

## Ostwestfalen – a place for business and investment



The northernmost region of North Rhine-Westphalia comprises the city of Bielefeld and the administrative districts of Minden-Lübbecke, Herford, Gütersloh, Paderborn and Höxter. The 54 towns and districts, covering an area of 5,274 square kilometers,

are home to some 1.7 million inhabitants or 784,495 private households. Ostwestfalen generates a gross domestic product of 56,704 euros per employee and wields a retail purchasing power of approx.

9.6 billion euros – making it one of Germany's top 10 economic regions.



The Ostwestfalen region is famous for its attractive cities and varied landscape. Rich in history and boasting large areas of unspoiled natural countryside, the region is ideal for relaxing, traveling – or living.

### Economic structure

"On top of NRW" – as we like to say in Ostwestfalen – not only refers to the region's geographic location and high quality of life. Above all, it reflects the attraction of Ostwestfalen as a strong economic region with a sound mixture of industries and a solid base of medium-sized companies (SMEs), which truly deserves its premier position in North Rhine-Westphalia.



The region is home to many innovative and world-famous companies (including Bertelsmann, Oetker, Miele, Melitta, Gerry Weber, Wincor Nixdorf and Schüco).

But it is the so-called "hidden champions" which give the region its special character: small and mid-sized companies, which are highly innovative, extremely successful and often global market leaders in their particular niche.



For several decades the region had to endure severe structural change. In the past, over 25% of all workers earned their money in the traditional sector of textile and clothing, 20% in the wood processing industry, 10% in the food, beverage and tobacco industry and 13% in engineering.

Today, Ostwestfalen enjoys a healthy mixture of industries. Although engineering (23%), metalworking (11%), furniture (12%) and food (10%) remain important sectors, the focus is now on electronics and computers (10%), chemicals and pharmaceuticals (3%), as well as the plastic processing industry (7%), which have seen the strongest growth over the past few decades.





Despite the dynamic and above-average growth of Ostwestfalen's manufacturing industries, however, it has been the service sector which has generated the largest number of jobs in the past few years – a trend which can be observed throughout the whole of Germany.

This development has been led in Ostwestfalen, above all, by the field of business-related services. Today, the tertiary sector provides employment for over half (approx. 62%) of the region's working population.

It was not until 2003, however, that the service sector first registered more employees than the region's manufacturing companies. Compared with a national average of 68% for the service sector, Ostwestfalen still offers considerable growth potential in this field.



The greatest development opportunities are predicted for business solution services, the health sector and tourism.

Germany is still one of the world's leading export nations – thanks in part to economic powerhouses like Ostwestfalen. Since 1992 the region's export ratio has grown by 17.5% to 36.0%. Following foreign trade revenues of over 14 billion euros in 2008. This excellent result underlines the fact that Ostwestfalen's strong SME sector is increasingly utilizing the opportunities presented by a converging global market.

Ostwestfalen has sufficient commercial real estate to welcome new companies from all business sectors. With its central internet portal [www.gewerbeflächenatlas-owl.de](http://www.gewerbeflächenatlas-owl.de) and retail database [www.einzelhandesatlas-owl.de](http://www.einzelhandesatlas-owl.de), the Ostwestfalen Chamber of Commerce and Industry has developed two highly efficient tools for potential investors to seek new locations in the region.

## Mobility



The region's highly developed infrastructure provides companies with fast connections to their respective markets. The A2 motorway is not only a vital link between the industrial Ruhr District and Berlin, but has developed into a central axis between Paris and Warsaw. The motorways A30, A33 and A44 offer connections to Hamburg, Frankfurt and Munich. Although the region lacks its own major international airport, Paderborn-Lippstadt offers numerous flights and Hannover, Düsseldorf and even Frankfurt are within easy reach.

The IC/ICE railway lines Dortmund/Dresden, Amsterdam/Berlin, Düsseldorf/Dresden and Berlin/Cologne provide the necessary rail connections, while the Mittelland Canal offers transportation for ships.



## **Business & Science**

The region also boasts a wealth of highly skilled workers. This is due in no small part to the diverse infrastructure of Ostwestfalen's education system and research institutes. In addition to its well-established school system, the region offers some 50,000 higher education places at seven universities in almost all subjects – from classic academic studies to more practical, business-oriented courses. Institutions such as the local chambers of commerce, technology centers and university liaison offices all ensure that the cooperation between business and science remains strong and lively.

The Transfer Award OWL (Ostwestfalen-Lippe) is one such initiative that promotes promising cooperation initiatives between companies and research institutes. The award is held every two years by the Ostwestfalen Chamber of Commerce and Industry and was well received at its premiere in November 2004, attracting an unexpectedly high number of entries. The new initiative underlines the highly innovative and future-orientated nature of the business location Ostwestfalen.

Positive effects can also be expected from Ostwestfalen's selection as a "model region" in North Rhine-Westphalia. After all, the attraction of a business location today depends more than ever on its modern and efficient administration system. The "OWL Red Tape Reduction Law" that came into force in April 2004 means that selected regulations of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia will be suspended for a limited period of three years while new administrative measures are translated into action. Further reform proposals have already been submitted to the state government.

## **Benefits of Ostwestfalen – at a glance**

In order to ensure that Ostwestfalen remains an innovative business location in future, its motto must be "Let's make what's good even better", says Ortwin Goldbeck, President of Ostwestfalen's Chamber of Commerce and Industry. When it comes to creating the right conditions for business, the region does not shy from any comparison with its competitors: Ostwestfalen's central location in Europe and outstanding transport infrastructure guarantees fast access to key markets – especially to the growth markets of the new EU states in Eastern Europe. With its wide variety of industries and services, Ostwestfalen offers a much envied stability and independence from the economic cycles of any one particular sector. At the same time, a growing population supports local demand and the region's high quality of life and cultural variety helps attract and retain highly qualified employees.

## **Chamber of Industry and Commerce**

<http://www.bielefeld.ihk.de>








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