

Press release

From coal to goal: Transformation of the Emscher-Lippe region

Football fans from Europe visit the champion of structural change

GERMANY/GELSENKIRCHEN. When the England national team visits the German city of Gelsenkirchen for the 2024 European Championships in June, they will be coming to a region that not only has a passionate football tradition: the Emscher-Lippe region, which stretches along the two rivers that give it its name, has developed into a sustainable economic centre with a high quality of life and an attractive cultural landscape. One million people live here in twelve cities - urbanised in the Ruhr metropolis, but at the same time surrounded by unspoilt nature.

The football tradition in Gelsenkirchen and the Emscher-Lippe region is inextricably linked with FC Schalke 04. Founded in 1904 by miners in the Schalke district, the football club is now one of the largest sports clubs in the world with around 178,000 members - and has a passionate fan base.

Diversity between Emscher and Lippe

Even if many people still think of mining, coal and smoking chimneys when they think of the Ruhr region, the region has long since undergone a remarkable transformation. The twelve cities between the Emscher and Lippe rivers boast a variety of qualities: Despite its location in a metropolitan area with one million people, the living space is attractive and, in contrast to other metropolitan regions, affordable. The potential labour force for the companies based here is also still available compared to other regions in Germany. In addition to extensive natural areas and a cultural landscape that is impressive in Europe, the Emscher-Lippe region with its modern industry has become a centre for chemistry - and is also developing into a green instead of grey hydrogen location. Instead of coal and steel, the focus is now on chemicals and hydrogen.

On the way to becoming a hydrogen model region

The Emscher-Lippe region already has the largest hydrogen production and utilisation in Europe - and is a pioneer on the way to becoming the Ruhr hydrogen model region. The National Hydrogen Ranking of the German Economic Institute (IW) shows the Ruhr region as No. 1 in Germany with the best conditions for establishing a hydrogen economy. Europe's first transport pipeline for green hydrogen "GETH" connects the city of Lingen with the Chemical Park in Marl and the Ruhr Oil Refinery in Gelsenkirchen. The fuel cell systems for Europe's first hydrogen trains are being installed in the immediate neighbourhood of Herten, at the site where the first municipal technology centre for hydrogen, h2herten, has been operating a hydrogen-based energy system since 2013 and is available as a demonstration platform for start-ups, universities and energy suppliers.



Stakeholders from industry, science and public institutions in the Emscher-Lippe region are working together to expand the hydrogen economy - and have developed a concrete roadmap for the path to the hydrogen economy by 2030 with the [H2EL Hydrogen Region Emscher-Lippe roadmap](#), because green hydrogen is the link between industry and climate protection, or, as Jules Verne wrote in his 1874 novel "The Mysterious Island": "Hydrogen is the coal of the 21st century".

The infrastructure, the proximity to the import harbours, the expertise of companies and universities, the industrial customers in the region and the early involvement with hydrogen as a building block of the energy transition in the h2netzwerk ruhr e.V. make this location particularly attractive for hydrogen-related settlements.

Important location for chemistry and circular economy

The chemical industry is one of the four most important branches of industry in Germany. In North Rhine-Westphalia and the Ruhr region, with the centre in the Emscher-Lippe region, the chemical and plastics clusters are among the state's profile-forming industries: The Marl Chemical Park, with around 10,000 jobs, is one of the largest chemical sites in Germany and also Evonik's largest production site. And the neighbouring city of Gelsenkirchen has developed into one of the ten most important sites for basic chemicals in Western Europe. In addition to the Marl Chemical Park, BP in Gelsenkirchen, Ineos in the city of Gladbeck and Rain Carbon in the city of Castrop-Rauxel as well as other mainly medium-sized companies are based in the region. Based on this strong chemical industry, centres for circular value creation have developed along the Emscher and Lippe rivers alongside the hotspots for hydrogen research and application. The development of climate-friendly or neutral and self-contained economic processes with minimal loss of resources has been established in the region for years. The [Circular Economy Hotspot](#), which was held for the first time in Germany in the city of Bottrop in 2022, brought together 400 experts from 15 countries.

