Abschlussbericht
Leibniz-WissenschaftsCampus

Berlin Centre for Consumer Policies (BCCP)

Project number: W5/2018

Period under review

October 2019 – September 2025

Participating Leibniz Institute(s)

German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin) – leading institute

Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB)

Participating universities

Humboldt Universität zu Berlin (HUB)

Technische Universität Berlin (TUB)

Other partners

European School of Management and Technology (ESMT Berlin)

Hertie School

Alexander von Humboldt Institut für Internet und Gesellschaft (HIIG)

Berlin School of Economics (BSE)

Spokesperson

Prof. Dr. Tomaso Duso

Executive Summary

The Berlin Centre for Consumer Policies (BCCP) successfully consolidated its position as a sustainable, international, and interdisciplinary platform at the intersection of Industrial Organization, Behavioural Economics, Competition Law, and Data Science. Operating as a bottom-up network of approximately 90 Fellows across its partner institutions — DIW Berlin, WZB, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, ESMT Berlin, the Hertie School, and HIIG — BCCP aligned its research with the regulatory challenges of the digital economy, including the GDPR, Digital Markets Act, Digital Services Act, and AI Act.

The Centre fulfilled its mandate to provide actionable evidence for policymakers and to develop young scholars. Key milestones include the institutionalisation of the BCCP Seed Grant Program (ten grants awarded), partial financial support for 20 BSoE doctoral students and five DIW Graduate Center doctoral students, and the establishment of recurring high-impact formats such as the BCCP Conference, Berlin IO Day, the Virtual Digital Economy Seminar, and the Berlin Applied Micro, Behavioural Economics, and Micro Theory seminars.

The COVID-19 pandemic reshaped operations from 2019 onward, requiring a strategic shift toward digital formats by intensifying outreach, expanding the News section (later BSE Insights), and delivering the Weekly Digest.

Fellows produced a substantial body of high-quality research across three areas — Consumer and Market Behaviour, Policy Design, and Policy Evaluation — with digitalisation as a unifying theme. Publications appeared in leading journals including the Journal of Political Economy, American Economic Journal: Microeconomics, Journal of the European Economic Association, Management Science, and the Economic Journal. Twelve dissertations were completed and eleven are ongoing. Three highly competitive ERC grants were secured by BCCP members (Bedre-Defolie, Strausz, Ullrich), and the DFG Collaborative Research Center TRR 190 was extended to 2028. Members also delivered applied research for DG Competition and the German Federal Ministry of Justice. Flagship events included the 5th BCCP Conference on AI: Prospects, Challenges, and Regulation (2024), online conferences during the pandemic, and Distinguished Lectures by Nobel Laureates Jean Tirole and Alvin E. Roth.

BCCP evolved into a connector between academic research and policy practice. Fellows engage with the German Parliament, federal ministries, the Monopolies Commission, and international institutions. Communication channels include the BCCP website, the Weekly Digest, BSoE Insights, and the publication series of DIW Berlin and WZB.

The Seed Grant Program empowered junior scholars to lead independent projects, while structured cooperation with the Berlin School of Economics and the DIW Graduate Center embeds them in a vibrant mentoring culture.

A flat, decentralised governance structure is led by a Board of Directors with Spokesperson Tomaso Duso (DIW Berlin/TU Berlin), supported by an Advisory Board including Oren Bar-Gill (Harvard), Amelia Fletcher (UEA), and Hans-Theo Normann (Düsseldorf). The fellowship comprises 46 Senior Fellows, 27 postdocs and assistant professors, and 18 Junior Fellows.

Quality is ensured through peer-reviewed publication in high-impact journals, adherence to the Open Access policies of the participating Leibniz institutes, and oversight by the international Scientific Advisory Board.

Partner institutions contributed approximately €3.08 million in in-kind resources over 2019–2025. Beyond the funding period, the participating institutions remain committed to sustaining BCCP's identity as a distributed network. Future activities will focus on selective, high-value formats, deeper collaborations with complementary research networks, and leveraging BCCP's reputation to pursue jointly funded opportunities — ensuring its continued role as an anchor for consumer policy research in Berlin and beyond.

