To whom it may concern

Alexander Ehrlich
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Mannheim, 11 February 2026

Application for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I am writing to apply for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026. I am currently a PhD student in Economics at the Technical University of Munich and a Researcher at the Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW) in Mannheim. I am also a Research Fellow of the Cluster of Excellence TransforM (Munich Center for Transformative Technologies and Societal Change).

My research focuses on firm-level innovation and productivity, with a particular emphasis on the role of artificial intelligence and innovation policy, using applied microeconometric methods and administrative and survey data. I am currently in the third year of my PhD and expect to complete my dissertation in 2028. Further details on my research and motivation for attending the boot camp are provided in the accompanying one-page essay.

A confidential letter of recommendation will be provided by my PhD supervisor, Prof. Dr. Hanna Hottenrott.

Thank you very much for considering my application. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Sincerely,
Alexander Ehrlich

Alexander Ehrlich

Contact Information

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Research Interests

Economics of Innovation, Artificial Intelligence, Productivity, Applied Microeconometrics

Current Positions

Since 05/2023	Researcher, Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW), Mannheim, Germany
Since 11/2023	Doctoral Student, Technical University of Munich (TUM), Munich, Germany Department of Economics & Policy Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hanna Hottenrott
Since 01/2026	Research Fellow, Cluster of Excellence TransforM (Munich Center for Transformative Technologies and Societal Change), Munich, Germany

Previous Positions

03/2022 - 04/2023	Junior Economist, Düsseldorf Competition Economics GmbH (formerly DICE Consult GmbH)
10/2021 - 02/2022	Intern and Working Student, Düsseldorf Competition Economics GmbH
10/2019 - 12/2021	Student Research Assistant, Düsseldorf Institute for Competition Economics (DICE)
04/2019 - 09/2019	Student Assistant, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
09/2016 - 04/2018	Working Student, Edeka Handelsgesellschaft Rhein-Ruhr mbH
10/2017 - 01/2018	Student Assistant, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

Education

10/2019 - 01/2023	Master of Science in Economics Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany Focus: Competition Economics
09/2018 - 01/2019	Study Abroad University of Maribor, Maribor, Slovenia Department of Economics and Business
10/2015 - 09/2019	Bachelor of Science in Economics Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany Focus: European Economic Policy

Working Papers and Work in Progress

Unleashing Productivity: The Role of AI and Data-Driven Investments in Firm Performance (with Bettina Peters). Manuscript in advanced draft.

To repeat or not to repeat R&D grants to firms: That is the question (with Helena Lenihan, Kevin Mulligan, Mauricio Perez-Alaniz and Christian Rammer). Manuscript in advanced draft.

The loss of public funding: How bad is it? (with Bastian Krieger). Work in progress.

R&D Grant Support for Firms During Economic Crisis (with Kornelius Kraft and Christian Rammer). Work in progress.

Research Presentations

2026	DRUID Academy (Aarhus University), 3rd KITZ Workshop on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology)
2025	DRUID Conference (Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto), 3rd REGIS Summer School (University of Bordeaux), 12th KID Summer School (Côte d'Azur University), PRICE Seminar (ZEW), 1st Workshop in Economics of Innovation, Geography and Science (University of Turin)
2024	DRUID Academy (University of Southern Denmark), Munich Summer Institute PhD Workshop (CU, ETH, HEC, LMU, MPI, TUM), 2nd REGIS Summer School (University Carlos III of Madrid), 24th Bavarian Micro Day (University of Würzburg), 12th Competition and Innovation Summer School (DICE), Research Workshop in Innovation Economics and Policy (TUM)
2023	REGIS Reading Group (virtual)

Organization

Since 02/2024	PRICE Seminar – Progress in Innovation, Competition and Entrepreneurship
2024	10th ZEW Conference on the Economics of Innovation and Patenting
2026	11th ZEW Conference on the Economics of Innovation and Patenting

Selected Policy Work

Results from the OECD microBeRD Project (forthcoming, 2026),
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
Country contributor (Germany).

Innovation Participation, Innovations and Productivity in the German Economy (2026),
Commission of Experts for Research and Innovation (EFI).

