



## A district in transition

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## Area and population

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The MEO Region which includes the cities of Essen, Mülheim an der Ruhr and Oberhausen has an area of 379 km<sup>2</sup> and 963,000 inhabitants. The population density is 2,543 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.

It has a value more than twice as high as the Ruhr Area (1,150 per km<sup>2</sup>) and is nearly five times as high as in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (525 per km<sup>2</sup>). The district accounts for 21% of its total population (5.1

million) on an area of only 9 % of the territory.

The cities of Essen and Oberhausen, located in the middle of the dense industrial zone, are the most densely populated municipalities in the Ruhr Area after the city of Herne (3,048) with 2,769 and 2,718 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. However, in the more agriculturally structured district of Wesel there are only 441 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>.



Photo credit: iStock/ilbusca

## Coal, iron and steel

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After the Second World War, the MEO-Region remained strongly oriented towards coal mining even after the closures and during the reconstruction phase in the 1950s, and experienced a deceptive and short term renaissance.

The end of the reconstruction phase at the beginning of the 1960s, made it increasingly clearer that the former engine of growth coal, iron and steel was now stalling, not only for the Ruhr Area but also for the MEO Region. The increased substitution of hard coal by cheaper petroleum in the energy and chemical industries, and the use of economic heating processes in iron and steel production triggered the drastic decline in hard coal consumption.

The coal mining crisis, which had been going on since the end of the 1950s, led to the closure of all mining facilities in the Chamber of Industry and Commerce district. In the mid-1950s, when the number of producing coal mines was still 27, with a total workforce of 80,000 miners and an annual production capacity of 20 million tonnes, the "Zeche Zollverein" closed in 1986, and the last pit the "Zeche Osterfeld" closed in 1992.

Today, the Zeche Zollverein is a symbol of the energy of the past and the future. Because: Zollverein is not only one of the most important industrial monuments in the world but also an international design and cultural centre. Zollverein was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in December 2001. Thus, the former coal mine is under the protection of the international convention for the cultural and natural heritage of humanity.

In the chamber's district, The pig iron and crude steel production increased steadily from 1947 to 1961 declined continuously from 1962, and ended with the blowing out of the last blast furnace in Oberhausen in September 1979. Altogether, the mining industry lost over 90% (80,000) of its jobs from 1963 to today.

The region was dominated by the mining industry until well into the 20th century. Today, the image of winding towers and blast furnaces is a thing of the past.

The industrial employment in the MEO Region since the beginning of the mining crisis in the late 1950s to 2018, declined around 85% and 57% in North Rhine-Westphalia. The sales development in the same period was significantly lower than that of the state of NRW. Also, the total turnover per employee increased less than in the entire republic. Many companies in the MEO Region have demonstrated a high degree of flexibility and efficiency, and since the mid-1970s,

they have increasingly opened up markets abroad. 50% of their turnover is already achieved through exports. Today's structural picture of the chamber's district shows a multi-faceted production mix with wide-spread production programmes. Today, the district is economically equivalent to a "centipede".



""Extraschicht' (extra shift) at Zeche Zollverein"

Photo credit: iStock/

## Employment – Gross value added

The shift from the primary/secondary to tertiary sector clearly demonstrates the economic restructuring process in the MEO Region.

While the number of persons subject to social security contributions in the primary/secondary sector was 51% in 1976, this figure has dropped to 21% within the last 40 years (2020). In the same period, the number of tertiary workers rose from 49% to 79%. A breakdown for the three cities gives a differentiated picture (as of 2020):

### Primary/secondary tertiary sector

Essen	18 %	82 %
Mülheim an der Ruhr	28 %	72 %
Oberhausen	25 %	75 %

The gross value added analysis reflects the following picture for the MEO Region: The primary/secondary sector generated 49% of gross value added in 1980, and declined to 22% by 2019. In the same period, the gross value added of the tertiary sector grew from 51% to 78%. These figures roughly correspond to the comparable values of the Ruhr Area (27% / 74%), the state of NRW (28% /

73%) and the Federal Republic (31% / 69%).

The corresponding data for the three MEO cities show the following values (as of 2020):

### Primary/secondary tertiary sector

Essen	20 %	80 %
Mülheim an der Ruhr	27 %	73 %
Oberhausen	25 %	75 %

In all three cities, gross value added data clearly shows the trend towards tertiary sector.

If this process of structural change takes into account the fact that, until a few decades ago, the tertiary sector was only addressing MEO-related or regional tasks, but has now gained national and international significance, this is a clear indication of the adaptability of the local economy to the changing macroeconomic conditions in the national and international environment.

