

EBERHARD KARLS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
TÜBINGEN



2024

# ANNUAL REPORT

University of Tübingen











Dear reader,

2024 was an extraordinary year for the University of Tübingen, one marked by academic success, social engagement, and the willingness to assume responsibility. We are particularly proud of our outstanding achievements in the Excellence Strategy: nine of our cluster initiatives were invited to submit full proposals – more than any other institution in Germany. This included the three existing clusters of excellence. My sincere thanks go to everyone who contributed to this success. Their commitment demonstrates how vibrant, efficient, and forward-looking our University community is.

Excellence means more than research at the highest level. In a world increasingly shaken by crises, we need research that provides guidance and develops solutions. The University of Tübingen embraces this responsibility. Our research informs debates, processes, and developments – across Germany and beyond. For example, the newly-founded Institute for Research on Right-Wing Extremism provides data and analysis for policymakers and educators on ways of dealing with right-wing extremism.

The University actively seeks dialogue with society at large. Our Science & Innovation Days festival enabled Tübingen researchers to engage with citizens on how to make better argu-

ments in the public arena. The University is a space for debate and a place for creative collaboration. We see ourselves not just as observers, but as creative agents contributing to an open, democratic society.

Communication was and remains central to me personally. Those in positions of responsibility should seek dialogue and remain curious, open, and approachable. Every day I am impressed once again by the rich diversity of our University. In my direct exchanges with staff and students, it becomes clear to me that the challenges facing the world are tangible also here on campus. But it is precisely this diversity and the vibrant culture of debate that strengthen us. To better address some of this complexity, we have expanded the President's Office with a new Vice-President for Sustainable Development. 2024 was a dynamic year, bringing with it major successes and important lessons. You will find some of them outlined in this report. I wish you an inspiring read and thank you for your interest in the University of Tübingen.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. (Dōshisha) Karla Pollmann, President

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# 2024 IN FIGURES





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**28,609**  
students enrolled

— including

>> page 50

**4,466**  
international students

**4,824**  
degrees completed

— including

**63 %**  
degrees completed by women

**3**

Clusters of Excellence

>> page 10

**8,310**  
employees

**789.8**  
million euros overall budget  
including

>> page 58

**279.6 (35 %)**  
million euros third-party funding

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**46**  
ERC Grants

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# RESEARCH

## A BROAD SPECTRUM OF TOPICS

Research across a wide range of disciplines at the University of Tübingen combines academic excellence with an awareness of social relevance and the value of interdisciplinarity. Our many new collaborative projects and individual achievements sharpen the University's profile in areas such as artificial intelligence, life sciences, and democracy research. Tübingen academics help shape current debates and develop solutions to current and future challenges.

### EXCELLENCE STRATEGY: SUCCESSFUL PREPARATION FOR THE SECOND ROUND

#### The three successful new proposals

##### **GreenRobust: Understanding robustness in plants from molecules to ecosystems**

Plants have developed strategies to cope with changes in their environment. They do this primarily by being tough enough to maintain their functions despite external disturbances. Given the increasing human impact on our planet, understanding the mechanisms and limits of plant robustness is crucial for developing effective and knowledge-based strategies to help preserve plant ecosystems and ensure agricultural productivity. The GreenRobust cluster of excellence combines the expertise of the Universities of Tübingen, Heidelberg, and Hohenheim to investigate plant robustness. The cluster has three main fields of research: climatic and biotic disturbances; the influence of disturbances on various levels of biological organization, from molecules to populations; and the diversity within a group of species selected from plant families of ecological and agricultural importance.

##### **HUMAN ORIGINS: A paradigm shift in the study of human evolution**

The research methods and approaches of the 21st century have revolutionized the study of human origins. We now know that several hominin species, representing a previously unimaginable diversity of human ancestors, not only co-existed in time and space, but also repeatedly interbred. New data has called into question many old assumptions, such as a linear increase in brain size over time. A new approach is therefore needed that can keep pace with rapid methodological developments, seek additional evidence, and fill gaps in the hitherto fragmentary investigation of fossil and archaeological finds. Integrating biological, cultural, and ecological aspects into the analysis of the finds reveals previously unseen connections and enables researchers to develop new theories. The HUMAN ORIGINS cluster examines the past five million years of human development by building on three interrelated topics – the systematics of evolutionary relationships, the evolution of human cognition, and the evolution of the human ecological niche.

##### **TERRA: Interactions between the geosphere and the biosphere in a changing world**

Vital resources such as drinking water and the air we breathe depend on interactions between the Earth's geosphere and its biosphere. Understanding these interactions in detail is therefore essential for the well-being of humankind. The current human impact on ecosystems is unprecedented, but the underlying laws of nature always apply. The TERRA cluster of excellence investigates how geo-biosphere interactions respond to environmental change and influence it. TERRA continues the Tübingen tradition of joint research in the geosciences and the life sciences and includes researchers from the University of Hohenheim and the Senckenberg Society for Nature Research in Frankfurt. The cluster pursues an integrative approach, combining fieldwork, experiments, and data studies analyzing different periods of the Earth's history.

## The three existing clusters extended

### iFIT: Individualized treatments using Image-Guided and Functionally Instructed Tumor Therapies

Around a third of all solid tumors are only diagnosed at an advanced stage, by which time they have often metastasized. The iFIT cluster of excellence focuses on these so far mostly incurable cancers by integrating cancer research and the development of treatments. It combines three main areas of research at the Faculty of Medicine: molecular and functional multiparametric imaging; the functional identification of tumor structures and the development of pharmaceutical and molecular treatments; and state-of-the-art immunological methods and immunotherapies for treating cancer. In its first funding period, iFIT researchers were able to better describe tumor biological processes and identify new targets for molecular and immunological cancer therapeutics and diagnostics. Now they will expand drug development to design more effective cancer therapeutics and diagnostics.

### CMFI: Control of Microorganisms to Fight Infection

Antibiotic resistance has been increasing for years, yet there are hardly any commercial antibiotic development programs. We may be facing a post-antibiotic era in which antibiotics will no longer be effective. The CMFI cluster of excellence investigates microbiome mechanisms, using them to develop strategies for the prevention and treatment of bacterial infections. During the first funding phase, CMFI researchers discovered novel antimicrobial substances naturally produced by the microbes in our microbiomes. In the second funding phase, the cluster will pursue an integrative ap-

proach to microbiome control. Biological, medical, chemical, and computer-aided research will record complex interactions in the microbiome and the host, and seek ways of harnessing them for new forms of treatment. The aim is to tackle difficult-to-treat infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacterial pathogens using new methods and new drugs.

### Machine Learning: New Perspectives for Science

In the first funding period, the researchers used machine learning techniques to gain new insights into widely different fields, thereby expanding our knowledge of, for example, the basic building blocks of the brain or gravitational waves in physics. However, machine learning techniques still have weaknesses in terms of reliability, robustness, and interpretability. In the second funding period, the cluster will focus on further developing the methods used, and on integrating automated learning into research processes generally. The researchers will demonstrate the potential of this approach in areas as varied as identifying the causes of disease progression and analyzing the dynamics of quantum systems. The partners in the cluster, along with the University of Tübingen, are the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems, the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics, the Tübingen ELLIS Institute, the Knowledge Media Research Center, and the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS).

## Projects envisaged to be funded by other sources

The **Bionic Intelligence for Health** proposal builds a bridge between the human system and state-of-the-art technologies to provide better help for people with neurological and

psychiatric disorders. These affect more than 40 percent of the world's population. For this ambitious endeavor the University of Stuttgart (coordinating), the University of Tübingen, as well as the Max Planck Institutes for Intelligent Systems and for Biological Cybernetics are pooling their expertise.

When it comes to coexistence on this planet, the paradigm of proximity is a decisive factor. The **Critical Proximities** proposal investigates various forms of coexistence, ranging from cooperation to conflict, and critically examines central approaches in the arts and in cultural studies. This project seeks to equip the humanities with new ideas and methodologies to better meet the challenges of the future. These include the combination of Western and non-Western epistemologies and ecological approaches.

Our current understanding of the brain is primarily based on studies of biological males and male animal models and the data arising from them. However, certain sex preponderances in the frequency, severity, and progression of disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, depression, and migraine, as well as communication impairments, raise the question of the extent to which functional and dysfunctional processes in the brain differ between the sexes and consequently influence susceptibility to mental and neurological disorders.

The **Female Brain** project explores this issue in three core areas of human existence and experience: memory and cognition, emotion and homeostasis, and communication. The interdisciplinary proposal combines basic and clinical research and utilizes the entire spectrum of molecular, cellular, and systems neuroscience methods. It aims to identify sex- and gender-related protective and risk factors for brain health and to open up new, individualized, sex- and gender-sensitive treatment options.



## RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM RESEARCHERS APPOINTED



The process of establishing the Institute for Research on Right-Wing Extremism (IRex) at the University of Tübingen is almost complete. In January 2025, Léonie de Jonge was appointed to the third of the institute's four planned professorships. De Jonge's research focuses on political actors and organizations on the right-wing extremist spectrum and their ideologies. The two professors appointed in late 2024 are Annett Heft, who studies right-wing extremism from a media and public communications point of view, and Heike Radvan, who approaches the topic from the perspective of education science.

IRex conducts foundational research into issues such as radicalization processes and the dynamics of right-wing extremist discourse. This research will provide policymakers with a firm knowledge base enabling them to better understand and identify right-wing extremism and respond to it appropriately. IRex works closely with partner institutions from politics and civil society, such as the state Agency for Civic Education and other bodies with the function of strengthening democracy and human rights. An important part of the IRex approach is that people affected or potentially affected are directly involved in the research. The three professorships now filled have open-ended funding from the State of Baden-Württemberg.

*Institute for Research on Right-Wing Extremism staff, left to right: Prof. Léonie de Jonge, administrative director Reiner Baur, Prof. Annett Heft, research director Rolf Frankenberger, and Prof. Heike Radvan*

## PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE GERMAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

### Robust Vision collaborative research center extended

Our visualized environment is constantly changing: lighting conditions change, some things are visible, others are not, and distractions must be ignored. Yet humans and other living beings manage to get around reliably using vision. Our brain creates a stable image of the changing world that enables us to move and interact with our environment safely. This robustness of vision is an amazing neural feat that researchers in the collaborative research center SFB 1233 *Robustness of Vision* are seeking to reproduce as a machine vision system. In 2024, funding for *Robustness of Vision* was extended for its third and final four-year phase.

By studying biological vision more closely, the researchers will seek new insights that can be applied to artificial neural networks – computer models that mimic the human brain. They consist of interconnected layers of artificial neurons that pro-

cess information. Yet the process could go both ways – the artificial systems can also be used as models of biological vision, because the path to the result is comparable in both systems. To enable this comparison between biological vision and the operations of artificial neural networks, the collaborative research center also analyzes data obtained from humans. The findings may not only advance machine learning, but also be significant for medical applications. The interdisciplinary form of a collaborative research center is particularly suitable for this twofold potential outcome, with scientists involved from disciplines as varied as computer science and machine learning to biology, medicine, and cognitive science.

### What is a collaborative research center?

A collaborative research center (SFB) is a long-term research program at one or more universities that is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). SFBs bring together expertise from various disciplines to jointly work on complex, interdisciplinary research projects over a period of up to 12 years. The transregional collaborative research centers (TRR) operate across several locations. Such collaboration creates a network of interdisciplinary research interests and resources across regions. Collaborative research centers are intended to explore new academic questions, establish sustainable research structures, and intensively promote early-career researchers via cooperation and a structured research agenda.



## Collaborative research centers at the University of Tübingen

Title	Spokesperson	Duration
Different Aesthetics (SFB 1391)	Professor Dr. Annette Gerok-Reiter German Language and Literature	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2027
Robust Vision – Inference Principles and Neural Mechanisms (SFB 1233)	Professor Dr. Matthias Bethge Werner Reichardt Center for Integrative Neuroscience/ Institute of Theoretical Physics	1 January 2017 – 31 December 2028
Molecular Coding of Specificity in Plant Processes (SFB 1101)	Professor Dr. Klaus Harter Center for Plant Molecular Biology (ZMBP)	1 April 2014 – 31 December 2025
ResourceCultures: Socio-cultural Dynamics in the Treatment of Resources (SFB 1070)	Professor Dr. Martin Bartelheim Institute of Prehistory and Medieval Archaeology	1 October 2013 – 30 June 2025

## Tübingen participates in these transregional collaborative research centers

Title	Spokesperson	Duration
ANTIBIOTIC CellMAP – Cellular Mechanisms of Antibiotic Action and Production (TRR 261)	Professor Dr. Heike Brötz-Oesterhelt Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2024
	Tübingen speaker	
PlantMicrobe: Genetic diversity shaping biotic interactions of plants (TRR 356)	Professor Dr. Rosa Lozano-Durán Center for Plant Molecular Biology (ZMBP)	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2026
Mathematics of Many-Body Quantum Systems and Their Collective Phenomena (TRR 352)	Professor Dr. Stefan Teufel Department of Mathematics	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2026
The Skin as a Sensor and Effector Organ Orchestrating Local and Systemic Immune Responses (TRR 156)	Professor Dr. Birgit Schitteck University Hospitals Dermatology Clinic	1 July 2015 – 30 June 2027

*Lisa Maier, coordinator of the  
Illuminating gene functions  
in the human gut microbiome  
priority program*



## New priority program: Exploring the microbiome

For bacteria, our body is just another ecosystem to live in. Scientists currently assume that the human intestine can be colonized by around 4,500 different species of bacteria, around 70 percent of which cannot yet be cultivated and studied in the laboratory. As a result, we do not know what about half of their genes do. Lisa Maier, Professor of Microbiome-Host Interactions at the Faculty of Medicine, is coordinating a new DFG priority program, *Illuminating gene functions in the human gut microbiome*, to investigate the most common intestinal bacteria in the human gut. Other participants include the LMU Munich, the Julius Maximilian University in Würzburg, and the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) in Heidelberg. In Tübingen, the project is linked with other bodies including the *Controlling Microbes to Fight Infections* cluster of excellence and the new M3 Research Center. The program will receive approximately 7.8 million euros during the first three-year phase.

The researchers are looking at aspects of gut bacteria including cellular structures and functions, their ability to produce and process new metabolites, and their interactions with their immediate environment. The findings will then serve as a starting point for microbiome-based therapies in various areas of medicine. The priority program will be funded by the DFG for six years.

### What is a priority program?

The aim of priority programs is to provide a tangible impetus for the further development of scientific and academic fields. The DFG thus funds original research that promises to have a formative impact in its area. Furthermore, priority programs incorporate interdisciplinary and cross-location collaboration between researchers. Funding is for a maximum of six years, divided into two periods of three years.

## Tübingen research units

The DFG supports academics who combine forces to work on a joint research project as a unit. Funding is provided in two phases over a period of eight years in total. Research units often provide impetus for the development of new research fields.

Institute	Title	Tübingen speaker
Institute of Physics	Precision Neutrino Physics with JUNO (FOR 5519)	Professor Dr. Tobias Lachenmaier
Institute of Medical Psychology and Behavioral Neurobiology	Information Abstraction During Sleep (FOR 5434)	Professor Dr. Jan Born
Institute for Theoretical Physics	Long-range interacting Quantum Spin systems out of equilibrium: Experiment, Theory and Mathematics (FOR 5413)	Professor Dr. Igor Lesanovsky
Protestant Theology, Practical Theology	De/Sacralisation of Texts (FOR 2828)	Professor Dr. Birgit Weyel
Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine	The Autotrophy-Heterotrophy Switch in Cyanobacteria: Coherent Decision-Making at Multiple Regulatory Layers (FOR 2816)	Professor Dr. Karl Forchhammer
School of Business and Economics	Understanding the Behavior of Multinational Corporations in the Context of International Tax Institutions (FOR 2738)	Professor Dr. Georg Wamser
Department of Psychology	Modal and Amodal Cognition: Functions and Interactions (FOR 2718)	Professor Dr. Barbara Kaup
Center of Neurology and Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research	Epileptogenesis of genetic epilepsies (FOR 2715)	Professor Dr. Holger Lerche
Institute of Ancient History	Migration and Mobility in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages (FOR 2496)	Professor Dr. Steffen Patzold
Senckenberg Center for Human Evolution and Palaeoenvironment and Institute of Linguistics	Words, Bones, Genes, Tools: Tracking Linguistic, Cultural and Biological Trajectories of the Human Past (FOR 2237)	Professor Dr. Katerina Harvati Professor Dr. Gerhard Jäger

## EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL FUNDING FOR TOP RESEARCHERS



Philipp Hennig

### Consolidator Grant for Philipp Hennig

European Research Council (ERC) grants are one of the European Union's most important funding initiatives for research. They were launched in 2007 to support excellent, innovative, and high-risk research and to keep the European research community internationally competitive. ERC grants provide generous funding for academics of all disciplines in order to realize outstanding projects.