Evaluation of the Funding Programme Eurostars-2 (2014-2021) – National Part (2024),
Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

Evaluation of the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs (ZIM) (2024),
Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK).

Mannheim Innovation Panel: Innovation Activities of Enterprises in Germany (since 2023),
Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR).

Completed Doctoral Courses

2025	Estimating the Production Function, Productivity and Markups, Jordi Jaumandreu (Boston University)
2024	Advanced Econometrics, Jeffrey M. Wooldridge (Michigan State University), Economics of Ideas, Science, and Innovation, several professors (Institute for Progress), Difference-in-Differences, Scott Cunningham (Baylor University), Effective Programming Practice for Economists, Hans-Martin von Gaudecker (University of Bonn), Mathematics, Martin Schlather (University of Mannheim)
2023	Management and Economics of Innovation, several professors (Copenhagen Business School), Causal Machine Learning, Michael Lechner (University of St. Gallen)

Miscellaneous

Software	Stata, R, Python, LaTeX
Languages	German (native), English (fluent)

Research Statement

My research covers primarily the economics of innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) at the firm level, with a particular focus on productivity, innovation input, and firm performance effects. Using firm-level administrative and survey data combined with applied microeconometric methods, I analyse technology adoption and firms' responses to innovation policy.

The first strand of my research focuses on innovation policy. One current project analyses repeated R&D grant support and its effects on firms' R&D input additionality and performance outcomes over time, using firm-level data from the largest R&D grant programme in Germany and comparable programme data from Ireland. The two-country setting allows me to study policy effects across distinct economic and industrial structures in a large and a small open economy. I am also working on related ongoing studies that extend this policy-focused research agenda. One study investigates how firms adjust their innovation and investment behaviour when R&D grant funding is withdrawn, a question that has become increasingly relevant in light of recent funding cuts across countries. Another project analyses whether R&D grants awarded to firms that are strongly affected by an economic crisis are as effective as grants to less affected firms. In a related planned project, I will analyse firm responses to the recent introduction of the R&D tax credit in Germany, focussing on which firms take up tax-based support and whether it reaches firms that previously did not use grant-based R&D funding.

In a second strand of my research, I am analysing AI adoption and its productivity effects at the firm level. In my main AI project, I study how AI adoption and data investments, separately and jointly, are associated with firm productivity. A central focus is the complementarity between AI and firm-specific data, highlighting that technology adoption alone is not sufficient to realize productivity gains. This work contributes firm-level evidence to the discussion of AI as a general-purpose technology and the role of complementary intangible investments. A related planned project will study AI adoption supported by external consultancies and how external expertise interacts with internal capabilities in shaping adoption and performance effects.

I want to attend the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp because of its strong emphasis on empirical innovation research using micro-data. My work relies on quasi-experimental approaches and rich microdata, and I would particularly benefit from deeper exposure to current methods and frameworks used in frontier innovation research. Close interaction with senior scholars and other participants would help me sharpen research questions, refine empirical strategies, and better position my projects within the innovation and technology adoption literature. I expect the boot camp to strengthen the design and interpretation of my ongoing and planned work.

To whom it may concern

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11 February 2026

Letter of recommendation for Alexander Ehrlich

To the Selection Committee,

Given my positive experience with the work of Alexander Ehrlich, it is my pleasure to recommend him for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026. I am writing this letter in the capacity of his PhD supervisor. In this role, I work closely with him on several projects in innovation economics and policy evaluation. He is an extremely talented, smart and capable young researcher with a clear focus on firm-level innovation, especially related to artificial intelligence and innovation policy.

Alexander works with complex firm-level administrative data sets and survey data. His current research includes a highly interesting and already quite well-developed project on the productivity effects of AI adoption and data investments. In addition, he is working on several projects on policy measures for R&D support. He combines strong empirical execution with an excellent economic intuition and an outstanding understanding of institutional and political settings.

Moreover, he is highly reliable in research collaboration, manages data and empirical work independently and rigorously. He takes feedback seriously and aims to continuously improve his skills and work.

The NBER Innovation Research Bootcamp would be an excellent fit for his research profile and methodological interests. I am confident that he would greatly benefit from the programme and provide a highly valuable contribution to the participant group.

Sincerely,