Achievement of objectives and milestones

The Berlin Centre for Consumer Policies (BCCP) successfully consolidated its position as an international and interdisciplinary platform for competition and consumer policy research. The Centre achieved its core objective of establishing strategic alignment with the multifaceted challenges of digitalization and Big Data, particularly in implementing regulatory frameworks such as the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Digital Markets Act (DMA), the Digital Services Act (DSA), and the AI Act. This positioning has enabled BCCP to provide high-level, actionable evidence for policymakers navigating these complex policy domains.

BCCP strengthened Berlin's research environment through deep cooperation across member institutions including DIW Berlin, WZB, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, ESMT Berlin, the Hertie School, and the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society. Operating as a bottom-up network of approximately 90 Fellows, the Centre successfully created synergies for scientific research despite pandemic-related constraints. After disruption due to the Covid-19 pandemic, BCCP restored its calendar of flagship events including the BCCP Conference, Berlin Applied Micro and Behavioral Economics seminars, and the Virtual Digital Economy Seminar in collaboration with international partners.

A cornerstone achievement was advancing the next generation of scholars. The Centre provided financial support to 20 BSoE and 5 DIW Berlin Graduate Center doctoral students. The institutionalization of the BCCP Seed Grant Program—awarding 10 grants during the reporting period—enabled flexible funding for non-tenured researchers and junior professors to support innovative research in digital markets analysis, empirical research through experiments, and interdisciplinary networking. Through partnerships with the Berlin School of Economics and the Graduate Center, combined with executive masterclasses in behavioral economics and policy evaluation, the Centre ensured its junior researchers developed the academic rigor and specialized skills necessary for evidence-based policy advice.

Activities and obstacles

COVID-19 disrupted operations from October 2019, forcing a shift toward digital formats and project extensions until September 30, 2025. The shift away from in-person knowledge exchange and post-pandemic reluctance to travel to networking events necessitated a revised strategy.

To maintain knowledge continuity, BCCP intensified digital outreach. The BCCP website News section was expanded to provide research summaries and was subsequently integrated into BSoE Insights, a joint platform with the Berlin School of Economics supported by the WGL. The Weekly Digest continued circulating events and updates to Fellows and external subscribers. PhD students were encouraged to contribute to science communication through funding support. While the BCCP Twitter account reached 650 followers by end of 2023, the Centre withdrew in early 2025 when its direction no longer aligned with institutional principles. The bi-annual Newsletter was discontinued following the departure of its dedicated coordinator, as remaining resources were absorbed by ongoing activities.

Despite obstacles, strategic operational shifts including digital formats preserved the research network and infrastructure while ensuring continued delivery of core objectives

Results and successes

Publications

With around 80 active members, BCCP spans consumer policy, competition economics, digital markets, behavioural economics, law, and regulatory design. Research remains structured around three core themes: Consumer and Market Behaviour, Policy Design, and Policy Evaluation with digitalization as a unifying theme. Selected work reflects the Centre's evolving agenda (a complete publication list is provided in the appendix).

In **Consumer and Market Behaviour**, Anderson and Bedre-Defolie (forthcoming) develop a model of hybrid platforms combining monopolistic competition with a dominant firm, with implications for platform regulation. Nocke and Strausz (2023) analyse collective brand reputation, showing how reputational concerns shape product quality and consumer welfare. Adena and Huck (2020) study the long-term consequences of avoidance strategies in online fundraising, revealing persistent negative effects on giving. Ngangoué and Weizsäcker (2021) examine learning processes in financial markets, showing that consumers draw different inferences from unrealized versus realized prices, with market design implications. Friedrichsen, König, and Lausen (2021) demonstrate how social status concerns shape the political economy of publicly provided private goods, contributing to redistribution analysis.

In **Policy Design**, Dargnies, Hakimov, and Kübler (2024) use experiments to study algorithmic hiring tools, documenting discrimination risks requiring transparency. Ribers and Ullrich (2024) show that algorithmic decision-support tools complement human judgment, using antibiotic prescribing as a case study. Nguyen et al. (2025) survey poisoning attacks on recommender systems, mapping vulnerabilities for platform regulation. Hacker, Engel, and Mauer (2023) analyse regulatory challenges of large generative AI models, while Novelli, Hacker et al. (2024) assess generative AI under EU law on liability, privacy, and intellectual property. Danz, Engelmann, and Kübler (2022) find that legal standards anchor consumers' ethical assessments. Roynane and Taylor (2022) explore competing sales channels with captive consumers, with implications for platform and retail regulation. Kalamov and Runkel (2022) study optimal taxes on unhealthy food consumption.

