

Barbora Šmahlíková receives the first ever Government Award for Gifted Students

On 8 June 2023, the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation Helena Langšádlová presented the 2022 Government Award for Gifted Students at the Hrzánský Palace in Prague. This new prize is awarded to secondary or higher education students who have shown exceptional talent and interest in research or scientific work. The recipient of its first iteration is Barbora Šmahlíková, a student of the Brno University of Technology.



The award was presented to the laureate on 8 June 2023 by the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation Helena Langšádlová. Photo: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

This is the **first time ever** that the Government has awarded a promising student for achievements in research. The recipient is chosen by the Government from a list of names submitted by the Council for Research, Development and Innovation. The award comes with a **monetary prize of CZK 50 000**. It is an opportunity to annually award a talented secondary or higher education student with the aim of promoting research activities and attracting promising young talent to a future career in science.

In her opening remarks, Minister Langšádlová, who is also the Chair of the Research, Development and Innovation Council, emphasised the importance of supporting talent young individuals whose skills contribute to building a better society. The quality of the submissions for the first ever award in 2022 shows that there are many promising young people who pursue science with excellent results during their studies.

“This is a brand new event and it is a uniquely important one for me because the Government has decided to award a student. We need to systematically nurture and cultivate talent and this award contributes to that. Young people are the potential future scientists who can be of immense importance in solving the most pressing issues of our society,” the Minister said.

The award winner Barbora Šmahlíková focuses on mathematical methods in information technology – an increasingly omnipresent field in our everyday lives. Minister Helena Langšádlová appreciated that the student had already managed to engage in high-level scientific work as early as during her undergraduate studies.

The Vice-Rector of the BUT, the winner's nominating university, doc. Iveta Šimberová, stressed the importance and contribution of the Government Award in her speech: *"It is a great honour for the Brno University of Technology that our student received this award in its very first year. There were many nominees and they all give us hope for the future of our society. That is because we can expect these talents to open doors for others. This is not Barbora's first award. She has already received numerous awards, both at the university and at conferences, for her excellent theoretical research, study results, and other contributions to the reputation of the Faculty of Information Technology and the BUT as a whole. It is a miracle that this young woman is able to devote herself with such humility to a field so difficult, a field where many students, even those in doctoral studies, have not been able to match her publishing results."*

In her closing speech, Barbora Šmahlíková confirmed that the Government Award made her feel responsibility and motivation. *"I take this award as a confirmation that what I do is meaningful. The research so far has given me valuable experience, I have had the opportunity to delve into tremendously challenging topics and meet many inspiring people,"* added the laureate.

The ceremony was also attended by members of the Council, the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education and Science Jiří Růžička, the President of the Czech Academy of Sciences Eva Zažímalová, the Chair of the Czech Science Foundation Petr Baldrian, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Ondřej Andrys, representatives of nominated students and other important members of the academic community.

Laureate of the Government Award

Bc. Barbora Šmahlíková is the first ever recipient of the Government Award for Gifted Student. She was picked for her contribution to the development of algorithms known as omega automata. Barbora Šmahlíková is currently studying a Master's Degree programme in Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence with a specialisation in Mathematical Methods at the Faculty of Information Technology at the Brno University of Technology.

Barbora got involved in research at the beginning of her Bachelor's Degree studies. Her work was soon published at various international conference forums, which are mostly reserved for doctoral students. The algorithm for complementation, which she was instrumental in creating, is currently one of the world's leading algorithms of its kind. The recommendations of her faculty and the results she has achieved so far show that Barbora Šmahlíková is an exceptional student with a great talent for science and research.