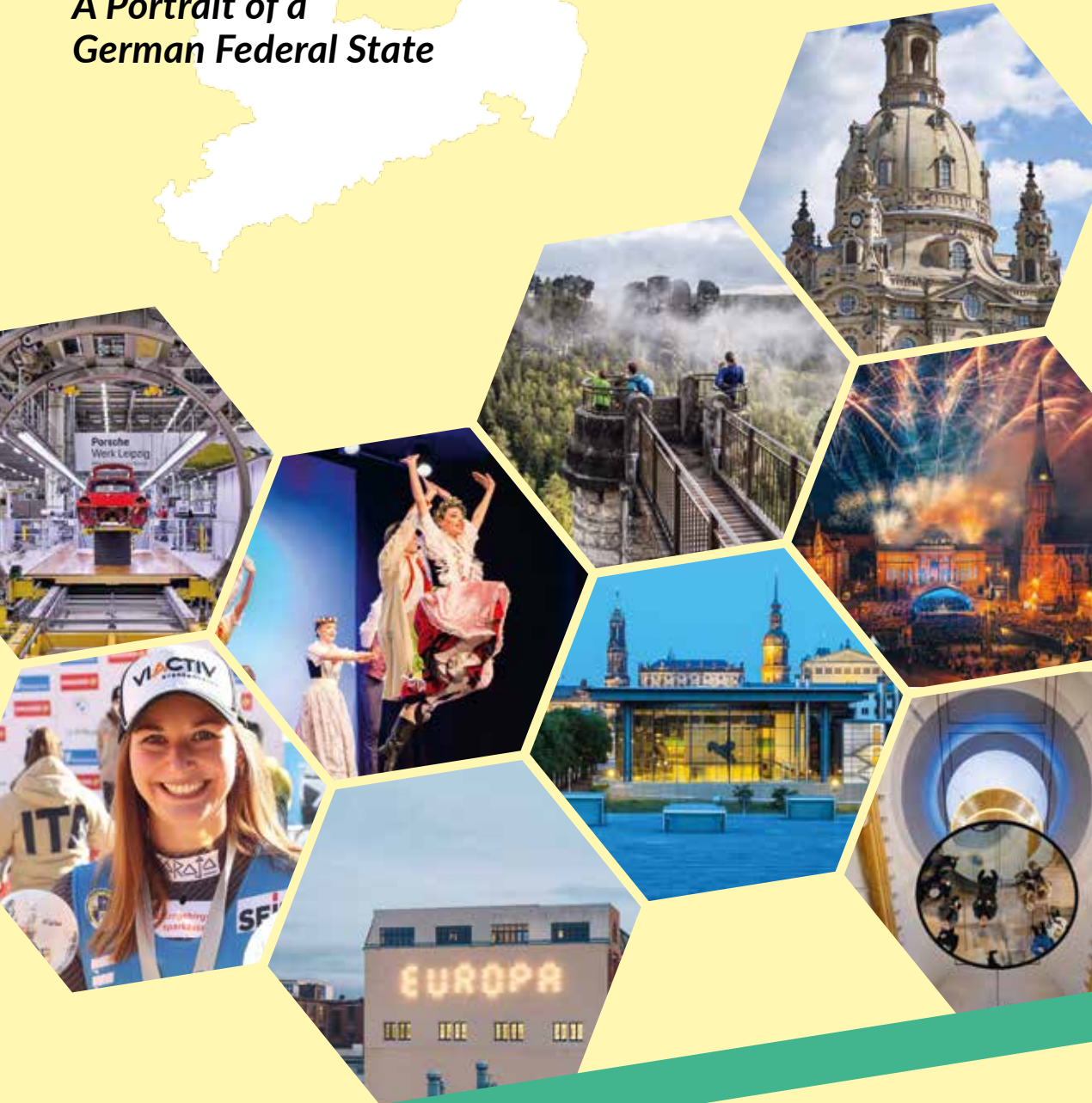


SAXONY

*A Portrait of a
German Federal State*



Nikolaus von Wolff

CHROMALAND

slob
SÄCHSISCHE
LANDESZENTRALE FÜR
POLITISCHE BILDUNG

Imprint

Second, revised edition, 2026

Special edition for the Saxon State Agency for Civic Education

© CHROMALAND Medienverlag Chemnitz, 2026
All rights reserved.

Author and editor: Nikolaus von Wolff
In collaboration with Joachim Amm and Werner Rellecke

Graphics and layout: Tomás Rodríguez
English language advice: James Hardie Dyson
Printed by: Westermann Druck Zwickau GmbH

This publication does not necessarily reflect
the views of the Saxon State Agency for Civic Education.
The authors are solely responsible for its content.

This edition is not intended for sale.

Printed in Germany

www.chromaland.net

Nikolaus von Wolff

SAXONY

*A Portrait of a
German Federal State*

Special edition for the
Saxon State Agency for Civic Education

CHROMALAND

Foreword

The Saxon State Agency for Civic Education is pleased to present the first English language edition of *Saxony: A Portrait of a German Federal State*.

In addition to a brief description of the political system, this volume provides key information on Saxony's geography, demography and regional development, on the economy and employment, the environment and energy, art and culture, science and education, sport and leisure, as well as on Saxony's history and other notable aspects of the Free State.

The sixteen German federal states differ considerably from one another, particularly in terms of their historical development. As a result, each state has developed its own distinct identity. Saxony possesses numerous distinctive features that make the state between the rivers Neisse in the east and Pleiße in the west unique among the German federal states.

Saxony's historical roots date back to the tenth century, when the Margraviate of Meissen was founded. At the height of its territorial expansion, large parts of present-day Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt and Brandenburg belonged to the lands ruled by the Saxon Wettin dynasty. To this day, the Saxon dialect is spoken far beyond the borders of the state.

Mining in the Ore Mountains and Saxony's pioneering role in Central Europe during industrialisation in the first half of the nineteenth century are still reflected today in the density of the urban settlement structure, the economic structure and elements of popular culture.

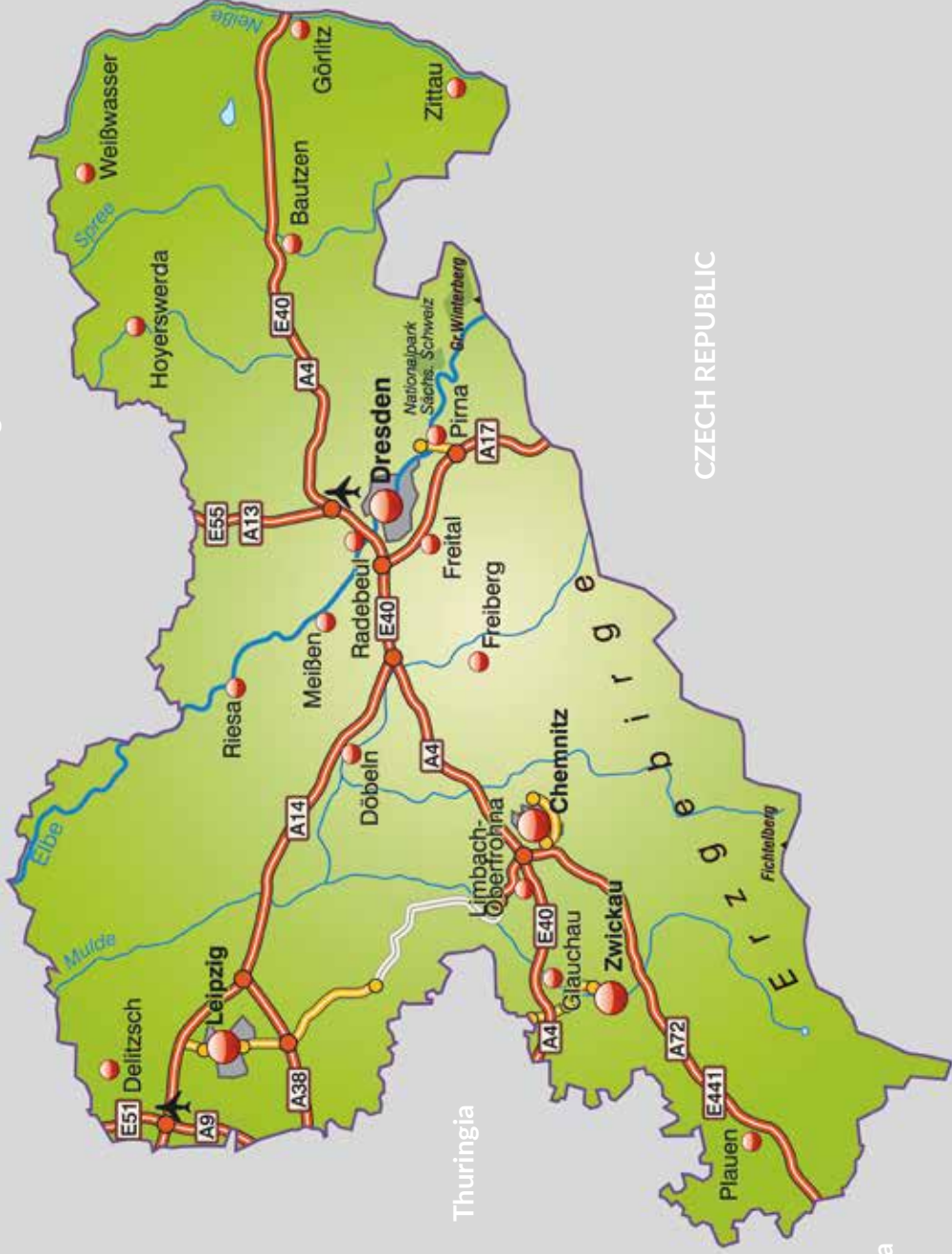
The people of Saxony have long been regarded as self-confident and independent-minded, which also explains their leading role during the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 that led to the end of the GDR. All these aspects are addressed in this volume.

