



CCKF-ERCCT NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2026

No 20

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GREETINGS

Dear colleagues and friends of the ERCCT,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the 20th issue of the CCKF-ERCCT Newsletter. This edition once again reflects the vibrant intellectual exchange and diverse academic activities that have taken place at our Centre over the past months.

Alongside our regular formats, such as the Taiwan Colloquium and our Visiting Fellow Programme, we hosted a number of public events that foster dialogue between academia, policy, and the broader public. Our Taiwan Documentary Film Festival and joint film screenings once more demonstrated the ERCCT's commitment to combining academic inquiry with cultural engagement. These events serve as important platforms for exchange, reflection, and mutual understanding between Taiwan and Europe. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our Visiting Fellows, speakers, partners, and supporters for enriching our community with their expertise and perspectives. We warmly invite you to take part in our upcoming programmes and to continue supporting the advancement of Taiwan studies in Europe and beyond.

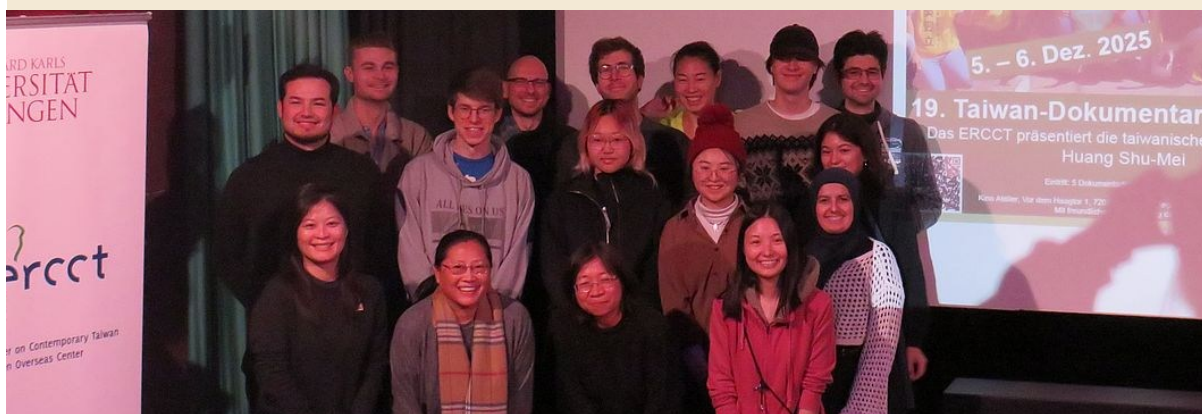
Prof. Gunter Schubert, ERCCT-Director



ACTIVITIES AT THE CENTER

2025 Taiwan Documentary Film Festival

The ERCCT's 19th Taiwan Documentary Film Festival took place on **5 and 6 December 2025** at Kino Atelier in Tübingen. Over the course of two days, the festival offered German and international audiences an in-depth cinematic exploration of Taiwan's environmental challenges, grassroots activism, and human–nature relationships.



EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN

Participants of the TECW, ERCCT visiting fellows, staff, and friends gather for a group photo following the film festival



This year's edition featured **Huang Shu-Mei** (黃淑梅), one of Taiwan's most important independent documentary filmmakers working on environmental and social issues, as the guest director.

The festival was honored by the presence of Ms. Wang Ching-Chi, First Secretary of the Taipei Representative Office in Munich, as well as the Press Officer of the Taipei Representative Office in Munich, both of whom attended the event in person. During the opening ceremony, Ms. Wang delivered welcoming remarks on behalf of the Taipei Representative Office, expressing appreciation for the long-standing

cultural and academic cooperation with the ERCCT and highlighting the importance of documentary film as a means of fostering mutual understanding between Taiwan and Europe. The ERCCT gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Taipei Representative Office, Munich Branch Office of the Federal Republic of Germany, which made the festival possible.



A Letter to Future Children

(給親愛的孩子, 2015)

Set in a mountainous region previously devastated by earthquakes and Typhoon Morakot, Huang Shu-Mei tells a long-suppressed story: the century-long destruction of Taiwan's green habitats. With the camera as witness, the film becomes a deeply personal message—a cinematic chronicle of the development and injury of Taiwan's mountain forests over one hundred years. *A Letter to Future Children* is both a warning and a legacy for future generations.



