in metascience – the study of how science itself is conducted – has reshaped the field. Vazire co-founded the Society for the Improvement of Psychological Science (SIPS), serving as its first president. Unlike traditional conferences, SIPS meetings prioritize collaboration over presentation: “Almost all of the 2.5-day conference was spent in working groups defining and working on tasks aimed at improving the practice of psychological science,” recalls a colleague. Solutions emerging from SIPS range from open teaching resources to initiatives that fundamentally change research practices, including the preprint server PsyArXiv and the Psychological Science Accelerator (Institutional Award Winner 2022). SIPS has inspired at least four similar societies in other fields, with Vazire advising their formation.

Vazire's influence extends to scientific publishing. She co-founded the open-access journal *Collabra: Psychology*, emphasizing methodological rigor over novelty, and became its editor-in-chief. Today, she leads *Psychological Science*, the flagship empirical journal in psychology, instituting policies that enhance transparency and openness. Colleagues praise her ability to implement change in prestigious, sometimes conservative journals:

**“Simine Vazire talks the talk and walks the walk,” writes Brian Nosek, Director, Center for Open Science, Institutional Award Winner 2021.**

Through these roles, Vazire has redefined editorial leadership, promoting fairness, reproducibility, and quality in the research record.

Her work is grounded in both scholarship and action. She has contributed to the Transparency and Openness Promotion (TOP) Guidelines, served on National Academy of Sciences committees on replicability, and co-authored widely cited papers on research transparency. Beyond formal roles, Vazire engages the public and early career researchers through her blog *Sometimes I'm Wrong*, her podcast *The Black Goat*, and social media.

**“Being around students and early career researchers was invigorating,” she says. “It allowed me to reconnect with the idealism and remember that there are people counting on us to study these important topics rigorously and with integrity.”** (Simine Vazire)

Vazire's advocacy comes with courage. When she introduced policies to improve transparency at *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, some established researchers resisted, triggering an investigation. It found no issues, yet the experience was stressful. “I did not give up on my push for better quality,” she says. Her perseverance demonstrates the integrity and resilience that colleagues see as emblematic of her leadership.

Inclusiveness and diversity are central to Vazire's vision. Under Vazire's leadership, SIPS was structured to integrate diversity and inclusiveness into its governance and initiatives, ensuring representation across early career researchers, non-PhD institutions, and scholars outside North America.

Among many recognitions for her scientific work, Vazire received the Leamer-Rosenthal Prize for Open Social Science from the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences, awarded to researchers and educators who exemplify values and practices of openness and transparency in research.

The €150,000 Einstein Foundation award will allow Vazire to continue making research quality the focus of her work. “The award helps validate my choice to spend time on this topic,” she says. “It belongs just as much to all the people who made it possible for me to make this the focus of my work for the last ten years, and the people who championed me more than I ever deserved.”

Colleagues describe her as a visionary and relentless advocate for reform.

Through her scholarship, editorial leadership, and community-building, Simine Vazire continues to inspire change, ensuring that scientific research is not only transparent but also rigorous, reliable, and inclusive.

# 2025 Institutional Award Winner: Portrait of the Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative

**Scientific progress depends on research that is both reliable and transparent, yet achieving this remains a persistent challenge. This year's winner of the Einstein Foundation Institutional Award, the Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative, brought together over 200 researchers from across Brazil to replicate and evaluate published biomedical experiments. Beyond measuring reproducibility, the Initiative created a collaborative platform where scientists learned from each other's successes and failures, fostering a culture of openness and rigor nationwide.**

What if an entire country could take a long, hard look at its scientific practices? For the Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative, that's exactly what happened. Founded as a national, open consortium, the Initiative brought together 213 researchers from 56 laboratories across Brazil to attempt 143 replications of 56 experiments using widely applied lab methods. The results, published as a preprint, revealed replication rates ranging from 15 to 45%, depending on criteria, while also uncovering factors that predict replication success.

**"It has been impressive to watch the Initiative develop and progress," states Tim Errington, Senior Director of Research, Center for Open Science, Institutional Award Winner 2021.**

Yet the Initiative's value extends far beyond replication numbers. Following dozens of laboratories as they tried to replicate published findings, the project revealed challenges not only in the literature but also within the replicating teams themselves. Limited infrastructure, variability in protocols, and differences in training and project coordination all shaped outcomes. Through systematic self-assessment, participants identified concrete ways to improve scientific practices, including harmonizing terminologies, improving protocol development, and strengthening data management.