In **Policy Evaluation**, Dušek and Traxler (2022) exploit law enforcement variation to identify learning and deterrence effects, aiding regulatory intervention design. Newham, Seldeslachts, and Banal-Estañol (2025) provide causal evidence that common ownership reduces market entry in pharmaceuticals, informing competition policy. Duso, Nardotto, and Seldeslachts (2025) evaluate state aid control in German broadband markets, offering empirical evidence on EU policy welfare effects. Chiappinelli, Giuffrida, and Spagnolo (2025) assess public procurement as an innovation policy instrument. Baake, Schwenen, and von Hirschhausen (2023) analyse local energy markets, contributing to decentralized energy regulation. Sarmiento, Wägner, and Zachlan (2023) estimate air quality and well-being effects of low-emission zones. Duso, Michelsen, Schaefer, and Tran (2024) examine Airbnb's impact on urban rental markets, addressing housing affordability.

Qualifications/Graduations

BCCP funded 5 doctoral and 3 postdoctoral fellows and supported 20 BSoE PhD scholarships. 12 dissertations were completed, 11 are ongoing, and 2 were abandoned. Leading international scholars, incl Rosa Ferrer (UPF), Ruben Durante (UPF), Michael Lechner (U St. Gallen), Jann Spiess (Stanford), Paul Heidhues (DICE) were attracted to deliver masterclasses for early-career researchers.

Successful external funding applications

BCCP did not directly raise funds but its PIs had successful applications closely tied to and based on BCCP. The collaboration with DFG's CRC TRR 190 "Rationality and Competition" was extended to 2028, supporting joint research on digital markets, AI, behavioral decision-making, information design, and regulatory technologies. Many BCCP researchers lead or contribute to CRC subprojects, resulting in a substantial number of high-quality publications in leading journals.

From 2019, three BCCP members received ERC grants: Hannes Ullrich (Starting Grant, 2019–2025) on antibiotic resistance and information in prescribing; Özlem Bedre-Defolie (Starting Grant, 2020–2025) on digital platforms and regulation; and Roland Strausz (Advanced Grant, 2023–2028) on data privacy in markets. These successes enhanced research visibility, attracted students, and fostered collaborations.

BCCP members contributed to research for the European Commission's DG Competition, including studies on state aid for airports and airlines (2024–2025), banks in difficulty (2023–2024), EU competition (2023–2024), COVID-aid effectiveness (2023), and environmental protection guidelines (2020–2021). Domestic work included a BMJV study (2021–2023) on housing market distributional effects. These studies provide evidence-based assessments that directly informed European and national policy.

Academic events

A core contribution of BCCP has been the organization and communication of academic events in Berlin. The Annual BCCP Conference brings together around 150 participants from academia, policy, and industry as a key forum for knowledge exchange. During the pandemic this conference was temporarily replaced by online panels, which broadened participation but could not fully replace in-person networking. BCCP therefore returned to a full on-site format in 2024, and the pandemic-era experience has enriched its event toolbox.

Recurring activities include the bi-weekly seminar series in Applied Microeconomics, Behavioural Economics, and Microeconomic Theory, which invite leading researchers and expand international networks. BCCP also co-organises the Berlin IO Day, an annual workshop for industrial organisation researchers, and the Virtual Digital Economy Seminar, an international online series on digital markets and policy attracting a global audience. The BCCP Forum provided an exchange platform for Fellows at all career stages; it was valued for intellectual exchange and community building. A wide range of additional workshops, lectures, and masterclasses were co-organised and supported by BCCP, see Appendix.

Transfer

The collaboration of two Leibniz institutes, university faculties (Law, Economics, and Computer Science), and two private schools forms a highly effective institutional constellation. BCCP coordinates the policy-transfer capacity of DIW Berlin, WZB, ESMT, and the Hertie School with the broad academic output of the universities. Grounded in consistently high research standards, this structure creates unique synergies and intellectual exchange.

BCCP effectively connects academic research and policy practice through regular roundtables and exchanges. Fellows actively engage with the German Parliament, ministries, and international institutions. Furthermore, scholars advise key government bodies—including the Monopolies Commission and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs—and contribute to parliamentary hearings on consumer and competition policy.

