Saxony-Anhalt: A state of culture and technology

Best known for its vast industrial and cultural heritage, the German region is the ideal place to invest, live and work in today.

As the birthplace of the Reformation five centuries ago and the cradle of Bauhausian industrial modernism in the 1920s, Saxony-Anhalt has always been a fertile home for world-changing ideas.

Located at the heart of Germany, the eighth-largest of the country’s 16 states is still taking a lead in global revolutions, having built on its renowned strengths in chemical, engineering, automotive and food industries to become a major force in technologies covering areas such as batteries, hydrogen, the bioeconomy, life sciences, medtech, digitalisation, industry 4.0, electric mobility, renewable energy, sustainability and smart materials. Throughout the state are thriving clusters for many of these sectors that include collaborative scientific institutions, established companies and startups. Among them are a growing number of global players like Akzo Nobel, Bayer, Borealis, IBM, IDT Biologiska, Mercer and Novelia, along with international entrepreneurs and other individuals that have chosen to invest, live, work and study in the dynamic region.

"International companies appreciate our outstanding infrastructure, innovative research landscape, effective transfer of technology, qualified workforce and attractive funding."
— Dr. Reiner Haseloff, Minister President

As Saxony-Anhalt is the preeminent destination for foreign investment in eastern Germany and analysis of just a few recent investments illustrates how the state has pivoted toward high-tech and green industries. For instance, Finland’s UPM is investing in a refinery that will extract biochemicals from sustainable wood, while the U.K.’s AlgaeCytes plans to harvest algae for products like hydrogen and batteries. One of the state’s more recent investors is another good example of this March, Intel announced that its capital, Magdeburg, a city with a long history of innovation, would be home to a new factory in the state. One of the world’s largest manufacturers of microprocessors, Intel’s new factory will bring an additional 1,500 jobs to the region, creating new opportunities for residents and attracting further investment.

Saxony-Anhalt currently has 29 research institutes, 32 centres of research and development excellence, two universities and eight universities of applied sciences that make up one of Germany’s densest research landscapes. Saxony-Anhalt’s high profile international further education institutions provide practical training to around 55,000 students a year in a variety of fields. Alongside this impressive provision, the state boasts an outstanding workforce, thanks to an impressively balanced demographic where the number of people aged 15 to 64 is significantly higher than in other German states.

A truly special and unique location

One of the state’s most important features is the variety of future-oriented businesses and institutions that have chosen to invest, live, work and study in Saxony-Anhalt. The region’s 1,000-kilometer Saale-Unstrut region, the world’s oldest branded beer Garley and craft beers from emerging breweries such as Brewckau. Overall, as State Minister for Economic Affairs, Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry Sven Schulze says: “It’s a beautiful, livable and culturally rich region. We look forward to welcoming more visitors and new residents who want to discover it.”

Saxony-Anhalt has also seen successful investments from the e-battery value chain, running from Dutch company AMG’s building of a lithium hydroxide refinery, through to Tesla’s establishment of Europe’s first e-battery gigafactory in the state. One of the state’s most recent investors is another good example of this March, Intel announced that its capital, Magdeburg, had seen off global competition to be the site of a new $17 billion semiconductor factory. Dr. Reiner Haseloff, Minister President of Saxony-Anhalt, sums up some of the reasons why the relatively small region has become a notable preferred destination for investors and is so attractive to enterprises like these: “National and international companies appreciate our outstanding infrastructure, innovative research landscape, effective transfer of technology, qualified workforce and attractive funding.”

Saxony-Anhalt has also been successful in attracting multinational companies to the state. For instance, the region’s main cities—Magdeburg and Halle—are also home to a number of international companies and startups. Among them are a growing number of global players like Akzo Nobel, Bayer, Borealis, IBM, IDT Biologiska, Mercerc and Novelia, along with international entrepreneurs and other individuals that have chosen to invest, live, work and study in the dynamic region.

The oldest Gothic cathedral in Germany is in Magdeburg

The wildlife-full wetlands of its Middle Elbe Biosphere Reserve are a UNESCO study location for sustainable development and Harz National Park is part of the Global UNESCO Network of GeoParks. Throughout Saxony-Anhalt are diverse, unspoiled landscapes that run from lowland meadows to the forests and magical mountains of Harz, which are complemented by innumerable rivers and lakes. That makes it a paradise for those who enjoy lazy walks, boat trips and tranquil picnics, as well as people seeking most strenuous activities. The region’s main cities—Magdeburg and Halle—are also home to a number of international companies and startups. Among them are a growing number of global players like Akzo Nobel, Bayer, Borealis, IBM, IDT Biologiska, Mercerc and Novelia, along with international entrepreneurs and other individuals that have chosen to invest, live, work and study in the dynamic region.