**"The most important outcome was watching labs as they tried to replicate studies," says Olavo Amaral, the Initiative's coordinator. "It became clear that the process itself – confronting what works, what doesn't, and what needs improvement – teaches lessons about collaboration, transparency, and scientific rigor that go far beyond the replication numbers."**

The Initiative also sparked lasting change in Brazil's research ecosystem. It led to the creation of BRISA, a collaborative platform for systematic reviews and meta-analyses in preclinical research, providing hands-on training in rigorous research methods. It also gave rise to the Brazilian Reproducibility Network (BRN), connecting researchers, groups, and institutions across disciplines to advance transparency, reproducibility, and collaboration.

In 2024, the Network provided CAPES, the national graduate program evaluation agency, with recommendations to foster open and reproducible science, which were followed by concrete policy changes at the national level. "The Initiative showed that large-scale, confirmatory research can thrive only when the scientific community works collectively, with the right incentives and infrastructure," Amaral explains. "By involving researchers as both participants and evaluators, we built legitimacy and engagement. People learned by doing, and by reflecting critically on their own practices."

Despite being based in a middle-income country with comparatively limited funding, the Initiative is one of the largest coordinated replication efforts in laboratory biology worldwide. Its focus on a single country maximized its impact on local labs, institutions, and funding bodies, while its open, collaborative design fostered education, motivation, and a culture of reform. As one participating researcher noted, "Being part of this groundbreaking project has shifted our lab's approach toward more transparent and reproducible science."

The Initiative's accomplishments have attracted international attention and support, with experts noting that it offers a replicable model for other countries seeking to strengthen research quality. Its impact continues through the BRN, which curates open educational resources, fosters training, and engages with policy-making bodies to integrate open science into national research strategies.

The €100,000 Einstein Foundation Award will help ensure the Initiative's data is analyzed in depth and that the Brazilian Reproducibility Network remains sustainable, supporting new collaborative projects, educational activities, and advocacy for research quality across the country.

**"The Initiative demonstrates that collective effort, transparency, and openness can transform science. This award will help us continue building capacity for rigorous, reproducible, and collaborative research in Brazil – and, we hope, provide a model for other countries." (Olavo Amaral, Coordinator Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative)**

By combining large-scale replication, systematic self-assessment, and community-driven reform, the Brazilian Reproducibility Initiative exemplifies how rigorous, open, and collaborative science can drive lasting change. Its legacy is not only in its data but in the culture of research it continues to inspire – one in which transparency, reproducibility, and collective responsibility are the foundations of progress.

# 2025 Early Career Award Winner: Portrait of Erring Rigorously

**Enhancing Research Reliability – the Early Career Award winners explore how experimental errors shape genomic data, developing tools to make analyses more accurate and reproducible.**

Even the most advanced biomedical experiments can be disrupted by small mistakes, creating misleading results that look like real biological signals. *Erring Rigorously*, led by bioinformatician Maximilian Sprang, is a pioneering project awarded the €100,000 Einstein Foundation Early Career Award, funded by the BIH QUEST Center for Responsible Research, which will systematically explore how errors in sequencing experiments influence the conclusions scientists draw.

The jury praised the project, selected from more than 70 global applications for tackling a fundamental challenge in functional genomics and its potential to set new standards for integrating experimental and computational research.

**“Maximilian Sprang’s project *Erring Rigorously* explores how to separate true scientific signals from noise and technical errors, strengthening the reliability and reproducibility of research.”  
(Marcia McNutt, president of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and president of the award jury)**

Sprang earned his PhD in Bioinformatics from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz in October 2024, summa cum laude, where he introduced the concept of *Quality Imbalance*, showing that differences in data quality between biological groups can distort results in over 30% of public RNA-seq datasets, including clinically relevant studies. Since March 2025, he leads a junior research group at the Medical Center of Mainz, combining bioinformatics and AI to uncover patterns in biological data and aid translational research in immunology.