My sincere thanks go to the author, Nikolaus von Wolff, for compiling this volume. I wish all readers an insightful and rewarding read.

Dr Roland Löffler
Director
Saxon State Agency for Civic Education

Saxony-Anhalt

Brandenburg



POLAND

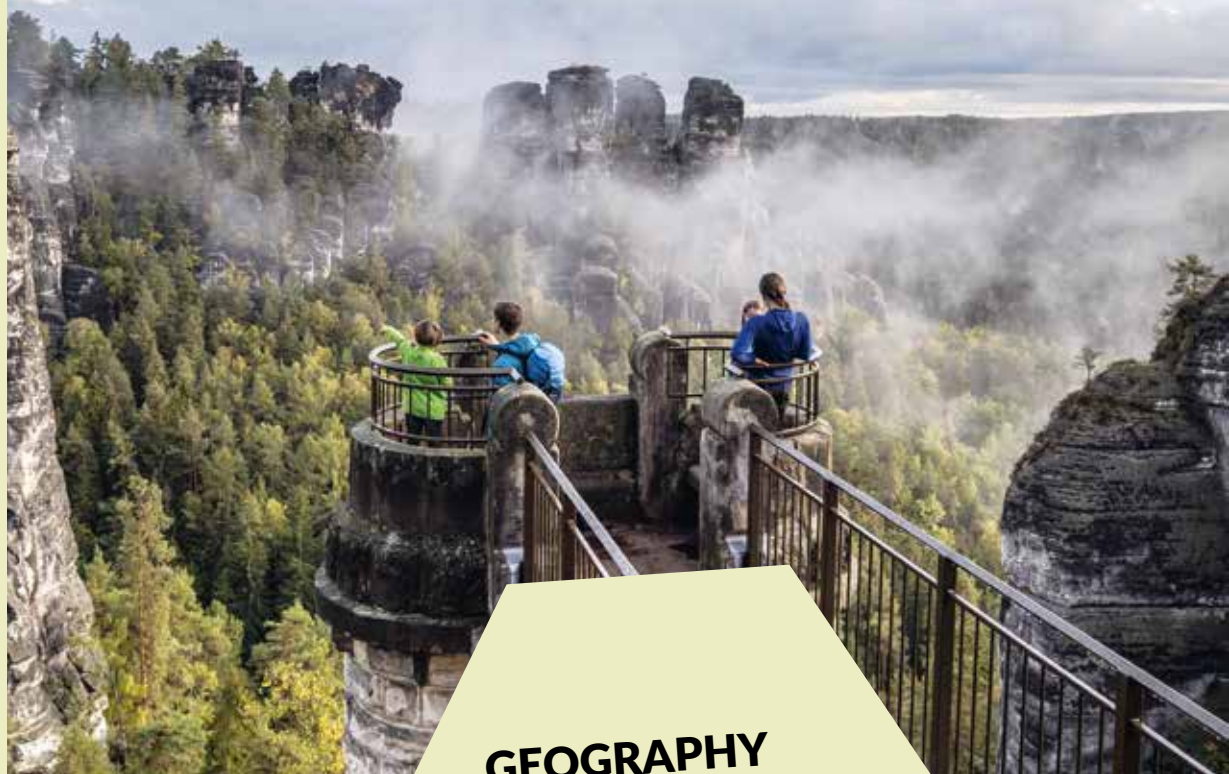
CZECH REPUBLIC

Thuringia

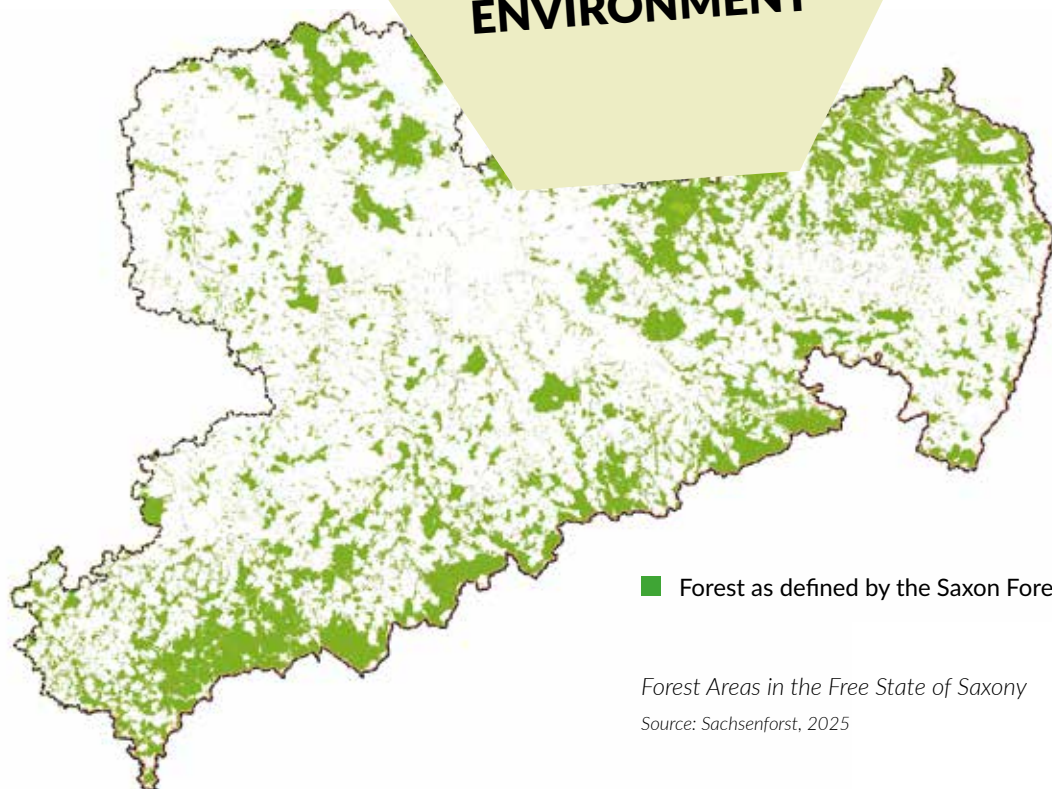
Bavaria

CONTENTS

Geography and Natural Environment	8
Cities and Regions	20
Society and Demography	36
Art and Culture	52
Economy and Labour	70
Science and Research	82
History and Memory	92
Politics and the Electoral System	112



GEOGRAPHY AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



■ Forest as defined by the Saxon Forest Act

Forest Areas in the Free State of Saxony

Source: Sachsenforst, 2025

The Free State of Saxony covers an area of 18,449.9 km², ranking tenth among the German federal states in terms of size, between Rhineland-Palatinate and Thuringia. Saxony borders Bavaria and Thuringia to the west, Brandenburg to the north, the Czech Republic to the south and Poland to the east. Its highly diverse landscape comprises lowlands, rolling hills and low mountain ranges.

Areas and Landscapes

The lowlands include the Leipzig Lowland Bay and northern Upper Lusatia. These areas are characterised by deposits from the Pleistocene glaciations and riverine sediments, and substantial lignite deposits lie beneath the surface.

To the south lie the Central Saxon Hills, whose extensive loess deposits provide exceptionally fertile soils. These formations are associated with terminal moraines from earlier glacial periods. A terminal moraine is a ridge-like accumulation of rock debris at the edge of a glacier.

Saxony's low mountain ranges are not clearly demarcated from one another and extend from the Bavarian border in the west to the Polish border in the east. The Vogtland region in the west, characterised by meadows, fields and wooded hilltops, lies above one of the most volcanically active zones in Central Europe. Significant earthquakes were recorded there in 1985, 2000 and 2014.

According to the *Handbook of the Natural Regional Structure of Germany*, the natural region of Vogtland extends into south-western Czechia, Bavaria and Thuringia. To the north, it borders the Ore Mountains basin near Zwickau; to the south, the Westerzgebirge extends into Czechia. The 805-metre Hohe Brand near Markneukirchen lies on the border between the Vogtland region and the Western Ore Mountains.



The Rochlitz volcanic system in Central Saxony was active 300 million years ago and produced extensive volcanic rock deposits, among them Rochlitz porphyry, a volcanic tuffstone. Due to its warm colour, it was used in many cultural monuments, including the tomb of Dedo III in the basilica of Wechselburg Monastery, the Electoral Saxon postal mileposts, and the entrance of the Grassi Museum in Leipzig.



Fichtelberg, Ore Mountains

To the east rise the Ore Mountains, which form a so-called *Pultscholle* – a particular type of tilted tectonic fault block that is uplifted on one side, creating a gentle slope on one flank and a steep escarpment on the other, facing the Eger Valley in Czechia. The altitude of the Ore Mountains gradually decreases from west to east. Saxony's highest peak, the 1,215-metre Fichtelberg, is located in the Central Ore Mountains.

