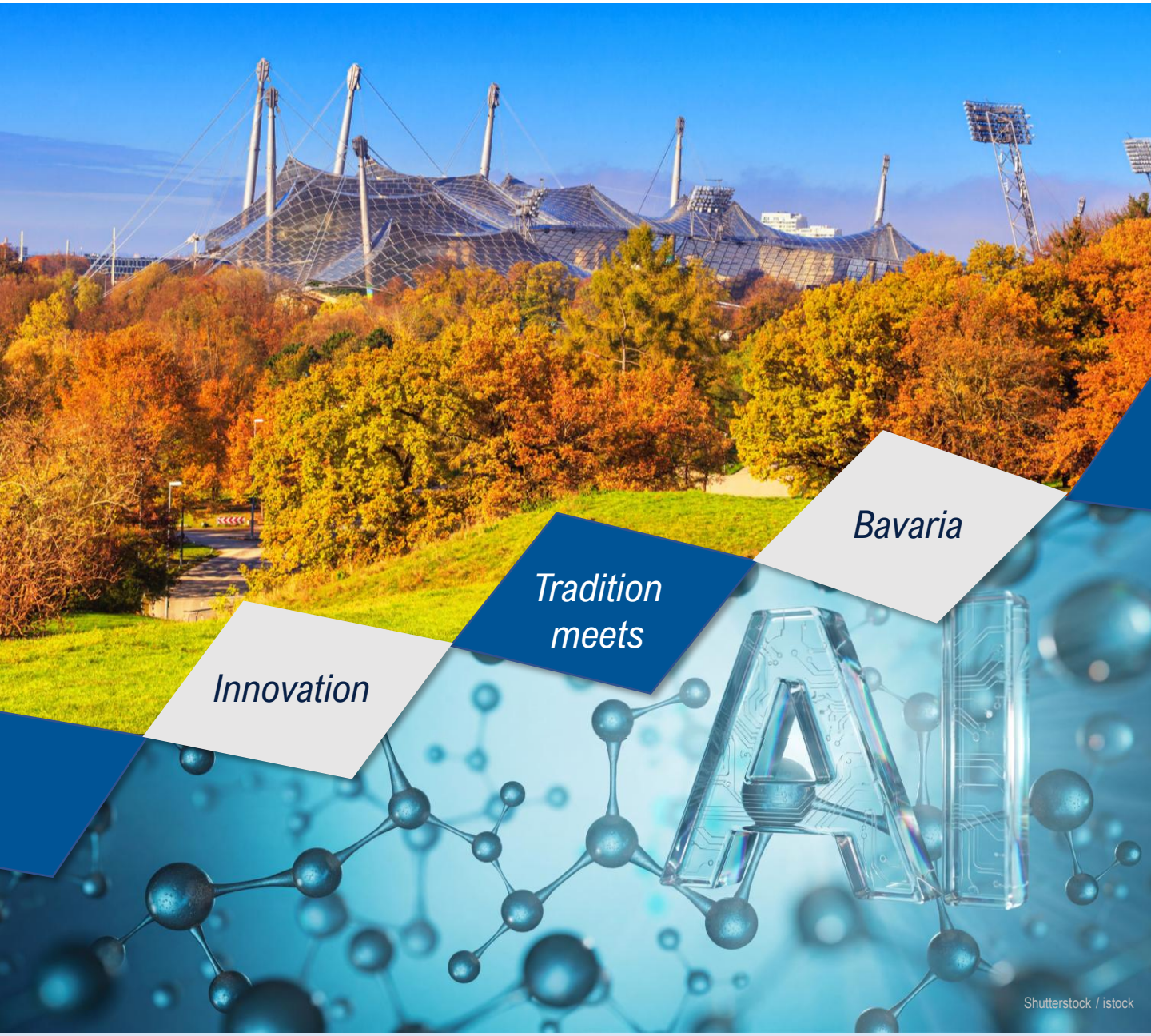
Bavarian Biotech News

October 2026

BAVARIAN BIOTECH CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT



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Dear reader,

What a month for Bavaria! Munich has just celebrated a record-breaking Oktoberfest, will host the World Athletics Championships in 2031, and is Germany's candidate for future Olympic and Paralympic Games.

And there is even more reason to celebrate in the life sciences: this year's Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine honors Peter Hegemann and Georg Nagel, two German researchers with strong ties to Bavaria. Read more in our featured story below.