Sprang emphasizes that ‘bad data’ should not automatically be discarded, as even low-quality samples can yield meaningful biological insights when their biases are understood. By combining controlled wet lab perturbations with machine-learning quality assessment, *Erring Rigorously* will generate openly accessible datasets and analytical tools to strengthen reproducibility, transparency, and reliability in functional genomics.

# Early Career Researcher Award Finalists 2025

## Understanding and Mitigating the Impact of AI on Scientific Cognition and Research Integrity

Generative AI is rapidly transforming scientific research, but its influence on researchers' thinking and integrity is largely unexplored. Laura Globig's project investigates how scientists actually use tools like ChatGPT and whether AI can reinforce or undermine rigorous scientific practices. By combining large-scale surveys of AI usage across disciplines with behavioral experiments, the project will develop a fine-tuned Research Integrity Assistant.

This AI tool will provide context-sensitive guidance on open science practices, transparent reporting, and critical evaluation strategies, encouraging reflection and reducing bias without being intrusive. Through a randomized controlled trial, the assistant's effectiveness will be tested against standard AI tools, with the aim of embedding rigorous thinking and reproducibility into daily research workflows. The project addresses an urgent metascientific challenge: ensuring that AI serves as a catalyst for improved scientific quality rather than a conduit for bias or error. Its outputs – an evidence-based map of AI use and an open-source intervention tool – will support researchers worldwide in adopting robust and transparent practices, advancing research integrity across disciplines.

## Image2Model Exchange: Democratizing AI Analysis through FAIR Data and Model Sharing

Image2Model Exchange is an open-source global initiative that allows researchers to exchange embryonic imaging data for AI-generated analytical models. By leveraging brightfield, widefield, and confocal microscopy datasets, the project creates a reciprocal bartering system where contributors receive ready-to-use AI tools tailored to their data while adhering to FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable).

The platform democratizes access to advanced computational methods, enabling laboratories worldwide – including those with limited resources – to analyze complex developmental biology datasets and gain novel insights. Using supervised and unsupervised AI models, as well as transfer learning across species and imaging modalities, Image2Model Exchange accelerates discovery, standardizes analysis, and fosters reproducibility. Community-driven governance, feedback loops, and contributor incentives ensure sustained participation, while fully open source and open data policies maximize transparency and usability. Led by Hernan Andres Morales Navarrete, the project aims

to build toward a foundational, cross-species AI model of embryogenesis, creating an inclusive, collaborative, and high-impact scientific ecosystem.

## High-Resolution Climate Dataset for West Africa: A Service for Climate Protection and Energy Transitions

This project aims to deliver the first 3 km-resolution climate dataset for West Africa, providing the detailed information needed for climate protection and energy transition planning. By downscaling CMIP6 climate models with the WRF-Solar model, the project produces hourly data on temperature, wind, solar radiation, and other key variables for both historical and future climate scenarios.

The dataset supports renewable energy projections, informs policymakers, and strengthens regional climate resilience planning. Open-source modeling frameworks and GitHub repositories ensure reproducibility, transparency, and collaboration, while regional partnerships enhance local ownership and capacity-building. Led by Aissatou Ndiaye and a geographically diverse team from Germany, Rwanda and Senegal, the project addresses a critical knowledge gap in a climate-vulnerable region, enabling data-driven decision-making and supporting equitable, sustainable energy transitions.

## UMUD: A Web Application for Open Research Data and Reproducibility in Musculoskeletal Ultrasonography

UMUD is a centralized repository for musculoskeletal ultrasound datasets, addressing critical gaps in data standardization, accessibility, and reproducibility. The platform aggregates metadata, benchmark datasets, and standardized pipelines for automated image analysis, fostering transparency and enabling AI-based research in muscle, tendon, and ligament assessment.

By providing FAIR-compliant, open-access resources, UMUD promotes reproducible research and supports clinical translation. Planned activities include expanding datasets and benchmarks, establishing standardized image acquisition protocols, and engaging the research community. Led by Fabio Sarto and Paul Ritsche, UMUD empowers researchers to collect high quality data, enhances open science practices in musculoskeletal research, and serves as a model for other imaging domains.

Project presentations for all finalists, including the winning project, are available [here](#).