Further east, the River Elbe cuts through the mountains, where deep erosion has formed the Elbe Sandstone Mountains. At the north-eastern edge of the Elbe Valley, the Lusatian Fault marks a sharp geological boundary with the Lusatian Highlands, which extend into Czechia and merge with the Lusatian Mountains.

Rivers

The Elbe is Saxony's largest and only navigable river. Rising in the Giant Mountains in Czechia, it stretches for 1,094 km in total and is one of Europe's major rivers.



Rivers in Saxony

Important tributaries within Saxony include the Mulde, Weißeritz, Zschopau, Weiße Elster and Spree, all of which belong to the Elbe river system. The Mulde, including the Zwickauer Mulde, is 314 km long and is formed by the confluence of the Zwickauer and Freiburger Mulde.

The Spree rises in Upper Lusatia in the east of the state and flows through Saxony, Brandenburg and Berlin before joining the Havel in Berlin-Spandau after approximately 400 km.

The Lusatian Neisse, a tributary of the Oder, rises in the Jizera Mountains in Czechia and forms part of the German–Polish border.



The Elbe Valley south of Meißen

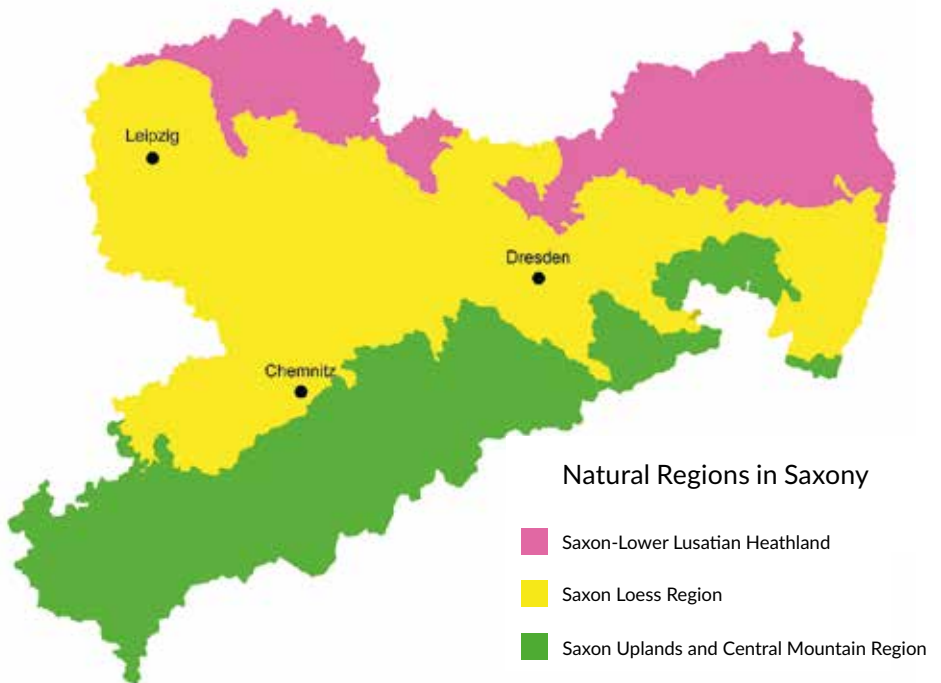
Geography and Geology

Saxony's present-day landscape has been shaped primarily by the ice ages and, more recently, by human intervention, particularly lignite mining. However, the geological history of the region extends much further into the past. Processes such as sedimentation, volcanism, mountain formation and erosion have created an exceptionally diverse geological structure.

The state falls into three major natural regions: the glacial lowlands, the loess-covered lowlands and hills, and the foothills and mountain areas.

In the lowlands, traces of ancient inland glacial advances can be seen along terminal moraines. The terrain is gently undulating, with elevations between 90 and 150 metres above sea level. The soils in the Saxon lowlands are largely nutrient-poor.

During the last ice age, which began around 115,000 years ago and lasted nearly 100,000 years, the hilly regions were not covered by ice sheets but by thick layers of loess, ranging from 0.5 to 10 metres. Loess is a fine sediment formed from rock dust produced by glacial activity and transported by wind. It forms the basis of fertile soils. For this reason, the Central Saxon Hills are regarded as the “breadbasket of Saxony”. The



Saxon Highlands and the low mountain ranges – from the Upper Vogtland to the Zittau Mountains in the east – form part of the Central European low mountain range system. Their geological composition differs significantly from that of the lowlands and hills.

Many towns in the Ore Mountains were founded as a result of rich ore deposits. Until a few decades ago, the mining of tin, tungsten, nickel and uranium ores, as well as fluorspar and barite, played an important economic role. Non-metallic raw materials such as sand, gravel and coal have also been extracted for centuries. While hard coal mining ceased in 1978, current legislation stipulates that opencast lignite mining is to end by 2038 at the latest.



The Bienitz, a wooded hill northwest of Leipzig, is part of the Dehlitz-Rückmarsdorf terminal moraine

Climate

Compared with most other regions in Germany, Saxony's climate is relatively continental owing to its distance from the Atlantic Ocean. Mountain ranges to the west, including the Fichtelgebirge, the Thuringian Forest and the Harz, weaken Atlantic influences and reduce precipitation. Winters therefore tend to be cooler and drier, and summers warmer and drier, than in western Germany. Föhn winds may occur on the northern slopes of the Ore Mountains.

The effects of climate change are increasingly evident in Saxony. Since the late 1960s, westerly weather patterns in winter have become more frequent in Germany, leading to milder and wetter winters. This trend is also visible in Saxony, though to a lesser extent. In summer, by contrast, westerly weather patterns have declined significantly over the past fifty years.

Of particular relevance is the Vb weather pattern (pronounced “five-b”), a large-scale system in which a low-pressure area moves from the Adriatic Sea across the northern Balkans and the Alps towards the Baltic region. Such patterns often bring heavy rainfall. Their increased frequency has contributed to a higher flood risk in Saxony. The Elbe flood of August 2002 is a notable example.

Impacts of Climate Change in Saxony

Frequent flooding, prolonged droughts, heavy rainfall and heatwaves are among the consequences of climate change. Agriculture is increasingly affected by soil erosion and water shortages, and forests are suffering from drought-related damage. These impacts have become particularly noticeable since autumn 2013.

In response, extensive protective measures have been introduced, particularly in the flood-prone valleys of the Ore Mountains. As small streams can swell into torrents within minutes, structural flood protection is essential to safeguarding settlements and infrastructure.



Flood protection installation in Burkhardtsdorf/Ore Mountains

Natural Habitats and Wildlife

Forests cover 28.3 per cent of Saxony's land area, slightly below the national average of 32 per cent. Spruce and pine remain predominant. To make forests more resilient to climate change, forest management is increasing the share of deciduous species. Nature reserves account for 3.6 per cent of the state's territory, compared with 6.5 per cent nationwide. Agriculture occupies 48 per cent of the land area, while settlement and transport infrastructure account for more than 14 per cent.

As part of the EU-wide *Natura 2000* network, 47 habitat types have been identified in Saxony, including inland dunes, heathland, grassland, moors, rocky habitats, forests and standing and flowing waters.

Saxony's diverse landscapes provide breeding grounds for numerous bird species, including ospreys, cranes, red kites, kingfishers and eagle owls.

A total of 87 mammal species have been recorded, either historically or at present. The aurochs, bison, wild horse and elk became extinct in Saxony by the seventeenth century. Moose have occasionally been sighted again in eastern Saxony, migrating from Poland, where populations are stable. Wolves and lynxes, which disappeared in the eighteenth century, have returned in recent decades.

Other species such as chamois, mouflon, raccoon dogs and raccoons have established populations. Saxony's waters are home to a wide range of fish species, including pike, perch, catfish, carp, trout, tench, zander and roach.



The European wildcat is spreading once again in Saxony. After disappearing in the 19th century, the first animals were recorded from 2020 onward in the Werdau Forest, and in 2023 in additional regions. Larger forest areas and interconnected habitats are facilitating its return.

Agriculture

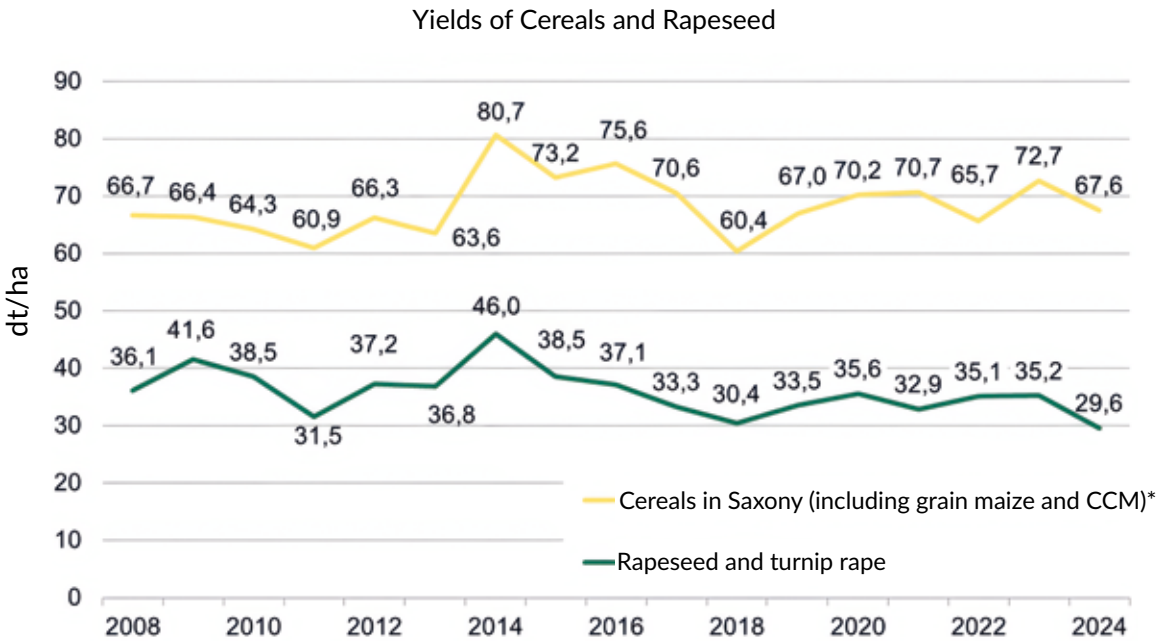
As a Central European cultural landscape, Saxony has been shaped by agriculture for centuries. Almost half of the state's total area is used for agricultural purposes, although the regions differ considerably in terms of their productive potential. Since Saxony was re-established as a federal state in 1990, a structure has developed in which large-scale and smaller agricultural enterprises coexist, covering a broad spectrum of production sectors.