Bavaria's biotech sector is also attracting international attention: Telix has announced a billion-dollar transaction to combine with Munich-based radiopharmaceutical company ITM.

And next up: BIO-Europe in Cologne. Bio^{M} and the Bavarian biotech community look forward to meeting partners and friends from around the world from November 9 - 11.

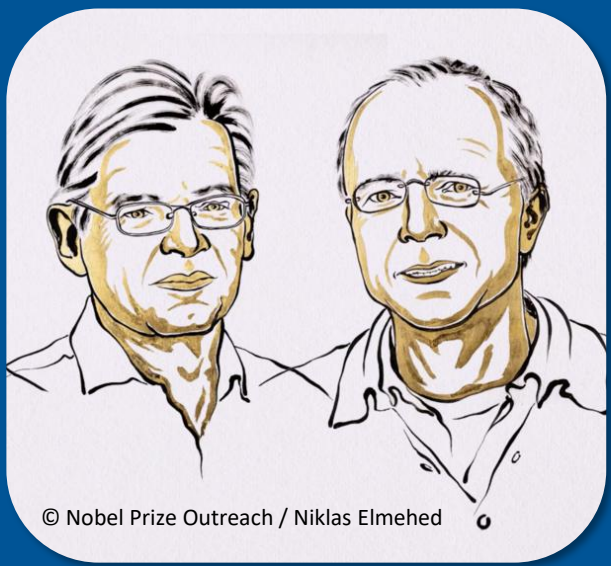
Discover these stories and many more updates from Bavaria's life sciences ecosystem.

Your Bio^{M} team

Two German researchers receive Nobel Prize in Medicine for optogenetics – key research conducted in Bavaria

Prof. Peter Hegemann and Prof. Georg Nagel have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Medicine for their pioneering contributions to optogenetics. Key work by the two German scientists was conducted at research institutions in Bavaria – at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Martinsried near Munich and at the University of Würzburg. Together with US researcher Prof. Karl Deisseroth, they are being honored for discoveries that make it possible to precisely control the activity of nerve cells using light. The method has fundamentally changed neuroscience research and opened up new possibilities for investigating how the brain works.

Read more



© Nobel Prize Outreach / Niklas Elmehed

Recent headlines

Telix to acquire Garching-based ITM for USD 1.65 billion

© AI generated

Australian radiopharmaceutical specialist Telix Pharmaceuticals plans to acquire Garching-based ITM Isotope Technologies Munich SE. The proposed merger aims to combine ITM's leading isotope production and development capabilities with Telix's global radiopharmaceutical platform. The transaction is valued at USD 1.65 billion, plus potential performance-based payments.

Telix Pharmaceuticals and ITM Isotope Technologies Munich SE, based in Garching near Munich, have announced an agreement to merge.
As part of the transaction, Telix plans to acquire all shares in ITM. The upfront consideration amounts to **USD 1.65 billion** on a cash-free/debt-free basis. Additional contingent payments of up to USD 700 million are linked to regulatory and commercial milestones for the therapeutic candidate ITM-11.

Through the merger, the two companies aim to combine their complementary strengths across the radiopharmaceutical value chain. ITM is one of the world's leading producers of therapeutic radioisotopes. The company operates two GMP manufacturing sites in the Munich area and supplies customers in more than 65 countries through its global distribution network. In 2025, ITM generated revenue of USD 273 million.

Read more

Technical University of Munich opens new center for Mini-Organs

© Andreas Heddergott / TUM

The Technical University of Munich has opened a new, innovative biotechnology research center on its Garching campus: the Center for Organoid Systems (COS) complements the Munich Institute for Biomedical Engineering (MIBE). The center conducts research on organoids, which replicate organ functions with exceptional accuracy and provide new insights into the human body. These findings form the basis for new therapies for common diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular diseases.

Organoids are three-dimensional structures that typically consist of different cell types that interact with one another. At the COS, they are grown from stem cells or body tissue. Due to their shape and the combination of different cell types, their behavior more closely resembles what actually happens in the body than that of traditional cell cultures.