Early-career researchers may obtain Starting Grants of up to 1.5 million euros; established researchers are eligible for Consolidator Grants of up to two million or for Advanced Grants of up to 2.5 million, each over five years. Synergy Grants are available to groups of two to four Principal Investigators contributing different skills and resources to tackle ambitious research problems. Successful applicants receive funding of up to 14 million euros for a maximum of six years.

Artificial intelligence is a key technology, but it also consumes a great deal of resources. AI system processes require large amounts of energy, computing time, and data. Professor Philipp Hennig secured a Consolidator Grant in 2024 to investigate more efficient management of these resources in his project *Advanced Numerical Uncertainty for Bayesian Inference in Science* (ANUBIS).

The question of efficiency arises above all in complex computing processes, as they are used in climate models, geological, and neuroscientific simulations. These usually involve questions that consist of an infinite number of sub-questions and cannot be answered definitively and perfectly. In order to arrive at a result nonetheless, the computer must simultaneously keep track of which parts of the question have already been answered and how well, while answering these

sub-questions. This record-keeping is itself a calculation that must be simpler than the calculation required to answer the respective sub-question. In his project, Philipp Hennig is working on expanding modern machine learning methods to enable more economical algorithms, making it easier for researchers to flexibly incorporate specific measurements, simulation data, and expert knowledge into their code.

## Five new Starting Grants for Tübingen researchers

Josef Leibold



### Improving cell-based cancer therapies via controlled senescence

Assistant professor Josef Seibold is a research unit leader in the cluster of excellence Image-Guided and Functionally Instructed Tumor Therapies (iFIT) and a physician at the Tübingen University Hospital. In his project, *Harnessing Senescence to Improve Cell-based Therapies against Cancer* (EXPLOITsen), Seibold seeks to make tumor cells more vulnerable to attack by the immune system. Cancer cells can normally evade immune surveillance by employing mechanisms to suppress the body's immune response. Immunotherapies aim to break through these camouflage mechanisms. They activate and strengthen the body's own immune system in a targeted manner so that it can recognize and fight cancer cells more effectively.

Seibold is researching methods for using senescence – biological aging – to do this. In a first step, senescence prevents tumor cells from dividing. In the second step, CAR-T cells – re-programmed immune cells from the body – are used to eliminate the “dormant” cancer cells. Success in the project has the potential to establish CAR immune cell therapy in the context of solid tumors and to enable new treatment options for patients with difficult-to-treat cancers. The project receives 1.5 million euros over the five-year funding period.

### Mathematics meets quantum physics: information propagation in many-particle systems

Information spreads at different speeds in different media. For example, during a thunderstorm, we see the lightning before we hear the thunder, because light travels faster than sound. Yet there are still many questions about how quickly information spreads in quantum many-body systems. In his project *The Mathematics of Quantum Propagation* (MathQuant-Prop) Professor Marius Lemm is applying mathematical methods to investigate quantum systems currently of great interest in physics. He will receive close to 1.5 million euros in funding from the ERC.

Lemm is interested in whether key statements such as those concerning information propagation in quantum many-body systems can be proven mathematically. What sets the speed limit in the system, or is there no speed limit in these models? Answers to such questions enable us to derive certain capabilities and limitations of the systems in applications, for example for quantum algorithms. Quantum physics models are an attempt to understand the microscopic relationships in nature that can be described from the perspective of quantum physics. Applying mathematical methods to them changes the way of thinking about physical problems.

Marius Lemm



### When a fungus goes from foe to friend

The project *When your enemy becomes your friend: evolution of the interaction between fungi and land plants* (FRIENEMIES) is based on a chance discovery assistant professor Isabel Monte made: the fungus *Trichoderma*, which has long been used in crop cultivation for biological pest control to promote growth, resistance, and stress tolerance in flowering plants, can have a completely opposite, harmful-to-lethal effect on mosses and ferns. Monte, based at the Center for Plant Molecular Biology, is investigating *Trichoderma*'s transformation from pest to beneficial organism at the molecular level. The project receives 1.5 million euros over the funding period.

Interactions with fungi and other microorganisms at the molecular level have been studied extensively in flowering plants, which comprise most of our crops. Molecular plant-microbe interactions have recently also been studied in spore plants such as mosses and ferns. Monte will use these models to learn more about the molecular mechanisms underlying the pathogenic effect of *Trichoderma* on spore plants. The wider aim is to better understand the complex and dynamic interplay between land plants and microbes during the course of evolution. Although the project involves foundational research, new knowledge about the re-



Isabel Monte



Claire Vernade



Florian Wimmers

lationship between spore plants and *Trichoderma* can be used, for example, in the context of living roofs or to combat unwanted moss growth in greenhouses.

### Adaptive learning for AI systems

Computer scientist Dr. Claire Vernade from the excellence cluster *Machine Learning: New Perspectives for Science* aims to ensure that machine learning systems are both reliable and adaptable in the ever-changing real world. Machine learning has already enabled impressive developments in areas ranging from language modeling to drug research. However, the systems still lack important capabilities: they do not remain reliable when the data distribution changes or when they are confronted with completely new situations. Vernade's project, *Continual and Sequential Learning for Artificial Intelligence* (ConSequentIAL), will receive approximately 1.25 euros.

Her project is based on techniques developed in the field of reinforcement learning, in which the software unit being trained searches an environment to achieve predefined

goals. It is also capable of learning through trial and error. Vernade is seeking to develop AI agents that can make intelligent decisions about when and how to collect new data in order to penetrate and adapt to new situations – known as exploration in reinforcement learning. Vernade will set out the theoretical foundations for combining this capability with existing machine learning models. In the long term, the aim is to create machine learning systems that support science and society in solving complex problems.

### Helping protect cancer patients against infections

In his project *Organoid- and AI-based Identification of Oncology Drug-Vaccine Interactions* (OrAIOn), Dr. Florian Wimmers from the Interfaculty Institute of Biochemistry is exploring ways to better protect cancer patients from infection. His project will receive a 1.5 million in ERC funding.

Cancer patients are particularly at risk, as they are often not adequately protected by vaccines, which may be impaired by the immunosuppressive effect of many cancer drugs. Wimmers and his team are seeking to systematically inves-

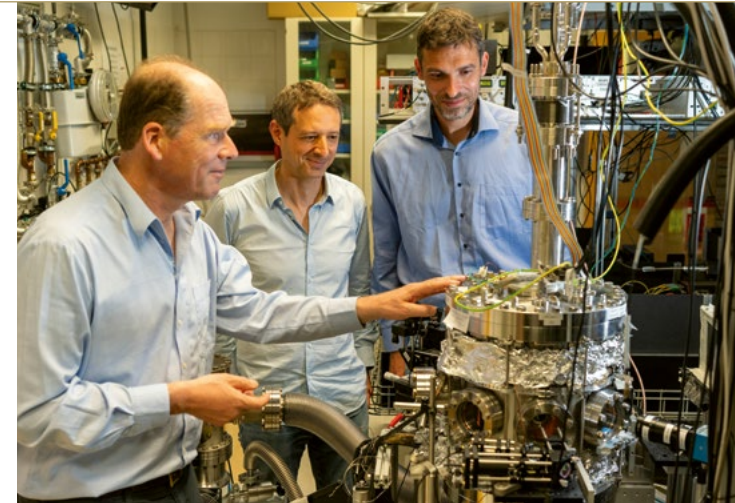
tigate the influence of cancer drugs on the effectiveness of vaccines. For this, they will use novel tonsil organoids that realistically mimic the vaccine response in the body. These simulate the processes that normally take place in the lymph nodes – the body's immune centers. This will enable the team to better understand how the immune systems of cancer patients respond to vaccines and what interactions exist.

Wimmers will also use advanced AI algorithms to create a virtual lymph node; such a model should be able to predict vaccine reactions that have not been tested in the laboratory. This will lead to the faster development of personalized vaccination recommendations. Wimmers and his team will publish their results in a comprehensive database of proven interactions between drugs and vaccines. In the long term, the results should also contribute to the development of new and more effective vaccines for everyone.

## Synergy Grant for research into quantum systems

Professor Igor Lesanovsky from the Institute for Theoretical Physics, working with Professor Ferdinand Schmidt-Kaler from the University of Mainz and with Professor Markus Hennrich from the University of Stockholm, has been awarded an ERC Synergy Grant project: Open 2D Quantum Simulator (Open-2QS). The researchers are investigating open quantum systems using simulators consisting of electronically excited ion crystals. Such a novel quantum simulator can answer questions in physics, but can also help us understand complex processes in chemistry, biology, and information processing. The ERC is funding the project with nearly ten million euros over six years, of which around three million euros are earmarked for research at the University of Tübingen.

*Left to right: Ferdinand Schmidt-Kaler (University of Mainz), Markus Hennrich (University of Stockholm), and Igor Lesanovsky (University of Tübingen)*



The researchers will create precisely controllable quantum systems, holding ions in place using electric and magnetic fields. The trapped particles form regular two-dimensional structures, known as ion crystals. The ions are then excited with laser pulses and brought into targeted interaction. The

dynamic processes in such a synthetic quantum system are so complex that predicting them far exceeds the capabilities of classical computers. The goal is to extend the lifetime of these very short-lived systems. This will open up new possibilities for researching complex states of matter.

## European Research Council Grants

### Advanced Grants

Name	Project	Duration
Professor Dr. Harald Baayen, Institute of Linguistics	Subliminal Learning in the Mandarin Lexicon (SUBLIMINAL)	2022 – 2027
Professor Dr. Klaus Corcilius, Institute of Philosophy	Text and Idea of Aristotle's Science of Living Things (TIDA)	2022 – 2027
Professor Dr. Katerina Harvati-Papathodorou, Institute of Scientific Archaeology	Our First Steps to Europe: Pleistocene Homo sapiens Dispersals, Adaptations and Interactions in South-East Europe (FIRSTSTEPS)	2022 – 2027
Professor Dr. Jan Born, Institute of Medical Psychology and Behavioral Neurobiology	Sleep Balancing Abstraction and Forgetting of Memory (SleepBalance)	2020 – 2025
Professor Dr. Gerhard Jäger, Institute of Linguistics	Cross-Linguistic Statistical Inference Using Hierarchical Bayesian Models (CrossLingference)	2019 – 2025
Professor Dr. Klaus Scheffler, Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics/ Radiology	Ultra-Fast, Spread-Spectrum Magnetic Resonance Imaging (SpreadMRI)	2019 – 2026



## Consolidator Grants

Name	Project	Duration
Professor Dr. Philipp Hennig, Department of Computer Science	Advanced Numerics for Uncertainty and Bayesian Inference in Science (ANUBIS)	2024 – 2029
Professor Dr. Christoph Stein-Thoeringer, Internal Medicine I	Leveraging the Impact of Gut Microbes to Advance the Efficacy of CAR-T Cell Immunotherapy (PowerMiT)	2024 – 2029
Professor Dr. Tobias Kaufmann, Psychiatry and Psychotherapy Clinic	Modelling and Maintaining Maternal Mental Health (HealthyMom)	2024 – 2028
Professor Dr. Georg Martius, Department of Computer Science	Model-based Reinforcement Learning for Versatile Robots in the Real World (REAL-RL)	2023 – 2027
Professor Dr. Jakob Macke, Department of Computer Science	Using Deep Learning to Understand Computations in Neural Circuits with Connectome-constrained Mechanistic Models (DeepCoMechTome)	2023 – 2028
Professor Dr. Rosa Lozano-Durán Center for Plant Molecular Biology	Emerging Multifactorial Complexity at the Geminivirus-host Interface (GemOmics)	2022 – 2027
Dr. Sireen El Zaatari, Institute of Scientific Archaeology	Tracing Hominin Occupations of and Migrations through the Levant: Reviving Paleolithic Research in Lebanon (REVIVE)	2021 – 2025
Professor Dr. Claudia Lengerke, Haematology, Oncology, Clinical Immunology and Rheumatology	Targeting Leukaemia by Modulating Hematopoietic Stem Cell Competitiveness (Hemstem)	2021 – 2025
Professor Dr. Michael Butter, Institute of English Languages and Literatures	Populism and Conspiracy Theory (PACT)	2020 – 2025
Professor Dr. Markus Siegel, Werner Reichardt Center for Integrative Neuroscience/ Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research	Neuronal Information through Neuronal Interactions (NINI)	2020 – 2025
Professor Dr. Holger Zellentin, Institutum Judaicum	The Qur'an as a Source for Late Antiquity (QaSLA)	2020 – 2025
Professor Dr. Eric Kemen, Center for Plant Molecular Biology and Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine	Knowledge based Design of Complex Synthetic Microbial Communities for Plant Protection (DeCoCt)	2019 – 2025

## Starting Grants

Name	Project	Duration
Assistant professor Dr. Isabel Monte, Center for Plant Molecular Biology	When Your Enemy Becomes Your Friend: Evolution of the Interaction between Fungi and Land Plants (FRIENEMIES)	2024 – 2029
Dr. Claire Vernade, Department of Computer Science	Continual and Sequential Learning for Artificial Intelligence (CoUTnSequentIAL)	2025 – 2030
Assistant professor Dr. Josef Leibold, Internal Medicine Department VIII	Harnessing Senescence to Improve Cell-based Therapies against Cancer (EXPLOITsen)	2025 – 2029
Professor Dr. Marius Lemm, Department of Mathematics	The Mathematics of Quantum Propagation (MathQuantProp)	2025 – 2029
Dr. Katrin Franke, Research Center for Ophthalmology	Tracing Visual Computations from the Retina to Behavior (Eye to Action)	2025 – 2029
Dr. Florian Wimmers, Interfaculty Institute of Biochemistry (IFIB)	Organoid- and AI-based Identification of Oncology Drug-Vaccine Interactions (OrAIOn)	2025 – 2030
Professor Dr. Ralph Lütticke, School of Business and Economics – Macroeconomics	Aggregate and Idiosyncratic Risk in Macroeconomics (AIRMAC)	2024 – 2028
Dr. Lukas Mager, Internal Medicine I	Systematic Triangulation of Pathobiont-Host-Interactions (SOAR)	2024 – 2028



## Starting Grants (continuation)

Name	Project	Duration
> Professor Dr. Lisa Maier, Institute of Medical Microbiology and Hygiene	Gut Microbiome-mediated Activities of Psychotropic Drugs (gutMAP)	2024 – 2028
Professor Dr. Christian Schürch, General and Molecular Pathology and Pathological Anatomy	Drivers and Brakes of CAR T Cell Efficacy Determined by the Tumor Immune Microenvironment (CAR-TIME)	2024 – 2028
Assistant professor Dr. Maria Spyrou, Institute of Scientific Archaeology	Infectious Disease Outbreaks as Contributors to Socio-cultural Transformations in the 2nd Millenium BCE (PROTOPEST)	2024 – 2028
Professor Dr. Anna Gumpert, International Economics and European Integration	Firm Organization and the Adoption of Information and Communication Technologies (ORGANDICT)	2023 – 2028
Professor Dr. Philipp Berens, Research Center for Ophthalmology	Next Generation Mechanistic Models of Retinal Interneurons (NextMechMod)	2023 – 2027
Professor Dr. Michael Filarsky, Interfaculty Institute of Biochemistry	Uncovering the Mechanisms Behind Adaptive Gene Expression Switching in Malaria Parasites (MALSWITCH)	2022 – 2026
Professor Dr. Tobias Hauser, General Psychiatry and Psychotherapy	Understanding the Impact of Brain Fluctuations on Decision Making (NeuroFlux)	2022 – 2027
Professor Dr. Judith Feucht, University Hospitals	Senolytic CAR T Cells as Novel Therapeutic Concept for Solid Tumors and Senescence-associated Diseases (CARsen)	2022 – 2026
Dr. Christoph Ratzke, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine	Bugs as Drugs: Understanding Microbial Interaction Networks to Prevent and Treat Infections (BugDrug)	2021 – 2025
Professor Dr. Esther Kühn, Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research	How Does our Brain Store Bodily Experiences? (BodyMemory)	2021 – 2026
Professor Dr. Jan Christian Jansen, Institute of Modern History	Refugees and Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1770s – 1820s (AtlanticExiles)	2020 – 2026
Professor Dr. Andreas Geiger, Department of Computer Science	Learning Generative 3D Scene Models for Training and Validating Intelligent Systems (LEGO-3D)	2020 – 2025
Dr. Christina Schwarz, Research Center for Ophthalmology	Exploring Visual Processes with Two-Photon Ophthalmoscopy (TrackCycle.2P)	2020 – 2026
Dr. Marcus Scheele Institute of Physical and Theoretical Chemistry	Coupled Organic Inorganic Nanostructures for Fast, Light-Induced Data Processing (COINFLIP)	2019 – 2024
Dr. Marcus Scheele Institute of Physical and Theoretical Chemistry	Graphics without Labels: Multimodal Structure Learning without Human Supervision (GraViLa)	2024 – 2029