Agricultural land near Leukersdorf

More than three quarters of the agricultural land is arable. Grassland accounts for the second-largest share, at 21 per cent.

Saxony has a longstanding tradition of fruit cultivation and ranks fourth among the German federal states in terms of the area devoted to fruit trees. With 498 hectares of vineyards, Saxony's wine-growing region is one of the smallest in Germany.



Source: Statistical Office of the Free State of Saxony
Presentation: LfULG
As of: 01/2025

* Excluding other cereals grown for grain
(e.g. buckwheat, millet, sorghum)

Transport Infrastructure

Owing to its long industrial history, Saxony has traditionally possessed a dense transport network. Considering only federal, state and district roads, the density of the road network is above the average of the western German federal states.

The length of the motorway network has increased by more than one third since 1990, though it remains comparatively limited. For example, the motorway connection from the Vogtland region via Chemnitz to Leipzig is not expected to be fully completed until the end of 2027.



Completion of the section of the A 72 Chemnitz-Leipzig motorway near Rötha, Leipzig district

The formerly extensive rail network has been reduced by almost one third since reunification. Nevertheless, regional rail services remain comparatively extensive in terms of route coverage. The situation is different with regard to modern long-distance connections between Leipzig and Chemnitz: since the 1990s, travellers have been awaiting the double-tracking and full electrification of the line, which, according to current plans, is to be completed by 2032. Until 2025, rolling stock dating back

to the GDR era was still used on the roughly one-hour journey between Leipzig and Chemnitz. Since 2026, battery-powered trains have been introduced on this route, replacing vehicles that had been in service for more than three decades.



Since 2020, Germany's "Grey Areas Funding Programme" has supported broadband expansion in areas with insufficient high-speed coverage. Under the current gigabit funding framework, areas are eligible if they do not reliably have access to 200 Mbit/s symmetrically or 500 Mbit/s in download speed. The programme builds on earlier "white areas" funding for connections below 30 Mbit/s and is part of the broader goal of providing nationwide gigabit connectivity by 2030.

As European integration progresses, Saxony's geographical position is becoming increasingly central from a logistical perspective. The importance of neighbouring Poland and Czechia continues to grow, and economic integration across borders is advancing rapidly.

As part of the expansion of the European high-speed rail network, plans have existed since the 1990s to reduce travel time between Dresden and Prague to approximately one hour by constructing a 25-kilometre tunnel through the Ore Mountains. The project is also intended to relieve traffic congestion in the Elbe Valley by shifting freight transport to rail. Test drilling for the tunnel has already begun.

Due to its central location, Saxony has developed into an important hub for air freight in Europe. Leipzig/Halle Airport is Germany's second-largest freight hub. By contrast, passenger numbers at the international airports in Leipzig and Dresden are comparatively modest.

Regional disparities in broadband coverage still exist. However, many previously underserved areas are now being connected to gigabit networks.

The expansion of fibre-optic infrastructure has accelerated across Saxony in recent years. Since 2022, numerous municipalities have begun connecting households and businesses to high-speed broadband networks, with further expansion planned throughout the decade.

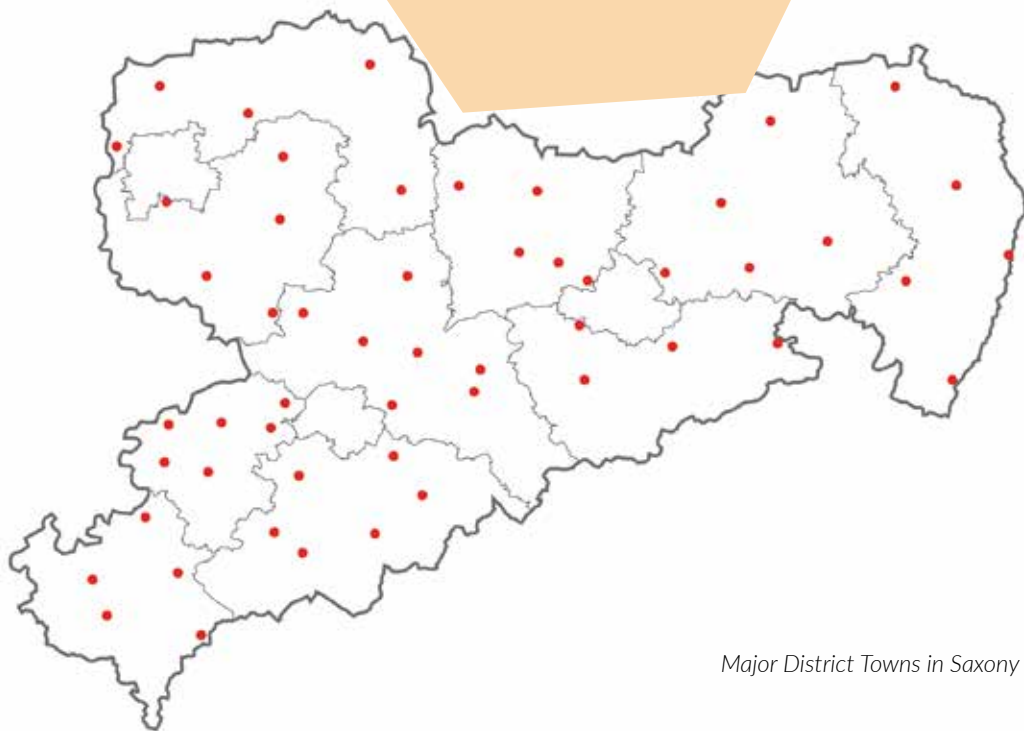
According to the current broadband atlas, gigabit coverage continues to increase across the state, including in rural regions such as the Vogtland. The aim is not only to ensure basic connectivity but to provide comprehensive high-speed broadband coverage in the foreseeable future.



Erzgebirgsbahn train at Chemnitz Central Station



CITIES AND REGIONS



Major District Towns in Saxony

The three independent major cities of Saxony – Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz – have a combined population of almost 1.4 million. Each forms an urban conurbation with neighbouring towns: Dresden with Radebeul, Meissen, Freital and Pirna; Leipzig with Halle (in Saxony-Anhalt); and Chemnitz with Zwickau, Glauchau and other surrounding municipalities. Following German reunification in 1990, all three cities – and Chemnitz in particular – experienced a dramatic economic downturn, high unemployment and significant population decline for nearly a decade. From around 2000 onwards, Dresden and Leipzig underwent substantial economic recovery and resumed steady growth. Both cities have since re-established themselves as internationally significant centres of business, science and culture. Chemnitz, the smallest of the three, succeeded in stabilising its population only from 2011 onwards.

Dresden

With 564,900 inhabitants (2025), the state capital is the second-largest city in Saxony after Leipzig. As the seat of the state parliament, the state government and numerous state authorities, Dresden serves as the political centre of the Free State.



Elbe Meadows, Dresden



The dome of the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts is colloquially also known as the “Lemon Squeezer.”

Widely recognised as a centre of culture, Dresden attracts millions of visitors each year (2.2 million in 2025). With its wealth of historical architecture, distinguished museums and internationally recognised orchestras, and as a city long associated with notable artists and rulers, Dresden occupies a unique position in eastern Germany.

The city is home to almost 60 galleries, 50 museums and 35 theatres and performance venues. The Frauenkirche, the Semperoper, the Zwinger and the Albertinum form part of the architectural heritage of the former royal capital of Saxony.

The Technical University of Dresden and the Academy of Fine Arts provide a strong foundation for science and the arts. Major employers include companies in pharmaceuticals, semiconductor manufacturing, mechanical engineering, telecommunications and aviation. Owing to its leading role in European microchip production, the Dresden metropolitan area is known as “Silicon Saxony”.

Leipzig

With more than 633,500 inhabitants (2026), Leipzig is the most populous city in Saxony and one of the fastest-growing cities in Germany. Over its nearly thousand-year history, it has been a centre of learning, trade and publishing. Since the Renaissance, Leipzig has been an important location for book printing and the book trade.