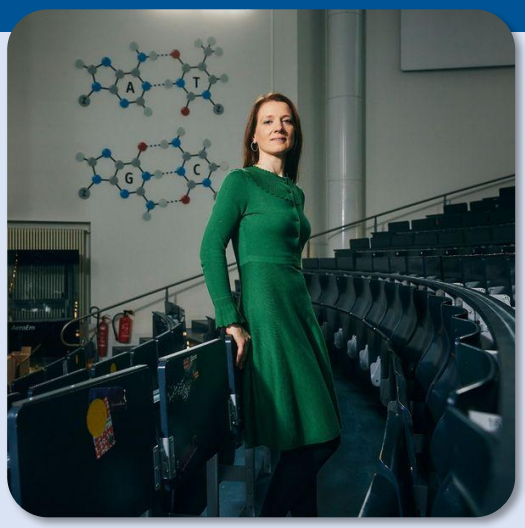
The COS high-tech building on the Garching campus currently houses nine research groups studying different types of organoids. One of the center's goals is to combine different types of organoids to investigate interactions between organs. Read more

Recent headlines

Prof. Olivia Merkel receives the UNIPRENEURS Award for academic entrepreneurship

Prof. Olivia Merkel of LMU Munich has received the UNIPRENEURS Award 2026 – Germany's highest honor for academic entrepreneurship. The pharmaceutical scientist is a co-founder of the LMU spin-off RNhale, which is developing inhalable RNA therapeutics at Bio^{M}'s MAxL incubator.

Prof. Olivia Merkel, Chair of Drug Delivery at the Faculty of Chemistry and Pharmacy at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich (LMU), has been honored with the **UNIPRENEURS Award 2026**. The award recognizes professors who have demonstrated an exceptional commitment to entrepreneurship and academic spin-offs at German universities.



Prof. Olivia Merkel © LMU

For many years, Merkel has been conducting research on novel, non-viral **RNA delivery systems**. A key focus of her work is the targeted delivery of RNA-based therapeutics via the lungs, with the aim of enabling new treatment approaches for inflammatory and other severe pulmonary diseases. This research led to the founding of the LMU spin-off **RNhale** in 2023, which Merkel co-founded.

Read more

New Women Entrepreneurs Alliance empowers female founders in Munich

Seventeen institutions in Munich's innovation ecosystem have joined forces to form the Women Entrepreneurs Alliance (WE Alliance). They will connect resources for female founders, make them more accessible, and streamline support. The new alliance will be introduced at the "Bits & Pretzels" startup conference.

Universities, research institutions, investors, start-up incubators, funding organizations, companies, and other partners have joined forces to make support for female founders more effective.

What kind of support fits which need and at which stage of the startup journey? The members of the WE Alliance aim to facilitate **access to the ecosystem**, connect the various offerings, refer female founders to the right resources, and thus provide more targeted guidance throughout their entire journey.

An overview is available on the Gründerland Bayern website: https://www.gruenderland.bayern/beratung-coaching/gruenderinnen/.

Read more

Recent headlines

AMSilk named to TIME's list of the Best Inventions of 2026

AMSilk, a global leader in advanced biomaterials made from silk proteins, has been named to TIME's Best Inventions of 2026, recognizing the company's breakthrough technology for creating high-performance materials from bioengineered silk proteins.

TIME revealed its annual list of the Best Inventions, which features 300 extraordinary innovations changing our lives.

To compile this year's list, TIME solicited nominations from TIME editors and correspondents around the world, and through an online application process, paying special attention to growing fields, such as health care and AI. TIME then evaluated each contender on a number of key factors, including originality, efficacy, ambition, and impact.

AMSilk translates protein-based biotechnology into advanced material solutions for the next generation of products. The company designs and engineers natural silk proteins and transforms them into high-performance biomaterials for industrial-scale applications.

Read more

EUR 30 million for Ethris: EIB strengthens mRNA-based product pipeline

Ethris, based in Planegg, has secured EUR 30 million in financing from the European Investment Bank (EIB) under HERA Invest. The funding will support the further clinical development of its mRNA-based product pipeline for respiratory diseases and pandemic preparedness.
The focus is on the antiviral candidate ETH47 for virus-driven exacerbations of asthma and COPD.

Laurent Muschel (HERA), Dr. Carsten Rudolph, (Ethris), and Yu Zhang (EIB) (from left). © BioM.