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Europe’s center for high-tech and green investments

Thomas Einsfelder, Managing Director, Investment and Marketing Corporation (IMG) Saxony-Anhalt, presents a new hotspot for investors

Saxony-Anhalt has positioned itself on the radar of Investors. As head of the economic development agency Investment and Marketing Corporation (IMG) Saxony-Anhalt, what are some of the state’s strengths?

It is an up-and-coming federal state in Germany that has undergone tremendous development. 10 years ago, we had a gross domestic product of roughly €50 billion. By the end of 2021, that had risen by about 20 percent to €63 billion, which is extremely solid growth over such a short period. Within the last five years, we have also attracted 272 new investment projects worth €3.2 billion that have created 7,776 new jobs and there are a variety of factors that have contributed to that. For instance, we’ve been an investor-focused location for over 150 years and have always been strong in forward-looking, innovative areas such as mechanical engineering, chemicals and the automotive sector, all of which are industries that have continued to advance here.

Overall, the state is future-focused and technology savvy, with a well-trained workforce, highly skilled talent and an immensely robust scientific landscape that includes a rich density of research institutions. We also have two prominent universities in Magdeburg and Halle that focus on mathematics, engineering, medical science and computer science, while our business and research sectors are closely intertwined. In addition, we are conveniently located between Berlin and Hannover at the heart of Germany and Europe, and one of our advantages is that we have very modern transport infrastructure in terms of motorways, railways, waterways and Germany’s second-largest cargo hub—the airport of Leipzig-Halle.

To help maintain Saxony-Anhalt as an industrial and research hotspot, IMG acts as a partner for all potential and established investors, which receive advice from us regarding, for instance, potential partners in technology, funding, financing and marketing. We’re a small state, which enables our government and other institutions to react with agility in its investment and business processes. However, even though we are small, there’s substantial industrial space available here for large-scale investments.

2021 saw a record number of investors moving into Saxony-Anhalt. IMG was involved in 68 new projects, most of which concerned high-tech industries. Is that trend continuing in 2022?

This trend is certainly continuing as Saxony-Anhalt has become interesting for major investments by global companies that now recognize it as a region of future technologies and the government has set up a special unit to offer optimal support for this type of project. This year, we were thrilled when Intel decided that our capital Magdeburg is the right location for a mega semiconductor factory. It’s among the largest inward investments Germany, and indeed the European Union, has ever seen. In February, leading U.S. technology company Avnet revealed it is investing over €2.25 million in a high-performance distribution center for semiconductors and electronic components here. On a site covering around 190,000 square meters, this eco-certified logistics center will serve Europe’s growing market for these products. Avnet has stated that the main factors behind it choosing Saxony-Anhalt’s central European location and the convenient connection to Leipzig-Halle airport, while IMG’s rapid assistance on planning requirements for the site paid off as well.

Saxony-Anhalt also stands out for its high-tech biotechnology and is making a name as a destination for investors prioritizing sustainability in a broad range of sectors. Why is it so successful in these areas?

Our biotech industry is becoming and the reason for that is our extensive chemical industry, which has a focus on green issues and is working together with players in the biotechnology sector on ways to replace fossil fuels—for example, by making plastics from alternative materials such as wood or sugar. Saxony-Anhalt has the capabilities to scale up biotechnology processes like that and we have many investment projects in this area. In terms of investors in other industries that want to make their processes more sustainable, 60 percent of the energy produced in Saxony-Anhalt is green—we generate significant amounts of wind and solar power. Our energy mix is much greener than you typically find in Germany, but energy costs here are at par with the rest of the country. We also offer extensive plug-and-play hydrogen infrastructure that includes a large hydrogen pipeline and a platform for testing electrolyzers. To put it simply, Saxony-Anhalt has the means to make production green.

As the electric-vehicle (EV) revolution continues to gather pace, can Germany’s automotive industry keep its competitive edge globally?

Part of our state’s heritage is a network of 300 automotive industry suppliers and we’ve recently amassed a lot of international investors around EVs, particularly in relation to lithium. That’s mainly because you need a central location to produce and distribute lithium and batteries, and we are close to huge EV production facilities of Tesla and Volkswagen. As well as proximity to big vehicle manufacturers, investments are being driven by our green energy, the chemical engineering know-how of our universities and the opportunity to make partnerships here. Our downstream e-battery industry is also remarkable: we have a strong thread of research going on in battery recycling and great battery testing facilities, for instance.

How attractive are Saxony-Anhalt’s cities for those considering investing, living or working in the state?

Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger coined the term Silicon Junction in relation to your new factory acting as a hub for advanced chip making. Could you elaborate Intel’s Silicon Junction in relation to Saxony-Anhalt?

At the center of Europe and with top talent, superb infrastructure and an existing ecosystem of suppliers and customers, Saxony-Anhalt is an ideal place to establish a new hub.

A Silicon Junction that connects the EU

In March 2022, Intel announced that it would be developing a mega semiconductor factory in Magdeburg. Worth $17 billion, two state-of-the-art facilities will cover 1,000 acres of land and will be 100 percent powered by green energy. We asked Christin Eisenschmid, managing director of Intel Germany, what the deciding reasons were for choosing the capital city of Saxony-Anhalt as the location for this substantial investment project.

Germany’s skilled workforce and central geographical location were important factors, but it shouldn’t be forgotten that Germany is the fourth-largest economy worldwide. The country also offers an unparalleled ecosystem of small and medium-sized enterprises, suppliers and houses many so-called hidden champions. In addition, the city of Magdeburg itself provides the necessary infrastructure and space, plus it scores highly due to its close proximity to universities.

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Christin Eisenschmid, Managing Director, Intel Germany

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At the center of Europe and with top talent, superb infrastructure and an existing ecosystem of suppliers and customers, Saxony-Anhalt is an ideal place to establish a new hub. Intel plans to refer to the Magdeburg site as the Silicon Junction that connects technology. This Silicon Junction will serve as the connection point for a wide range of innovation and manufacturing across the European Union: besides this leading-edge semiconductor factory in Germany, there are plans to establish a new research, development (R&D) and design hub in France, and to expand capacities in Ireland, manufacturing and foundry services in Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain.

More than 3,000 jobs will be created at Intel Magdeburg and many others in the industries that will supply it. In your experience, how important are soft location factors for attracting the international talent Intel needs in order to prosper?

As a company, Intel offers an extensive package of benefits for employees and their families, such as performance rewards, a stock program or scholarship programs. Besides that, soft factors can definitely make a location more attractive. Intel assesses a possible new location according to some general parameters of livability. All indicators of a high quality of life are important, which include elements such as education, leisure activities and cultural offers.

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**Excellence in sustainable chemistry**

Saxony-Anhalt has long been a prime location for innovation in life sciences, with high-performance clusters, Centers of Excellence and government bodies encouraging both investment and profitable collaborations between companies, research institutions and universities in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and medtech.

The state’s pharmaceutical sector alone generates over €1 billion in export revenue a year from businesses that include subsidiaries of international giants such as Bayer and Sandoz, world-leading local firms and emerging high-tech specialists. They are supported in bringing new products to market rapidly by the close provision of active ingredient, packaging, equipment, contract research and other suppliers.

One hotpot for pharmaceuticals is Biopharmapark Dessau, a 136-hectare center of excellence offering cutting-edge infrastructure and services that are specifically designed to meet the industry’s needs. Among the tenants of the spacious industrial park are Merz, the global operator in aesthetic- and neurotoxin-related pharmaceuticals, and Ceva, the front-runner in animal health that has production and innovation centers at the site. Another, IDT Biologika, illustrates a core strength of Saxony-Anhalt’s vaccine industry.

IDT is one of the world’s most important developers and contract manufacturers of virus vaccines, viral vectors and other biologics, with a workforce of 1,600 in Biopharmapark providing worldwide clients with end-to-end services from preclinical research to commercial supply. IDT’s response to COVID-19 demonstrates how adeptly the state’s pharmaceutical industry responds to challenges: as well as initiating the development of its own vaccine with the German Center for Vaccine Research, it formed early partnerships with both Johnson & Johnson and Astrazeneca to manufacture their vaccines for global distribution. IDT was able to start producing vast quantities of these vaccines quickly by adjusting its workflows, but it is now investing €100 million in the expansion of its manufacturing plant that will make it the biggest facility of its type in Europe.

Among other pharmaceutical and biotech companies are based at Technology Park Weinberg Campus in Halle, the largest site for life and material sciences in central Germany. At this center of excellence, over 100 companies work alongside renowned research institutes and the Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg, while its innovation hub for entrepreneurs has helped launch about 200 startups to date. Notable examples include Verovacines, a spin-off from the on-site university, which is developing revolutionary animal vaccines from yeasts.

Many of the park’s tenants are innovators in medtech, a sector in which Saxony-Anhalt boasts around 120 companies overall. Those firms are producing solutions covering all aspects of health, with conspicuous strengths being e-health, imaging, autonomy in old age, prosthetics and surgical robots.

