Robotics for People

Robotik für Menschen. Why the DGR's mandate depends on its members, and how I want to build it.

Sebastian Schmidt, candidate for **Vice President (2. Vorsitzender)**

WHO I AM

Born in Munich; studied in Passau, Budweis and Deggendorf. I worked in research before founding my first company, and I have founded more than once: co-founder and CEO of Athegus GmbH, a 2025 spin-off of Deggendorf Institute of Technology. Club and volunteer work since my school days; today a member of the GI personally and, through my companies, of the VDMA and Bitkom. On this ballot I am the only candidate from a company.

WHY I AM STANDING

Robotics will keep improving either way; RIG exists for that question. Nobody yet organises the other half: how these machines reach the buildings and the working days of this country. I see that half every week. The people who carry it, those who run lifts, networks, wards and classrooms, belong to no society at all. The DGR is the first German organisation open to all of them. I am standing because I want it to become the place they turn to, and because building things like this is what I do.

WHY THIS TERM COUNTS

Five developments fall into the three years of this term:

1. **Regulation is being locked in.** Between **September 2026 and December 2027** the CRA reporting duty, the new Product Liability Directive, the Machinery Regulation and the main CRA obligations all take effect. What gets written now sets the terms for years.
2. **The technology makes its leap.** Language models are moving into robots. What was a lab demo two years ago is shipping this term.
3. **The race accelerates.** Chinese and American companies are scaling with capital and industrial policy behind them. Whether European robotics keeps pace is decided in what we build and in what we buy over these three years.
4. **Demand will outrun supply.** The workforce is shrinking, and two thirds of German hospitals already report unfilled nursing posts. Robots will enter daily work either way. Which robots they will be, and under which rules, is being decided now.
5. **The DGR builds itself in the same window.** Our project funding and its milestones run through exactly these three years, while the founding team hands over. By the end of the term the society has to carry itself.

None of the new rules tells an operator what his robot records and where the data goes; no such register exists. Robots were dropped from Annex III of the CRA, yet parts of the market are advised otherwise in writing. Members with a robot on their premises would pay for clarity.

HOW I WANT TO SHAPE THIS SOCIETY

These four pillars are what I stand for, and what I want to build the board's work on:

- **Robotics that fits Europe.** Technology integrated into our workplaces and institutions in a way people here accept. That fit is Europe's strength in this race, and that is where I want our planning to start.
- **Transparency and education.** I want to take the robotics map that is already planned and make it filterable by industry, by application, by research project and by result, down to where you can watch one working. That makes the field graspable outside our bubble. Public and vocational education ("Volks- und Berufsbildung") is our purpose under § 2.2 of our statutes, and people who see the field join it.
- **Evidence.** I want to motivate members to document what happens in operation, with case numbers attached. Prepared and openly accessible, that material becomes positions for standards bodies and ministries, and research questions for science.
- **A sharp fit between DGR and RIG.** The near-term questions we answer ourselves; the deep ones go to RIG and other research institutions, together with the data behind them. Keeping this division sharp is board work, and I want to take it on.

§ 17 of our statutes has the structure for this: specialist groups ("Fachbereiche"), none set up yet. I want to start four (**robotics in operation** · **safety and standards** · **education and early careers** · **robotics and society**), each with a speaker ("Sprecher") in the Presidium, and I will build the first regional group in the south myself.

WHAT I BRING

I have put robots into operation in real hospitals, from the first workshop to the running ward. I installed robots in international duty-free shops, I talk to mid-sized automotive suppliers, airports and fitness studios. My weeks are spent with Chinese and German manufacturers, integrators, nurses, store operators and developers: the people that should be the base of this society. Through me the board hears their questions in the month they come up.

As a researcher I published and ran experiments, led multidisciplinary teams and exchanged ideas with students. As an entrepreneur I have built software companies more than once, and I run a robotics spin-off today.

I have seen robotics from many perspectives, and I know different speeds: science needs years and protection from time and cost pressure, an association can decide in weeks. I will hold the DGR to its pace. In the first months that means:

- **A Director, hired fast, with a clear mandate.** The contract is the board's first signature, with member growth in it from day one.
- **A fee schedule ("Beitragsordnung") for organisational tiers.** I will draft it and put it on the agenda of the first general assembly. The plan expects five organisational members in year one, worth **11,000 Euro**, double the fees of all **134** planned individual members.

A President who carries the scientific standing of this society. A deputy who brings in the people running robots every day, and the pace these three years demand. I want to do that second job.

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