The biotechnology company **Ethris** is advancing the clinical development of its mRNA-based therapies and vaccines for respiratory diseases.
Together with the **European Investment Bank (EIB)** and the European Commission's **Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (DG HERA)**, the company has agreed on **EUR 30 million in financing** under **HERA Invest**.

The funds will support the further clinical development of Ethris' portfolio. At the center is **ETH47**, the company's lead **mRNA-based antiviral candidate**. The financing also covers additional programs, particularly **ETH52 and ETH53**, which focus on **mucosal influenza vaccines** and preparedness for future pandemics. Read more

m⁴ Award winner Plectonic Biotech launches research collaboration with Evotec

The Munich-based biotech company Plectonic Biotech, winner of the 2019 m⁴ Award, is entering into a research collaboration with the Hamburg-based company Evotec to explore a novel immunotherapy approach for the treatment of solid tumors. The goal is to successfully apply classical T-cell engager therapies to solid tumors, where their effectiveness has been limited to date. To achieve this, Plectonic's programmable LOGIBODY® technology will be combined with Evotec's proprietary BiTco platform.

Plectonic-Founder Klaus Wagenbauer, Jonas Funke und Benjamin Kick. © Kratzer/Plectonic

Plectonics' LOGIBODY® technology is based on DNA-protein therapeutics that recognize tumors based on **highly specific combinations of tumor-associated antigens** before triggering the activation of T cells. Unlike conventional T-cell engagers, LOGIBODY® molecules become active only when they simultaneously bind to a predefined signature consisting of multiple tumor antigens. This logic-driven approach represents a novel class of drugs aimed at increasing treatment precision, reducing activation in healthy tissue, and potentially broadening the therapeutic window.

Evotec's BiTco platform is based on a proprietary, non-blocking CD2 antibody that provides T cells with an additional **costimulatory signal**, thereby enhancing their activity and persistence in the tumor microenvironment. Read more

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Bavaria and Osaka: continuing a strong life science partnership

Another chapter in Bio^{M}'s collaboration with Japan: on 5 October, Bio^{M} Biotech Cluster Development GmbH and Osaka Bio Headquarters renewed their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Osaka. At the heart of the partnership is a simple goal: bringing the Bavarian and Osaka/Kansai life science communities closer together.

From biotech start-ups and pharma companies to research organisations, the cooperation creates opportunities to meet the right people, exchange ideas and explore new collaborations. Matchmaking, delegation visits, trade missions and knowledge exchange will continue to be an important part of the partnership.

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Together with Biocommunity Kansai (BiocK), Bio^{M} and Osaka Bio Headquarters are also strengthening connections with the broader life science ecosystem across the Kansai region.

Read more

BIO-Europe 2026: Meet us in Cologne

BIO-Europe 2026 will take place from November 9 to 11, 2026 in Cologne, Germany. This year, Bio^{M} will be represented with its own booth and will showcase Bavaria as a leading biotech location together with Bavarian hubs and partners.

Meet us at **booth 7-24**, representing Bavaria's biotechnology sector. Together with IZB Innovation and Start-up Center for Biotechnology, we will highlight what makes Bavaria stand out as a biotech location: excellent research, innovative companies, strong infrastructure and an internationally connected ecosystem.

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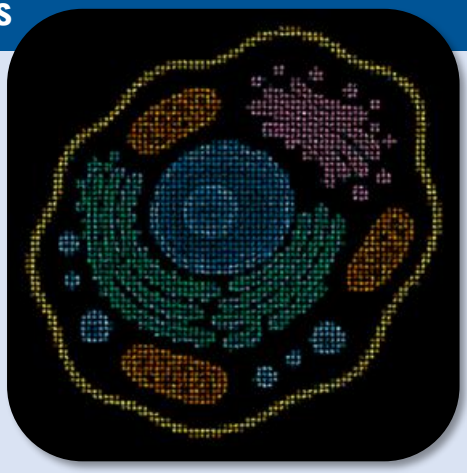
Prof. Ralf Huss, Managing Director, Bio^{M} will take part in the session:

"Therapeutic Insights – Cell and Gene Therapy: What Should You Know?"
Monday, November 9, 2026, 4:00 - 4:45 pm.

