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## Successful network research is extended

**Sleep, religious conflicts and the health of the environment, plants, humans and animals: these are the topics of the three Interfaculty Research Cooperations at the University of Bern. The innovative network projects, which started in 2018, were very successful and will therefore be extended for two years.**

With the launch of three Interfaculty Research Cooperations (IRC) in 2018, the University of Bern broke new ground in research promotion: The IRCs are network projects, each of which brings together 8 to 13 research groups from various faculties, are oriented towards the University of Bern's five priority topics. In a competitive process, the three projects "One Health", "Religious Conflicts and Coping Strategies" and "Decoding Sleep" were selected for funding of CHF 1.5 million each per year.

### Impressive performance record

"All three projects have produced high-quality scientific work in the last two years," says Daniel Candinas, Vice Rector for Research at the University of Bern. Therefore, the Executive Board of the University of Bern has decided to extend all three IRCs for another two years. "The IRC's impressive track record confirms our decision to specifically promote interdisciplinary research. Complex, current problem areas can only be tackled in an interdisciplinary manner," says Candinas. The IRC's funding by the University of Bern is limited to a total of four years.

### "One Health": the health of the environment, humans and animals in focus

Within a short period of time, the IRC "One Health" has established a new, unique interdisciplinary research network to investigate the impact of various environmental chemicals on the health of food chains and their microbial communities. Various research successes have already been recorded. "For example, we were recently able to show for the first time in detail [how agricultural practice affects pesticide pollution in seabed ecosystems in the long term](#)," says Matthias Erb, Director of the IRC "One Health". In addition, the IRC was also very active in teaching (e.g. with the Summer School "Hidden Players in the Food Chain"), promoting young scientists and raising third-party funds.

"In the long term, our efforts should, for example, contribute to pesticide-free, sustainable agriculture. The first two years have shown the great potential and enormous benefits of this

interfaculty network. We want to build on this," says Matthias Erb.

The interdisciplinary "One Health" approach is also gaining ground internationally. Every year on November 3, for example, researchers around the world mark the "[One Health Day](#)" to draw attention to the great importance of interdisciplinary research to maintain and promote the health of the environment, humans and animals - this year this topic is more relevant than ever.

### **"Religious Conflicts and Coping Strategies": Model for the Analysis of Religious Conflicts**

Since the start of the project, the IRC "Religious Conflicts and Coping Strategies" has developed a model for the analysis of conflicts with religious dimensions, involving all disciplines involved. "The model can be applied in science as well as in politics, in religious communities, in international peace work. Media professionals can also use the model to achieve a differentiated presentation of conflicts with religious dimensions in their reporting," explains IRC Director Katharina Heyden.

Since 2018, the members of the IRC have published or submitted for publication a total of 83 scientific papers and organized numerous scientific conferences and workshops. In addition, an [interactive educational video](#) on the IRC's topic was also published this year. There are also plans for the future in research and teaching: "2021 will see, among other things, a doctoral school, a conference in cooperation with the platform [versoehnt.ch](#), and of course our own annual conference under the title *Gender Religion Conflicts*," says Heyden.

### **"Decoding Sleep": What constitutes healthy sleep**

The IRC "Decoding Sleep" has used the last two years to reorient sleep research on a local level, involving various disciplines, and to link it internationally. Among the numerous research successes from the Bernese consortium, recent reports which highlighted that [people can learn new vocabulary of a foreign language during deep sleep](#) and that in animal models, [recovery after a stroke can be promoted by influencing sleep](#), gained a lot of media attention. In addition, the IRC is strongly committed to supporting researchers` at all academic career stages. "In the future, we would like to give the IRC an even stronger international orientation and establish the University of Bern among the world's leading centers of interdisciplinary sleep research," says Claudio Bassetti, head of the IRC "Decoding Sleep".

Sleep-wake disturbances can be the first signs of diseases - such as Parkinson's, dementia or depression. "We contribute to a deeper understanding of what constitutes healthy sleep and how physical, psychological and mental well-being, performance and quality of life can be improved as a result. Not only patients but also the general public should be able to benefit from the findings of our research," says Bassetti.