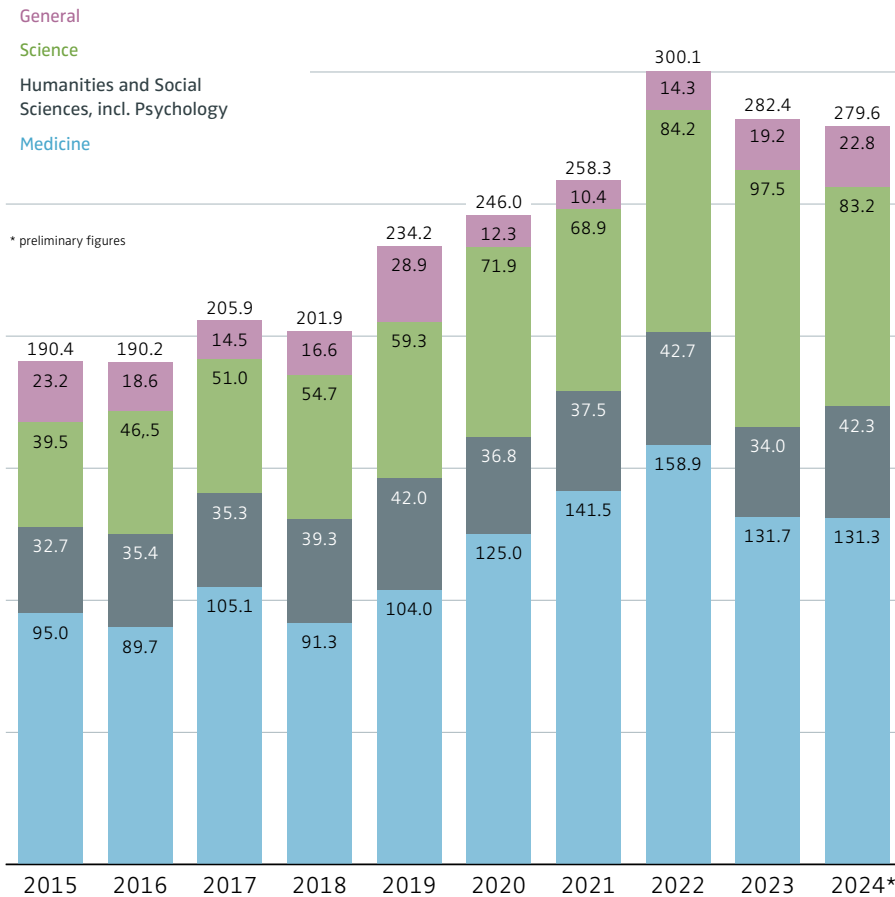
## Synergy Grants

Tübingen Research Unit	Project	Duration
Professor Dr. Igor Lesanovsky, Institute for Theoretical Physics	Open 2D Quantum Simulator (OPEN-2QS), with the University of Stockholm and University of Mainz	2025 – 2031
Professor Dr. Carola Lorea, Institute of Religious Studies	Mantras in Religion, Media and Society in Global Southern Asia (MANTRAMS) with the University of Vienna and Brown University, USA	2025 – 2031
Professor Dr. Holger Bettinger, Institute of Organic Chemistry	Tackling the Cyclacene Challenge (TACY), with the University of Heidelberg	2023 – 2029
Professor Dr. Martin Giese, Werner Reichardt Center for Integrative Neuroscience/ Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research	How Body Relevance Drives Brain Organization (RELEVANCE) with KU Leuven, Belgium, and Maastricht University, the Netherlands	2020 – 2025
Professor Dr. Ulf Ziemann, Hertie Institute for Clinical Brain Research/ Neurology	Connecting to the Networks of the Human Brain (ConnectToBrain) with Aalto University, Finland	2019 – 2026

## THIRD-PARTY FUNDING

### Third-party funding in the Sciences, Humanities and Medicine, and general income

in millions of euros 2015 – 2024



### Sources of third-party funding

in millions of euros 2015 – 2024

2024:

DFG: 98.4 m euros

Foundations, endowments etc.: 60.7 m euros

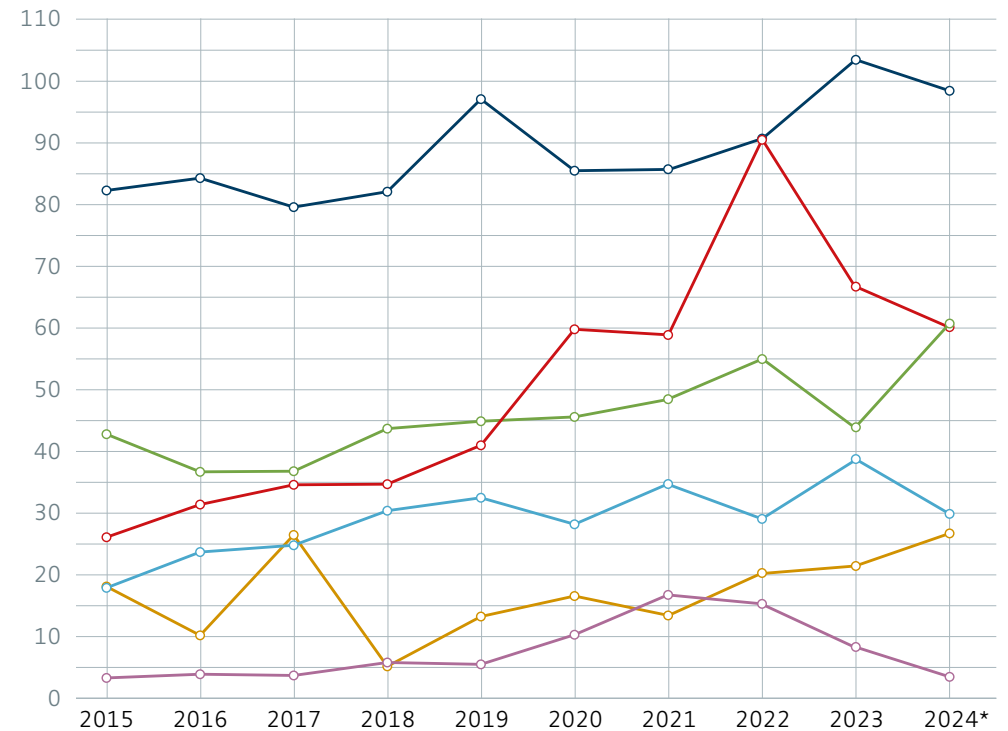
German govt.: 60.2 m euros

Business: 29.9 m euros

EU: 26.8 m euros

State of Baden-Württemberg: 3.6 m euros

\* preliminary figures



## RESEARCH NEWS



Madelaine Böhme with 3D models  
of the primate molars from the  
Hammerschmiede excavation site



**+++ Two ape species coexisted in Europe some 11 million years ago +++** *Buroni* *manfredschmiedi* – is the name of the new species of ancient primate discovered by an international research team led by Professor Madelaine Böhme in the Hammerschmiede clay pit in southern Germany. The small ape lived 11.6 million years ago in the same habitat as *Danuvius guggenmosi*, whose finding was announced in 2019. *Danuvius* is the first great ape to exhibit the characteristics of an upright gait. The *Buroni* fossils – two teeth and a kneecap – were recovered near the place *Danuvius* was found. Differences in bone structure and tooth enamel suggest different lifestyles: *Buroni* was much smaller, weighing only about ten kilograms, and was presumably better adapted to climbing trees. Its teeth indicate a vegetarian diet, while *Danuvius* was an omnivore. The find provides the first evidence of the simultaneous occurrence of two species of great ape in the same habitat in Europe. *Buroni* probably lived in the treetops, while *Danuvius* roamed a wider area in search of food.

**+++ Climate change likely to activate toxic metals in soil +++** How do rising temperatures and carbon dioxide levels in the air affect agriculture? A study conducted by a research team from the University of Tübingen and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research (UFZ) led by Assistant Professor Dr. Marie Muehe showed that toxic metals naturally occurring in soils could become more mobile as a result of climate change, thereby destabilizing ecosystems and entering the human food chain in greater quantities via agriculture. The study

used the example of the carcinogenic metal cadmium. In its bound form, it is usually harmless, but its mobility increases under projected climate conditions. In laboratory experiments, agricultural soils were analyzed under the assumed climate conditions of the year 2100: higher temperatures and twice as much carbon dioxide in the air. The mobility of cadmium increases by up to 40 percent. As a result, the soil microbiome changes, certain microorganisms become more active, use up more nitrogen, and further acidify the soil – which in turn may further increase the mobility of cadmium. Elevated cadmium levels could jeopardize food quality and influence emissions in the long term. The problem mainly affects slightly acidic soils; in alkaline soils, cadmium remains stable. The study highlights how sensitive agricultural ecosystems are to climate change.

**+++ Stuttgart ballet principal dancer collaborates with Other Aesthetics +++** Friedemann Vogel is a principal dancer with the Stuttgart Ballet and one of the world's most renowned artists in the field. Since the 2024/25 winter semester, he has been an associate member of the *Other Aesthetics* collaborative research center, where he works with researchers to organize events on dance and aesthetics. To launch the collaboration, Vogel performed *Écorché! Anatomy of Dance* in the University's Old Anatomy Building. The title refers to *écorchés* – skinned human and, rarely, animal bodies that from the 16th century onwards were the focus of anatomical studies focusing on musculature in medicine as well



*Soils naturally contain small amounts of cadmium. Due to climate change, this toxic metal could enter the human food chain.*



*View of the north gate of the pylon (left) and the north tower of the temple with the newly discovered chamber in Athribis*

as in sculpture, painting, and graphic art. Vogel's dance explored the concept of these gruesome and at the same time beautiful objects by reenacting the process of skinning, the display of muscles, and some of the poses in which écorchés were placed.

**+++ Simulating fruit fly vision with artificial neural networks +++** Neurons transmit information in the brain and, as a network, control perception, behavior, and cognition. An international research team has succeeded in simulating a neural network that predicts the activity of individual neurons without having to take measurements from a living brain. The team, led by Professor Jakob Macke from the University of Tübingen and Dr. Srinivas Turaga from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, USA, used deep learning methods to develop a dynamic simulation of the fruit fly's visual system. The model accurately predicts the activity of 64 neuron types. It also identified cells that were not previously known to be relevant for motion detection. The model will enable targeted simulations in the future, for example, to investigate why biological neural networks work more efficiently than artificial ones. The study opens up new avenues for brain research – far beyond the fruit fly model.

**+++ Egyptologists find likely hidden temple in Athribis +++** A team from the University of Tübingen and the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities has uncovered a sacral building known as a pylon in Athribis, north of Luxor: two towers flank a main entrance.

According to project leader Professor Christian Leitz and excavation manager Marcus Müller from the Institute for Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations (IANES) at the University of Tübingen, the pylon likely marks the entrance to a temple in the rock behind it. Since 2022, the team has been investigating the temple complex, which was built between 144 BCE and 138 CE. The original temple complex was 51 meters wide, with the towers each 18 meters high. Today, about five meters still remain. In recent excavations, the team discovered reliefs in the entrance gate depicting a king offering sacrifices to the lion-headed goddess Repit. An inscription identifies Ptolemy VIII as the pylon's builder. Further excavations will reveal whether there is indeed a rock sanctuary behind the pylon. Smoothly worked limestone blocks and a typical cobra frieze suggest that this is the case.

## SPRINGBOARD FOR ACADEMIC CAREERS

### Baden-Württemberg Foundation sponsors three postdocs

The Baden-Württemberg Foundation's elite program for postdoctoral researchers supports outstanding early-career researchers on their way to becoming professors. It offers them the opportunity to independently design, apply for, and carry out their own research projects – giving them a high degree of independence at an early stage of their careers. In addition, the foundation supports researchers with continuing education opportunities that specifically strengthen skills in teaching, science management, and academic self-administration.

#### **Silja Mordhorst: Antimycobacterial peptides may yield new antibiotics**

Bacterial products play a major role in the development of new drugs. These products fulfil a biological function for the bacteria that produce them; scientists optimize them for use in humans – for example, to obtain antibiotics. However, more and more pathogens are developing resistance to common antibiotics. Particularly problematic are those that are insensitive to several drugs (multidrug-resistant bacteria) and those which can now withstand almost all available antibiotics (extensively drug-resistant bacteria). The

discovery of new agents and thus new drugs is becoming increasingly difficult. With support from the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, Silja Mordhorst, assistant professor of pharmaceutical biology, is researching new active agents effective against certain types of bacteria and which could provide an alternative to current antibiotics.

The class of natural products known as ribosomally synthesized and post-translationally modified peptides (RiPP) is known for its great structural diversity and wide range of bioactivities. Striking examples are the RiPPs lassomycin and kitamycobactin, which have a strong effect on the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* organism. Tuberculosis is an infectious disease affecting around ten million people worldwide every year. Up to one-third of the world's population is estimated to carry the *M. tuberculosis* pathogen, and some 1.5 million people are believed to die of tuberculosis each year. The compounds lassomycin and kitamycobactin have a structure that is particularly suitable for preventing the growth of the tuberculosis pathogen and killing the bacteria. Thanks to Silja Mordhorst's research, this structure could be specifically modified and thus used to obtain effective new antibiotics.

#### **Carolina Teotino-Tattko: The pictorial ostraca of Athribis**

Carolina Teotino-Tattko's research focuses on ancient Egyptian ostraca – shards of clay, glass or stone which were inscribed or painted in ancient times. They were found in the hitherto little-researched remains of ancient Athribis (Atripe), an excavation site about seven kilometers southwest of the modern city of Sohag. Ptolemy IX and his son Ptolemy XII built a large temple complex there for the deities Repit, her husband Min, and their son Kolanthes. In a University of Tübingen excavation west of the recently uncovered temple, more than 38,000 of these broken pieces have been unearthed so far.

The aim of Carolina Teotino-Tattko's project, funded by the Baden-Württemberg Foundation, is to study and publish the pictorial ostraca from Athribis. The shards contain not only important information about the daily life of the region's inhabitants, but also about their beliefs. The drawings are mainly in ink or charcoal. In addition to squiggly, indefinable shapes, there are elaborate illustrations by skilled artists and pictures most likely done by children. Most of the motifs are of humans and deities. Among the animals depicted are dogs, scorpions, and falcons; the plants include palm leaves



and flowers. There are also objects such as an incense burner and sundials, architectural elements such as buildings and columns, geometric figures such as grids, crosses, and stars, and other decorative elements.

### **Rebecca Schlegel: Terrestrial radar interferometry to measure ice shelf melting**

Global warming is predicted to cause extreme weather events, the flooding of coastal areas, disruptions to food and water supplies, and a loss of diversity in flora and fauna. Earth system models identify tipping points, which, if reached, could cause sudden and irreversible changes in the system. A breakup of the Antarctic ice shelf is one of these tipping points. Yet due to insufficient data, the key relationship between the Antarctic ice and the salt water of the ocean is not yet fully integrated into Earth system models.

Dr. Rebecca Schlegel's research aims to improve the observability of this interaction at the bottom edge of the Antarctic ice shelf. The ice melts when it meets the ocean at depths of hundreds of meters. The rate at which it melts is an important factor in sea level rise and the dynamics of glaciers and thus in reaching the critical tipping point for the climate.

The basal melt rate and other relevant parameters are currently inferred from the limited data available from the surface of the ice shelf. Existing methods can achieve either high-resolution point measurements over time or wide spatial coverage, but not both. Using ground-based radar inter-

ferometry, Schlegel plans to solve the problem by developing a method which enables the collection of new data with high temporal and spatial resolution. This data can then be used in climate models to better describe the interaction between the ice and the ocean.

*Rebecca Schlegel at work in the field*





## NURTURING RESEARCH TALENT

### Combining disciplines to discover more about cellular regulation

2024 saw the launch of a new DFG-sponsored Stuttgart-Tübingen research training group investigating the mechanisms of cell division, cell differentiation, cell repair, and cell death. *EpiSignal – Interaction of Intracellular Signaling Pathways and Chromatin Modification Networks* is conducting research into the two complex regulatory mechanisms that control these processes: chromatin modifications and cell signaling networks. Professor Albert Jeltsch from the University of Stuttgart is the spokesperson, working with Professor Dirk Schwarzer from the Interfaculty Institute of Biochemistry at the University of Tübingen. The aim is to establish how the regulatory networks interact and accomplish challenging regulatory tasks. EpiSignal straddles the fields of molecular biology and biomedicine. Doctoral students from biochemistry, cell biology, genetics, systems biology, mathematics, and computer science are working together in the new research training group.

