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“A pioneer in responsible AI and autonomous systems”: MIT Professor Daniela Rus to receive the 2026 High-Tech Award of the Bavarian Minister-President

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Daniela Rus, Director of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is being honored for her groundbreaking contributions to robotics and autonomous systems engineering.

The High-Tech Award of the Bavarian Minister-President is the most highly endowed award for technology and engineering in Germany. This joint award from the Bavarian State Government and the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities is endowed with 300,000 euros provided by the Ulrich L. Rohde Foundation. It will be presented on July 23 at the Munich Residence.



Daniela Rus is the director of the Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She is a pioneer in the field of self-organizing robot collectives.

[Press images available for download](#) (© Daniel Jackson)

Pioneering work in robotics and AI

This year's award winner Prof. Daniela Rus is a world-leading expert in the field of robotics and autonomous systems. As Director of the MIT Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) and Panasonic Professor of Computer Science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Rus is shaping the next generation of intelligent and connected robots.

Celebrating her achievements, the selection committee of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities explained its decision to award her the prize:

"Her research aims to develop flexible, safe technology which integrates seamlessly into people's everyday lives. Her groundbreaking work focuses on four key areas – self-organizing robot collectives, soft robots, autonomous mobility, and artificial intelligence inspired by the human brain."

Minister-President Dr. Markus Söder: "Bavaria is known for high-tech and excellence. We are among the global leaders across the entire spectrum of future technologies. At present we are boosting domestic investment in Bavaria and expanding our international network. On this occasion we honor Daniela Rus, a world-renowned authority in robotics and AI. She conducts research at MIT in Massachusetts, shaping the next generation of intelligent and connected robots. From the operating table to the highway, to the depths of the sea, her innovations help make life longer and better. Her pioneering spirit fits perfectly with the "Bavarian Way of Life": with its High-Tech Agenda, Bavaria is the sole federal state in Germany to invest six billion euros into science and research - from quantum computing to artificial intelligence, from robotics to bio-life sciences, from defense tech to aerospace. In doing so, we are creating a unique ecosystem: Bavaria is Germany's number one startup hub, leads the way in attracting venture capital, and is home to the two best universities in the European Union, the Technical University of Munich and Ludwig Maximilian University. This atmosphere attracts top companies and researchers from around the world to Bavaria. As Germany's most highly endowed technology award, the High-Tech Prize is another flagship achievement. High-tech shapes the future. Innovation will create new value and prosperity for our societies in the longer term."

Minister of Science Markus Blume: "Professor Daniela Rus sets the standard for research in AI and robotics. Through her visionary research, she combines human creativity with machine intelligence, using fundamental scientific study to provide concrete societal benefits. Her work impressively demonstrates that cutting-edge technological research has its greatest impact when it serves humanity. Daniela Rus embodies scientific excellence, a bold vision for the future, and the power of research to make tomorrow's world a little better. And from personal encounters, I know that Daniela Rus cherishes international networking. It's wonderful that she personally embodies the connection between Boston and Bavaria, between MIT and TUM."

The Jury continues in its statement: "Rus is a pioneer in the field of **self-organizing robot collectives**. Together with her team, she has developed some of the first modular robots capable of assembling, disassembling, and transforming into different shapes for specific tasks without human intervention. In addition, she is considered the founder of modern **soft robotics**. Her flexible, shape-shifting robots and origami robots have completely redefined our concept of robotic bodies, and significantly expanded the range of applications for autonomous systems in sensitive ecosystems or within the human body. For the healthcare sector, for

example, Rus has designed minimally-invasive robots, including an origami robot that can be swallowed and unfolds in the stomach to perform medical procedures. In the field of **autonomous mobility**, she has developed planning and decision-making processes for self-driving vehicles and on-demand mobility systems. Rus's team integrates methods from social psychology into the decision-making of autonomous vehicles, enabling them to analyze and anticipate the social behavior of road users – a key factor for safe interaction between humans and machines. A recent focus of Rus's research is **AI architecture inspired by the human brain**, which is specifically tailored to autonomous systems in practical applications. Her liquid neural networks are inspired by the dynamics of biological neurons – enabling, among other things, drones to navigate in unfamiliar environments or to adapt to novel weather and lighting conditions."