Quality of life through recreational areas in nature and by the water

Even though the Emscher-Lippe region has an industrial heart, nature lovers will get their money's worth here. With an area of 2,000 square kilometres, the Hohe Mark Nature Park in the north of the region is one of the largest recreational areas in North Rhine-Westphalia. With a total forest area of around 5,500 hectares, the Haard forest area is part of the Hohe Mark - and is a popular excursion destination with cycling, hiking and water trails. The local recreation on the water is outstanding - whether sailing on the Haltern reservoir or paddling and surfing on the renaturalised Lippe, which is considered the most beautiful river in North Rhine-Westphalia. Many new leisure and recreational areas have also been created in the Emscher river catchment area, inviting people to enjoy local recreation on their doorstep. Since the end of 2021, the Emscher has been free of wastewater after 170 years and the Emscher conversion project has been successfully completed.

First-class cultural landscape

Former industrial plants as cultural sites, museums, theatres, art galleries and festivals: the Emscher-Lippe region is a remarkable cultural region. With over 300 events a year, the "Ruhrfestspiele" in Recklinghausen is one of the oldest and most renowned theatre festivals in Europe, the "Musiktheater im Revier" is one of the most beautiful modern theatre buildings, the "Museum Quadrat" in Bottrop and the "Skulpturenmuseum" in Marl are known worldwide in the cultural scene.



Overall, the Emscher-Lippe region offers a high quality of living and life as an important location factor. The structural change has characterised the people - and brought about a culture of openness: Companies from a wide range of sectors and people from a wide range of backgrounds and qualifications find a home in the twelve cities between the Emscher and Lippe rivers. The rapidly growing cities of the northern Ruhr region have become a melting pot of different cultures - with football still playing an important role today as a major "integration machine". It is therefore no coincidence that Gelsenkirchen will be one of the venues for the European Championships in summer 2024, where fans from all over Europe will be welcomed as guests.

www.from-coal-to-goal.de

About the WiN Emscher-Lippe GmbH

WiN Emscher-Lippe GmbH is the regional economic development organisation, supported by the district of Recklinghausen and the twelve towns in the region as well as companies from the region. WiN stands for Economic Development Network and acts as a regional umbrella organisation and coordinator of the municipal economic development agencies and as an interface to Business Metropole Ruhr GmbH and the political chambers. It represents the business-orientated interests of the region vis-à-vis the state government.

As a service provider for companies and municipalities, WiN deals with the three major transformation topics of demography (recruiting and securing skilled workers), digitalisation and defossilisation (hydrogen and circular economy).

Contact:

WiN Emscher-Lippe
Gesellschaft zur Strukturverbesserung mbH
Herner Str. 10
45699 Herten
www.emscher-lippe.de
info@emscher-lippe.de

For press enquiries:

Stefan Prott
RDN Agentur für Public Relations GmbH & Co. KG
mobil: 0172-4258582
s.prott@rdn-online.de

PS: If you would like to take part in a guided press tour through the Emscher-Lippe region in the run-up to the European Championships, please contact us!

The Emscher-Lippe region

The Emscher-Lippe region is located in the north of the Ruhr metropolis in North Rhine-Westphalia. The region comprises twelve cities with around one million people, making it one of the most densely populated regions in Germany. The name of the region is derived from the two rivers Emscher and Lippe, which flow through and border the area in an east-west direction.

The Emscher-Lippe region includes:

- the independent cities of Bottrop and Gelsenkirchen
- the district of Recklinghausen with the district towns of Castrop-Rauxel, Datteln, Dorsten, Gladbeck, Haltern am See, Herten, Marl, Oer-Erkenschwick, Recklinghausen and Waltrop

On the way to becoming a smart region and hydrogen hotspot h2el

Germany's last active colliery in the region was shut down in Bottrop in 2018. The former coal and steel region with Gelsenkirchen as the "city of a thousand fires" and Herten as Europe's largest mining town has undergone rapid change since the turn of the millennium. It has developed into a smart region which, building on its industrial strengths in the chemical and energy industries, is taking on a pioneering role in the field of hydrogen. Emscher-Lippe is in competition with other regions for the retention and settlement of innovative, future-oriented companies, their employees and families. Success in this process is guaranteed by short distances to decision-makers, the combination of urbanity and nature and the historically grown ability to integrate people from different backgrounds.