This interdisciplinarity is a core element; previously, the two cellular regulatory networks were largely considered separately. Interdisciplinary collaboration is important for understanding how these two networks interact and influence each other, according to Dirk Schwarzer. Researchers at the

University of Tübingen are contributing their expertise in the field of chemical biology, developing customized tools for researching the interaction of chromatin modifications with cell signaling networks. The DFG is providing a total of five million euros in funding for ten researchers over a period of five years for *EpiSignal* research and training.

#### What is a research training group?

Research training groups support researchers in the early stages of their careers. The focus of such groups lies on doctoral studies within a clearly defined research topic, embedded in a structured, interdisciplinary qualification program. The aim is to prepare doctoral candidates specifically for the manifold requirements of academic life and to enable them to conduct independent research at an early stage. Research training groups are funded by the DFG for a period of up to nine years.

## Research training groups

Title	Spokesperson	Duration
Non-canonical G Protein Signaling Pathways: Mechanisms, Functions, Consequences (GRK 2816)	Professor Dr. Dr. Bernd Nürnberg Experimental and Clinical Pharmacology and Toxicology	1 October 2022 – 30 September 2027
Women's Mental Health Across the Reproductive Years (GRK 2804)	Professor Dr. Birgit Derntl Psychiatry and Psychotherapy	1 January 2023 – 31 December 2027
Research training group Stuttgart – Tübingen Intraoperative multi-sensor tissue identification in oncology (GRK 2543)	Professor Dr. Oliver Sawodny University of Stuttgart	1 January 2020 – 31 March 2029
	Professor Dr. Arnulf Stenzl University of Tübingen Faculty of Medicine	
cGMP: From the bedside to the laboratory bench (GRK 2381)	Professor Dr. Robert Feil Interfaculty Institute of Biochemistry	1 July 2019 – 30 June 2028
MOMbrane: The multifaceted functions and dynamics of the mitochondrial outer membrane (GRK 2364)	Professor Dr. Doron Rapaport Interfaculty Institute of Biochemistry	1 April 2018 – 30 March 2027
Research training group Mannheim – Freiburg – Heidelberg – KoblenzLandau – Tübingen Statistical Modeling in Psychology (SMiP) (GRK 2277)	Professor Dr. Thorsten Meiser University of Mannheim	1 October 2017 – 30 September 2026
	Professor Dr. Mandy Hütter Professor Dr. Rolf Ulrich University of Tübingen Faculty of Science	
Research training group Frankfurt – Tübingen Doing Transitions – The Formation of Transitions over the Life Course (GRK 2105)	Professor Dr. Andreas Walther University of Frankfurt am Main	1 January 2017 – 31 December 2025
	Professor Dr. Barbara Stauber University of Tübingen Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences	

## 2024 Doctorates

Faculty	2024 doctorates	
	female	male
Protestant Theology	3	3
Catholic Theology	2	1
Law	4	14
Medicine	226	150
Humanities	26	23
Economics and Social Sciences	17	10
Science	139	167
Total	417	368
	785	

## Habilitations completed in 2024

Faculty	2024 habilitations	
	female	male
Protestant Theology		1
Catholic Theology		1
Law		2
Medicine	7	9
Humanities	3	9
Economics and Social Sciences	1	4
Science	4	7
Total	15	33
	48	

## PRIZEWINNING RESEARCH



Kira Rehfeld

### Award for courageous research: Kira Rehfeld

Professor Kira Rehfeld from the Department of Geoscience received the state of *Baden-Württemberg's Preis für mutige Wissenschaft*, or award for courageous academic research, for her interdisciplinary research on reconstructing past climate change. The jury, consisting of members of the Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities and of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research, and the Arts, said Rehfeld took a risk with her strategy of bringing usually separate academic fields together.

There are tensions and a lack of understanding between the fields of experimental paleoclimate reconstruction and numerical climate simulation. Rehfeld's interdisciplinary re-

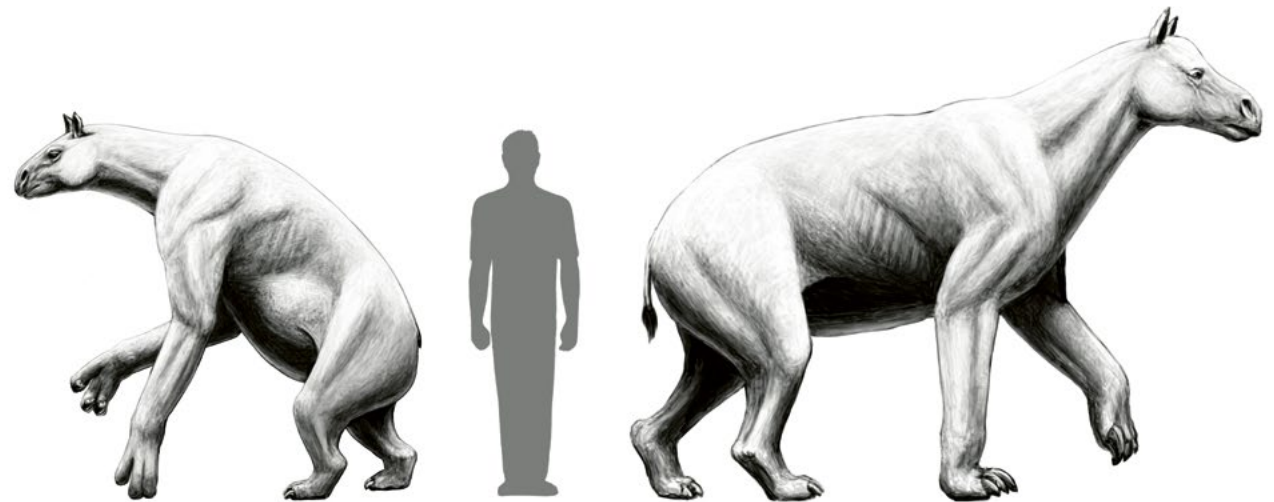
search forms a bridge between these different scientific cultures. Paleoclimate and paleoenvironmental research are usually located within the geosciences, while climate modeling is mostly carried out by physicists and meteorologists. Rehfeld takes creative approaches to testing climate models and to developing scientifically-based solutions to help protect the environment.

Kira Rehfeld has been the University of Tübingen's Professor of Climatology and the Biosphere since 2021. She and her team investigate paleoenvironmental reconstructions, the ability of climate models to simulate climate variability, and ways to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The

state of Baden-Württemberg gives the award for courageous research to those who pursue unconventional approaches or achieve outstanding results in unconventional ways. The prize has been awarded biennially since 2016 and is endowed with 30,000 euros.



*Panagiotis Kampouridis*



*Ungulates such as Chalicotheriinae (left) and Schizotheriinae (right) were related to today's rhinos and horses.*

### Bernd Rendel Prize for outstanding early-career work in Geoscience

In September 2024, Panagiotis Kampouridis – now a Doctor of Geoscience – received a Bernd Rendel Prize from the German Research Foundation for his promising and original research into vertebrate paleontology, the identification of extinct mammals, and their relationship with the environment. Kampouridis' doctoral thesis, completed at the University of Tübingen, focuses on *Chilotherium*, an extinct ge-

nus of rhinoceros which lived in Eurasia between ten and five million years ago. He also looks at other extinct cloven-hoofed animals related to today's rhinos and horses. Panagiotis Kampouridis has already published 26 articles in peer-reviewed journals; for ten of them he was the lead author, and some of the papers were co-authored with international colleagues.

Prizewinners each receive 3,000 euros to enable participation in international conferences and to otherwise support their work. Since 2002, the DFG has awarded the Bernd Rendel Prize annually to graduates in the geosciences who have not yet obtained their doctorates.





# SPONSORSHIP

## TRUSTED NETWORKS

Private foundations contribute to valuable research in many ways, sponsoring professorships, research projects, prizes, scholarships, and structural developments. Non-state sponsorship flows into research in fields as vital and varied as teaching informatics, recycling plastics, detecting a common poison in the air, the impact of AI language processing, and violence in democracies. The University of Tübingen relies on long-standing partnerships while welcoming new ones.

### PRIVATE FUNDING FOR ADDITIONAL PROFESSORSHIPS

#### Teaching the future teachers of computer science

Professor Maria Knobelsdorf became Tübingen's first Professor of Informatics Didactics in October 2024 thanks to funding from the Carl Zeiss Foundation of three million euros over ten years. After that, the University has guaranteed further financing. The new professorship integrates the discipline of Computer Science with didactics at the Tübingen School of Education, the University of Tübingen's cross-faculty institution for teacher education.

Maria Knobelsdorf will engage in research and teaching in computer science education, promoting the further development of the subject. She will also establish a learning laboratory for computer science teaching. The University of

Tübingen's Bachelor and Master of Education in Informatics degrees – aimed at secondary school teachers – will benefit greatly from the new endowed professorship.

Maria Knobelsdorf studied computer science and mathematics at the Free University of Berlin, where she earned her doctorate in Informatics Education. Her work has taken her to positions in Europe and the United States. Prior to her move to Tübingen, she held a professorship for Informatics Education at the University of Vienna.



Maria Knobelsdorf



## Endowed professorships

Field	Name	Sponsor
<b>Faculty of Law</b>		
Artificial Intelligence Law	Professor Dr. Michèle Finck, LL. M.	Carl Zeiss Foundation
<b>Faculty of Humanities</b>		
Modern Taiwan Studies	Professor Dr. Yu-chin Tseng	Education Ministry of the Republic of China (Taiwan)
<b>Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences</b>		
Financial Literacy and Economic Didactics	Professor Dr. Taiga Brahm	Dieter von Holtzbrinck Foundation
Educational Effectiveness/ Educational Trajectories	Professor Dr. Richard Göllner	Hector Foundation
Ethics of Globalization	Professor Dr. Claus Dierksmeier	Karl Schlecht Foundation
<b>Faculty of Medicine</b>		
Preclinical Imaging of the Immune System	Professor Dr. Bettina Weigel	Adolf Leuze Foundation
Advanced Preclinical Metabolic Imaging and Cell Engineering	Professor Dr. André Martins	Alexander von Humboldt Foundation
Functional and Metabolic Brain Imaging	Professor Dr. Kristina Herfert	Carl Zeiss Foundation
Clinical Parasitology and Global Health	Professor Dr. Steffen Borrmann	DAAD Foundation
Transfusion Medicine	Professor Dr. Tamam Bakchoul	German Red Cross Blood Donation Service and Baden-Württemberg-Hessen gGmbH
Molecular Mechanisms in Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)	Professor Dr. Simon Clark	Helmut Ecker Foundation
Data Science for Vision Research	Professor Dr. Philipp Berens	Hertie Foundation
Neurodegenerative Diseases	Professor Dr. Thomas Gasser	Hertie Foundation
Computational Sensomotrics	Professor Dr. Martin Giese	Hertie Foundation
Cell Biological Foundations of Neurological Diseases	Professor Dr. Mathias Jucker	Hertie Foundation
Functional Neurogenetics	Professor Dr. Philipp Kahle	Hertie Foundation
Translational Imaging of Cortical Microstructure	Professor Dr. Esther Kühn	Equipment sponsored by the Hertie Foundation
Neurology/Epileptology	Professor Dr. Holger Lerche	Hertie Foundation
Clinical Neurogenetics	Professor Dr. Ludger Schöls	Hertie Foundation
Machine Learning for Clinical Neuroscience	Professor Dr. Kerstin Ritter	Hertie Foundation
Complementary Medical Procedures	Professor Dr. Holger Cramer	Robert Bosch Foundation
Clinical Pharmacology	Professor Dr. Matthias Schwab	Robert Bosch Foundation
Occupational and Social Medicine	Professor Dr. Monika Rieger	Südwestmetall Employers' Federation (Südwestmetall)
Preclinical Imaging and Imaging Technology	Professor Dr. Bernd Pichler	Werner Siemens Foundation
<b>Faculty of Science</b>		
Continual Learning and Multimodal Datastreams	Professor Dr. Maria Knobelsdorf	Carl Zeiss Foundation
Informatics and the Didactics of Informatics	Professor Dr. Maria Knobelsdorf	Carl Zeiss Foundation
Machine Learning	Professor Dr. Matthias Hein	Robert Bosch GmbH
Didactics of Physics (Tübingen School of Education)	Professor Dr. Jan-Philipp Burde	Vector Stiftung
<b>Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Center</b>		
Philosophy and History of Science	Professor Dr. Reinhard Kahle	Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker Endowed Professorship, Udo Keller Foundation ForumHumanum

## VOLKSWAGEN FOUNDATION PROGRAMS



Gerhard Jäger



Michael Franke

### Pioneering language research

The Volkswagen Foundation's Pioneering Projects provide funding for risky research projects which due to their unusual and innovative approach cannot guarantee results. Such high risk, high gain research may only have benefits in the long term – or it may come to nothing. In 2024, Professor Gerhard Jäger from the Institute of Linguistics secured funding via the Pioneering Projects initiative for an AI-supported method to study the development of human languages using spoken language data. Jäger believes this will provide deeper insights into the history and evolution of languages and open up new perspectives on human cultural heritage. The project will receive 550,000 euros over a period of three years.

The evolution of languages is commonly mapped using family tree models. Researchers compare words in different languages to uncover relationships and to identify points of divergence between related languages. Yet comparative linguistics usually relies on written data, which lacks many features of spoken language. Jäger's goal therefore is to analyze spoken language directly. He and his team are developing an AI-supported technology that can recognize spoken language and convert it into analyzable data. This should enable the researchers to better trace the origins of languages and to reconstruct earlier phases of languages.

### A new way to recycle plastics

Researchers at the University of Tübingen are investigating bacteria which may help recycle the plastic waste currently accumulating in the environment, harming plants, animals, and humans. At the interface between microbiology and biotechnology, Professor Lars Angenent and Professor Karl Forchhammer from the University of Tübingen, along with Dr. Bastian Molitor, now at the University of Leipzig, are seeking ways to convert organic waste and industrial exhaust gases into valuable resources with the help of microorganisms. Success could lead to a reduction in both pollution and exploitation of raw materials by helping to create a circular economy based on recycled and biogenic materials, extended product lifespans, as well as on mechanisms of reprocessing and repurposing materials. As of 2024, the Volkswagen Foundation has been supporting the project with a total of 1.34 million euros over four years as part of its Circularity with Recycled and Biogenic Resources funding line.

Cyanobacteria naturally produce the polymer cyanophycin, which can be used as a high-quality bioplastic. To produce it in a controlled manner, the bacteria must be supplied with nutrients in the closed environment of a bioreactor. The problem is that the cyanobacteria produce the polymer through photosynthesis. For this they need light, something that is difficult to provide in bioreactors. The envisaged

solution is to transfer the genes for producing cyanophycin into another bacterium, *Clostridium ljungdahlii*, which uses industrial waste but requires no light for synthesis. The bacteria modified in this way produce cyanophycin from a gas mixture of hydrogen and carbon that is produced, for example, in steel production. This turns waste into a valuable resource – a step toward a circular economy.

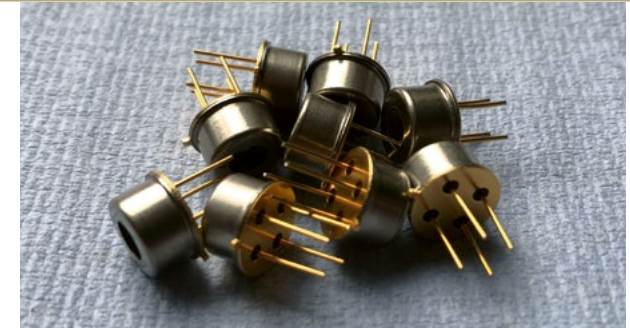
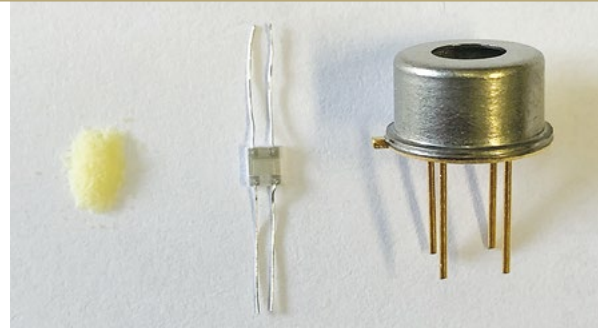
The Volkswagen Foundation's Circularity with Recycled and Biogenic Resources funding line sponsors projects that address original and practical research questions in relation to creating circularity in material-product cycles.

### Exploring the risks and opportunities of AI-based language technology

Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT and DeepSeek are widely used. They are powerful tools – but we don't fully understand how they work. Every LLM consists of billions of parameters that make it impossible to understand exactly how a specific response was generated. Academia and society as a whole are struggling to assess the impact of these fast-growing technologies.

Professor Michael Franke from the Institute of Linguistics says researchers have a responsibility to identify and explain the risks and opportunities these technologies pose for society.

