

Seventh Coffee Talk at the University of Passau: An inspiring meeting with our Fellows

3rd February 2026

The PICAIS Coffee Talk held on February 3rd at the University of Passau brought together PICAIS Fellows, faculty hosts, and guests for an engaging afternoon of scholarly exchange and networking. The four PICAIS Fellows presented concise overviews of their



Group photo with all participants

Photo: University of Passau

current research projects, followed by lively discussions and opportunities for interdisciplinary dialogue. The presentations spanned a wide range of topics from literary and artistic utopias, and digital political communication, to human–AI collaboration in critical decision-making, highlighting the international and interdisciplinary character of the PICAIS research community. Informal conversations over coffee and pastries further enriched the event, fostering new connections and ideas. We look forward to seeing new collaborations in the months ahead!



Discussion of interdisciplinary research fields

Photo: University of Passau

Prof. Dr. Tali Hadasa Blank (Tel Hai College, Israel): *Exploring the Duality of New Venture's Sustainability Commitment and Performance in Israel and Germany*

Host: Prof. Dr. Suleika Bort (Chair of International Management & Social Entrepreneurship)

Prof. Blank presented her research on how sustainability commitment influences the performance of new ventures, focusing on the roles of institutional contexts and stakeholders such as investors and boards. She highlighted how comparing the two countries can explore the effect of different environmental and institutional factors on the relationship between Sustainability commitment and firm performance in the short and long term.

Prof. Dr. Lorely French (Pacific University, USA): *Dreams, Hopes, and Utopias in Literature, Writings, Film, and Art by Roma and Sinti in Europe*

Host: Prof. Dr. Marina Ortrud Hertrampf (Professorship of Romance Area and Literary Studies with a focus on France)

Prof. French introduced her project, which focuses on the theme “Dreams, Hopes, and Utopias in Literature, Writing, Film, and Art by Roma and Sinti in Europe.” She also presented examples from the work of Ceija Stojka, which will be featured in the upcoming exhibition “Ceija Stojka: Say Yes to Life – Dreams, Hopes, Utopias.”

The exhibition will be on view in the foyer of the Central Library at the University of Passau from March 2 to March 26, 2026. It will open with a vernissage on March 5 at 6:00 p.m., featuring members of the Stojka family as well as international guests who will contribute to shaping the artistic programme.

In addition, Prof. French presented a second project at the University of Passau: an academic colloquium on the same topic as the exhibition, which will take place on March 6 and 7.

Dr. Sagorika Singha (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India): *Content Creators as Custodians: How YouTubers Affect Political Communication in Digital India*

Host: Prof. Dr. Wolfram Schaffar (Chair of Development Politics)

Dr. Singha conducts research about how regional YouTube influencers in India played a key role in shaping political narratives during the 2024 general elections. She highlights how more than ever in this digital age, state-backed influence initiatives blur the lines between digital labor, propaganda and economic opportunity.

Dr. David Sládek (Defence University, Czech Republik): *Airborne Human-AI Collaboration: Trust in Weather Forecasts for Critical UAS Tasks*

Host: Prof. Dr. Matthias Kranz (Chair of Embedded Systems)

Finally, Dr. Sládek introduced his research project at the University of Passau, which focuses on improving the accuracy and reliability of automated weather forecasting systems for drone operations by analyzing how errors propagate through different stages of the forecasting workflow. His project ultimately contributes to developing a robust and real-time weather system which can be used in human rescue searches, and which is tailored for drones across European industries.