Never Give Up

(龍晟不打烊, 2022)

The residents of Longsheng Village in Miaoli County have steadfastly defended their homeland against pollution from industrial waste, despite threats and violence from criminal groups. For twenty years, they fought together with determination, and now victory seems within reach. Yet illegal dumping of industrial waste continues in many rural regions of Taiwan, with devastating consequences for people and the environment. The resistance of Longsheng is a powerful signal of Taiwan's environmental movement, while also exposing the tension between economic development and ecological justice. When profit confronts conscience and short-sightedness clashes with sustainability—where is Taiwan heading?



The Tale of Ino Yumin

(伊諾物語, 2023)

For many years, Ino Yumin has dedicated himself to passing on Atayal culture. He shares the knowledge he has accumulated over a lifetime about the mountains and forests with the children of his home village, Zhenxibao. The film conveys Ino's deeply rooted philosophy of nature—calm and powerful like the mountains themselves—and shows that a truly pure and harmonious relationship between humans and nature is possible.



The Battle of Matou Mountain

(馬頭山之戰, 2021)

In southern Taiwan, people have long told the story that Mount Matou resembles a noble white horse—the “White Horse God.” For the local population, it is a spiritual center and a symbol of their bond with land and nature. In 2015, plans were revealed to build an industrial waste land-fill on the mountain. To protect their sacred mountain and homeland, residents rose up and began a determined struggle—a powerful expression of deep love for land and nature.



The Solar Power Revelation

(七股光電啟示錄, 2024)

Since 2017, the Taiwanese government has pursued the goal of achieving net-zero CO₂ emissions by 2050, vigorously promoting the expansion of renewable energy. In Qigu District, Tainan—traditionally an area of fish farming—around ten percent of the land has already been converted into solar parks. Many fishermen and aquaculture farmers have lost their leases and livelihoods, as coastal ponds give way to a “sea of solar panels.” Once-vibrant fishing villages are undergoing profound ecological and social transformations as a result of the energy transition.

A Chip Odyssey: Joint film screening

In cooperation with the Stuttgart chapter of the Monte Jade Science and Technology Association, the ERCCT presented the recent hit documentary A Chip Odyssey (造山者—世紀的賭注), directed by Hsiao Chu-Chen (蕭菊貞), on **Saturday, 13 December 2025**, at Kino Atelier. The film drew a large audience, who were welcomed by Dr. Dieu Ian-Tsing (趙彥青), Eva Tseng from Monte Jade, and Mr. Ding of AOU, and were given an introduction to the topic by ERCCT Director Prof. Dr. Gunter Schubert.



Ghost Town: German translation launch

Taiwanese screen actor and novelist **Kevin Chen** came to Tübingen on **Wednesday, 5 November 2025**, to launch the German translation of his novel *Ghost Town*, together with the translator Monika Li, at a cheerful event co-hosted by the ERCCT and the CCT. In a lively dialogue, the author and translator shed light on the novel's references to Chen's own life, aspects of the translation process, and Taiwanese society and culture more broadly. The event was graciously chaired by Prof. Emily Graf and attended by a large audience, including students from the AOI and Taiwanese fans of Kevin Chen.



Jimmy Brainless's latest novel

On Monday, 3 November 2025, the ERCCT, in cooperation with the CCT, welcomed the young Austro-Taiwanese writer known by the pen name Jimmy Brainless from Vienna for a reading from his second novel, *Im Spiegel der Ahnen* (In the Mirror of the Ancestors). The book tells the story of both sides of the family of Simon, an Austro-Taiwanese man, tracing twentieth-century history through the life stories of his ancestors and exploring the entanglements of guilt and identity on both individual and societal levels in Taiwan and Austria. A kind-hearted and approachable presence, Jimmy Brainless fostered a warm and personal dialogue with the audience during the discussion that followed.



Jan 19 – Chen Pei-Chi (Dep. of Political Science, NTU)

The Impact of Amendments to the Act Governing the Allocation of Government Revenues and Expenditures on Taiwan's Local Public Finance

The Visiting Fellow presented part of her Ph.D. research on public finance to ERCCT Fellows, students from the Department of Chinese Studies, and participants in the master's program Politics and Society of East Asia.