*Formaldehyde is a widely-used substance harmful to humans. The small, energy-efficient sensors developed by Udo Weimar's research group detect the gas indoors.*



This requires interdisciplinary expertise. For his project – *Understanding of, and Explanations with, Large Language Models* – Franke received a Volkswagen Foundation Momentum grant of around 920,000 euros over a period of four years.

Michael Franke is looking for the key to understanding LLMs in language and language acquisition, both in humans and in artificial models. The project is divided into two research strands. The first investigates the mechanisms and behavior of LLMs from a linguistic perspective. The second research strand uses the capabilities of modern LLMs to make use of information that is otherwise difficult to formalize, such as intuitive judgment and general knowledge, for transparent, explanatory models of human language use. Franke assumes that even LLMs possess a kind of general knowledge – of facts, events, social conventions, and typical processes that occur in the real world – for processing human input. This makes LLMs a potential tool for linguistics and cognitive science. The Volkswagen Foundation's Momentum Funding for Recently Tenured Professors program gives re-

searchers the opportunity to develop the discipline covered by their professorships. A further important goal of Franke's work is to communicate information about modern language technologies to students and the public, thus enabling them to form informed opinions about the possibilities and risks of using LLMs.

### A sensor to detect formaldehyde gas

A research team led by Professor Udo Weimar at the Institute of Physical Chemistry received funding of 60,000 euros over two years from the Alfred Teufel Foundation to support the development of a cost-effective mobile sensor for measuring formaldehyde concentrations in the air in enclosed spaces.

Formaldehyde is harmful even at very low concentrations and may cause cancer. Monitoring indoor spaces with formaldehyde sensors can help detect emissions and thus initiate measures to improve air quality in homes and offices. A

sensor could also enable formaldehyde measurements in potentially contaminated work environments, such as pathology, wood processing, and construction. Formaldehyde may be a component of synthetic resins and plastics, and can escape as a gas from treated wood, flooring, furniture, and textiles.

In the new sensor, the gas interacts with a semiconducting metal oxide layer; this interaction is converted into electronic signals. The technology offers cost-effective production, a long sensor lifetime, and high miniaturization potential. Furthermore, the sensor's small size enables highly energy-efficient operation – which is crucial for the intended mobile application.

The Alfred Teufel Foundation was established by the entrepreneur Alfred Teufel (1894–1985), who in addition was a University of Tübingen honorary senator.

## UNIVERSITY PRIZE FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION

At the annual *Dies Universitatis* in October, the University of Tübingen honored the Universitätsbund or Friends of the University Association with the University Prize. Inaugurated in 2008, the University Prize honors sponsors and partners of the University who have made outstanding contributions to research or teaching. On the occasion of the association's 100th anniversary, this prize was conferred on the Universitätsbund in recognition of its enduring generous support of and manifold commitment to the University. President Karla Pollmann presented the award to the chair of the association, Christian O. Erbe. President Pollmann praised the Universitätsbund as a far-sighted and thoughtful partner.

The association supports a variety of individual projects and institutions at the University, such as the annual media lectureship, special exhibitions and museum publications, sports tournaments, and public events. The association also significantly co-finances major projects as well as a wide range of smaller but important activities. It also facilitates the awarding of doctoral prizes each year. And it has been the largest single sponsor at the University of Tübingen of Deutschlandstipendium scholarships since their introduction in 2011 – giving a total of 1.7 million euros to support more than 900 talented and high-performing students. The association also manages 27 foundations, some of whose funds are earmarked for specific purposes, institutes, or disciplines.



*The chair of the Universitätsbund board, Christian O. Erbe, accepts the University Prize from President Karla Pollmann (center), with (left to right): Executive Vice-President Andreas Rothfuss and member of the board Kerstin Pull, Michael Fausten of Robert Bosch GmbH, Annette Matzat of Mercedes Benz Group AG, Stefan Zauner, Dean Thilo Stehle, Carsten Köhler, Gabriele Schaub, Christoph Gögler, and Johannes Schmalzl of the Würth Foundation.*

## A BROAD SPECTRUM OF SPONSORSHIP

### Political violence in democracies: then and now

A research project at the Universities of Tübingen, Göttingen, and the LMU Munich is investigating political violence in the democracies that emerged after 1945, focusing on Germany, Austria, Japan, and Italy. The Gerda Henkel Foundation is supporting the project with some 300,000 euros over a period of three years. The Tübingen part of the project is headed by Professor Sonja Levsen from the Institute

of Contemporary History. The goal is to develop a better understanding of the characteristics of these young democracies and the relationship between democracy and the use of political violence in post-fascist, post-war democracies from 1945 to 1960. Levsen says political violence has often been present in democracies despite not being part of their proclaimed ideal.



Left to right: Peter Dietrich,  
Solmaz Mohadjer, and Michael Pelzer

According to the researchers, the assumption that a pacifist countermovement emerged in democracies as a reaction to fascism is not entirely tenable, with evidence pointing to a clear presence of physical violence in the everyday political life of democracies after 1945. The project seeks to examine who accepted, legitimized, and propagated this violence, and in what forms. Examples of this include West Germany's long-serving postwar chancellor Konrad Adenauer's thanks to supporters who "used their fists," as well as attacks on those protesting against re-releases of films by Nazi propagandist director Veit Harlan in the 1950s.

The work has clear relevance for the present day. "The culture of threats in social media is clearly a contemporary phenomenon. But threats of violence, even of murder – for example, in letters to politicians – have always existed," Levsen says. The Gerda Henkel Foundation supports research projects that place current problems in a larger historical context or specifically examine present-day and future-related topics.

### Trust between academia and society

The 2024 Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation Research Prize went to Dr. Solmaz Mohadjer, Professor Peter Dietrich, and Michael Pelzer for their project exploring how to show and explain the uncertainties of scientific and wider academic findings. As we tackle global challenges such as climate change, trust between academic research and society is needed. In their



project, the interdisciplinary team – from global awareness education, the geosciences, and research communication – focus on the representation of geoscientific uncertainties, for example in weather maps and natural hazards.

The Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation's Research Prize supports innovative projects that address pressing questions of the future. It is endowed with 100,000 euros. The Prize has been awarded annually to an innovative research project at the University since 2017. The foundation, based in Lörrach, Baden-Württemberg, was established by entrepreneur Dr. Karl Helmut Eberle; it promotes research and innovation at the University of Tübingen and at other universities. Eberle, who died in 2015 at the age of 88, was a Tübingen alumnus.

### Addition to classical sculptures collection

A plaster cast of the Great Kouros of Samos has been on display in the University of Tübingen's Museum of Ancient Cultures at Hohentübingen Castle since November 2024. This was made possible by a substantial donation from the Bachofer Foundation. Around 600–580 BCE, an influential man named Ishes erected a statue in the Sanctuary of Hera on the island of Samos. Five meters tall, it depicts a *kouros* – a naked young man, smiling, with long locks down his back in the fashion of the time. It is an important testimony to the visual culture of ancient Greece and to how its elites regarded themselves, particularly in their relationship with ancient Egypt. The original statue was discovered in the 1980s during German excavations on Samos.

The Kouros of Samos cast







# INTERNATIONAL

## AT HOME IN THE WORLD

The University of Tübingen is further strengthening its international profile with groundbreaking new study programs, strategic partnerships, and joint research initiatives. Many of these partnerships focus on seeking solutions to problems faced by the world as a whole. The University is also well set up to receive international academic visitors, with a new home for them in the College of Fellows at the Villa Köstlin.



*Durham University delegation in Tübingen, headed by Vice-Chancellor Karen O'Brien (3rd from left), with Tübingen President, Karla Pollmann (4th from left)*

## INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

### Three CIVIS partners in pilot project

In cooperation with the University of Aix-Marseille and the Sapienza University of Rome, the University of Tübingen has launched the English-language Master's in Palaeolithic Archaeology. It is Tübingen's first study program that can be completed at three universities together. When graduates finish the two-year course, they receive a Master's certificate from all three institutions. This innovative Master's degree is a brainchild of the CIVIS alliance, in which the University of Tübingen collaborates with ten other European institutions in teaching and research.

The Palaeolithic Archaeology Master's program deals with many aspects of human cultural evolution in its earliest phases. Close cooperation across the CIVIS network enables multidisciplinary, international, and multilingual training in

the field. For example, Sapienza University has particular expertise in the Mediterranean Stone Age, the University of Aix-Marseille has a very strong background in osteology and isotope analysis, while the University of Tübingen's contribution includes expertise in microscopy, protein analysis, and spectroscopy. Each university has its own excavations and a network of non-university institutions; students from all participating universities can work with them as part of their practical training.

### Durham and Tübingen extend successful partnership

Also in 2024, the Universities of Tübingen and Durham extended their partnership for a further five years. Tübingen

welcomed a delegation from Durham for the signing of a new cooperation agreement in January; the partners also launched the Tübingen – Durham Seedcorn Fund, a program to provide start-up funding for joint research aimed at tackling global challenges.

Each university has earmarked a total of 50,000 euros for the new program. This seed capital is intended to attract additional third-party funding from national and international funding organizations. Using this model, researchers at both universities have already acquired several million euros in external funding for research in the fields of archaeology, plant immunity, climate, landscapes, settlement development and society. Tübingen and Durham have been working together since 1989; and they are both members of the worldwide Matariki university network.



### A first strategic partnership in Africa

The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and the University of Tübingen agreed in April 2024 to form a new strategic partnership. The signing of the agreement by Wits Vice-Chancellor and Principal Zeblon Vilakazi and the University of Tübingen President Karla Pollmann was followed in November by a visit to Wits by a Tübingen delegation including Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity Monique Scheer. Delegation members and their South African colleagues discussed promising fields for collaboration in the areas of geoscience and environmental research, plant molecular biology, population-based medicine, economics and the humanities. Building on this, Wits and Tübingen launched their first joint seed funds to support the initiation of new collaborations in research and to attract further funding. Wits is Tübingen's first strategic partner in Africa.

### Brazilian-German symposium for a resilient future

The 11th German-Brazilian Symposium for Sustainable Development was held at the University of Tübingen in March 2024. The theme was *Toward a Resilient and Safe Future*,



and participants discussed resilience, value creation, food security, and access to water. The conference was organized by the Center for Brazil and Latin America at the University of Tübingen together with the University of Hohenheim and the Leuphana University, Lüneburg. With around 120 participants – more than half of them from Brazil – the symposium served as a platform for interdisciplinary exchange. The São Paulo Research Foundation, FAPESP, and Brazil's higher education agency, the CAPES Foundation, provided sponsorship for eighteen of the Brazilian researchers to attend the conference.

### The world at home in Tübingen

2024 also saw the College of Fellows move into new premises in the specially renovated Villa Köstlin at Rümelinstrasse 27. The College was established at the University of Tübingen in 2022 as a platform for international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural academic exchange.

The Villa Köstlin was built by the legal scholar Christian Reinhold Köstlin in 1842 for his wife, the composer and singer Josephine Lang. Her salon became a cultural center where the writers Berthold Auerbach, Justinus Kerner, and Ottilie

Wildermuth, the composer Friedrich Silcher, the poet Ludwig Uhland, and others met for poetry readings and musical soirées. The Villa Köstlin is now to be an academic home for international visiting academics and will be open to those who wish to make contact with them.



*Left: President Karla Pollmann of the University of Tübingen and Vice-Chancellor and Principal Zeblon Vilakazi of the University of the Witwatersrand at the signing of the partnership agreement*

*Center: Participants at the German-Brazilian Symposium on Sustainable Development*

*Right: Detail on the facade of the Villa Köstlin, the new home to the College of Fellows*

## THE UNIVERSITY OF TÜBINGEN AND ITS INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS



Tübingen Center for Japanese Studies,  
Dōshisha University – **KYOTO**  
Tübingen Center for Korean Studies,  
Korea University – **SEOUL**

### North America

**Canada**  
University of Alberta – **EDMONTON, ALBERTA**  
Mount Allison University – **SACKVILLE, NEW BRUNSWICK**  
Ontario Colleges and Universities – **ONTARIO**  
Université Laval – **QUÉBEC, QUÉBEC**

**United States of America**  
University of Alaska – **FAIRBANKS, AK**  
Northern Arizona University – **FLAGSTAFF, AZ**  
California State Universities – **CA**  
University of California San Diego – **SAN DIEGO, CA**  
University of Denver – **DENVER, CO**  
Connecticut State Universities and Colleges – **CT**  
Yale University – **NEW HAVEN, CT**  
Georgetown University – **WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa – **HONOLULU, HI**  
Butler University – **INDIANAPOLIS, IN**  
Valparaiso University – **VALPARAISO, IN**  
Bellarmine University – **LOUISVILLE, KY**  
University of Massachusetts – **BOSTON, AMHERST, MA**  
Boston College – **BOSTON, MA**  
Tufts University – **MEDFORD, MA**  
Washington College – **CHESTERTOWN, MD**  
University of Maryland – **COLLEGE PARK, MD**  
University of Michigan – **ANN ARBOR, MI**  
Western Michigan University – **KALAMAZOO, MI**  
University of Missouri – **COLUMBIA, MO**  
Washington University – **ST. LOUIS, MO**  
Montana State University – **BOZEMAN, MT**  
North Carolina State Universities – **NC**  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill – **CHAPEL HILL, NC**  
Princeton Theological Seminary – **PRINCETON, NJ**  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges – **GENEVA, NY**  
State University of New York – **STONY BROOK, NY**  
Oregon University System – **OR**  
Reed College – **PORTLAND, OR**  
Temple University – **PHILADELPHIA, PA**  
College of Charleston – **CHARLESTON, SC**  
University of Tennessee – **KNOXVILLE, TN**  
Rhodes College – **MEMPHIS, TN**  
University of North Texas – **DENTON, TX**  
University of Washington – **SEATTLE, WA**

### Latin America

**Argentina**  
Pontificia Universidad Católica Argentina – **BUENOS AIRES**  
Universidad Nacional de Córdoba – **CORDOBA**

**Brazil**  
Univates em Lajeado – **LAJEADO**  
Universidade Federal Fluminense – **NITEROI**  
Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul – **PORTO ALEGRE**  
P.U.C. do Rio Grande do Sul – **PORTO ALEGRE**  
Universidade Federal de Pernambuco – **RECIFE**  
USP Campus Universitário Ribeirão Preto – **RIBEIRÃO PRETO**  
Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul – **SANTA CRUZ**  
Universidade Federal de Santa Maria – **SANTA MARIA**  
Universidade de São Paulo – **SÃO PAULO**

**Chile**  
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile – **SANTIAGO**  
Universidad de Chile – **SANTIAGO**

**Ecuador**  
Universidad San Francisco de Quito – **QUITO**

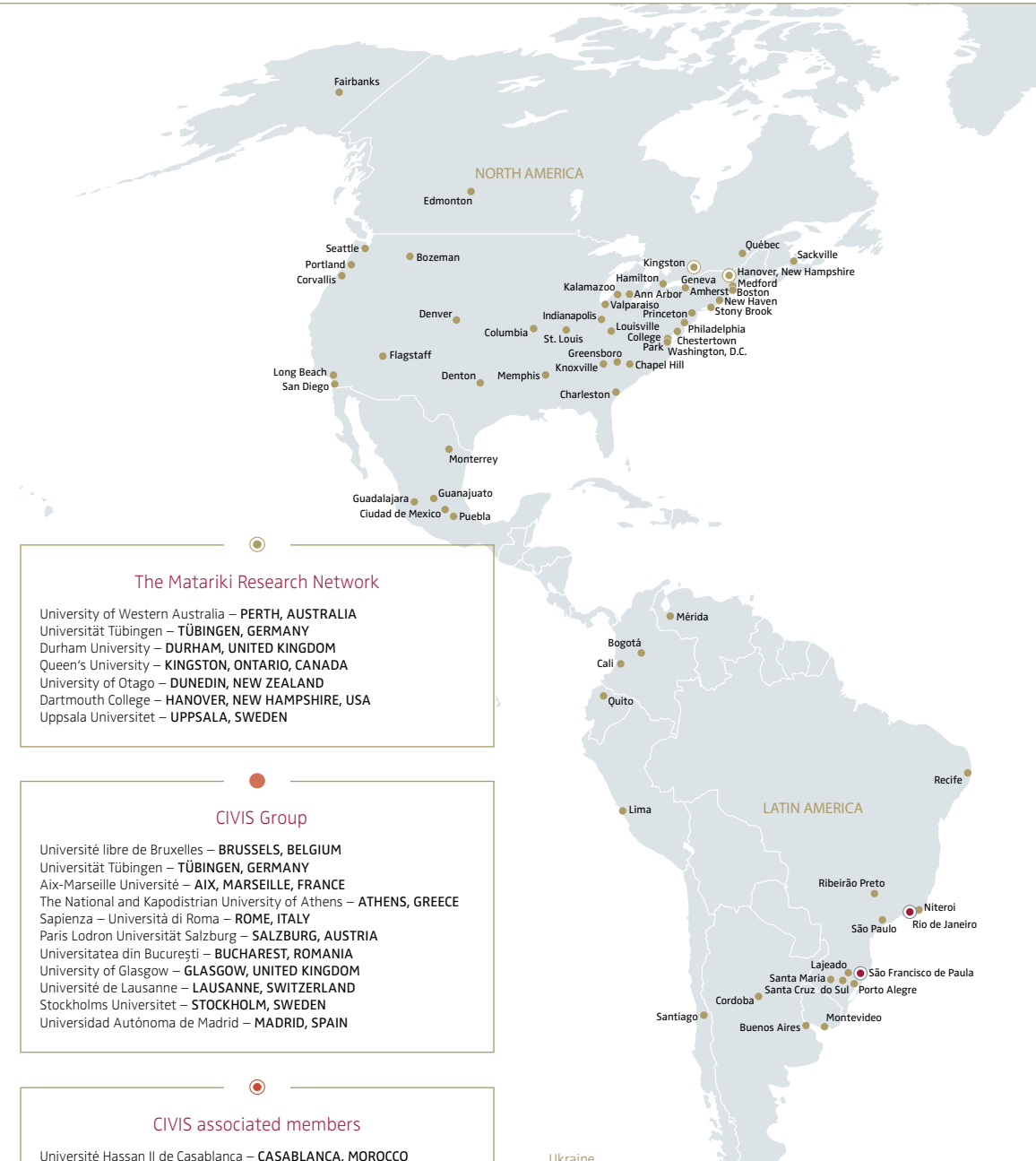
**Colombia**  
Universidad de los Andes – **BOGOTÁ**  
Universidad Icesi – **CALI**