The city is home to one of Europe’s oldest universities as well as renowned institutions of commerce, music and art. Johann Sebastian Bach and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy lived and worked here. The Gewandhaus Orchestra and the St. Thomas Choir enjoy international acclaim.

Leipzig was also the focal point of the peace prayers and Monday demonstrations in the GDR that culminated in the Peaceful Revolution of 1989. Today, alongside its historical and cultural importance, Leipzig has developed into an major business hub and a vibrant centre of international cultural life.



Karl Heine Canal, Leipzig-Lindenau

Chemnitz

Until the end of the Second World War, Chemnitz was one of the most important industrial centres in Germany and Europe. From textile machinery and steam locomotives in the nineteenth century to automobile production and the computer manufacturer Robotron in the GDR era, the city – known as Karl-Marx-Stadt between 1953 and 1990 – was closely associated with technological innovation.

Following a successful application in 2020, Chemnitz held the title of European Capital of Culture in 2025. Under the motto “C the Unseen”, the city presented around 150 projects and more than 1,000 events showcasing its cultural potential. Visitor numbers rose significantly during the Capital of Culture year.

Chemnitz is home to the second-largest technical university in Saxony, research facilities of the Fraunhofer Society, the Hydrogen Competence Centre and an expanding start-up scene. Architecturally, the city offers notable landmarks such as Villa Esche by the Belgian designer Henry van de Velde, impressive industrial heritage sites and the Kaßberg district, one of the largest contiguous Art Nouveau neighbourhoods in Europe. The Chemnitz Art Collections and the Gunzenhauser Museum house important works of classical modernism. The city currently has around 250,400 inhabitants.



Chemnitz's Wirkbau building with the light installation “Europa” by Caro Baumann and Johannes Scheel, 2024

The Medium-Sized Towns of Görlitz, Plauen and Zwickau

With approximately 57,000 inhabitants, Görlitz is the largest town in Upper Lusatia. Its largely preserved historic centre, which was spared extensive destruction during the Second World War, displays architectural styles ranging from the late Gothic to the Baroque.

Görlitz forms a cross-border twin city with the Polish town of Zgorzelec. The two parts are connected by the bridge named after Pope John Paul II and jointly declared themselves a European City in 1998. Following the redrawing of borders in 1945, the development of the two halves diverged for decades. The district of Görlitz also includes the Bohemian-influenced town of Zittau at the foot of the Zittau Mountains.



Untermarkt, Görlitz

Plauen, the capital of the Vogtland region, has around 65,500 inhabitants. In 1912, its population was twice as high. First mentioned in 1122, Plauen developed as a trading and textile town. Its landmark is the Old Town Hall with its Renaissance gable dating from 1548. St. John's Church, built on the foundations of an earlier church consecrated in 1122, is another significant monument. Plauen is internationally known for "Plauen lace" and for the illustrator Erich Ohser, who, under the pseudonym E. O. Plauen, created the popular "Father and Son" picture stories.



St. John's Church, Plauen

With 87,600 inhabitants, Zwickau is the largest of Saxony's district towns. First documented in 1118, it was the centre of a major coal mining region for more than 800 years. Zwickau is also regarded as the cradle of Saxon automobile manufacturing. Following the establishment of the Horch factory in 1904, Auto Union became a major employer in the interwar period. Production continued during the GDR era at the Sachsenring plant.

Today, Volkswagen manufactures key electric vehicle models in Zwickau. The composer Robert Schumann, born here in 1810, is commemorated by the Robert Schumann Conservatory.



Johannisbad, Zwickau

Regions and Districts



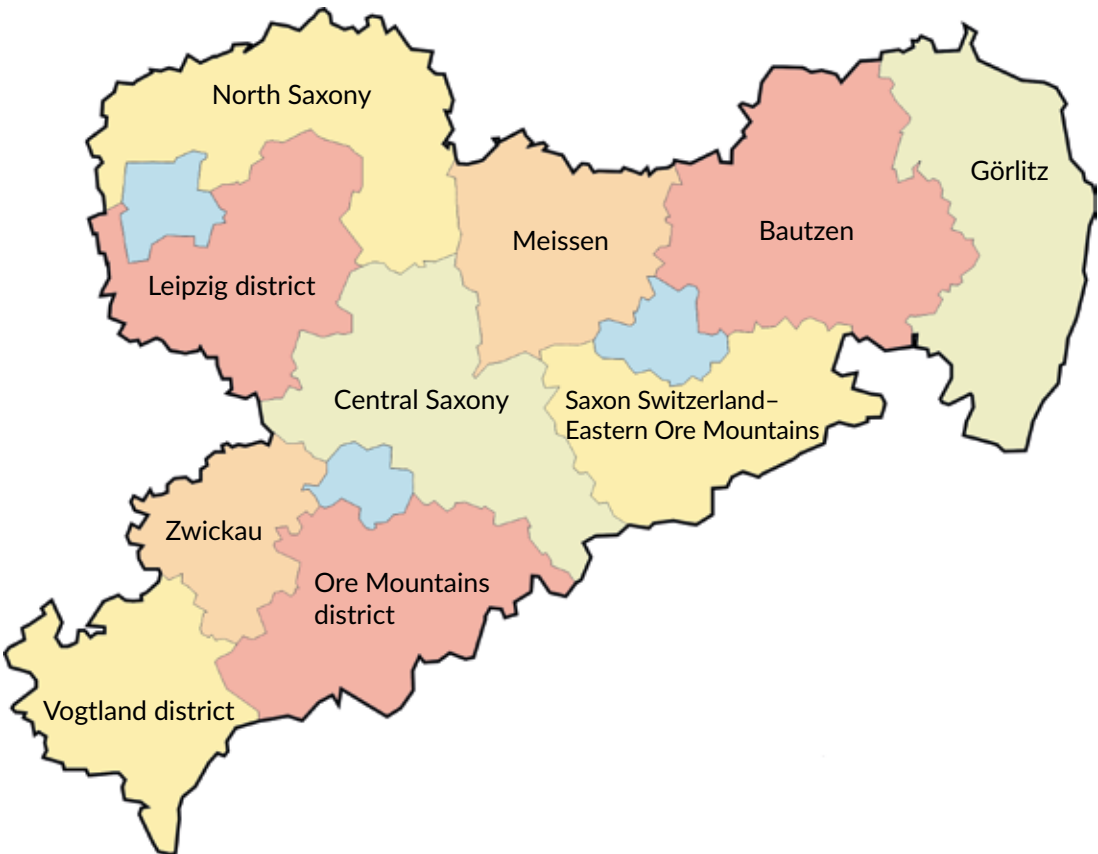
St. Anne's Church, Annaberg-Buchholz

In addition to the three independent cities, ten administrative districts structure Saxony: Bautzen, Erzgebirgskreis, Görlitz, Leipzig District (Landkreis Leipzig), Meissen, Central Saxony (Mittelsachsen), North Saxony (Nordsachsen), Saxon Switzerland–Eastern Ore Mountains (Landkreis Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge), Vogtlandkreis and Zwickau. These districts reflect the state's cultural, historical and natural diversity, ranging from forests and plateaus to river valleys, rock formations, spa towns and fertile agricultural areas.

Saxony has fifty large district towns with more than 17,500 inhabitants, including Freiberg, Bautzen, Radebeul, Pirna, Freital, Hoyerswerda, Torgau, Schwarzenberg, Limbach-Oberfrohna, Markkleeberg, Meissen, Riesa, Zittau and Annaberg-Buchholz.

Altogether, Saxony comprises 166 towns and 250 additional municipalities within the districts. Since 1990, many municipalities have merged into administrative communities. While there were 1,626 independent municipalities in October 1990, the number has since decreased to 418 (by 2024).

Zwickau is the most populous town within a district. The spa town of Rathen on the Elbe, with just under 500 inhabitants, is the smallest municipality in the Free State.



Districts in Saxony (excluding independent cities)

The Vogtland Region and Musical Instrument Making

The Vogtland region is internationally renowned for musical instrument making. Since the nineteenth century, the area encompassing Markneukirchen, Erlbach, Klingenthal and Schöneck has been known as the “Musikwinkel” (“music corner”). Around 1900, instruments from this region accounted for nearly 50 per cent of the global market in certain sectors, including harmonicas and string instruments. Between 1893 and 1916, a United States consular agency was located in Markneukirchen.



Demonstration workshop, Musicon Valley World of Experience Musical instrument making, Vogtland

Today, a wide range of instruments – from tubas and drums to harps and violins – continues to be manufactured there. The region is also known for the spa towns of Bad Elster and Bad Brambach, as well as for the Göltzschtal and

Elstertal bridges, the largest brick bridges in the world.

The Ore Mountains Mining Region

Few regions in Germany have been shaped as profoundly by mining and related industries as the Ore Mountains.



Zinnkammern Pöhla visitor mine, visitor group

The cross-border Ore Mountains/Krušnohoří mining region in Saxony and Czech Republic was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2019. From the Renaissance onwards, Saxon-Bohemian mining exerted worldwide influence. Techniques developed here for extracting and processing raw materials were adopted in other mining regions.

The sixteenth-century mining administrative system also laid the foundations for the silver thaler, first minted in 1520.

This coin influenced monetary systems across Europe. The word “dollar” ultimately derives from the term “Joachimsthaler” (minted at Joachimsthal, today Jáchymov), a silver coin minted in the Ore Mountains.