June 26 – Chang Chuan-Hsien (Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica)

Changing Sides and Changing Minds: An Examination of Public Expectations of the Legislative Yuan

In his project, Dr. Chang examines how voters' partisanship influences their expectations of the Legislative Yuan, and he hypothesizes a relationship between these expectations and whether the government is unified or divided. His presentation was therefore followed by constructively critical questions from the audience, all of which Dr. Chang addressed with great patience.



Taiwan Colloquium Winter Term 2025/26

During both the summer and winter terms, the Taiwan-Colloquium serves as a **weekly gathering for ERCCT Research Fellows, Visiting Scholars, and interested students**. The colloquium provides a platform for sharing project ideas, discussing intended field studies, scrutinizing applied theory and methodology, and critically assessing empirical findings gathered in the field. The participation of our Visiting Scholars is particularly valuable as they not only evaluate the projects of the Fellows but also present their own research, opening it up for academic debate.

Jan 12 – Prof. Jonathan Sullivan (University of Nottingham)

Do influencers have any influence? Internet celebrities in Taiwanese politics and cross-Strait relations

Jonathan Sullivan from the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham presented a paper to ERCCT Fellows and master's students from the Department of Chinese Studies. Titled "**Influencer Politics: 館長 and the Evolution of Political Communication in Taiwan,**" the paper introduced the audience to the career trajectory of Holger Chen (陳之漢), contextualized his political messaging, explained his popularity, and sought to assess whether Chen—as a political communication phenomenon—represents an evolutionary step in Taiwan's political communication environment.



Jan 19 – Dr. Huang Jou-Fei (Sociology, Academia Sinica)

Geopolitical Risk and Taiwan's Public Support for Various Energy Options

Visiting Fellow Dr. Huang's presentation was based on a quantitative analysis of survey data examining whether and how Taiwanese public preferences for different energy sources change in response to expectations of a potential military conflict across the Taiwan Strait. The ensuing discussion focused on the implications of these findings for government policy-making and political communication in Taiwan's highly polarized political landscape.

Our Visiting Fellow Programme Winter Term

The ERCCT proudly presents its **Visiting Fellow Programme**, offering scholars a focused research experience in beautiful Tübingen. As a Visiting Fellow, participants receive a stipend, office space, and full integration into the ERCCT's academic activities.

Peggy Chen serves as a bridge between academic research and political practice. While pursuing her Ph.D., she has accumulated over nine years of professional experience in Taiwan's high-level political arena.

Her extensive career includes serving as a Confidential Secretary (Senior Policy Staff) to a Cabinet Minister and a Minister without Portfolio at the Executive Yuan (Cabinet). She has also worked as an Associate Researcher at a political think tank and as a Legislative Assistant in Parliament. In these roles, she specialized in policy analysis, public opinion monitoring, and strategic support for decision-making. Her research interests are firmly grounded in this practical experience and focus on government budgeting, central–local fiscal relations, and related political dynamics in Taiwan. She aims to draw on her professional insights to identify and document critical issues in Taiwan's public administration that are often overlooked by traditional theoretical frameworks.

Jou Fei Huang is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University at Buffalo. Her research focuses on the institutional factors that shape the allocation of public goods and on how foreign donors, as major providers, influence state legitimacy and public support for democracy, with particular attention to transportation and energy. Her central research questions examine the conditions under which governments mitigate the negative externalities of public goods provision and how geopolitical risk shapes policy processes. Her work has been published in *Policy Studies*.



Chen Pei-Chi 陳佩琪

*Home Institution: Graduate
Institute of Political Science,
National Taiwan University*



Huang Jou-Fei 黃柔翡

*Home Institution: Institute of
Sociology, Academia Sinica*



Peggy Chen, Pei-Chi:

from National Taiwan University, one of our Visiting Fellows, reflects on her time in Tübingen. Inspired by her experience here, she is now **expanding her research to study comparatively** the Fiscal Federalism in Transition in Taiwan and Germany.

I. Introduction: The Quest for a Fiscal Blueprint

Nestled along the Neckar River, the University of Tübingen is not merely a historic center of European thought; for a researcher in social sciences, especially political science, it is a living laboratory of federalism.