**Mexico**  
Universidad Iberoamericana – **CIUDAD DE MÉXICO**  
El Colegio de México – **CIUDAD DE MÉXICO**  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México – **CIUDAD DE MÉXICO**  
Universidad de Guadalajara – **GUADALAJARA**  
Universidad de Guanajuato – **GUANAJUATO**  
Universidad de Monterrey – **MONTERREY**  
Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla – **PUEBLA**  
Universidad de las Américas – **PUEBLA**

**Peru**  
Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú – **LIMA**  
Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola (USIL) – **LIMA**

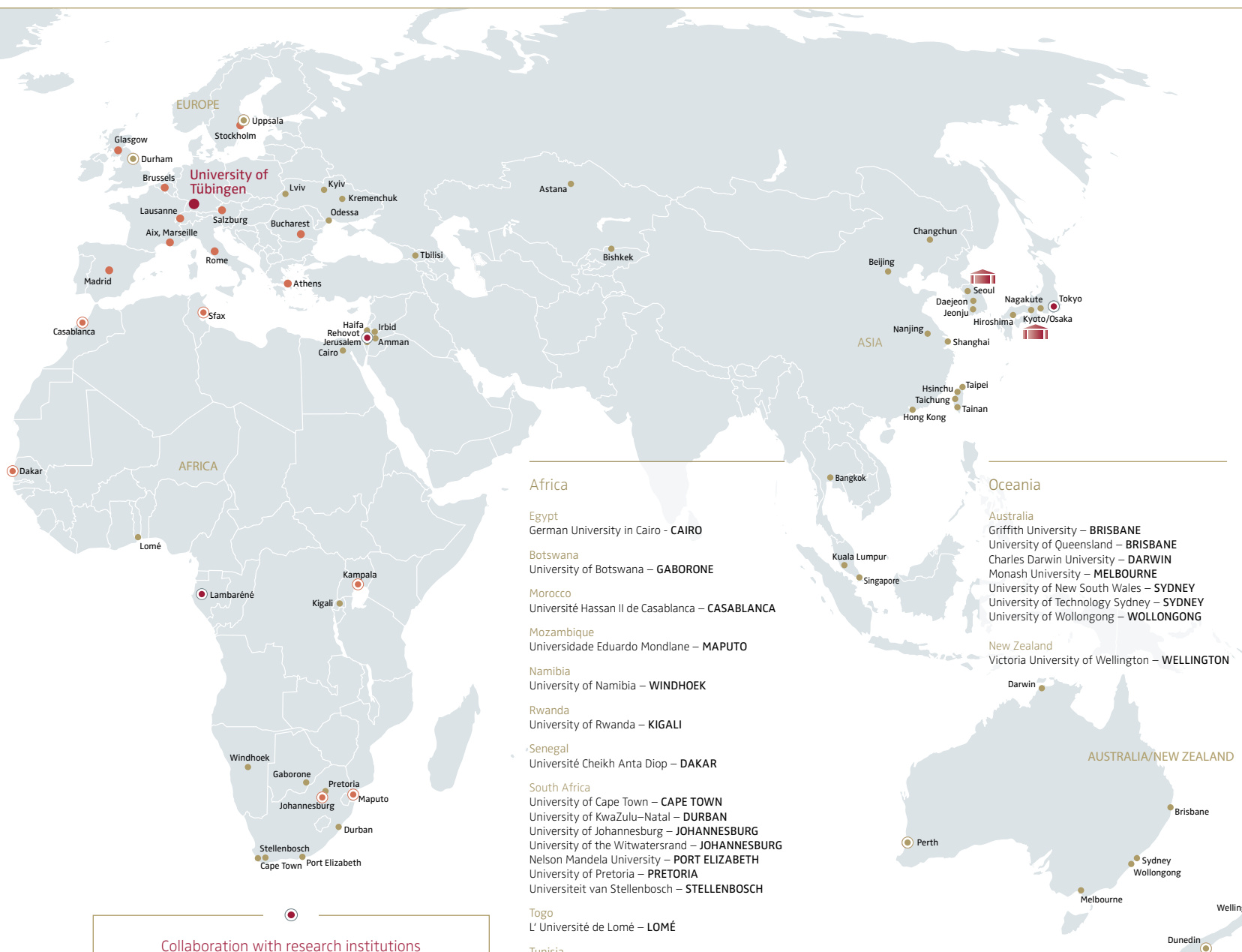
**Uruguay**  
Universidad de Montevideo – **MONTEVIDEO**

**Venezuela**  
Universidad de los Andes – **MÉRIDA**



### Ukraine

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv – **KYIV**  
Kremenchuk Mykhailo Ostrohradskyi National University – **KREMENCHUK**  
Ivan Franko National University of Lviv – **LVIV**  
Odesa I. I. Mechnikov National University – **ODESSA**



### Collaboration with research institutions

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – **RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL**  
 Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul /  
 Forschungsstation Prô Mata – **SÃO FRANCISCO DE PAULA, BRAZIL**  
 CERME – **LAMBARÉNÉ, GABON**  
 Weizmann Institute of Science – **REHOVOT, ISRAEL**  
 Riken Institute – **TOKYO, JAPAN**

### Africa

**Egypt**  
 German University in Cairo – **CAIRO**

**Botswana**  
 University of Botswana – **GABORONE**

**Morocco**  
 Université Hassan II de Casablanca – **CASABLANCA**

**Mozambique**  
 Universidade Eduardo Mondlane – **MAPUTO**

**Namibia**  
 University of Namibia – **WINDHOEK**

**Rwanda**  
 University of Rwanda – **KIGALI**

**Senegal**  
 Université Cheikh Anta Diop – **DAKAR**

**South Africa**  
 University of Cape Town – **CAPE TOWN**  
 University of KwaZulu-Natal – **DURBAN**  
 University of Johannesburg – **JOHANNESBURG**  
 University of the Witwatersrand – **JOHANNESBURG**  
 Nelson Mandela University – **PORT ELIZABETH**  
 University of Pretoria – **PRETORIA**  
 Universiteit van Stellenbosch – **STELLENBOSCH**

**Togo**  
 L' Université de Lomé – **LOMÉ**

**Tunisia**  
 Université de Sfax – **SFAX**

**Uganda**  
 Makerere University – **KAMPALA**

### Asia

**China**  
 Jilin University – **CHANGCHUN**  
 City University of Hong Kong – **HONG KONG**  
 University of Hong Kong – **HONG KONG**  
 Nanjing University – **NANJING**  
 Peking University – **BEIJING**  
 Renmin University of China – **BEIJING**  
 Fudan University – **SHANGHAI**  
 Tongji University – **SHANGHAI**

**Georgia**  
 Ilia State University – **TBILISI**

**Israel**  
 Hebrew University of Jerusalem – **JERUSALEM**  
 University of Haifa – **HAIFA**

**Japan**  
 Hiroshima University – **HIROSHIMA**  
 Dōshisha University – **KYOTO**  
 Ritsumeikan University – **KYOTO**  
 Aichi Prefectural University – **NAGAKUTE**  
 Kansai Gaidai University – **OSAKA**  
 Chuo University – **TOKYO**  
 Rikkyo University – **TOKYO**  
 Sophia University – **TOKYO**  
 Waseda University – **TOKYO**

**Jordan**  
 University of Jordan – **AMMAN**  
 Yarmouk University – **IRBID**

**Kazakhstan**  
 Nazarbayev University – **ASTANA**

**Kyrgyzstan**  
 American University of Central Asia – **BISHKEK**

**Malaysia**  
 Monash University – **KUALA LUMPUR**

**Singapore**  
 National University of Singapore – **SINGAPORE**  
 Singapore Management University – **SINGAPORE**

**South Korea**  
 Chungnam National University – **DAEJEON**  
 Jeonbuk National University – **JEONJU**  
 Ewha Womans University – **SEOUL**  
 Hanyang University – **SEOUL**  
 Korea University – **SEOUL**  
 Kyung Hee University – **SEOUL**  
 Seoul National University – **SEOUL**  
 Sogang University – **SEOUL**  
 Sookmyung Women's University – **SEOUL**  
 Sungkyunkwan University – **SEOUL**  
 Yonsei University – **SEOUL**

**Taiwan**  
 National Tsing Hua University – **HSINCHU**  
 National Chung Hsing University – **TAICHUNG**  
 National Cheng Kung University – **TAINAN**  
 National Chengchi University – **TAIPEI**  
 National Taiwan University – **TAIPEI**

**Thailand**  
 Chulalongkorn University – **BANGKOK**  
 Mahidol University – **BANGKOK**

### Oceania

**Australia**  
 Griffith University – **BRISBANE**  
 University of Queensland – **BRISBANE**  
 Charles Darwin University – **DARWIN**  
 Monash University – **MELBOURNE**  
 University of New South Wales – **SYDNEY**  
 University of Technology Sydney – **SYDNEY**  
 University of Wollongong – **WOLLONGONG**

**New Zealand**  
 Victoria University of Wellington – **WELLINGTON**







# STUDIES IN TÜBINGEN

## DIVERSE AND FUTURE-ORIENTED

The University of Tübingen remains a popular place to study with student numbers close to the all-time highs of recent years. At the same time, the demands on teaching and study are constantly evolving and we encourage innovative approaches by teaching staff as well as student initiatives. The University is also stepping up to meet the various challenges of internationalization and the increasingly complex situations faced by many students, both domestic and international.



## A NEW GENERATION

The University of Tübingen is a top preference for both German and international students. Current enrollments are among the highest they have ever been. In the 2024/25 winter semester, Tübingen maintained the historic number of enrolled students reached in the previous winter semester.

At the same time, many students are dealing with tightening finances, illness or disability, the continuing fallout from the Coronavirus pandemic, the influences of current world events, as well as personal questions of religious and political belief, identity and gender. These issues, too, are addressed within the University.

### Student numbers hold steady

On the cutoff date in November 2024, a total of 28,609 students were enrolled at the University of Tübingen. This included 5,349 first-years and other newcomers. With 17,116 women enrolled, the student body overall was nearly sixty percent female.

There were 4,466 international students enrolled, constituting 15.6 percent of students at the University.

### By faculty or institution

Faculty	Winter semester 2024/25
Protestant Theology	384
Catholic Theology	141
Law	2,189
Medicine	5,012
Humanities	6,836
Economics and Social Sciences	5,147
Science	8,729
Center for Islamic Theology	117
Leibniz Kolleg	53



*Gender and Diversity Certificate  
coordinator Davina Höll*

## Students facing more complex problems

Each year, around 25 percent of students make use of the Student Counseling Service and the help it has to offer. 2024 marked a sea change in the concerns of students. While study, organization, exams, and changing subjects continued to play a major role, new topics came into focus, such as dealing with mental stress and excessive pressures, as well as situations in which several related problems and stresses occur together in the context of studying. Knock-on effects of the Covid-19 pandemic were still being felt. Counseling goals included reconnecting with previous studies, making friends, money matters, and preparing for graduation.

Students with disabilities or chronic illnesses often find themselves facing several problems at once. The proportion of students with multiple illnesses and mental health issues who made use of counseling services rose significantly; counseling appointments were up approximately 20 percent in 2024. Counseling services also played a role in academic success for international students: topics frequently addressed were related to academic and social integration, such as dealing with communication problems, mental stress, illness, and financial difficulties.

## Gender and Diversity Certificate

The issues of gender and diversity research are of particular interest in the open and inquiring culture of the University. To give students from all disciplines the opportunity to explore gender and social diversity as an approach to research, the Center for Gender and Diversity Research (ZGD), in cooperation with the Transdisciplinary Training and Professional Orientation (TRACS) program, launched the Gender and Diversity Certificate in the winter semester 2024/25.

“As part of the certificate, participants learn to understand gender and diversity not as objective and ‘natural’ characteristics of individuals or groups,” says Dr. Davina Höll, who coordinates the certificate at the ZGD. “Gender, origin, sexuality, ethnicity, and disability are powerful categories by which people identify themselves and are identified by others. At the same time, they are always historically determined categories and thus subject to constant change.” Gender and Diversity is one of a total of 19 certificate programs that allow students to pursue further interests in addition to their subject studies and to create an individualized profile. The courses range from audio production and practical ethics to rhetoric and communication.



## UNIVERSITY PRIZES

### Teaching Prize goes to innovative French lecturers

The University of Tübingen's 2024 Teaching Prize went to a team of French lecturers at the Institute of Romance Languages. Audrey da Rocha, Dr. Nicolas Heslault, and Dr. Benjamin Massot were honored for their dedicated and innovative teaching efforts. The three have taught French at the University of Tübingen since 2018. They have formulated principles for language teaching, with a focus on language practice, to ensure the quality of teaching and to strengthen cooperation between faculty members.

The jury highlighted the many different approaches in the projects, the successful integration of artistic formats, as well as the teamwork within the projects, and highlighted their relevance. Study content is directly related to the students' future professional lives, for example in the cultural sector or in language teaching.

The University of Tübingen Teaching Prize has been awarded annually since 2007. The prize money of 5,000 euros will be used to continue the projects and secure their place in French teaching at the University.

### Student Commitment prize for support hotline

The 2024 Student Commitment Prize went to Nightline Tübingen, a telephone service run by students for students. The approximately 20 volunteers offer a sympathetic ear for



*Vice-President Monique Scheer (right) with Teaching Prize laureates Audrey da Rocha and Nicolas Heslault*



*Julia Schnurr (left) receives the Student Commitment Prize from Vice-President Monique Scheer.*



*Political scientist Ulrich Brand delivers the Sustainability Lecture*

the worries, problems, and joys of university life and beyond. These conversations are now also available via text messaging. Nightline Tübingen was established to help those experiencing heartbreak, exam stress, or difficulties getting started in a new town. Calls are anonymous and confidential. The volunteers receive training on how to handle callers' concerns responsibly and professionally. Nightline Tübingen was founded in 2011 by Julia Schnurr, at the time a medical student. The organization will use the 1,000 euros of prize money to cover its running costs.

### Sustainability Prize for seven graduates

In November 2024, Sustainability Prizes were presented for Bachelor's and Master's theses and, for the first time, for a doctoral thesis. Leon Flemming, Marie Luise Geisbusch, and Benedikt Sanwald received the award for their respective Bachelor's theses. Mara Buchstab, Jörg Müller, and Freya Reiss were honored for their Master's theses. Physicist Dr. Beatrice Ellerhoff received the Sustainability Award for her doctoral thesis. The University of Tübingen's Sustainabil-

ity Prize has been awarded annually since 2011 with the aim of promoting academic engagement with sustainable development topics.

The awards ceremony includes the annual Sustainability Lecture, delivered in 2024 by political scientist Professor Ulrich Brand from the University of Vienna. His topic was *Capitalism at its Limit? On the Contradictions of the 'Imperial Way of Life.'* He illustrated the pressing ecological and social challenges of our time, the fundamental causes of the climate crisis, and possible paths toward a more sustainable society. Brand outlined the concept of "monstrous normality," which describes how deeply the destructive exploitation of humanity and nature is embedded in our society and economy. He criticized the term "ecological modernization" as often merely concealing the fact that problems are treated superficially instead of addressing their root causes. Brand's core message was: change is possible, but it requires profound transformation in our economy, politics, and way of life – away from destructive practices and toward a solidarity-based and sustainable society.