As many of the global players in the state are NovoNovum, which specializes in small-diameter hoses, and Mecotec, a leader in high-tech cooling chambers for the health, wellness and sport industries. In 2020, Mecotec made international headlines for its pioneering development of stationary and mobile container units that safely transport and cool the BioNTech-Pfizer mRNA COVID-19 vaccine and similar products. These unique units can maintain vaccines at a temperature of -80°C, store over 500,000 doses and operate for 24 hours without an external power source. "Innovative solutions are required for the storage and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and we’re delighted that we’re contributing to that due to our 20 years of experience in industrial deep cooling,” says Enrico Klauer, Mecotec’s managing director. "Our containers cover the entire logistics chain, from deep freezing of the vaccine directly after its manufacturing to withdrawal at distribution centers." As a result of its innovation, Mecotec expects to double in size over the next five years.

Numerous other firms can now take advantage of Saxony-Anhalt’s increasing investment in its medtech capabilities to grow their businesses. For instance, an industrial cluster for medtech and plastics has formed in the town of Hallstadt and two other hubs have been established in the capital. The first is a medtech research campus that is a joint venture between Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg, Siemens Healthcare and the STEMULATE association of companies and research institutions. The second is the Health + IT Campus, which is providing local and international startups with affordable space and accelerator services to promote Saxony-Anhalt’s next generation of high-tech life science innovations.

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**A healthy location for innovators in life sciences**

As befits the state’s heritage, five of the centers are large-scale chemical complexes to finished products, and they are driving global innovation in areas such as green chemistry, pharmaceuticals, syntheses and fibers, fine and specialty chemicals, chemistry for electric drives and batteries, sustainable chemistry and high-performance materials.

Among the attractions for investors in Saxony-Anhalt are twelve Centers of Excellence, where businesses and researchers innovate together to take products from initial ideas to global markets in sectors such as chemicals, pharmaceuticals, medtech, e-mobility, the bioeconomy and hydrogen.

Each location combines the talents and resources of leading industry players, startups, universities and research institutions, as well as relevant component manufacturers, technical colleges and other service providers. As befits the state’s heritage, five of the centers are large-scale chemical parks that form the core of the renowned Central German Chemical Triangle. Overall, more than 500 companies employ around 23,000 people, generate about €9 billion a year and work alongside 15 research centers in these five parks. Collectively, they cover the value chain from basic chemicals to finished products, and they are driving global innovation in areas such as green chemicals and hydrogen.

The state intends to retain its position as one of Europe’s most innovative regions for innovation in life sciences, with high-performance clusters, Centers of Excellence and government bodies encouraging both investment and profitable collaborations between companies, research institutions and universities in pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and medtech.

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Much of Saxony-Anhalt is covered in sustainable forests

Saxony-Anhalt is a key node in the European Union’s booming bioeconomy, which has been expanding in value by 13 percent a year and currently generates around €2 billion in annual sales.

Germany contributes about €300 billion of that and Saxony-Anhalt leads the country’s embrace of emerging bio-industries: the local government has been providing financial support for them since 2013 and they already contribute 16.4 percent of the state’s industrial revenues. There are many reasons why its bioeconomy is flourishing. One is the plentiful supply of raw materials, infrastructure, industry and market opportunities.

In Saxony-Anhalt’s €550-million investment project, which was carried out by UPM since 2013 and the project is expected to produce 300 metric tons of algae a year, which will be processed into omega-3 silks, beta-carotene and other ingredients, with the residue being used in fertilizers. According to Jörn Saß, venture partner at Xerias Capital, which is advising the firm, “AlgaeCytes focus on sustainability by providing vegan nutrients and removing reliance on fish resonates well with investors and the pharmaceutical industry. We expect that this will make it one of the most valuable biotechnology businesses in the coming years.” The company is equally optimistic about the future, says Cosentino: “Building our first commercial facility in Dessau is an exciting milestone for us as we seek to meet the high demand for our products. We share a common goal with Saxony-Anhalt to promote biotechnology and algae research and to provide sustainable solutions for industry.”
New Horizons?

YES, WE CAN.

INVESTMENT AND MARKETING CORPORATION SAXONY-ANHALT.

YOUR SPECIALISTS ON SITE. Saxony-Anhalt has very special charms. And we’d be delighted to tell you all about them. As business development and location marketing specialists, our interdisciplinary team will help you with all your questions about moving in, expansion and future viability. We accompany you on your journey. Cooperation and service are our core beliefs. We support Saxony-Anhalt’s transformation and positive perception as a business location and are passionate about promoting it as a travel destination. With all our energy and a great deal of expertise, we build bridges for you!

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