The city of Essen, for example, houses the headquarters of global energy supply

companies, which make their business policy decisions from here. The three cities of the Chamber District have certain priorities within the tertiary sector, which can be used and developed as a strength of each subregion: These are in Essen the media and business consulting area, in Mülheim an der Ruhr the commercial sector and in Oberhausen the industrial and building cleaning services.

the 500 largest companies in the Federal Republic are located in the chamber district. 6 companies belong to the secondary and 11 to the tertiary sector, whereby four belong to the energy sector.

According to the latest survey of the daily newspaper "Die Welt" (2019), 17 of



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## Hard Location Factors – Soft Location Factors

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A decisive prerequisite for further development is the creation of a favourable investment climate and the "by-passing" of communal borders. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry sees regional cooperation as a suitable instrument for wider metropolitan co-operation.

In addition to the "hard location factors", so-called "soft location factors" such as traffic, education and research facilities as well as the environment and leisure facilities are becoming increasingly important. These soft location factors will play an increasingly important role in location competition.

The central location of the MEO-Region in the core area of the Ruhr Area has gained additional value with the opening of the markets in Eastern Europe and the associated reactivation of the European West-East corridor. The Ruhr Area opens up a market of 60 million people within a radius of 250 km, more than 15% of the EU population.

In addition to numerous direct connections to the international road, rail, waterway and air traffic networks, the Ruhr

Area has a well developed and efficient transport infrastructure compared to other metropolitan areas. This also includes the largest transport association for public local transport in the Federal Republic of Germany, the "Verkehrsverbund Rhein-Ruhr".



## Education

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**Over the past 50 years, the accelerated establishment and expansion of the technical and comprehensive colleges and universities has led to a dense network of education and research facilities in the Ruhr Area, which convert new research findings into competitive manufacturing processes and products in the high-tech sector.**

The city of Essen has been a university location since 1972. The "Haus der Technik" promotes the technical and economic exchange of information with a variety of events, and Deutsche Montan Technologie (German mining technology [DMT]) - formerly Bergbauforschung Essen - works as an international research institute not just in the field of mining technology.

Mülheim an der Ruhr has been home to the Max Planck Institute for Coal Research since 1911, and to chemical energy conversion since 1958, while the Fraunhofer Institute for Environmental, Safety and Energy Technology (UM-SICHT) is located in Oberhausen.

In 2009, the Ruhr-West University of Applied Sciences was finally founded in Mülheim an der Ruhr with a focus on mathematics, computer science, natural sciences and technology.

The University of Applied Sciences for Economics and Management in Essen - which today counts 55,000 students at 32 university centres throughout Germany - completes the offer.

## Environmental Protection

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The idea of the "Public Private Partnership" is reflected in institutions such as **Initiativkreis Ruhrgebiet, Essener Technologie- und Entwicklungs-Centrum (ETEC), ZENIT-Zentrum in Nordrhein-Westfalen für Innovation und Technik GmbH in Mülheim an der Ruhr and Oberhausener Technologiezentrum Umweltschutz.**

The ecological consequences of industrialisation such as air pollution, water pollution, deterioration of the landscape, waste generation and noise pollution were already recognised as a central problem as a central problem of an industrially dense region at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Even then, the Ruhr Area Chambers of Industry and Commerce demanded regional and suprarregional solutions beyond the borders of individual cities.

State, municipalities and the industry regulated the water industry even before the First World War with the founding of water industry associations. These associations continue to fulfil their environmental responsibilities and are based in Essen.

The renaturation of former industrial wastelands as well as planned landscape management and nature conservation are implemented systematically.

The "Internationale Bauausstellung Em-scherpark" (IBA), funded by the North Rhine-Westphalian state government, aimed to restore old industrial structures for new uses and to restore the landscapes and ecological systems destroyed by industrialisation to their original condition, including in Essen, Mülheim the Ruhr and Oberhausen.

## Cultural and leisure activities

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**The MEO Region offers opportunities for cultural, sports and more generally in the area of recreation a wide range of leisure activities.**

The city of Essen carried on the traditional form of the city theatre and provided new highlights to the opera scene with the opening of the Aalto-Theatre. Oberhausen concentrates on music theatre, and Mülheim an der Ruhr is treading new artistic paths in the form of "independent theatre work" with the new theatre "Theater an der Ruhr".

The Essen Folkwang Museum, with its representative collection of art from the 19th Century to the present day.

The Rheinisches Industriemuseum, with its headquarters in Oberhausen and its branches in the Rhineland, documents the economic, social and technical changes in this region during the industrialisation process of the last 200 years.

The State Garden Show MüGa, 92 - Mülheim Garten an der Ruhr - has significantly improved the green infrastructure of the city centre.

The two large parks Nienhausen (on the border with Essen) and Vonderort (Oberhausen / Bottrop) offer numerous leisure and sports facilities. If you are looking for recreation in green surroundings, you will find plenty of opportunity in the three cities with their many forests and agricultural areas as well as in the Ruhr Valley with its numerous reservoirs.

# Imprint

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