## CANTEEN ON WILHELMSTRASSE REOPENED

The canteen on Wilhelmstrasse reopened in September 2024 after more than four years of renovation and reconstruction. The listed building retained the appearance of Paul Baumgarten's original 1966 design, but was brought up to date in terms of energy efficiency and technology. The indoor climate, acoustics, and lighting were improved. The renovation cost almost 50 million euros.

The spaces in the new canteen have been further opened up, and are also available outside of meal times for individual and group work. Some 50 staff prepare and serve around 3,000 meals daily in the modernized canteen and the downstairs cafeteria.



## STUDENT PROJECT: EXPLORING TÜBINGEN'S JEWISH HISTORY

In the darkest period of modern German history, it was the goal of fervent Nazis to describe their towns and cities as "Jew-free." Tübingen was no exception. Persecution of the Jewish community began here with the exclusion of Jews from civil society in the early 1930s. The University also played a shameful role, declaring itself "Jew-free" as early as 1933. Jewish people were forced to emigrate or were deported to their deaths; Jewish life and its traces were erased. To this day, the evidence of Jewish culture in Tübingen has almost completely disappeared.

To change this and to serve as a warning, 101 *Stolpersteine* – memorial stones set into the pavement – now commemorate Jewish people of Tübingen and their fates during the Nazi era. The term *Stolperstein* literally means "stumbling block" – something that makes you trip up and examine closely what you thought was safe ground. The stories of these people and the Jewish history of Tübingen were retold in a theatrical walking tour, *Living Stumbling Blocks* – a collaboration between the Friends of Jewish Culture Tübingen, the Tübingen State Theater (LTT), and the University of Tübingen in July 2024.

*The Living Stumbling Blocks tour told human stories with the help of multimedia technology.*



At selected locations, actors from the LTT staged scenes and conversations with the people behind the *Stolpersteine*, giving participants in the tour an impression of the Jewish experience. Students from the fields of media studies, digital humanities, cognitive science, and computer science, under the direction of Erwin Feyersinger and Kevin

Körner, worked closely with director Sapir Heller and director Adrian Herrmann to design and implement the media stations along the walk. They also developed an interactive app that outlined selected biographies ahead of the performance and bridged the longer walks through the town center with an audio guide.



## STUDENT EXCHANGES WORLDWIDE

### Baden-Württemberg Foundation exchanges

The Baden-Württemberg Foundation is an independent body financed by the State of Baden-Württemberg. It has been funding exchange programs between Baden-Württemberg universities and their partner institutions worldwide since 2001. In 2024, the Baden-Württemberg Foundation provided 354,450 euros in total to support 82 incoming students during their stay in Tübingen via the Baden-Württemberg STIPENDIUM (BWS) program, as well as 67 Tübingen students who studied abroad on University-run exchange programs.

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, BWS funds were reallocated to enable students from Ukraine and Russia to study in Baden-Württemberg. Eight Ukrainian students at the University of Tübingen received a total of 45,000 euros in funding.

The Foundation's regional development or REK program line is designed to enable students from ACP countries (Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific) as well as from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to study abroad. In 2024, funding of 130,100 euros supported 23 individuals – mostly doctoral

students – to study and conduct research in Tübingen. The scholarship recipients came from countries including Senegal, Cameroon, Kenya, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Nigeria, Zambia, South Africa, Togo, and Tunisia. Thanks to the REK program, Tübingen has developed stable partnerships in Africa in recent years.

The Foundation's BWS Plus program supports innovative collaborative projects between colleges and universities worldwide. Two such Tübingen projects received funding in 2024: the Infection Network Tokyo-Tübingen project, which launched in October 2024; and the TuExTLV project, a life sciences exchange program between the Universities of Tübingen and Tel Aviv.

### Strong support from the German Academic Exchange Service

German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) statistics showed an overall increase in international mobility for the University of Tübingen in 2023, the most recent year for which numbers were available at the time of writing. Total funding

from the DAAD for the University of Tübingen amounted to around 7.8 million euros – 400,000 euros more than in 2022. This was largely due to greater spending on programs and projects.

In addition to these funds, under the European University Networks program the University of Tübingen receives 175,000 euros annually from the DAAD for its participation in the CIVIS university alliance in the second funding phase, which ends in 2025.





# STRUCTURE AND POLICY



## EXCELLENCE THROUGH INNOVATION

The University of Tübingen is taking concrete steps to address social and environmental challenges, a task which requires new forms of leadership. In 2024, a new role of Vice-President for Sustainable Development was created, and a second faculty adopted a dual leadership team. The University signed up to policies supporting greater diversity and equality. At the same time, the building of new research facilities was ongoing, and Tübingen's status as an excellent research university was reaffirmed by the European Commission.



*Left to right: Vice-Presidents Karin Amos and Peter Grathwohl, President Karla Pollmann, Executive Vice-President Andreas Rothfuss and Vice-President Monique Scheer*



*President Karla Pollmann congratulates Samuel Wagner on his election as Vice-President*

## THE UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

### New Vice-President of Sustainable Development

The University Senate elected Professor Samuel Wagner as Vice-President of Sustainable Development in July 2024. He is the first to hold this newly-created position, which promotes sustainability at the University's highest level and includes employees and students in that effort. The new vice-president coordinates recommendations and events on sustainability regarding teaching, research and administration, and is tasked with promoting the climate neutrality

of University operations. For this, the new Vice-President will also draw on the expertise of the University's environmental advisory board and on the environmental management skills in the University's central administration. Wagner, a professor of Infection Biology, started work in September 2024.

Following his studies in human biology in Marburg, his Master of Medical Sciences in Biomedicine, and his doctorate in Stockholm, he moved to Yale University as a postdoc before

becoming an assistant professor of Infection Biology at the University of Tübingen in 2012. Since 2019, he has been a board member of the Control of Microorganisms to Fight Infections (CMFI) excellence cluster.

Wagner's term of office is three years – as is that of Professor Katja Schenke-Layland, who succeeded Professor Peter Grathwohl as Vice-President of Research, Innovation and Transfer in April 2025 following her election in September 2024.

## The President's Office

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### President

Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. (Dōshisha) Karla Pollmann, Classics and Theology

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### Executive Vice-President

Dr. Andreas Rothfuss

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### The Vice-President for Sustainable Development

Professor Dr. Samuel Wagner, Interfaculty Institute of Microbiology and Infection Medicine

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### Vice-President of Teaching and Learning

Professor Dr. Karin Amos, Institute of Education

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### Vice-President for Research and Innovation

Professor Dr. Peter Grathwohl, Applied Geoscience

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### Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity

Professor Dr. Monique Scheer, Institute of Historical and Cultural Anthropology

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## The University Board

### External members

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#### Chair

Bernhard Sibold | formerly of Deutsche Bundesbank, Stuttgart

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Matthias Anbuhl | Deutsches Studierendenwerk, Berlin

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Dr. Michael Bolle | Carl Zeiss Foundation, Stuttgart

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Daniela Eberspächer-Roth, PhD, PhD | Profimetall Xellar Gruppe, Hirrlingen/IHK, Reutlingen

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Lena Ganschow | SWR, Baden-Baden

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Professor Dr. Moritz Hardt | Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems, Tübingen

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Professor Dr. Renate Schubert | UniDistance Switzerland, Brig/ETH, Zürich

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*Members of the University Board, front row, left to right: Daniela Eberspächer-Roth, Renate Schubert, Moritz Hardt, deputy chair Irmgard Männlein, chair Bernhard Sibold; back row, left to right: Lena Ganschow, Matthias Anbuhl, Heike Oberlin, Stefan Teufel, Gender Equality Representative Ingrid Hotz-Davies, and Jacob Bühler*

### University internal members

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#### Deputy Chair

Professor Dr. Irmgard Männlein | Faculty of Humanities

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Jacob Bühler | Student, Tübingen

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Professor Dr. Heike Oberlin | Faculty of Humanities

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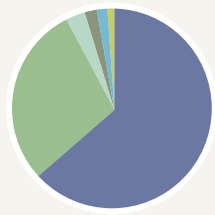
Professor Dr. Stefan Teufel | Faculty of Science

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## UNIVERSITY FINANCES

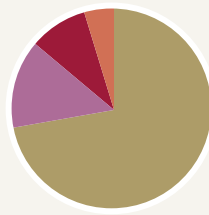
### University budget (excluding Medicine)

Revenue 2024  
(461.6 million euros)



- Earmarked funds from State of Baden-Württemberg  
294.1 m euros
- Third-party funding for research and teaching  
132.5 m euros
- Third-party funding for professional training and services  
14.2 m euros
- Other operating income  
8.8 m euros
- Liquidation of special items  
7.4 m euros
- Income from other accounting periods  
4.6 m euros  
includes third-party funding of  
1.6 m euros

Expenditure 2024  
(451.7 million euros)

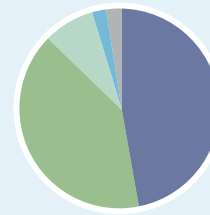


- Payroll costs  
327.2 m euros
- Other operating costs  
62.3 m euros
- Materials for teaching and research  
42.1 m euros
- Depreciation of intangible assets, property and equipment  
20.1 m euros

### Faculty of Medicine budget

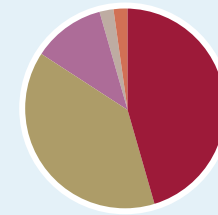
\* figures preliminary

Revenue 2024  
(328.2 million euros)\*



- Earmarked State of Baden-Württemberg funding  
155.3 m euros
- Third-party funding  
131.3 m euros
- Other income  
26.2 m euros
- State of Baden-Württemberg funding for investments  
7.5 m euros
- Income from DFG projects and other programs  
7.9 m euros

Expenditure 2024  
(333.6 million euros)\*



- Payroll and operating costs  
151.8 m euros
- Third-party funding expenditure  
129.7 m euros
- Other  
37.6 m euros
- Investments via State of Baden-Württemberg funding  
7.5 m euros
- Investments via third-party funding  
7.0 m euros





*Deans Dominik Papies and Taiga Brahm jointly head the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences.*

*The international group of participants in the intercultural skills development program at Stockholm University*



## NEWS

### Dual leadership at the Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences

The Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Tübingen has been under new leadership since late 2024. Professor Taiga Brahm and Professor Dominik Papies were elected as co-deans in April 2024 and took up office in September 2024. Their term of office is five years. The Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences is the second faculty at the University to be headed by a dual leadership team – the Faculty of Humanities has been jointly run by Professor Angelika Zirker and Professor Dietmar Till since 2023.

Taiga Brahm has been Professor of Economic Education at the University of Tübingen since October 2016. Dominik Papies has been Professor of Marketing at Tübingen since 2012. Both previously held senior administrative roles within the faculty. They succeed the professor of sports science Ansgar Thiel, who took up a new position as President of the German Sport University in Cologne in May 2024.

### CIVIS sponsors internationalization program for administrators

Three members of the University administration went to Stockholm in early 2024 to attend a workshop aimed at developing intercultural skills. The four-day program was organized by the European university alliance CIVIS. At its heart was a program developed by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain. Known by its acronym, SUCTI, the program aims to sensitize employees in university administrations to the complex processes of intercultural communication and to enable participants to share at home what they have learned, using a train-the-trainer model. The Tübingen delegates, together with some 15 colleagues from seven other universities in the CIVIS alliance, completed the program.

The workshop also provided information on internationalization processes, including current developments affecting student mobility. Students used to spend an academic year abroad, but now there is a trend towards short-term programs of two to three weeks. It is also becoming more difficult to attract students for a semester abroad at German-

speaking universities because German is being taught less frequently at universities abroad. This underscores the importance of intercultural support across university structures.

### Outstanding conditions for researchers

European Commission experts came to Tübingen in March to review the University's status as a holder of the HR Excellence in Research label. Tübingen earned the distinction in 2017 as part of its participation in the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) audit. The audit underlines the University's commitment to improving the working conditions of researchers. The European Commission review takes place every three years and looks at progress in areas such as professional development programs, the implementation of the European Charter and Code for Researchers and support for innovation in research and teaching. The experts attested that the University's approach was very much in line with the ideas and objectives of the HRS4R audit; they approved the extension of the HR Excellence in Research label for the following three years.

## Professors at the University of Tübingen in 2024

	2024									
	Full professors			Assistant professorship with tenure track			Assistant professorship without tenure track			Total
	male	female	total	male	female	total	male	female	total	Total
Protestant Theology	11	2	13							13
Catholic Theology	9	3	12	1		1				13
Center for Islamic Theology	4	2	6							6
Law	18	4	22					1	1	23
Medicine	96	32	128	1		1	2		2	131
Humanities	42	39	81	2	6	8	2	5	7	96
Economics and Social Sciences	43	18	61	2	3	5	3	5	8	74
Science	126	37	163	6	4	10	1	4	5	178
Knowledge Media Research Center (IWM)	4	2	6							6
Central institutions	1	0	1							1
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>541</b>

## RESPONSIBILITY FOR DIVERSITY

The University of Tübingen promotes an inclusive culture through targeted initiatives, in particular providing support in the areas of equal opportunities and alternative lifestyles, and with a raft of programs aimed at supporting women in research on their often particularly challenging career paths.

### Team Equity – A consistent line on fairness

In November 2024, the Diversity Office, the Gender Equality Office, and the Family Office were amalgamated under the new name of Team Equity – reflecting the intersectionality of these areas. Team Equity focuses on groups that have historically been underrepresented and potentially affected by discrimination. These include women and transgender people, caregivers, and those marginalized due to ethnicity, religion, age, disability, or social background.

### Signing up to diversity ...

On Germany's Diversity Day on May 28, 2024, President Pollmann signed the Diversity Charter on behalf of the Uni-

versity of Tübingen, making it part of a Germany-wide network of over 5,000 institutions and companies with more than 14.7 million employees committed to diversity management. Signatories pledge to respect those they interact with, regardless of age, origin and nationality, gender and gender identity, physical and mental abilities, religion and ideology, sexual orientation, and social background. The University's diversity strategy seeks to consistently promote a positive working and study environment for University members.

### ... and to family-friendly policies

Also in May 2024, the University of Tübingen officially joined the *Familie in der Hochschule* association and signed the charter of the same name. In doing so, the University of Tübingen commits to meeting the association's standards as a family-friendly employer and place of learning. *Familie in der Hochschule* aims to establish as the norm the compatibility of studies, work, and academic life with family responsibilities in the German-speaking higher education sector.



Left to right: Team Equity members  
Melanie Stelly, Ulrike Thrien and  
Susanne Weitbrecht with President  
Karla Pollmann

### Positive developments in gender equality

The University has made consistent efforts over many years to boost gender equality, with evidence of success in a number of areas. One key indicator is the number of women in senior academic positions.

The proportion of full professors who are women has increased by a factor of 2.5 in 15 years, rising from just over 11 percent in 2009 to just over 28 percent as of December 2024. The proportion of women assistant professors has almost doubled in that same period, going from 30 to 58.3 percent.



*Margarete von Wrangell,  
Germany's first woman  
professor*



*Gero Bauer of the  
Center for Gender and  
Diversity Studies*

## Wrangell Program sponsorship for two women professors

The State of Baden-Württemberg's Margarete von Wrangell Program sponsors young female researchers on their path to tenured professorships, enabling them to set out transparent career paths in the post-doctoral phase. Two of the four Wrangell assistant professorships conferred in 2024 went to Tübingen researchers.

**Dr. Theresa Jäckh**, an assistant professor (with tenure track) of Medieval History, focuses on pre-modern interreligious relations in the Mediterranean region. She is currently looking at the question of which everyday legal problems arose for Jewish individuals and communities living in non-Jewish majority societies.

Jäckh says she was pleased about the funding, but also sees room for improvement in the Wrangell Program. She points out that the funding ends after 36 months with no allowance made for pregnancy and childbirth – a phase in which women researchers frequently suspend their academic careers due to lack of support.

The second Wrangell Professor, **Dr. Silja Mordhorst** from the Pharmaceutical Institute, has been an assistant professor of Pharmaceutical Biology at the University of Tübingen since April 2022. She investigates bioactive natural products with the goal of developing new compounds for medical applications. She completed her doctorate in Freiburg and subsequently conducted research at the ETH Zurich. Together with her postdoctoral fellow Dr. Panagiota-Hanna Koutsandrea, she is now working on the derivatization of lipopeptide antibiotics, compounds which can form the basis for new drugs.