Mining traditions remain visible today, notably in wood carving, mining parades and ceremonial processions.

The Ore Mountains are also popular with hikers, winter sports enthusiasts and nature lovers.



Reichstaler, silver, Annaberg, 1551

The Zittau Mountains and the Moravian Church

Covering an area of around 50 km², the Zittau Mountains are considered the smallest mountain range in Germany. Open to tourism since the nineteenth century, they continue to offer hikers and climbers an unspoilt natural landscape. Steep, rugged sandstone cliffs are characteristic of the range. The villages of Oybin, Hain, Lückendorf, Jonsdorf and Waltersdorf are situated directly within the mountains.

One of the most striking rock formations is Mount Oybin, which rises above the municipality of Oybin and is crowned by the ruins of a castle and monastery. The earliest archaeologically verified settlement on the mountain dates back to the twelfth century BC. In the fourteenth century, Emperor Charles IV established an imperial residence and a monastery for the Celestine Order here. Romantic painters such as Caspar David Friedrich and Carl Gustav Carus depicted the ruins of Mount Oybin in their works.



Mount Oybin, Zittau Mountains

The Zittau Mountains Nature Park also includes the town of Herrnhut, which holds a special place in the history of Protestantism. In the early eighteenth century, followers of the reformer Jan Hus, known as the Bohemian Brethren (Unitas Fratrum), fled religious persecution following the Counter-Reformation and settled on the estate



Vogtshof, Herrnhut

of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, who granted them asylum. In keeping with their religious convictions, they placed their community under the “care of the Lord Jesus” and named their settlement Herrnhut. From there, they developed an extensive missionary movement. Moravian congregations were established across the globe, and the worldwide Moravian Church today has more than one million members, many of them in Tanzania.

The Elbe Valley near Dresden – Winegrowing in Saxony

The Dresden Elbe Valley comprises the sparsely populated sections of the Elbe Valley basin within the city limits of Dresden. The “Dresden Elbe Valley Cultural Landscape” extends along a 20-kilometre stretch of the river. The vineyard-covered slopes run for approximately 12.5 kilometres from Pillnitz in the south-east towards Radebeul in the north-west.



Wackerbarth Palace

At the western end of the valley lie the terraced gardens of the Elbe castles. Numerous architectural monuments along the river bear witness to Dresden's settlement and economic history since the Renaissance. These include churches, manor houses and distinguished villas that also reflect the city's industrial development in the twentieth century. Parts of the slopes near Pillnitz are protected as nature reserves. Height differences of up to 200 metres shape the deeply incised valley landscape, which forms the boundary between the Elbe Valley basin and the West Lusatian Hills and Uplands.

Thanks to its favourable microclimate, viticulture has long been practised on the slopes of the Elbe. Today, the vineyards are linked by the Saxon Wine Route, the Elbe Cycle Route and the Saxon Wine Trail, extending as far as the Elbe loop near Meissen.

The entire cultural landscape on both sides of the Elbe in Saxony is known as Saxon Elbland. It includes the towns and cities of Pirna, Dresden, Radebeul, Meissen, Riesa and Torgau. Historically, this region formed the core territory of the medieval Margraviate of Meissen and, from 1547, of the Meissen district within the Electorate of Saxony.

Upper Lusatia and Coal Mining

Upper Lusatia lies in the north-east of Saxony and represents part of a historically distinct region. Approximately 67 per cent of Upper Lusatia lies in Saxony, 30 per cent in Poland and 3 per cent in the federal state of Brandenburg. Within Saxony, it comprises the districts of Görlitz and Bautzen. The region is one of the principal settlement areas of the Sorbian minority, and until the late nineteenth century Sorbian was still the predominant language in many parts of Upper Lusatia.



View of Weifa, Lusatian Highlands

In the nineteenth century, lignite deposits were discovered in northern Upper Lusatia, around Hoyerswerda and along both sides of the River Neisse. More than a century of opencast mining fundamentally altered the landscape. Expropriations and forced resettlements affected thousands of residents up to the end of the GDR.



Nochten open-cast mine, Upper Lusatia

Coal is still extracted at the Nochten and Reichwalde opencast mines south of Weißwasser in Upper Lusatia and at Bogatynia in Poland. Many former mining pits, however, have been renaturated and flooded, creating new lakes that now form the Lusatian Lake District, a popular destination for bathing and water sports.

Upper Lusatia is more than a former mining area. Its northern part consists largely of the Upper Lusatian Heath and Pond Landscape, designated a UNESCO biosphere reserve in 1996. The central region is hilly,

while the southern part rises towards the Lusatian Mountains. The highest point in historical Upper Lusatia is 1,072 metres above sea level on the slope of Tafelfichte (Smrk) in the tri-border area of Upper Lusatia, Silesia and Bohemia. Görlitz is the largest city in Upper Lusatia and is often regarded as its cultural centre.

Saxon Switzerland and the Elbe Sandstone Mountains

The Elbe Sandstone Mountains, widely known as Saxon Switzerland, are renowned far beyond Saxony for their striking rock formations. Unique among the Central European low mountain ranges is the constant alternation of plateaus, gorges, table mountains and rock formations interspersed with extensive forested areas. These diverse microclimatic conditions have fostered an exceptional variety of species. In particular, the abundance of ferns and mosses is unparalleled among Germany's low mountain ranges.



Elbe Sandstone Mountains, view into the Elbe Valley

Geologically, the formation of the Elbe Sandstone Mountains is linked to extensive marine deposits from the Upper Cretaceous period. On the Saxon side, these formations are referred to as the Elbe Valley Cretaceous and consist primarily of sandstone and associated rock types. Across the border in Czechia, the formations continue as part of the North Bohemian Cretaceous Basin.

The Saxon Switzerland National Park is one of the state's most important tourist attractions, drawing approximately 1.7 million visitors each year.

The Central Saxon Uplands and Their Castles

The Central Saxon Hills, sometimes referred to as the Saxon Castle region, form a varied landscape in the centre of the state. The principal towns are Döbeln and Grimma. To the north, the region is bordered by the confluence of the Freiberger Mulde and Zwickauer Mulde rivers, which together form the Vereinigte Mulde. To the east, it extends from Meissen along the River Triebisch to the Tharandt Forest; to the west, it reaches the Thuringian border. South of the hill region lie Freiberg, Chemnitz, Glauchau and Werdau.

The region is rich in architectural heritage. Castles such as Rochlitz and Colditz, the fortresses of Kriebstein and Gndstein, and the Benedictine monastery of Wechselburg exemplify late Romanesque and medieval architecture. Wechselburg Monastery has belonged once again to the Bavarian Benedictine Congregation since 1993. Colditz Castle houses a museum dedicated to the escape attempts of Allied officers imprisoned there during the Second World War. A youth hostel opened in the castle in 2007, and so did the Saxony State Music Academy in 2010.



Rood screen in Wechselburg Monastery



Kriebstein Castle near the Zschopau

The Leipzig Lowlands and the Leipzig Lake District

The Leipzig Lowland Bay, with its flat topography, forms part of the southernmost section of the North German Plain and is a typical old moraine landscape. Elevations are modest, including the Hohburg Hills, and the area is intersected by the broad river valleys of the Saale, Weiße Elster, Mulde and Pleiße. The soils are highly fertile.

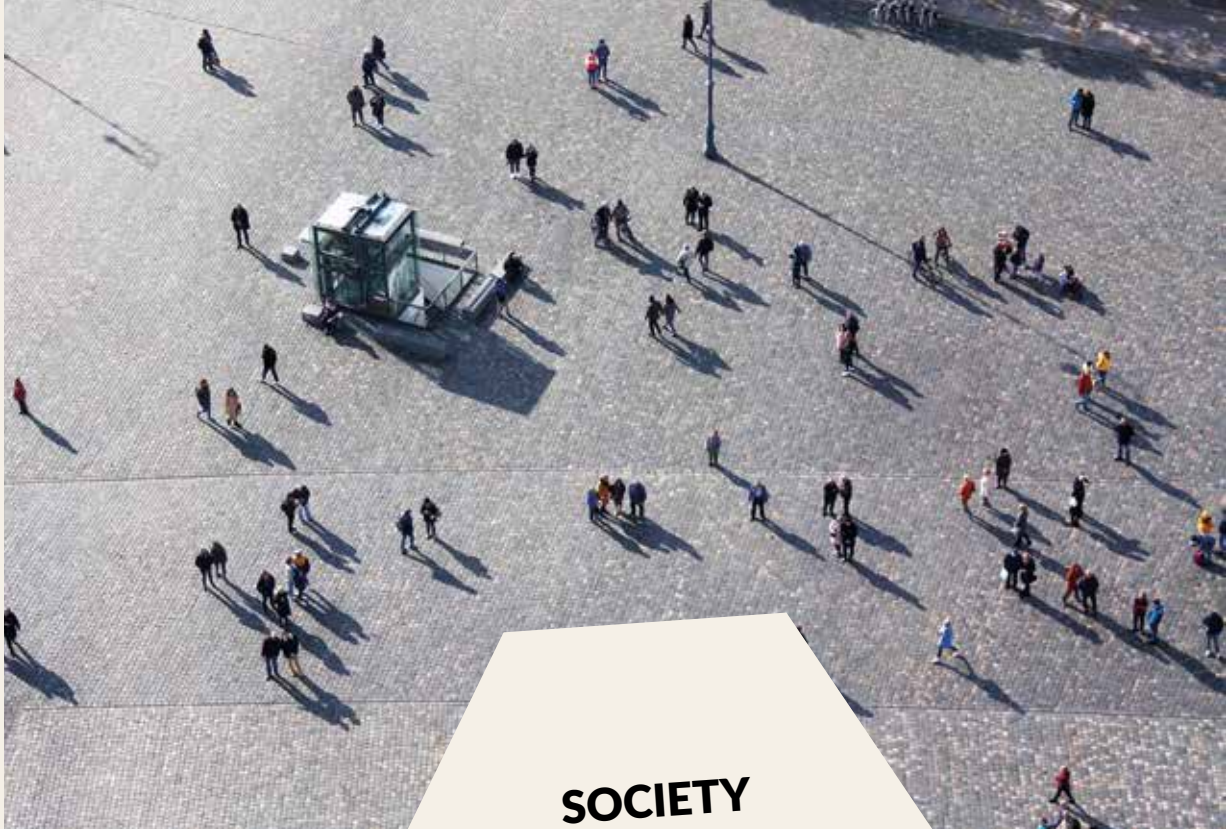
Less than two centuries ago, extensive riparian forests lined the river courses. However, urban expansion and nearly a century of opencast lignite mining led to widespread deforestation and the canalisation of waterways.