Prominent location

The region benefits from its central location in the largest economic area in Central Europe: The Emscher-Lippe region can be reached just as quickly from the seaports in Belgium and the Netherlands as from the Rhine-Ruhr conurbation. Important transport routes between Western and Eastern Europe and between Northern and Southern Germany cross the region. A dense motorway system, the network of ports and waterways with the largest canal junction in the world, numerous rail connections, Dortmund and Düsseldorf airports and pipelines keep people and goods on the move. The still strong presence of agricultural and food processing companies ensures the availability of regional products locally. The constantly growing network of attractive cycle paths creates both mobility and recreational value. In the Emscher-Lippe region, the Ruhr metropolis meets the Münsterland region.

Living close to nature

39 per cent of the total district area is used for agriculture; the proportion of woodland is almost twice as high as in Münsterland at 26 per cent. The district is also characterised by rivers (Lippe, Emscher), canals (including Wesel-Datteln, Dortmund-Ems) and reservoirs, as well as spoil tips and individual winding towers. Attractive residential areas in integrated locations or commercial uses in former industrial halls offer the region's one million people an attractive living and working environment.

University and educational landscape

The region benefits from an excellent university and educational landscape: in addition to two locations of the Westphalian University of Applied Sciences and the Ruhr West University of Applied Sciences in the Emscher-Lippe region, more than a dozen other universities and colleges and several Fraunhofer Institutes and Max Planck research institutes are within easy reach.

www.emscher-lippe.de

The Emscher-Lippe chemical region

From the very beginning, the Emscher-Lippe region was characterised by coal mining, heavy industry - and chemicals. The first chemical sites were established by leading national and international companies in the early 20th century. This was followed by a radical change in the 1970s: mixed chemical parks replaced the traditional plants of individual companies, the companies specialised and the surrounding universities opened up increasing research and development opportunities for sustainable chemistry and industry.

At the heart of the Emscher-Lippe chemical region is the Marl Chemical Park, the third largest Verbund site in Germany and also the largest production site of Evonik Industries AG. The Marl Chemical Park is characterised by its excellent infrastructure and customised service offerings. Major international companies such as Evonik Industries AG, Air Liquide, Air Products, INEOS Solvents Marl GmbH, INEOS Styrenics, DOW, Sasol and VESTOLIT already produce at this site. However, small and medium-sized companies also find ideal connection opportunities here. The 18 companies located in the Marl Chemical Park provide almost 10,000 jobs for the region.

In addition to the chemical industry, there are other sustainable sectors in the Emscher-Lippe region that benefit from its proximity to the chemical industry, including surface technology, plastics and biotechnology or the future-oriented sectors of the circular economy and hydrogen economy.

The diversity of the Emscher-Lippe chemical region is created by the unique mix of internationally active big players, traditional medium-sized companies, innovative start-ups, close municipal cooperation and a high density of educational and research institutions. Together, the players from these sectors form a strong alliance for a sustainable chemical industry. The ChemSite association networks companies in the chemical industry as well as neighbouring sectors, local authorities, science, associations, state administration and politics - and strengthens the major chemical and industrial locations in the Ruhr region.

About the Marl Chemical Park

The Marl Chemical Park was founded in 1938 and is now one of the largest chemical industry sites in Germany. The site covers an area of six square kilometres and is home to 900 buildings, including 100 production facilities, two wastewater treatment plants and three power plants. The chemical park has been operated by Evonik Industries AG, a global leader in speciality chemicals, since 2013. The Chemical Park is home to Evonik's largest production plant in Europe. In addition to Evonik, its subsidiaries and affiliates, 17 other companies are currently based in the Chemical Park. Their plants and facilities produce around 4 million tonnes of products from various industries every year, which are exported to Europe and all over the world.

Further information at www.chemiepark-marl.de

About Evonik Industries AG

The chemical company Evonik Industries AG is an internationally active company with its headquarters in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, and around 34,000 employees worldwide. Evonik's production sites are spread across six continents and 27 countries. The Marl site has a special position: Evonik operates its largest production plant in Europe at the Marl Chemical Park, in the heart of the German Emscher-Lippe region.

