

## Interview: Maximilian von Ehrlich, Director of the Center for Regional Economic Development (CRED)

The Center for Regional Economic Development (CRED) was founded in 2012 as an interdisciplinary center of the University of Bern. Professor Maximilian von Ehrlich, the Director of CRED, offers an overview on the center and outlines the upcoming changes that will take effect in January 2026.



### Interview with Maximilian von Ehrlich

*In your view, what have been the main achievements of CRED over the past 13 years?*

For me, CRED's biggest achievement was that it really put Bern on the map in regional and urban economics. Highlights were the CRED workshops, where we brought some of the world's leading researchers in the field to Bern, scholars like Esteban Rossi-Hansberg, Enrico Moretti, and Gilles Duranton. Having them here gave the university strong international visibility and created great opportunities for our PhD students and Postdocs.

A second achievement was the strong connection to policy. Over the years, CRED became a trusted partner for federal and cantonal administrations. We worked on projects for SECO, BWO and several cantons, and public authorities increasingly approached us directly because they knew they would get independent, high-quality analysis.

CRED also clearly increased the visibility of the department through media contributions, public events, and active networking.

*How will CRED change as of January 2026?*

From 2026, CRED will no longer exist as an independent center. But the activities and the spirit behind it won't disappear. They will be integrated directly into the Institute of Economics via the newly established *Forum Wirtschaft* and the Forschungsstelle Tourismus.

The focus will also become broader. Instead of concentrating mainly on regional topics, the new structure of *Forum Wirtschaft* includes all major areas of the department: monetary macro, IO, labor markets, public economics as well as regional economics.

An important development is that Tourism research, which was previously part of CRED, has now been upgraded to a standalone Forschungsstelle within the department.

Many successful formats and activities continue: For instance, the workshop series started under CRED, which brought top researchers to Bern, now lives on as the Bern–Zurich–Wisconsin collaboration with the University of Zurich and the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

*What will be the main focus and activities of the "Forum Wirtschaft"?*

*Forum Wirtschaft* will be the new umbrella for all outreach and policy-oriented activities. The aim is for the Department of Economics to become a go-to source for sound, research-based input on economic policy in Switzerland.

The Forum will focus on regular public communication, providing research-based input on current Swiss economic debates. It will also take a strong role in policy consulting projects, continuing and expanding the work with federal and cantonal administrations.

Events will be a central pillar as well. The annual Econ Bern Lecture is planned to be complemented by policy roundtables that bring together experts from administration, academia, and sometimes the private sector. The Forum will also serve as the umbrella for conferences, including the ongoing Bern–Zurich–Wisconsin workshop, one of our strongest international collaborations.

In short, the *Forum Wirtschaft* is there to make the department's expertise more visible, strengthen our links to policymakers, and ensure that our research has a clear and meaningful presence in public debates.

*Maximilian von Ehrlich, thank you very much for this interview.*