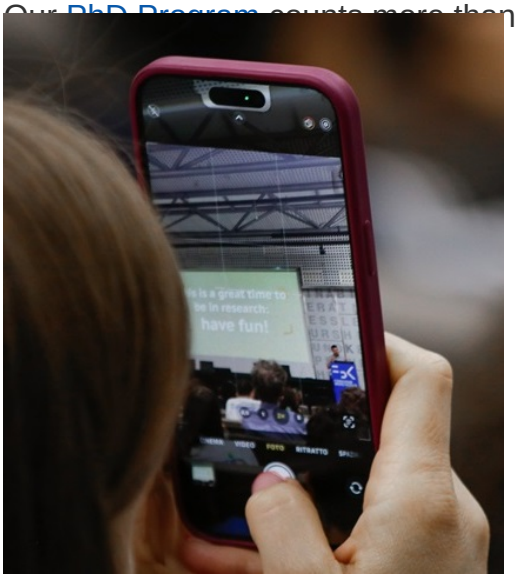
FONDAZIONE BRUNO KESSLER
MAGAZINE

Such a perfect (PhD) day

May 20, 2025

There are many reasons to become a PhD student at FBK. The annual event dedicated to our community of young scholars is the right opportunity to experience what it means to be part of it. The winner of the competition for the best poster is Nazanin Padkan, followed by Vandita Shukla and Narges Takhtkeshha: an all-female podium.

FBK is a multicultural and international environment, with researchers of 36 different nationalities. Our PhD Program counts more than 180 PhD students from 25 countries of the five continents,



The **PhD Day** is an annual event where students across all fields come together to share insights, network, and explore the inspiring research happening at FBK.

On May 20th 2025 our vibrant research community celebrated once again this special occasion, the first of the new course outlined in the FBK Strategic Plan and characterised by a strong willingness to invest in young people with original programmes such as the Talent Development Program by FBK, Poc by FBK and the Ambassador project.

The event started with three testimonials from the FBK community that sparked a lively debate on scientific career paths.

Paolo Traverso, FBK's Director of Strategic Planning, broke the ice with his **Keynote Session**: *'Beyond the thesis – Finding a purpose in research*', motivating young researchers to lead the future through their novel and disruptive research ideas.

The following session, "Research Inspirations: Voices from the Field" spotlighted **Andrea Micheli** , Head of Planning, Scheduling and Optimization Unit at FBK Digital Industry Center, with a focus on Research as a craft: what I learned during my PhD experience in FBK, and **Annapaola Marconi**, Head of Motivational Digital Systems Unit at FBK Digital Society Center, with A personal journey through the PhD (and beyond): trials, triumphs, and transformation.

Micheli shared the 'lessons learnt' through a challenging but extremely rewarding path of personal and professional growth, during which he gradually shaped his profile as a researcher, from his thesis dissertation to the ERC starting grant and the leadership of his own research unit now, continuously building a network of collaborators and sharing knowledge with his mentor step by step. An enlightening testimony on the mindset needed to do research, constantly striving to excel and honing the sensitivity to find the right balance to emerge in terms of relevance, one competition after another. *'Money doesn't make you happy,' he added, 'I am very grateful to FBK because here I have been able to build my ideal study environment and dedicate myself to the subjects I am so passionate about.'*

Starting from her experience, with very different and heterogeneous topics (e.g. education, green transition and digital transformation), **Marconi** invited young researchers to imagine big, be curious and adapt to any change, to embrace it and grasp unprecedented opportunities. "*FBK is an ideal context for a PhD because you are immersed in a stimulating and collaborative international research environment."*

Then, the PhD Students took the floor for sharing their own pitch presentations: 3-5 minutes to explain each ongoing research activity for a non-specialist audience.



Lunchtime and the first afternoon have been devoted to networking activities to get to know each other and deepen some research ideas sparkling curiosity. Through a PhD **Poster** Exhibit they have been quickly in touch with the best intuitions to keep in contact with.

Through the Themed Poster Session & Researcher Interaction, the PhD students, grouped by thematic areas, spent dedicated time to view posters and interact with the presenters, with the opportunity for **voting for the best poster, among 47 overall showed,** in order to leave their peers other significant feedbacks.

The day ended **celebrating the Best Poster.** The winners of this year edition areis **Nazanin Padkan** (3D vision-based system for inspection and monitoring using AI methods) followed by **Vandita Shukla** (Autonomous drone for wildlife conservation) and **Narges Takhtkeshha** (Precise and automatic forest inventory using multispectral lidar and AI): an all-female podium.



The 3 winners: Le 3 vincitrici: Nazanin Padkan, Narges Takhtkeshha, Vandita Shukla

Last (but not least), a physical board available throughout all the day for participants, collected further comments, ideas, or suggestions for future events or to improve the PhD program itself: a reflection of our community that co-evolve as a collective intelligence experience, changing day by day, between fails and successes and trials and errors, that are the core of the intriguing research adventure.

'The FBK's PhD Programme,' commented **Claudia Dolci** (Head of Special Project "Research and Innovation for Schools") and **Alessandro Dalla Torre** *(Head of People Innovation for Research), 'represents a convinced investment in the value of the new generations and their extraordinary talents. We think of and experience PhD Day as a special moment; a time to recognise the contribution and work proposed by a new generation of researchers and innovators. FBK measures its own attractiveness and puts its reputation on the line by ensuring higher education in a research context of excellence.*

The PhD Programme currently involves some 180 PhD students, 70 of whom started their research career this year. More than a third of these PhD students come from

abroad and are spread across all research areas of the Foundation, in the areas of AI for Health, AI for Industry, AI for Society and Sensors for AI.'



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