Further information at www.evonik.com

Largest European infrastructure project

Renaturalisation of the Emscher: The blue-green transformation of a region

First an agricultural landscape, then a mining region, now a close-to-nature, innovative business location: The Emscher-Lippe region in North Rhine-Westphalia is a master of transformation. This development is symbolised by the Emscher, the approximately 85-kilometre-long river that characterises the region between the Ruhr area and the Münsterland not only by its name. After the Emscher and its tributaries had been used as an open sewer for more than a century, the Emschergenossenschaft renaturalised the river system over 30 years as part of the Emscher conversion decade project. Since the end of 2021, the Emscher has been free of sewage again - and nature is returning.

As early as the 19th century, people began to shape the Emscher according to their needs. This transformed the river from a naturally flowing body of water into a far-reaching, complex system of open wastewater courses that ensured safe wastewater disposal in the region for decades.

Under the management of the Emschergenossenschaft - Germany's first water management association - the Emscher system has been extensively cleared of wastewater since 1992: With the construction of four new modern large-scale sewage treatment plants, over 430 kilometres of new underground sewers, three gigantic pumping stations and ultimately more than 340 kilometres of renaturalised river landscapes, the Emscher conversion is considered the largest European infrastructure project. The Emschergenossenschaft invested almost 5.5 billion euros in the decade-long project, which was completed as planned at the end of 2021 after exactly 30 years and remained largely within budget.

"At the same time, over 130 kilometres of cycle paths and footpaths have been created, making the new blue-green life along the Emscher and its tributaries a tangible experience. The former wastewater courses are well on the way to becoming the lifelines of the Ruhr region once again," says Prof. Dr. Uli Paetzel, Chairman of the Emschergenossenschaft. The "Emscher conversion" decade project with its vision of a blue Emscher with green banks is therefore a shining example for Germany and the whole of Europe.

About the Emschergenossenschaft

The Emschergenossenschaft (EG) is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. Founded on 14 December 1899 as the first German water management association, the Emschergenossenschaft is now Germany's largest operator of sewage treatment plants and pumping stations together with the Lippeverband (LV), which was founded in 1926. The tasks of EGLV are wastewater disposal, flood protection, water maintenance and climate impact adaptation. The two public-law associations are based in the heart of the Ruhr region in Essen, North Rhine-Westphalia.

For their contribution to biodiversity and the ecological improvement of water quality in the region, Emschergenossenschaft and Lippeverband were honoured at the end of 2023 with the German Sustainability Award 2024, Europe's largest award for ecological and social commitment.

More information at www.eglv.de.

Contact:

Ilias Abawi (Press spokesperson EGLV), +49 (201) 104 – 2586, abawi.ilias@eglv.de

ZINQ drives forward circular transformation in Emscher-Lippe

On the way to a climate-neutral industry

Sustainability and economic efficiency are not a contradiction in terms: the ZINQ Group from Gelsenkirchen is an example of how the transformation to a climate-neutral and sustainable industry can succeed. This is possible thanks to the systematic and complete focus on a circular economy. To do this, ZINQ has developed a pioneering circular business model with which the surface specialist proves that a circular economy does work. To share its experience with other companies and drive the circular transformation forward, ZINQ is involved in corporate initiatives and regional networks in the Emscher-Lippe region.

The Gelsenkirchen city harbour is located in the immediate proximity of ZINQ's main office and offers ideal conditions for becoming a real laboratory for the transformation of the medium-sized business sector: The harbour is the leading, multimodal transport centre in the Emscher-Lippe region and is home to energy-intensive companies from various sectors - including ZINQ. In 2021, Lars Baumgürtel, CEO of the ZINQ Group, founded the Gelsenkirchen Climate Port initiative with 15 other energy-intensive companies from the city harbour. The aim is to actively utilise the city port's central location to transform the economy towards climate neutrality.

The initiative's pilot project is the conversion of process heat production in energy-intensive companies from natural gas to green hydrogen. As spokesman of the initiative, Lars Baumgürtel exchanges ideas with players from politics and business and clearly states: "Medium-sized companies play a key role in the success of the energy transition. However, the legal framework needs to be modified so that green hydrogen can be utilised by medium-sized industrial companies." Thanks to public awareness of the initiative, the Gelsenkirchen climate harbour is expected to be connected to a supply of green hydrogen in 2028 - and therefore become a blueprint for the climate-friendly transformation of an entire industrial area. The first step will be taken in 2024 by switching to a hydrogen-based energy gas. Decarbonising the operations in the Gelsenkirchen climate port would save over 150,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year.