Today, the Leipzig Lake District occupies much of this former mining landscape. Lakes such as Markkleeberg, Cospuden, Hain, Kulkwitz and Gröbern were created by flooding former mining pits and have become popular recreational areas.

The Leipzig–Halle conurbation, with more than one million inhabitants, forms the core of the region. Other important towns include Delitzsch, Eilenburg, Merseburg and Borna.

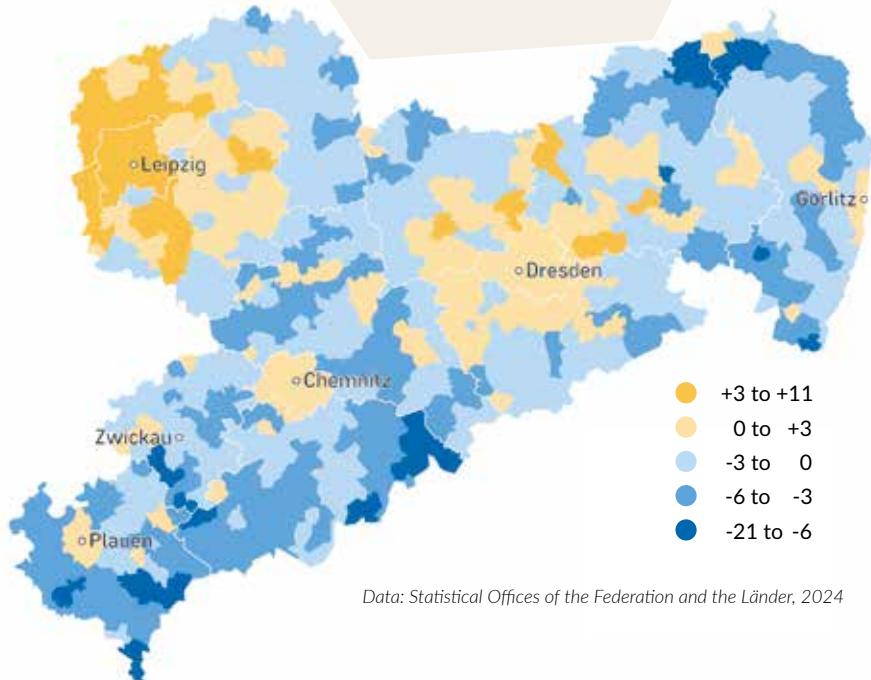


Lake Hainer, south of Leipzig



SOCIETY AND DEMOGRAPHY

Change in Population (in percent),
2018-2023



Data: Statistical Offices of the Federation and the Länder, 2024

Until the end of the Second World War, Saxony was one of the most industrially developed regions in Europe. Over the course of more than a century of industrialisation, its population more than doubled: from around two million inhabitants in 1806 to 4.8 million in 1918. Alongside the Ruhr region, Saxony was regarded as the industrial heartland of Germany and attracted migrant workers from across Europe.



As one of Germany's most important industrial cities, Chemnitz had more than 360,000 inhabitants in 1930, exceeding its current population by more than 110,000.

With advancing urbanisation and the upheavals of the twentieth century, the conurbations in particular continued to grow, and in 1950 the state reached its highest population level, with almost 5.7 million inhabitants. Following German reunification in 1990, however, a significant demographic shift occurred. Large numbers of people – especially skilled workers and young women – migrated to the western federal states. Although immigration has stabilised the population since 2011, long-term demographic projections still anticipate a gradual overall decline.

Age Structure

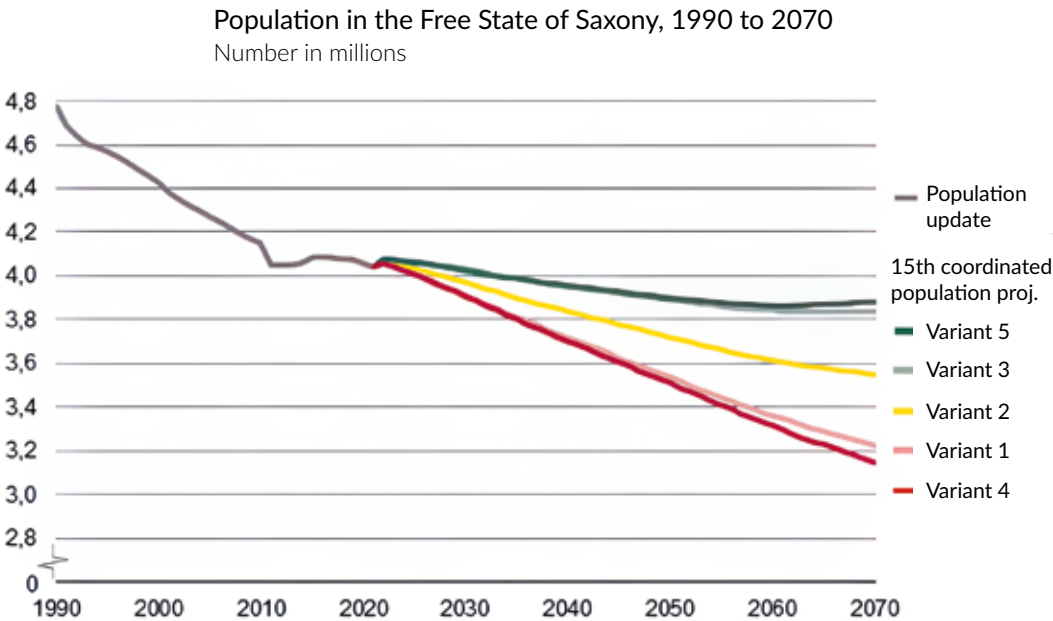
In December 2024, just over four million people (4.042 million) lived in the Free State of Saxony, more than one third of them in Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz. In terms of population size, Saxony ranks seventh among the German federal states.

The average age of the population is 46.8 years; the median age – the age at which half the population is older and half younger – is 46.9 years. The proportion of people under the age of 20 fell from 24 per cent in 1990 to around 18 per cent today. At the same time, older age groups have grown considerably. Currently, 26.8 per cent of the population are aged 65 or over. This share is expected to rise to more than 30 per cent by 2030.

Age distribution varies significantly between urban and rural areas. While metropolitan centres tend to retain and attract younger residents, rural areas – particularly those distant from major cities – are aging more rapidly.

This demographic trend, observable throughout Germany and much of Europe, is primarily due to birth rates well below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. Long-standing imbalances between immigration and emigration have further weakened the demographic base of many communities.

Population aging and decline already have substantial economic and social consequences. A shrinking labour force poses challenges for the labour market, while rising expenditure on healthcare and infrastructure places pressure on public finances. Policies that support families and promote openness to immigration are therefore considered essential in mitigating the effects of demographic change.



According to the five variants of the 15th coordinated population projection at state level, Saxony's population is expected to decline by up to 22 percent by 2070. Data: Statistical Office of the Free State of Saxony, 2024.

The Sorbian National Minority

Approximately 60,000 Sorbs live as a recognised national minority in the Saxon districts of Bautzen and Görlitz and in southern Brandenburg. They trace their origins to West Slavic tribes – the Milceni and Lusici – who settled in Upper and Lower Lusatia in the sixth century.

The rights of the Sorbs are granted by the constitutions of the Free State of Saxony and the State of Brandenburg and enjoy special legal protection. Bautzen (Sorbian: Budyšin) is regarded as the cultural centre of the Sorbs. It is home to the “House of the Sorbs”, headquarters of the Foundation for the Sorbian People.



Sorbian National Theatre: “FOLKLORA!”, 2024

The Domowina – the Union of Lusatian Sorbs – serves as the umbrella organisation for Sorbian associations and represents their interests in public life. Bautzen is also home to Germany’s only bilingual theatre, the German-Sorbian People’s Theatre (Sorbian: Nemsko-serbske ludowe dźiwadło). The Sorbian National Ensemble, comprising choir, ballet and orchestra, as well as a music academy currently under development, contributes to the preservation of Sorbian cultural traditions.

Place names and signage in Sorbian settlement areas are bilingual. Towns such as Bautzen/Budyšin, Weißwasser/Běła Woda, Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy and Kamenz/Kamjenc exemplify this linguistic duality.

