

Tübingen Korean Studies Lecture Series

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Fertility Crises in South Korea: Exploring the Impact of an EU-Korea Partnership on Gender Policies

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Biography: Patricia Chica, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at the University of Malaga specializing in EU-Korea relations, international cooperation, and gender policies in South Korea. She teaches on Korean studies, international cooperation, and gender topics at undergraduate and master's levels. Chica is involved in research on gender and inclusion in South Korea, funded by Spanish and Korean institutions. Her recent work explores institutional feminism, feminist movements, and misogynistic discourse in South Korea. In 2025, she was an invited EU-Korea relations expert at the NATO Public Forum.

Abstract: South Korea's low birth rate is a major national security concern. In 2024, former President Yoon declared a "national emergency" because of this issue, highlighting worries about the impact of a shrinking, aging population. This demographic challenge also affects many developed countries, including those in Europe. Fertility rates are influenced by many factors, making quick solutions difficult. Since 2000, South Korea's government has tried to address the problem, but efforts have mostly centered on economic incentives and have overlooked issues like work-life balance and disruptions to women's careers. Without considering these social factors, it's hard to fully understand or solve the problem. The European Union's experience with gender policies that improve work-life balance and support fertility could offer valuable lessons. Cooperation between Korea and the EU on these non-traditional security issues could open new paths for solutions. This conference will examine how Korea-EU collaboration, particularly through a gender-focused approach, might help address these demographic challenges.