Innovations for greater sustainability

The conversion of the system in Gelsenkirchen is just the beginning for ZINQ. The long-term goal is to replace natural gas with green hydrogen at all locations. But avoiding the emission of greenhouse gases is only part of the challenge for Lars Baumgürtel. "In order to achieve climate neutrality, the manufactured product must also be considered with all its environmental impacts over the entire life cycle and the CO₂ emissions and savings contained in the product," says Baumgürtel. This is why ZINQ is driving the circular transformation in its own company with a holistic business model. ZINQ implements innovations for more sustainability in eight fields of action. ZINQ's surfaces have been Cradle to Cradle® (C2C) certified for 13 years and are developed and manufactured in such a way that they can be used again and again to produce new surfaces. At the same time, CO₂ emissions are continuously reduced for all zinc surfaces.

ZINQ is already realising the triple objective of the EU Green Deal

As a pioneer in the medium-sized business sector, ZINQ is right in the middle of the transformation - and acts with foresight: ZINQ's circular business model is already pursuing the triple objective defined in the EU Green Deal: zero waste, zero carbon, zero pollution. The surfaces produced by ZINQ in Germany save 45,000 tonnes of CO₂ per year over their entire product life cycle.

ZINQ transfers the CO₂ savings achieved through the energy and material optimisation of the products to its customers in the form of carbon credits to a CO₂ account. ZINQ evaluates the ecological characteristics of its products on the basis of existing standards and translates them into a digital and circular product passport logic. "This shows that it is possible to provide evidence of circular quality. However, to fully document the environmental impact of products throughout their entire life cycle, everyone needs to get on board - in all supply chains that will be affected by the introduction of product passports from 2026. Product passports will then form a decisive basis for political incentives to support the purchase of sustainable products with proven circular quality," Baumgürtel is convinced.

Advancing the circular transformation in the region

ZINQ is involved in regional networks, such as the "Transform to Zero in the Prosperkolleg" network, to switch a large part of the economic output in the (northern) Ruhr region to a circular economy. "I would like to share the knowledge gained from ZINQ's circular transformation with other entrepreneurs from the resource-intensive industry in order to convert entire supply chains to a circular value chain, initially in a regional context," says Lars Baumgürtel.

About ZINQ

ZINQ has specialised in hot-dip galvanising and coating for more than 130 years and is now the market leader in the field of corrosion protection on steel using zinc. ZINQ specialises in the development and production of innovative, Cradle to Cradle®-certified surfaces that are used in a wide range of steel processing applications. Every year, more than 650,000 tonnes of steel are protected against corrosion with ZINQ at over 50 European locations. In 2020, ZINQ was named a climate protection company.

Driving structural change and providing stimulus for the labour market

Stölting Service Group strengthens the Emscher-Lippe economic and living environment

Over 40 locations throughout Germany, more than 14,400 employees of various nationalities and a 125-year company history steeped in tradition: the Stölting Service Group, headquartered in Gelsenkirchen, has developed from a former glass cleaning company into a service group with national appeal. At the same time, the family-owned company keeps its roots in mind and is committed to the Gelsenkirchen location and the Emscher-Lippe region: With the new construction of the "Stölting Harbor" company administration building on the site of the former Graf Bismarck colliery, Stölting has contributed to the successful revitalisation of the location in the Ruhr region. In addition, Stölting provides important impulses for the labour market in the northern Ruhr region by creating jobs at all qualification levels.

If you are looking for a business success story in Gelsenkirchen, you cannot avoid the Graf Bismarck harbour district. The Gelsenkirchen-based Stölting Group has been at home here since 2018. The new "Stölting Harbour" company administration building has given the former industrial wasteland a modern appearance with a maritime flair. Right next to the Rhine-Herne Canal, a green corridor of the Emscherland Adventure Park and the "ZOOM Erlebniswelt", one of the most modern zoos in Germany, a new four-storey building has been constructed with generous office space with a view of the harbour and restaurants on the ground floor. In this way, Stölting contributes to sustainable structural change and strengthens the economy and attractiveness of the region. In 2021, Hans Mosbacher, shareholder of the Stölting Service Group, was honoured as a "Citizen of the Ruhr" by the pro Ruhr board. "Our existence and our success are based on our roots in the Ruhr region. I am a Ruhr family entrepreneur right through," says Hans Mosbacher.

