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Dies Natalis

On Friday 7 March 2025, Wageningen University & Research will celebrate its Dies Natalis. This year's theme is: Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Futures.



Do you have a question about this event?



[NM \(Nikolien\) van Gelderen](#)

[Contact Events Team](#)

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Dies Natalis | Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Futures

7 March 2025 | 15:00-17:00hrs

Wageningen Campus, Orion Building, Bronland 1, Wageningen or online

During our Dies Natalis celebration, we will explore how scientists and students can become responsible change makers and leverage AI to envision a future where a sustainable world becomes a reality.

Artificial Intelligence holds the potential to contribute immensely to science by data analysis, accelerating discoveries, and enabling innovative research and education methodologies. From optimising agricultural practices to estimating global change impacts, AI can be a powerful tool driving scientific innovation and sustainability worldwide.

However, as we explore its transformative promise, we must also address the challenges that come with its use in scientific discovery. Researchers and students have an important role to play in ensuring that Artificial Intelligence is used responsibly and effectively.

The official Dies Natalis celebration will be preceded by the pitches for the Research Award, organised by Wageningen Graduate Schools and made possible with support of University Fund Wageningen. For more information on the programme of the Research Award, see the [Research Award webpage](#).

Programme official celebration Dies Natalis

14:00 Welcoming reception and registration

15:00 Artificial Intelligence for Sustainable Futures

Introduction by Prof.dr Carolien Kroeze - Rector Magnificus and Vice-President of Wageningen University & Research

Dies lecture by Prof. Andrea E. Rizzoli - Director of IDSIA USI-SUPSI and (full) professor at SUPSI (University of Applied Sciences of Southern Switzerland)

Intermezzo

Presentations by early career scientists Hilmy Baja, Smaranda Filip and Paulan Korenhof

Research Award

Closing words by Rector Magnificus Prof.dr Carolien Kroeze

17:00 Drinks

Practical information

Venue: Wageningen Campus, Orion Building, Bronland 1, Wageningen

Register: please use the button below. Please, register before 4 March 2025.

Information: if you have any questions, please contact us at dies@wur.nl.

[Register here](#)

Prof. Andrea E. Rizzoli: AI-research for science in Europe is outstanding



Andrea Emilio Rizzoli is a distinguished researcher and professor with dual Swiss and Italian citizenship. Currently, he is the director of the [Istituto Dalle Molle di Studi sull'Intelligenza Artificiale](#) (IDSIA USI-SUPSI), a professor at the [University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland](#) (SUPSI) and adjunct professor at the [Faculty of Informatics of Università della Svizzera Italiana](#).

His research interests include decision support systems, modelling and simulation of dynamic systems, and the application of operations research and artificial intelligence techniques to natural resource management. Throughout his career, Rizzoli has authored over 200 publications and has been recognised with several awards, including

the Early Career Research Excellence award by the Modelling and Simulation Society of Australia and New Zealand.

Improving AI

In his keynote, Prof. Andrea E. Rizzoli will highlight how AI can foster scientific progress and what challenges the use of AI in scientific discovery poses. He will also address what European researchers can do to improve the way AI is used in the scientific context as well as in society at large.

The impact of AI on scientific progress is huge, according to Rizzoli: “Just think of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry awarded to Baker and Hassabis, the latter a co-founder of DeepMind, an AI company. Yet, I do not think that the progress we observe is due to the rapid development of AI. On the contrary, the current impact of AI on scientific research is the result of decades of research. We are just reaping the fruits. At the same time, the recent developments of Generative AI are already producing promising results, and there's for sure more to come.”

The cost-benefit ratio

AI and sustainability is a very hot topic, Rizzoli acknowledges. “On one side we see the impact of AI-enhanced research which can make better use of data at scale, increasing, for instance, the resolution of climate change models, or solving complex optimal management problems by means of reinforcement learning, or producing better forecasts of extreme events. On the other side, there are the increasing energy costs of training huge AI models, and the cost-benefit ratio is still uncertain.”

AI-research for science in Europe is outstanding, he emphasizes. “For instance, there could have not been AlphaFold, the AI tool that won the Nobel Prize for Deepmind, without the data collected and provided by the European Molecular Biology Laboratory. Yet investments in research are lagging, and despite the promising efforts of the various funding programmes of the EU, the working conditions to attract top-tier researchers in European universities are still not there. We have a unique opportunity to attract AI talent in Europe, given the current geopolitical situation, and yet our Universities are not yet prepared.”

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