The **societal relevance of Rus's work** – a key criterion for the award – is evident in its numerous applications across sectors such as mobility, healthcare, care, agriculture, logistics, and environmental and disaster protection. Underwater robots protect sensitive ecosystems; swallowable robots are opening up new avenues in medicine; autonomous boats and vehicles are improving urban mobility; and AI co-pilots are enhancing flight safety. Through industrial partnerships and Liquid AI – the company she co-founded – Rus is a key figure in driving technological advances. "In all her research, Daniela Rus is a pioneer in responsible AI and autonomous systems. At the same time, she has an impressive track record in the areas of innovation and technology transfer," the selection committee explained.

[You can find the selection committee's detailed rationale here](#)

[Read the jury's statement](#)

"With this award, the Academy emphasizes the central role of research in both the Bavarian and international contexts. It provides a targeted stimulus which will incentivize further research in areas of major scientific and societal significance," stated Academy President Prof. Dr. Markus Schwaiger. "It gives me particular pleasure that we are honoring Daniela Rus this year. Through her scientific excellence, innovative spirit, and the outstanding societal relevance of her work, she perfectly embodies the spirit of the prize. We wish her the warmest congratulations!"

The High-Tech Award of the Bavarian Minister-President

The High-Tech Award of the Bavarian Minister-President honors outstanding innovations in the technical sciences. This joint award from the Bavarian State Government and the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities is presented to researchers from Germany and abroad whose work has a lasting impact on the world. Every other year, the award recipients also have a special connection to the Free State of Bavaria. A decision is reached by a committee of the Academy, which includes both German and foreign scientists as well as leading figures from industry. Amounting to 300,000 euros, the prize is endowed by the Ulrich L. Rohde Foundation and underscores the importance of science as a driving force for progress and prosperity.

"Our goal is to honor researchers whose work improves people's everyday lives," emphasizes the founder, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Ulrich L. Rohde, an honorary member of the Academy. "As a scientist myself, it was a matter close to my heart to establish this prize, as there is no comparable award in Germany or internationally that recognizes outstanding achievements in the technical and

engineering sciences; not even the Nobel Prize takes such disciplines into account. Because the Academy aspires to build bridges between disciplines – and between science, politics and society – it is the ideal institution to host this award.”

The award ceremony will take place on Thursday, July 23, at 6:30 p.m. in the Herkulesaal of the Munich Residence. In addition to Minister-President Dr. Markus Söder, Minister of Science Markus Blume, and Academy President Prof. Dr. Markus Schwaiger, approximately 800 guests are expected to attend, including numerous prominent figures from the fields of science and research, politics, and society, as well as the award recipients. The event will also be livestreamed: <https://badw.de/live>

Information for media representatives

July 23, 2026

Get accredited now

Bavarian High-Tech Awards 2026 — Awards Ceremony in the Herkulesaal of the Munich Residence

www.hightechpreise-bayern.de

This event is particularly well-suited for photojournalists. Accreditation is required by no later than Monday, July 20, at 12:00 p.m. at presse@stmwk.bayern.de. The event will also be livestreamed at: <https://badw.de/live>

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The Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities

The Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities is both a non-university research institution and a scholarly community. It connects scholars across disciplinary and national boundaries, contributes its scientific expertise to policy and society, provides targeted support for early-career researchers, and serves as a forum for dialogue between the scientific community and the public. It conducts innovative long-term research, which in the humanities serves primarily to preserve cultural heritage. The Academy includes the Leibniz Supercomputing Center, one of Europe's largest supercomputing centers, the Bavarian Research Institute for Digital Transformation, and the Walther Meissner Institute for Low-Temperature Research. It supports outstanding early-career researchers in Bavaria through the Young Scholars Program.

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