Read more

New technology: Munich researchers use artificial intelligence and microscopy for genetic screening of cells



© Niklas Schmacke

A new technology promises to enable more comprehensive investigations into how individual genes determine the appearance and behavior of cells.
Researchers led by Professor Veit Hornung at **LMU's Gene Center** and Prof. Matthias Mann at the **Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry** in Martinsried, together with Prof. Fabian Theis at **Helmholtz Munich**, have developed **SPARCS**, a technology that combines artificial intelligence with microscopy and genetic screening.

The method enables researchers to screen millions of genetically modified cells for complex visual features and then selectively isolate individual cells of interest. Using SPARCS, cellular effects can thus be linked to the genetic changes that cause them. The findings have now been published in the journal *Cell*.

In their study, the scientists used artificial intelligence to analyze microscopy images of a total of **70 million cells for changes caused by genetic alterations**. In an initial genome-wide proof-of-concept experiment, the researchers investigated autophagy - an important cellular recycling process.

Read more

The 2026 Falling Walls Science Breakthrough of the Year award goes to FAU researcher Georg Schett

Vice President of Research, Prof. Dr. Greorg Schett, Chair of Internal Medicine III.
© Simone Kessler/Erlangen University Hospital

The research of Prof. Georg Schett of Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU) has been awarded the "Falling Walls Science Breakthrough of the Year 2026" in the Life Sciences category.

His research on reprogramming the immune system using **CAR-T cell therapy** opens up new possibilities for treating severe autoimmune diseases. Patients with autoimmune diseases such as lupus, scleroderma, myositis, and arthritis - as well as those with other severe conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease and multiple sclerosis - are expected to benefit from this research.

The research conducted by Prof. Schett and his interdisciplinary team in Erlangen applies an approach **from cancer medicine to autoimmune diseases**: CAR-T cells are used to specifically eliminate disease-causing cells. The goal is to, in a sense, "reprogram" the immune system to be "healthy."
"Our strategy is no longer to suppress a diseased immune system, but to create a new, healthy immune system. This means that medications such as cortisone and other immunosuppressants are no longer needed," explains Schett, Director of Medical Clinic 3 – Rheumatology and Immunology at **Erlangen University Hospital** and Vice President for Research at FAU. Read more

Triple recognition for Diabetes Research at Helmholtz Munich

Prof. Anette-Gabriele Ziegler receives the Claude Bernard Prize © Helmholtz Munich

Three researchers from Helmholtz Munich and the German Center for Diabetes Research (DZD) were honored at the annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) in Milan.

Prof. Anette-Gabriele Ziegler received the Claude Bernard Prize, the EASD's highest honor. Prof. Andreas Birkenfeld was honored with the Camillo Golgi Prize. Dr. Aaron Novikoff received an EFSD Rising Star Fellowship.

With the **Claude Bernard Prize**, the EASD recognizes **Anette-Gabriele Ziegler** for her outstanding contributions to research on type 1 diabetes. As director of the Institute for Diabetes Research at Helmholtz Munich, a professor at the Technical University of Munich, and a DZD researcher, she has made significant contributions to identifying **early stages** of the disease. Her work shows that type 1 diabetes begins years before the first clinical symptoms appear and can be detected early based on specific autoantibodies. In doing so, she laid an important foundation for screening programs, prevention studies, and new approaches to early treatment. Read more

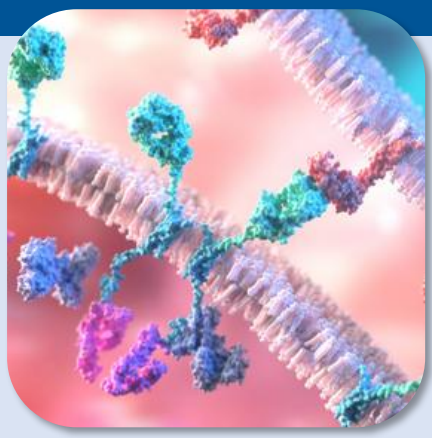
Young Researchers' Nobel Prize: Bavaria ranks first in Germany for the fifth consecutive year in ERC Starting Grants

These researchers from Bavaria have been awarded the ERC Starting Grant. © Otto Friedrich University of Bamberg, FAU Erlangen-Nuremberg, Erlangen University Hospital, LMU, LMU Medical Center, TUM, TUM Medical Center, Technical University of Nuremberg, Würzburg University Hospital, Julius Maximilian University of Würzburg, Helmholtz Munich.