My doctoral research focuses on the urgent reform of the Act Governing the Allocation of Government Revenues and Expenditures in Taiwan. Compared to Taiwan's unitary system, Germany, as a federal state, not only leads the development of the entire European Union but has also been renowned for its excellent fiscal discipline, making it a country I've always wanted to visit. Therefore, my month-long visiting research at the University of Tübingen stemmed from a key question: How does Germany's intergovernmental fiscal transfer mechanism work? What aspects can Taiwan learn from it?

II. Intellectual Exchange: The Reality of "Executive Federalism"

For me, this academic visit had two major highlights. First, the seminars at the European Centre for Research on Contemporary Taiwan (ERCCT) at the University of Tübingen, where I listened to Prof. Jonathan Sullivan's preliminary research on well-known Taiwanese internet celebrities, Dr. Huang Jou-Fei's sharing on Taiwanese people's preferences for different energy sources and support for power grid development under geopolitical influences, and Dr. Chang Chuan-Hsien's research on the political polarization of Taiwanese civil society—all very insightful.

Further, when sharing my preliminary research proposal, the exchange on the concept of regional equilibrium also helped me clarify my research questions and future research focus.



The second highlight was at the end of the trip, where I had the honor of meeting Prof. Gabriele Abels, Speaker of the Board of The European Centre for Research on Federalism (ECRF).

Our discussion transcends theoretical formulas of tax allocation, delving into the political realities of the German system—the 2020 fiscal balance reforms (Finanzkraftausgleich) were not merely technical adjustments to VAT rates, but rather a high-stakes political deal reached "behind the scenes" between the Federal Chancellor and the governors of the 16 states.

This highlights a profound paradox: while the reforms abolished direct horizontal transfers disliked by wealthy states like Bavaria, they simultaneously expanded the federal government's power to intervene in state affairs. For my research, this underscores that fiscal reform is not simply about efficiency; its core lies in the interplay of political power, offering many points worthy of in-depth study and comparison with Taiwan.

III. The "Debt Brake" Dilemma: A Lesson for Taiwan

On this occasion, my visit coincided with the aftermath of the landmark **2023 Federal Constitutional Court rul-**

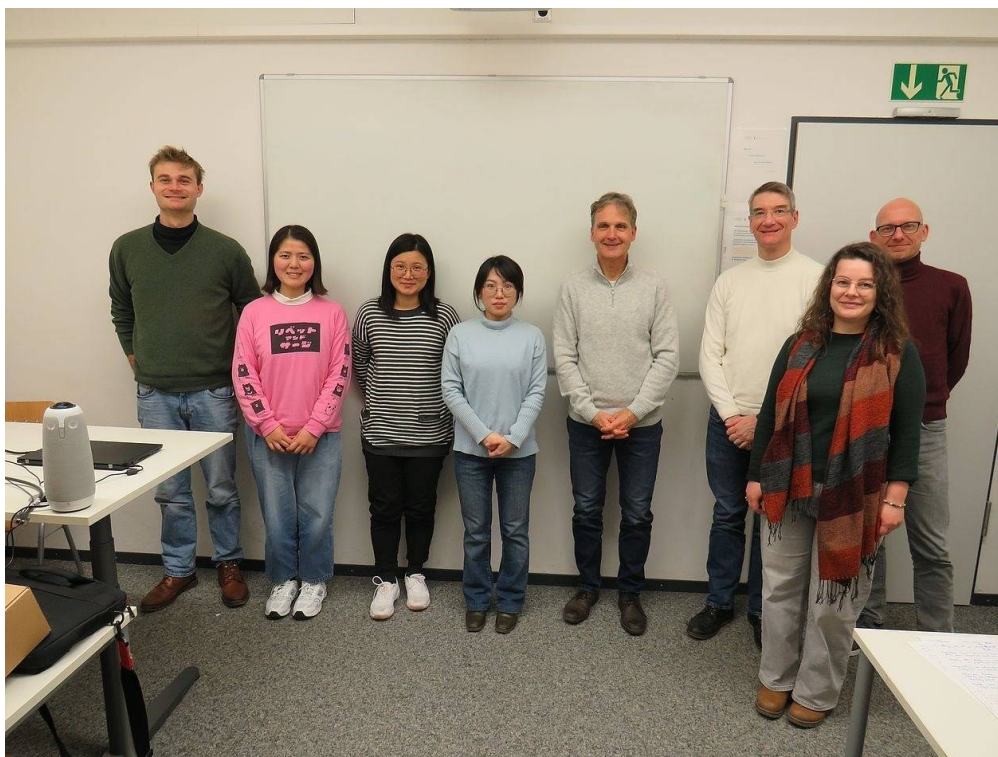
ing on the Climate and Transformation Fund (KTF). Witnessing the academic and political debate firsthand also offered a sobering lesson on fiscal discipline. The ruling, which strictly enforced the "Debt Brake" (*Schuldenbremse*), to some extent, highlights the rigidity of constitutional fiscal rules and suggests that Germany's fiscal discipline system may be due for adjustment in line with social changes.