Stölting as a driver of integration in the region

With its cleaning, security and personnel divisions, Stölting has a broad base and offers a wide range of career opportunities. Regardless of professional qualifications, the company gives everyone a chance of a job - from academics and career starters to temporary staff. In this way, Stölting creates equal opportunities and promotes diversity in the company's workforce. This is reflected in the co-operation of people from over 100 different nationalities and makes Stölting a driving force for integration in the region. The integration philosophy and the diversity of the workplaces strengthen the labour market in the northern Ruhr region.

Sustainability as part of the corporate culture

Fair working conditions, equal opportunities and the promotion of non-discriminatory, diverse cooperation are firmly anchored at Stölting. This long-term responsibility towards its employees makes the company a sustainable employer. Stölting is also determined when it comes to environmental and climate protection: the company's carbon footprint is being improved step by step with the gradual conversion of its fleet of over 1,000 vehicles to e-mobility, as well as with extended offers for job bikes and discounted public transport.



Energy- and water-saving cleaning machines, ecological cleaning products and resource-saving building technology are also used. The aim is to become CO₂-neutral in the new decade.

Commitment in the region

Anyone who is passionate about their hometown is happy to get involved with the city, the people, and the region: Stölting has sponsored several sports clubs for many years - including FC Schalke 04, Borussia Dortmund, Fortuna Düsseldorf and VfL Wolfsburg. And Stölting is also playing an important role in the 2024 European Football Championships, which will host a few matches in the region this summer: In some of the European Championship stadiums in North Rhine-Westphalia, the company ensures a carefree football experience with its security service. To keep distances short and pool capacities, Stölting's trained employees are based in a specially constructed container village near the "AufSchalke" arena in Gelsenkirchen. Sebastian Mosbacher, CEO of the Stölting Service Group: "People's safety is our top priority. That's why we at Stölting are happy to help ensure that fans from the region, Germany, Europe and all over the world can enjoy the games."

About the Stölting Service Group

Founded in 1899 as a glass cleaning company, the Stölting Service Group is now one of the leading providers of security, personnel, and cleaning services in Germany. With more than 14,400 employees, the family-run company generates an annual turnover of around 360 million euros and has over 40 locations throughout Germany in addition to its headquarters in Gelsenkirchen.

Statements on the location factors of the Emscher-Lippe region

Bodo Klimpel, District Administrator of the district of Recklinghausen and Chairman of the Executive Committee of WiN Emscher-Lippe GmbH:

"Politics, business and research have understood that our industrialised past not only provides the causes of our current challenges, but often also their solutions. The legacy of the coal and steel industry is also an opportunity for us: thanks to an excellently developed infrastructure on land and water, a high potential of labour and the widely available technical know-how."

Dr. Babette Nieder, Managing Director of WiN Emscher-Lippe GmbH and Hydrogen Coordinator for the Emscher-Lippe region:

"For the second time in history, our region will play a key role in Europe's energy supply. We are pioneers on the road to the hydrogen economy. Thanks to our pipeline infrastructure, we are like a spider in the web and have the entire supply chain at our disposal and are setting standards in the transition to hydrogen."

Prof. Dr. Ulrich Paetzel, Chairman of the Board of Emschergenossenschaft and Lippeverband

"With the Emscher modification, we have completed Europe's largest infrastructure project with great success and have consistently kept to our schedule and budget. The former cesspit has now become a sewage-free river, opening new habitats for nature and people. The fact that the days of the strong-smelling river are now finally a thing of the past is a huge step towards a new blue-green future for the region."

Thomas Wessel, Chief Human Resources Officer of Evonik Industries AG

"A successful energy transition and a climate-neutral future will only be possible with green hydrogen. As a speciality chemicals company, Evonik is an important player for a sustainable hydrogen economy in Marl. With our products, we are contributing to the efficient production and distribution of hydrogen and are researching the chemistry of tomorrow, which will have to do without fossil fuels."

Joined forces for a strong future in Gelsenkirchen

A strong alliance for Gelsenkirchen and the European Football Championship has been formed to pool Gelsenkirchen's strengths: On the occasion of this summer's tournament, FC Schalke 04, the city of Gelsenkirchen, the Emscher-Lippe employers' associations and the North Westphalia Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) have agreed to use the European Championship 2024 to present the city as a hospitable, sustainable and innovative business location under the motto "Gelsenkirchen - We speak soccer and shape the future".