## Pride Month 2024

Tübingen joined in Pride Month celebrations in June 2024. Numerous events addressing queer topics took place both in the town and at the University of Tübingen. A varied program of lectures and workshops, readings, art exhibitions, and concerts was made possible by a collaboration between the Tübingen town administration and the University, as well as through the commitment of local initiatives. Dr. Gero Bauer is the academic director of the Center for Gender and

Diversity Studies and was involved in organizing Pride Month on behalf of the University of Tübingen. He worked closely with Lou Schumm from the town's Equality and Integration Office. "It makes sense to leverage synergies," says Bauer.

"Commitment to openness and diversity in society is one of the University's core missions. With various events during Pride Month, we aim to increase the visibility of queer people at the University," said Professor Monique Scheer, Vice-President for International Affairs and Diversity.

Pride Month, celebrated every June, underscores the rights, history, and culture of the LGBTIQ+ community and its members' fight for equality. LGBTIQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, intersex\*, queer, and asexual, with the plus at the end including all other identities and orientations.

## BUILDING FOR THE UNIVERSITY

*Breaking ground for the new building, left to right: Hans Reiter of the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Gisela Splett, State Secretary of Finance, Marcus Wandel, head of the Tübingen construction authority, University Vice-President Samuel Wagner, Tübingen Mayor Boris Palmer, and Andreas Geiger of the Computer Science Department at the University of Tübingen*



### New building inaugurated on the Campus of Theologies

In November, State Premier Winfried Kretschmann and State Secretary for Finance Gisela Splett officially handed over a new building at Liebermeisterstrasse 18 to the University. The State of Baden-Württemberg invested 22.8 million euros in the property. The new building provides some 2,500 square meters of space for research and teaching and is now home to the Center for Islamic Theology, to some offices and meeting rooms for the Catholic and Protestant Theologies, and to the Department of Psychology. The building also contains a library, with reading areas opening onto a courtyard.

Premier Winfried Kretschmann said: "The Center for Islamic Theology was the first institution of its kind in Germany and is also relevant for our secular society. It is more important

than ever that our Muslim religious teachers and the next generation of academics in Theology receive sophisticated academic and contemporary training." University President Karla Pollmann, drawing on her own specialization in Theology and Classics, added that "the critical examination of religion, its texts, its history, and its culture helps students acquire knowledge that is helpful to them personally as well as to those they work with over the course of their careers."

### Construction begins on Cyber Valley 2

In October 2024 work began on the Cyber Valley 2 building in Tübingen's Science and Technology Park. This building will be used by research groups from the University's Department of Computer Science and the Hertie Institute for Artificial Intelligence in Brain Health.

The new research space of some 8,700 square meters will be home to a total of 20 research groups in the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning; it includes a central lecture hall, a cafeteria, and a reference library.

The project was made possible by around 75 million euros of funding from the State of Baden-Württemberg. The building is planned for completion in mid-2028.



MUSEUM

Science Notes

SCIENCE & INNOVATION DAYS



# CELEBRATING KNOWLEDGE

## A UNIVERSITY FOR SOCIETY

The University of Tübingen maintains a lively dialogue and interaction with German society at large. An overarching theme at many events in 2024 was the importance of conveying relevant academic messages successfully to a wider public audience. To this end, the University honored researchers and students for their special services to academic communication.

### SCIENCE & INNOVATION DAYS FOCUSED ON “ARGUING BETTER”

#### Ideas festival: a forum for dialogue

In November 2024, more than 100 of the University researchers got together with local people for discussions on Germany's culture of public debate under the motto: *Arguing better. Let's work on it together*. The University's partners – regional broadcaster SWR, the Knowledge Media Research Center, the Global Ethics Institute, and the Max Planck Institutes in Tübingen, as well as many civic institutions – once again made key contributions to the success of the Science & Innovation Days festival.

Public debate can be productive on the political, economic, and academic levels. At the same time, differences of opinion, polarization, and agitation are perceived as destructive drivers of current social discourse. The festival addressed

major controversial topics: the role of science in the COVID pandemic, animal testing in research, the gender debate, AI research – but above all how to deal with different perspectives and the question: how can academic disciplines help develop a constructive culture of debate?

Visitors to the festival were able to discuss controversial topics with experts from research, business, and society at more than 40 events in a variety of formats. Numerous interactive events were once again on the program in 2024: for example, a rhetoric workshop for citizens, helping participants to develop a critical view of their own behavior in an argument, and the creative hackathon, which brought together AI researchers, design students and the public to jointly develop visualizations for AI.

The heart of the festival was the Science Fair, where research institutions, NGOs, companies and urban initiatives presented their work. There was a virtual reality experience called *Dispute Over The Temple Mount*, and lunchtime talks were held with prominent guests.

A new element was a special program for schools, giving high school students the opportunity to discuss controversial topics with researchers. Changing formats, from debates to plays, helped the students familiarize themselves with differing perspectives and to develop their own points of view.





*Christian O. Erbe (center) receives his honorary senatorship, seen here between the Baden-Württemberg Economics Minister, Dr. Nicole Hoffmeister-Kraut (right), and the University President, Professor Karla Pollmann (left).*

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Christian Otto Erbe was born in Tübingen, studied in Karlsruhe and Berlin and began working for Erbe Elektromedizin GmbH in 1992. He has been head of the group of companies since 2003. Since 2010 he has been president of the Reutlingen Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

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## Universitätsbund turns 100; Chair becomes honorary senator

The Association of Friends of the University, the Universitätsbund, was founded in 1924. Christian O. Erbe has been its chair since 2018. As one of the University's key supporters, he was made an honorary member of the University Senate in 2024.

Erbe is proud of the association's achievements: over the past 20 years, the Universitätsbund has invested more than 5.3 million euros in big and small projects, such as the publication of the research magazine *Attempto!* and the grand piano for the Neue Aula. The money comes from membership fees, donations, and other contributions. Since 2011, the Universitätsbund has also been funding Deutschlandstipendium scholarships at the University of Tübingen – benefiting 30 students in 2024 alone. Overall, the association has collected some 1.7 million euros with which it has sponsored more than 900 talented students.

In addition, the Universitätsbund is the forum through which alumni can maintain their ties with the University. But others can join too; the Universitätsbund brings together internal and external friends of the University.

Furthermore, Erbe sees the Universitätsbund as a bridge between the University and businesses in the region. The Universitätsbund can help here, as many business representatives are active within it.

The new honorary senator says it is important for the University to build upon its excellent reputation by applying its talents to innovation for the future. He seeks to bring the University and industry even closer together, so that both parties may benefit.

## University first mentioned 550 years ago

In 2027, the University of Tübingen will celebrate the 550th anniversary of its foundation. However, the University first comes up in historical documents three years before that. This is confirmed by two new studies by historians Robert Gramsch-Stehfest, of the University of Jena, and Tübingen's own Julius Jansen.

On May 4, 1474, Count Eberhard V of Württemberg-Urach submitted a petition to Pope Sixtus IV, writing that he wanted to establish a university in Württemberg, specifically in Tübingen. Count Eberhard pointed out that there was no such center of learning in his own territory, nor in that of his uncle, Count Ulrich V of Württemberg-Stuttgart. Yet it took almost three years for the University of Tübingen to be formally established, and almost three and a half years until the start of lectures in October 1477.



## A PLACE OF CULTURE



### 2024 Tübingen Writers' Lectureship

The talks at the 37th Tübingen Writers' Lectureship were held by Daniel Kehlmann, Nora Bossong, and David Schalko. Kehlmann was born in Munich in 1975 and studied philosophy and German Language and Literature in Vienna. He is one of the most successful contemporary German-language authors. His greatest success to date has been *Die Vermessung der Welt* (2005), published in English as *Measuring the World* (2006).

Nora Bossong, born in Bremen in 1982, studied Philosophy and Comparative Literature in Berlin, Potsdam, and Rome and now lives in Berlin. Her work has earned her numerous prizes. Bossong's most significant success to date is the novel *Schutzzone*, which was longlisted for the German Book Prize in 2019.

Bossong's and Kehlmann's discussion on writing about history focused on the literary treatment of historical sources and on their collaboration with historians.

David Schalko was born in 1973 in Waidhofen an der Thaya, Austria. He studied business administration in Vienna until he started working for the television station Wien 1. Schalko has written scripts for television programs and has produced and directed numerous films and TV series.

In a discussion with the title *Kafka and Us*, Kehlmann and Schalko gave insights into their collaboration on the ARD series *Kafka* and the challenges of production, and explored the question of how both biographical details and Kafka's literary works can be expressed in film.

The Tübingen Writers' Lectureship is sponsored by the Würth Foundation and Adolf Würth GmbH & Co. KG. It has been held annually since 1996 and has been directed by Professor Dorothee Kimmich since 2005. Authors are invited to deliver public lectures and organize workshops for students.

*Guest writers in 2024, left to right: Daniel Kehlmann, Nora Bossong, and David Schalko*

## 19th Tübingen Media Lecture

In June 2024, journalist and presenter Dunja Hayali came to the University of Tübingen and gave a speech with the title *When the dialogue stops, we may as well pack up and go home*. In it, Hayali focused on the new power of populism, the near-constant outrage governing discourse, and the art of debating in a climate in which those who think and live differently face instant condemnation.

Dunja Hayali, whose parents came to Germany from Iraq and who was born in Datteln, Westphalia, is familiar with racist and sexist hostility. She has been receiving death threats for years and is attacked on social media; yet she does not avoid debate and controversy. She talks to supporters of the extreme right political party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and interviews neo-Nazis, COVID deniers and critics of the pandemic measures. On the fringes of demonstrations, she engages in discussions with conspiracy theorists.

She talked about her own experiences growing up and working in Germany as a person with a different ethnic heritage. She explored the issues of who actually belongs, who is allowed to join in the discussion, who is listened to and who is not – calling for dialogue and bridge-building through improved communication.

Dunja Hayali studied at the German Sport University Cologne and has worked as a presenter for various formats and broadcasters. She has received numerous awards for her journalistic work and her commitment to a new culture of debate. The Tübingen Media Lectureship is organized jointly by the University of Tübingen, the Institute of Media Studies, and SWR Studio Tübingen.

*Dunja Hayali advocates  
for dialogue across the  
full spectrum of society.*





## Tübingen welcomes invited artist Otobong Nkanga

The internationally renowned artist Otobong Nkanga came to the University of Tübingen for three weeks in 2024. In her workshop entitled *A Line, A Trace, A Score*, which took place as part of the Transdisciplinary Course Program at the University, she encouraged students to perceive themselves and their surroundings in a new way, so as to develop their creative intelligence. Questions of identity and belonging as well as our relationship with our environment shape Nkanga's engagement with the world and were also at the heart of her artistic work during the workshop.

Otobong Nkanga was born in Nigeria in 1974 and lives in Antwerp, Belgium. She has had exhibitions at the documenta in Kassel and the Venice Biennale. Immediately before her visit to Tübingen, Nkanga opened an installation at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

The invited artist program at the University of Tübingen introduces art and its traditions and draws attention to special features and developments in different cultures. Otobong Nkanga is the sixth invited artist to come to Tübingen since the program began in 2018.

*Otobong Nkanga discusses experimental drawing with Tübingen students.*

## PRIZES AWARDED BY THE UNIVERSITY

*Israeli philosopher Omri Boehm (right)  
with Bernhard Anuth, Vice-Dean  
of the Faculty of Catholic Theology*



### Alfons Auer Prize for Omri Boehm

The Israeli philosopher Omri Boehm received the 2024 Alfons Auer Ethics Prize from the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Tübingen and the Diocese of Rottenburg-Stuttgart Academy. The award is in recognition of Professor Boehm's outstanding work on the moral responsibility of radical universalism.

The Alfons Auer Ethics Prize is sponsored by Siegfried Weisshaupt, an international tech entrepreneur who is interested in ethical and cultural challenges.

Boehm says radical universalism demands that people regard the lives of those on the other side as equally infinitely important as the lives of the people on their side. Boehm continues to assert this universalism following the Hamas

attack on Israel in October 2023 and Israel's subsequent military response in the Gaza Strip. He calls for reflection on political alternatives and proposes a joint, federal state for Jews and Palestinians. In doing so, he shows that the universalism he proposes makes it possible to speak and act in the crises of the present.

Omri Boehm has been Associate Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research, New York, since 2010. The manifold sources of his philosophy include the biblical narratives of the Torah, the writings of Immanuel Kant, and the US Declaration of Independence.

The award is bestowed every two years. It owes its name to one of Tübingen's most prominent ethicists, the moral

theologian Professor Dr. Alfons Auer (1915–2005). In the early 1970s, Auer developed the notion of "autonomous morality" liberating Catholic moral teaching from confessional boundaries. The prize honors personalities who have distinguished themselves through outstanding ethical commitment in academic, religious, and social fields. It is endowed with 25,000 euros.



## Historian David Nirenberg receives Leopold Lucas Prize

The Faculty of Protestant Theology awarded the Dr. Leopold Lucas Prize to historian David Nirenberg, paying tribute to his research into the relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the Middle Ages and in the present day. At the award ceremony in May 2024, Nirenberg gave the keynote speech on the topic: *What theology and history can offer each other when thinking about Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*.

David Nirenberg is Director and Leon Levy Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton; he has received many academic awards and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Medieval Academy of America. In his work, he deals with the coexistence and opposition of the three monotheistic religions, both specifically in late medieval Spain and France and in analyses spanning several epochs.

Nirenberg contextualizes violence between religious groups and individuals, explaining its causes and intentions without excusing the violence or dismissing it as irrational. He analyzes anti-Judaism in Western thought since Antiquity and places its manifestations precisely in their respective historical contexts. By rationally explaining phenomena of rejection and violence and placing them in social, political, and economic contexts, Nirenberg shows possibilities for the peaceful coexistence of religions.

The Dr. Leopold Lucas Prize goes to individuals who have made a major contribution to greater tolerance and better relations between people and nations, and who have helped



Professor David Nirenberg

to promote a philosophy of tolerance. The Leopold Lucas Prize honors the memory of the Jewish rabbi and scholar Dr. Leopold Lucas, who died at Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1943. The prize, now of 50,000 euros, was endowed by his son, Franz D. Lucas, in 1972, and is the most significant prize the University has to bestow.

## Communicating academic findings

In 2024, the University of Tübingen once again honored innovative and successful academic communication by its researchers. The Tübingen Prize for Science Communication was awarded in equal parts to the Eastern European historian Professor Klaus Gestwa for his analysis and explanation of the background to the Russian war against Ukraine, and



Winners of the Tübingen Science Communication Prize, left to right: Klaus Gestwa, Ulrike von Luxburg, Thomas Thiemeyer, Tim Schaffarczyk, and Claudia Lemmes

to the AI researcher Professor Ulrike von Luxburg and the two cultural anthropologists Professor Thomas Thiemeyer and Tim Schaffarczyk on behalf of the team behind the Cyber and the City exhibition at the Tübingen Municipal Museum.

The young talent award for science communication went to historian Claudia Lemmes for her communication in relation to the DFG project *Effects of medieval to early modern urban development on bodies of water using the example of Bad Waldsee*.

The Tübingen Prize for Science Communication is part of the Tübingen Excellence Strategy. The aim is to motivate academics to better communicate the findings and implications of their research. The main prize is endowed with 10,000 euros; the prize for a junior researcher with 5,000 euros.



*Pre-Colombian artifacts from the Pelling-Zarnitz bequest*

## EXHIBITIONS

### Art and Cult at the University Museum

The University Museum of Ancient Cultures presented for the first time 23 artifacts from various Central and South American cultures as part of the *Art and Cult* exhibition. The age of the exhibits from the Maya, Zapotec, Chavin and Chimú cultures ranged from around 1000 BCE to the early modern appearance of Europeans in the Americas around 1500. The objects were bequeathed to the museum

by Dr. Claus Pelling and Dr. Marie Luise Zarnitz. Both were renowned collectors in the fields of Mayan artifacts, Byzantine seals, ancient Egyptian art, and Islamic coins. Their aim was to make these little-known cultures more accessible to the public. The bequest provided for a book publication of the artifacts and a permanent exhibition in the University Museum at Hohentübingen Castle.

### Unissued Diplomas

On February 24, 2022, everything changed for Ukrainian students. Lecture halls became air raid shelters; libraries, laboratories, and seminar rooms were destroyed. Following the Russian attack on their country, many Ukrainian students are now fighting to defend their homeland. Some students will never receive their diplomas because they have been killed in the war – either at the front or in missile and drone attacks on homes and civilian institutions.

The traveling exhibition *Unissued Diplomas* highlights these fates all over the world. It tells the stories of 40 Ukrainian students killed in the war, underlining that they would still be here, had it not been for the Russian invasion. It is a reminder of the high price that people in Ukraine have to pay every day in their fight for freedom and self-determination. In Tübingen, the *Unissued Diplomas* exhibition could be viewed in April and May, 2024, in the University Library foyer.

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