For Taiwan, which is considering writing fixed tax-sharing ratios into law, the German experience offers a cautionary tale. While strict rules prevent moral hazard and "fiscal laziness," they can also create a "Joint-Decision Trap" (*Politikverflechtungs Falle*), paralyzing the state's ability to invest in critical transitions during crises. The German struggle to balance the "equivalence of living conditions" with fiscal sustainability has reshaped my understanding of the "Commitment Problem." If Taiwan wants to lean more towards a federal system and establish a shared tax system between the central and local governments, it cannot simply be a matter of revising the constitution or legal provisions; it must also have corresponding supporting operational mechanisms.

IV. Conclusion: Beyond the Formulas

Life in Tübingen was intellectually rigorous. The university's culture of deep, solitary contemplation (*Sitzfleisch*) provided the perfect environment to synthesize these complex ideas. I leave Germany with a refined hypothesis: The success of the German model relies not just on its tax formulas, but on a complex web of political safeguards and judicial oversight which is difficult to copy easily.

This visit has been transformative. It has shifted my dissertation focus from a purely economic analysis of tax coefficients to a broader institutional analysis of political negotiation. I return to Taiwan not with a simple "copy-paste" solution, but with a nuanced framework to advocate for a fiscal reform that respects Taiwan's unique constitutional reality while learning from Germany's evolving federalism.



Huang Jou-fei :

from Academia Sinica, one of our Visiting Scholars, reflects on her time in Tübingen. Inspired by her experience here, she is now **expanding her research to study the nuclear and renewable energy public opinions preferences in Taiwan relating to war risks.**

I truly appreciate the opportunity to visit Tübingen. Even though I did not stay long, I had the chance to engage with scholars and experience a slice of German life.

Tübingen is such a lovely city with excellent biking infrastructure. On most roads, there are dedicated bike lanes and even bicycle-specific traffic lights. I used to believe that cycling during snowy winters was simply too risky, but Germany proved me wrong.

The most impressive thing I observed was a father who had modified his bicycle: an infant seat was attached to the front, a small cart was connected at the back, and sitting in the cart was a husky. The bike was incredibly long, and I was genuinely surprised that the government does not seem to regulate how long a bicycle is allowed to be. But this, in a way, also reflects how well-developed and accommodating Germany's cycling infrastructure is.

This is very different from the situation in Taipei, where bike lanes often exist

on one stretch of road but suddenly disappear. At that point, cyclists are forced to decide whether to ride onto the sidewalk or merge into car traffic—either option increases the risk to pedestrians or to cyclists themselves.



Recently, I've been chatting with many German classmates, and it has really made me admire Germany's welfare system. If someone becomes unemployed, the government provides unemployment benefits for up to a year,

allowing people to seriously think about what kind of job they want to pursue next or to take the opportunity to receive further vocational training. If a couple has a child, both parents are entitled to paid parental leave to take care of the baby.

Even though I've only seen a small slice of Germany, it has left me deeply impressed. I sincerely hope that Taiwan can one day develop a welfare system as robust and supportive as Germany's.



During my stay, I presented one of my ongoing research projects, co-authored with Dr. Thung-Hong Lin, on the impact of war risk on public energy preferences. Our research seeks to answer the following question: Does exposure to war risk affect public energy preferences? Specifically, does it make people more willing to compromise and downplay nuclear risk? Or, alternatively, do people seek energy options that are

more resilient during conflicts, such as solar power?