Acting as a hub for policymakers and stakeholders, BCCP bridges policy-oriented Leibniz work with academic university research. Major transfer activities include the annual BCCP Conference, which unites interdisciplinary researchers with policymakers and industry. Key communication tools include the website (whose News section was integrated into BSE Insights) and the widely circulated Weekly Digest, though the biannual Newsletter ended for financial reasons. Finally, Leibniz outlets like *WZB-Mitteilungen* and DIW Berlin's *Wochenbericht* remain vital for the Centre's policy outreach.

Equal opportunities, career development and internationalisation

The Board underwent a strategic transition to integrate younger scientists and achieve gender parity (appointing Maja Adena and Özlem Bedre-Defolie). All professional communication occurs in English. The Seed Grant Program empowers non-tenured Fellows to lead independent projects, while collaboration with BSoE and the DIW Graduate Center provides structured mentoring.

Structures and collaboration

BCCP is organized around a decentralized, bottom-up structure with a small Board of Directors overseeing key decisions. The Board includes Maja Adena (WZB, Technische Universität Berlin, Head of the Research Group on Information, Incentives, and Inequality), Tomaso Duso (Spokesperson, DIW Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, Chairman of the German Monopolies Commission), Özlem Bedre-Defolie (ESMT Berlin, European University Institute), and Roland Strausz (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin). The Advisory Board of renowned experts—Oren Bar-Gill (Harvard University), Amelia Fletcher (University of East Anglia), and Hans-Theo Normann (University of Düsseldorf)—ensures international standards. A streamlined coordination team, led by the Spokesperson and Coordinator (until 2023), handles daily operations with support from DIW Berlin. The team is supported by another doctoral student, a student assistant, and the administrative infrastructure provided by DIW Berlin.

BCCP comprises approximately 90 Fellows across three career stages: 46 Senior Fellows (tenured faculty providing stable foundations), 27 Fellows (assistant professors and postdocs), and 18 doctoral students. This intentional turnover reflects BCCP's mission as a springboard for early-career researchers. BCCP functions as a central hub for an interdisciplinary network combining Industrial Organization, Behavioral Economics, Competition Law, and Data Science, disseminating insights through conferences, policy forums, and digital outlets.

Quality assurance

BCCP maintains rigorous quality standards through two primary mechanisms. First, research is published in high-impact, peer-reviewed academic journals, ensuring contributions to Industrial Organization, Behavioral Economics, and Competition Law meet demanding scientific standards. BCCP adheres to Open Access policies established by its Leibniz institutes, DIW Berlin and WZB, ensuring publicly funded research is available to the scientific community and public without financial barriers.

Second, the Scientific Advisory Board—composed of authoritative international scholars spanning diverse fields relevant to the Centre's mission—provides independent external evaluation and strategic guidance. The board advises the Board of Directors on research direction, thematic networking quality, and outreach effectiveness, ensuring BCCP maintains its competitive edge as a leading international platform for consumer policy.

Additional resources

The consortium’s internal personnel resources strategically complemented Leibniz Association funding. These institutional contributions covered project leaders and postdoctoral researchers responsible for organizing and executing BCCP activities. Partner institutions' own funds were essential for promoting cross-disciplinary and international dialogue, sustaining their invaluable role in the Campus's success by bridging academic research and political decision-making.

Alongside personnel, material resources primarily funded PhD scholarships for early-career researchers. They also supported operational costs for seminars and workshops, including technical infrastructure, academic printing, and event logistics.

Furthermore, partner institutions provided substantial resources through the dedication of involved faculty and researchers (Table 1). This investment comprised 5-10% of participating professors’ working hours, alongside significant time from the broader research staff.

Outlook

Continuing BCCP beyond its formal funding is both a challenge and an opportunity. Despite the lack of renewed funding, its core elements remain: a strong interdisciplinary network, high research standards, and a focus on consumer and competition policy in both digital and traditional markets. Sustained by existing institutional resources, BCCP evolves from a centrally funded ScienceCampus into a distributed, strategically coordinated collaboration hub.

Future activities will prioritize low-cost, high-impact formats like targeted workshops, seminars, and exchanges. Leveraging its established reputation, BCCP is positioned to deepen collaborations with research, policy, and international partners to attract joint events and external funding. Maintaining its unique interdisciplinary and policy-oriented character will ensure BCCP remains a vital anchor for consumer policy research in Berlin and beyond.