22 top European grants from the European Research Council (ERC) - the ERC Starting Grants - are going to Bavarian universities, with a large portion going to projects in the fields of medicine/health, life sciences, and biotechnology.

The funding is going to **Bamberg**, **Erlangen**, München, **Nuremberg** und **Würzburg**. The Technische Hochschule München (TUM) is the most successful university in Germany with eight grants, closely followed by Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität (LMU) in second place with seven. Bavaria's top young researchers are continuing their winning streak: For the fifth consecutive year, the Free State of Bavaria **ranks first in Germany** for the prestigious ERC Starting Grants. A total of 22 of these coveted European research grants for 2026 are going to early-career researchers at Bavarian universities, with the majority supporting projects in the fields of **medicine, life sciences, and biotechnology**. Read more

Researchers from Munich and Basel develop AI tool that identifies proteins and cell membranes in record time



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A research team from Helmholtz Munich, the Technical University of Munich (TUM), and the Biozentrum at the University of Basel has developed MemBrain v2, an AI tool that analyzes cell membranes and their proteins.

The software thus accomplishes in a few hours what previously required weeks of time-consuming manual work. The freely available software recognizes membranes, locates specific proteins, and analyzes their spatial arrangement. In this way, it reveals how cellular processes are organized at the molecular level, particularly in the development of disease processes.

Cryo-electron tomography (cryo-ET) is a specialized microscopy technique that allows researchers to peer inside cells in three dimensions and at very high resolution. Because cells are frozen in a flash for this process, they remain virtually unchanged, from entire cell structures down to individual molecules. However, analyzing membranes in this data has been difficult until now.
Now, a team from Helmholtz Munich, the Technical University of Munich (TUM), and the Biozentrum at the University of Basel has developed MemBrain v2, an **AI tool** that automates this task, reducing work that used to take weeks to just a few hours. The **freely available software** detects membranes, locates specific proteins, and analyzes their spatial arrangement. Depending on the application, the AI requires little or no additional training data to do so. Read more

Eleftheria Zeggini from Helmholtz Munich receives FEBS | EMBO Women in Science Award 2027

© Federation of European Biochemical Societies 2026

EMBO and the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) have named Prof. Eleftheria Zeggini, Director of the Institute of Translational Genomics at Helmholtz Munich, as the recipient of the FEBS | EMBO Women in Science Award 2027.

The award recognizes her pioneering contributions to human genomics and the translation of large-scale genetic discoveries into biological and clinical insights, as well as her scientific leadership and sustained commitment to mentoring, equality and inclusion.

Prof. Eleftheria Zeggini is internationally recognized as a leading scientist in the **genomics of complex human diseases**, with a particular focus on type 2 diabetes, obesity and osteoarthritis. Her research aims to move large-scale genetic discoveries towards a deeper understanding of disease mechanisms and, ultimately, potential clinical applications.
Her work combines population-scale genomics with multi-omics, advanced computational methods and artificial intelligence. Through the **Type 2 Diabetes Global Genetics Initiative**, Zeggini has led efforts to integrate and analyse genetic data from more than four million individuals worldwide.

Read more

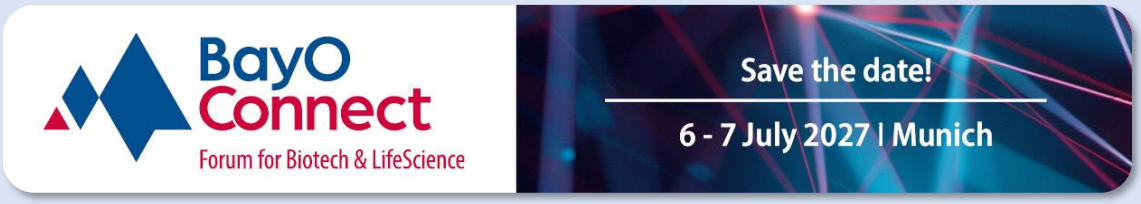
Events

AIDDD (AI Drug Discovery & Development Summit)
27 – 29 October 2026 I Boston, USA

BIO-Europe
9 – 11 November 2026 I Cologne, Germany

Swiss Biotech Day
26 – 27 April 2027 I Basel, Switzerland

BIO International Convention
7 – 10 June 2027 I Philadelphia, USA



Please find current event information on our website www.bio-m.org/en/events

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