Over the past few years, we have observed a series of policy reversals on nuclear energy across advanced democracies. In 2022, both Japan and South Korea shifted away from earlier nuclear phase-out trajectories. In 2024, Switzerland followed. By 2025, countries such as Spain, Belgium, and Italy began reconsidering or delaying their own anti-nuclear commitments.

These are wealthy, democratic societies with high levels of education and strong post-materialist values—precisely the kinds of countries where conventional wisdom would predict strong opposition to nuclear power. Why, then, are these societies reversing their anti-nuclear policies now? If economic development and value change were sufficient explanations, we would not expect this pattern to emerge. This suggests that economic development alone can no longer account for contemporary nuclear policy choices, and that additional constraints or competing considerations are shaping political behaviour.

Hence, we argue that it is necessary to bring war risk into the discussion. Intensified geopolitical risk increases the like-

likelihood of energy supply disruptions. Since 2022, the Russia–Ukraine war has rendered these concerns concrete rather than hypothetical, especially for countries that rely heavily on imported energy, such as Germany and Spain. When war risk becomes more immediate and politically salient, citizens may reassess other risks in relative terms. We therefore ask whether there is a trade-off—or competition—between perceived war risk and nuclear risk.

We rely on a national telephone survey conducted in Taiwan between October 28 and November 13, 2024, with a total sample size of 1,220 respondents. In short, war risk reshapes energy preferences in Taiwan in a selective way. Greater exposure to war risk increases support for nuclear power while reducing support for renewable energy, and this shift is only partially driven by economic misperceptions. Our findings highlight how geopolitical anxiety can produce pragmatic—and sometimes reluctant—adjustments in public attitudes toward contested technologies.

The presentation led to an interesting discussion that I had not anticipated. From my perspective, this divergence should be addressed through more effective government communication. At present, energy preferences are polarised along party lines, and this alignment makes it far more difficult to move policy forward. Some audience members argued that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has done everything it can to communicate its policy goals in promoting renewable energy. However, from my observation, there remains a gap between policy promises and implementation. The incumbent government needs to substantially revise its framing and narratives in order to reach citizens who remain skeptical about the reliability of renewable energy.

This has been an incredibly enriching experience. I've learned a great deal from Germany, and I sincerely hope to have the opportunity to come back to Tübingen.





CCKF-ERCCT Visiting Fellow Programme Summer Semester 2026

The European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan – A CCK Foundation Overseas Center (CCKF-ERCCT) at the University of Tübingen, Germany, pursues the objective of promoting and facilitating postgraduate **social science research on contemporary Taiwan** and scholarly cooperation between Europe and Taiwan. To that purpose, the Centre runs a **Visiting Fellows Programme** in cooperation with its Taiwanese partner institutions. Under this scheme, we invite **Taiwanese Ph.D. or Postdoc students** (R.O.C. nationality required!) each semester to join the CCKF-ERCCT for a **period of one month**.

The successful applicant will be granted a living stipend of 500 EUR, free accommodation, insurance provided by the CCKF-ERCCT, and a free round trip air ticket (economy class, up to € 1400).

During their stay in Tübingen, Visiting Fellows will be officially affiliated to the CCKF-ERCCT and be provided with office space. They will take part in the centre's activities, most notably the Taiwan Colloquium, and present their on-going Ph.D. or Postdoc research to the other fellows. Working languages at the CCKF-ERCCT are English and Mandarin Chinese.

Interested applicants should submit an academic CV, an exposé of their Ph.D. or postdoc research project of no longer than 10 pages, and a letter of recommendation by a professor of the institution where they are enrolled. All application materials should be sent in electronic form to Stefan Braig at stefan.braig@uni-tuebingen.de

The application deadline for summer semester 2026 (April 13 to July 25) is March 15, 2026.

For more information on the CCKF-ERCCT please refer to our website at <https://www.ercct.uni-tuebingen.de/> or feel free to write to stefan.braig@uni-tuebingen.de



Taiwan Europe Connectivity Workshop
at the CCKF-ERCCT, University of Tübingen, Germany
5 – 11 July, 2026

The European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan - A CCK Foundation Overseas Center at Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, Germany, will hold a workshop for emerging young scholars, i.e. Ph.D. students and postdocs, from **5 to 11 July, 2026**. The main topic for the workshop is "**The development of Taiwan-EU relations under China's gaze**".