To this end, four specific projects were agreed and launched that are both eye-catching and associated with concrete benefits. They are intended to make domestic and foreign guests as well as social media users curious about Gelsenkirchen and the potential that exists here.

"UnternehmensElf" shapes the cityscape

Together with eleven large companies from Gelsenkirchen, a team has been formed that exemplifies the various and diverse economic activities in the city. The members of the UnternehmensElf will finance individually designed oversized steel footballs and set them up at their locations or at locations of their choice in the city. The balls will be manufactured in Gelsenkirchen and will have a diameter of approx. 1.60 meters and weigh approx. 320 kilograms. As the property of the respective companies, they can be used for their own activities. Due to the expected great public interest in the city of Gelsenkirchen as one of the venues for UEFA EURO 2024, the eleven partners can use this to present their company and their work. The presentation of the UnternehmensElf took place on December 14, 2023 at the "Gelsenkirchener Unternehmertreff" of the "Wirtschaftsförderung Gelsenkirchen" at Schalke's Arena. The balls will be completed in April 2024.

Video impressions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqkAH6Jek_g

ZukunftsForum GE provides information on future topics

An exhibition and event venue will be created on the premises of the ZINQ company at the city's harbor in Gelsenkirchen, where future topics such as hydrogen, digitalization, education, sustainability, the circular economy and the conversion of the Emscher will be presented. The opening will take place on June 3, 2024 (5 p.m.) with the event "Contributions for a successful future".

Local and regional stakeholders will discuss which projects, initiatives and activities are helpful for a successful future in two panel discussions. Films about the production and design of the oversized "soccer sculptures" and the new image film about the Emscher-Lippe region will round off the program. Until mid-July, there will be events, theme days and committee meetings on various future topics, e.g. a joint sustainability day organized by FC Schalke 04 and the IHK North Westphalia. The "ZukunftsForum GE" is geographically located halfway between the "Arena auf Schalke" and the FanZone at Nordsternpark.

Project partners launch multi-year reading initiative for Gelsenkirchen

Gelsenkirchen is also enthusiastically launching a pioneering reading initiative in the run-up to the European Championship 2024. The initiative aims to strengthen and promote reading competence among primary school pupils. And not just during the European Championship 2024, but over several years. In addition to the four sponsors already mentioned, FC Schalke 04's own foundation "Schalke hilft!" is also supporting this project.

At the start of the campaign, valuable treasure chests of books worth 400 euros each were handed over to ten selected elementary schools - the contents were donated by committed companies in the

city. In the coming years, the initiative will gradually consider equipping all other elementary schools in Gelsenkirchen so that the campaign can have an impact throughout the city. In addition to the high-quality book donation, regular participation in the nationwide Read-Aloud-Day is also on the agenda. Decision-makers from companies, the city administration and cooperation partners will read aloud in elementary school. Workshops are also planned for nursery school teachers, parents and dedicated readers. A reading competition will also motivate pupils and further strengthen their reading skills. The initiative will then culminate in a reading festival in June 2024.

With this cooperation, the partners of the reading initiative are sending a strong signal for the importance of education and the promotion of reading in Gelsenkirchen - a city that is suffering particularly from structural change and whose citizens, especially the youngest, need special support and encouragement in social areas.

Pavilion of the economy as a meeting place for all nations

Finally, a special highlight is being created in the heart of the city of Gelsenkirchen as part of the European Championship 2024: the Pavilion of Economy. In June 2024, the Friedrich Grillo Industrial Club will become the central meeting point for local business representatives with national and international business contacts. On all four EURO match days in Gelsenkirchen, the Pavilion of Business invites you to network in a stylish atmosphere. This initiative demonstrates the diversity and strength of local companies and the economy.

The Pavilion of the Economy offers a unique opportunity to present Gelsenkirchen as a successful business location. The cooperation between local companies and national and international partners shows how dynamic and innovative Gelsenkirchen is beyond its city limits.

Point of Contact:

Industrie- und Handelskammer Nord Westfalen
Guido Krüdwagen
Head of Public Relations
Telephone: +49 209 388 233
E-Mail: guido.kruedewagen@ihk-nw.de