Other paper submissions pertaining to the fields of Taiwan politics, society, economics, and cross-strait relations are also highly welcomed.

This established format provides participants from Taiwan and Europe with the opportunity to

- present their research to an international audience of peers
- engage in scholarly exchange on theory and methodology
- discuss publication strategies
- get to know Tübingen, the CCKF-ERCCT and Tübingen University

Travel expenses (of up to 1,250 EUR) and accommodation will be covered by the CCKF-ERCCT. Successful applicants are requested to submit a research paper after the workshop for online publication in the CCKF-ERCCT Online Paper Series.

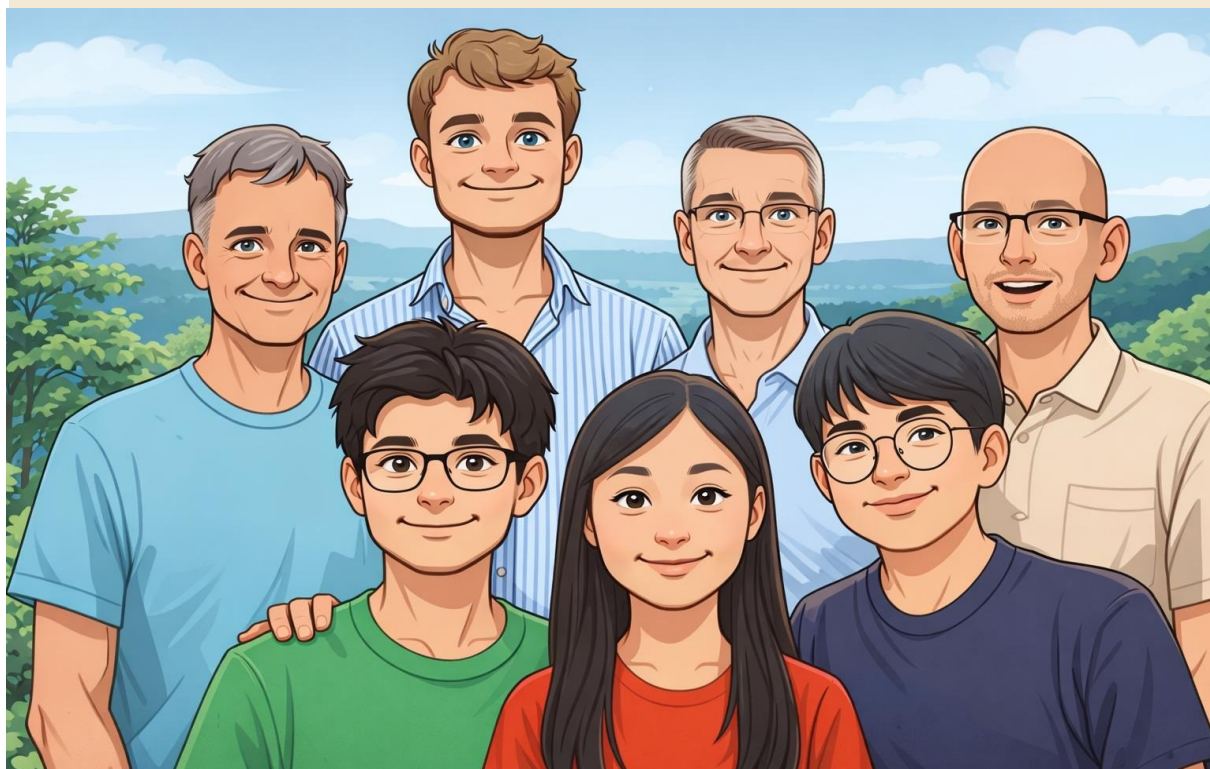
For application, please send your CV and an outline of your research project (5-6 pages) by **15 March, 2026** to:

Stefan Braig
ERCCT Managing Director
Mail: stefan.braig@uni-tuebingen.de



CONTACT Us

European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan -
A CCK Foundation Overseas Center (CCKF-ERCCT)



Jointly sponsored by the University of Tübingen (Germany) and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (Taiwan).

Keplerstraße 2

72074 Tübingen / Germany

Web: www.ercct.uni-tuebingen.de

E-Mail: ercct@uni-tuebingen.de

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