Migration

Throughout its history, Saxony has repeatedly served as a refuge for persecuted individuals, displaced persons and labour migrants. Following the recatholicisation of Bohemia in the seventeenth century, thousands of Protestants fled to Saxony. Asylum was granted primarily to Lutherans, and the acceptance of refugees was limited by widespread poverty. Nevertheless, many religious refugees gradually integrated into Saxon society. Of the approximately 40,000 Huguenots admitted to German territories in the seventeenth century, only around 300 settled in Saxony, often encountering resistance from local authorities and communities.



Cuban contract worker, GDR, 1985

In the nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of labour migrants from across Europe contributed to Saxony's industrial growth. In 1912, foreigners accounted for 15 per cent of the population.

A further major influx occurred after the Second World War, when large numbers of displaced persons from Silesia and the Sudetenland resettled in Saxony. In the early years of the GDR, they constituted nearly one third of the population in Saxon districts.

Later, the GDR recruited so-called "contract workers" from Cuba, Vietnam and Mozambique. Many lived under restrictive conditions and were socially segregated; in some cases, female workers were required to terminate pregnancies or leave the country.

Debates on asylum and migration since 2015 must also be seen in this historical context. Xenophobic incidents continue to pose challenges in parts of the Free State and affect its attractiveness to international skilled workers. In an aging society, such workers are urgently needed. In 2023, for example, 3,486 doctors with foreign citizenship were employed in Saxony, including 571 from Syria. Labour shortages also exist in sectors requiring lower formal qualifications, such as the hospitality industry, logistics and nursing.

In 2023, foreign nationals accounted for 8.1 per cent of Saxony's population, significantly below the national average of 15.2 per cent. The

largest groups originate from Syria, Poland, Romania, Russia and Vietnam. Most reside in Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz, where the proportion of foreign nationals ranges between eight and ten per cent.

In many rural districts, the proportion is markedly lower. In Erzgebirgskreis, Bautzen and Leipzig districts, for example, it is below three per cent.

In 2023, foreign nationals represented eight per cent of all employees in Saxony, compared with at least 13.2 per cent in the western federal states (excluding Berlin). The largest group among foreign employees came from Ukraine (18.8 per cent), followed by Syrians (10.7 per cent). Cross-border commuters from Czechia and Poland account for a significant share of the workforce, particularly among Polish and Czech citizens.

Between 2,000 and 2,600 people are naturalised in Saxony each year. Around one quarter originate from other European countries. Approximately two thirds of naturalisations involve individuals from Syria and Iraq, while Polish nationals account for 7.2 per cent.

Of the 57,500 schoolchildren in Saxony whose first language is not (or not only) German, 24.3 per cent obtained the general higher education entrance qualification (Abitur), representing 13 per cent of all schoolchildren.

Religion

In 1945, around 90 per cent of the population of East Germany belonged to a Christian church. By the end of the GDR period, this figure had fallen to approximately 25 per cent. Although churches played a significant role in the Peaceful Revolution, this did not lead to a lasting increase in membership.

In 2024, 16.1 per cent of Saxony's population belonged to the Protestant Church and 3.7 per cent to the Catholic Church. Approximately 0.4 per cent were members of Orthodox churches. Since 2022, the number of people formally leaving the churches has further increased.



In 2024, the vacancy rate in parts of Saxony was as high as 16 percent. Those relatively high vacancy levels enabled many municipalities in the state to offer sufficient housing to Ukrainian refugees quickly.



St Nicholas Church is the oldest and largest church in Leipzig city centre. In 1989, it was the site of the prayers for peace through which the GDR civil rights movement found a decisive platform. St Nicholas Church became the starting point of the Monday demonstrations, which led to the Peaceful Revolution in the GDR and ultimately forced the fall of the Wall in Berlin on 9 November 1989.

With 575,500 members (2024), the Evangelical Lutheran Church remains the largest Protestant denomination in Saxony. Church-run institutions play an important role in social and educational provision: 259 church-operated nurseries, 83 additional church-sponsored childcare facilities and 93 schools contribute significantly to the educational landscape.

The Protestant welfare organisation Diakonie and the Catholic charity Caritas are among the largest welfare organisations in the state.

There are Jewish communities in Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz. Jewish community membership increased from 190 people in 1992 to more than 2,343 in 2021, primarily as a result of immigration from Eastern Europe.

Jewish cultural life has become increasingly visible in urban centres. Approximately 0.7 per cent of the population in Saxony is Muslim. The state has nine mosques and several Islamic cultural associations.



New Synagogue Chemnitz; built in 2002 to plans by the Frankfurt architect Alfred Jacoby

Educational Structure

Saxony has a comparatively high proportion of residents with completed vocational training or a general higher education entrance qualification. This educational profile represents an important locational advantage.

There are significantly more individuals with completed vocational training than with university degrees. Thirty per cent of the population hold a tertiary qualification, a figure in line with the national average.

At five per cent, Saxony has the second-lowest proportion of low-skilled workers among the German federal states.

In 2023, 34.5 per cent of school leavers obtained the general higher education entrance qualification. Women accounted for 54 per cent of those receiving this qualification, men for 46 per cent.

This gender difference reflects a nationwide trend, with women more frequently attaining higher school-leaving certificates. In older age cohorts, however, the pattern is reversed.

Among those aged 65 and above, only 11 per cent of women hold a university entrance qualification.

Regional disparities are evident. In Dresden, approximately 40 per cent of pupils recently obtained the general higher education entrance qualification, compared with only 24 per cent in the rural Erzgebirgskreis district.

In 2024, 9.1 per cent of school leavers in Saxony left school without a lower secondary qualification, a higher proportion than in Hamburg (6.6 per cent) or Bavaria (5.5 per cent).



Construction of a new secondary school at Hartmannplatz in Chemnitz.

In the 1990s, projections for future pupil numbers in Saxony were highly conservative and, as critics noted, overly pessimistic. As a result, particularly after the 2010s, many formerly “structurally weak” municipalities lacked sufficient modern premises and teaching staff for growing pupil numbers.

School and Education in Saxony

For many years, Saxony has ranked highly in comparative assessments such as the Education Monitor of the federal states. The state's education system ranks among the strongest in Germany.

Education Monitor Ranking	
Rank	Federal States
1.	Saxony
2.	Bavaria
3.	Hamburg
4.	Baden-Württemberg
5.	Thuringia
6.	Hesse
7.	Saarland
8.	Schleswig-Holstein
9.	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
10.	Lower Saxony
11.	Berlin
12.	Rhineland-Palatinate
13.	Saxony-Anhalt
14.	North Rhine-Westphalia
15.	Brandenburg
16.	Bremen

ISM Education Monitor 2025
Source: Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft

Following the re-establishment of the Free State in 1990, reforms aimed to align the school system with international standards and to avoid structural weaknesses identified elsewhere.

High levels of professional training for early-years educators, strong school performance, comparatively low levels of educational disadvantage and a comprehensive support infrastructure are frequently cited strengths.

The three-tier structure – primary school, secondary school and grammar school – forms the backbone of the system. More than 90 per cent of general education schools offer all-day programmes, which have become a defining feature of school culture in Saxony.

Pupils with special educational needs may attend mainstream schools under inclusive arrangements or receive targeted support in specialised schools that prepare them for independent living and employment. Qualifications up to intermediate secondary level and, in many cases, reintegration into mainstream education are possible.

Before entering primary school, children benefit from high-quality early childhood education and care provided by various public and private organisations. Pre-school programmes are designed to ease the transition to primary education. In addition to public institutions, private providers – including church schools and Montessori or Waldorf schools – form part of Saxony's diverse educational landscape.

Health

The healthcare system comprises 79 hospitals with almost 25,400 beds, including the Carl Gustav Carus University Hospital in Dresden, Leipzig University Hospital, and the Klinikum Chemnitz, an academic teaching hospital of the Technical University of Dresden. In addition, there are municipal hospitals in larger towns and 17 specialist clinics. Several hospitals are certified cancer centres.

The Heart Centre Leipzig, one of the largest cardiac centres in Europe, and the Dresden Heart Centre were among the first hospitals in Germany to be privatised in the 1990s.

In the field of rehabilitation, the *Klinik Bavaria* in Kreischa near Dresden is one of the largest rehabilitation centres in Saxony. Further specialised rehabilitation facilities are located in Saxon Switzerland, the Ore Mountains and the Vogtland region.

The Free State is also an important location for companies in medical technology and pharmaceuticals, as well as for medical research institutions.

Training institutions for medical professions and degree programmes in medicine in Leipzig and Dresden underpin the high standard of healthcare provision in Saxony. These centres attract numerous international students and professionals each year. Since 2022, a model degree programme in human medicine has also been offered in Chemnitz.

Gender Equality

The historically high childcare coverage in eastern Germany has a positive impact on women's employment in Saxony. More than half of all children under the age of three (54.7 per cent) attend day-care facilities, compared with around 30 per cent in the western federal states. Flexible working arrangements – including part-time models and remote working – increasingly support the reconciliation of work and family life.

The Free State has the highest female employment rate in Germany (as of 2022), with 64.6 per cent of women of working age in employment. Of these, 85 per cent are skilled workers. Forty per cent of women in socially insured employment in Saxony make use of flexible part-time ar-



Saxony has the highest female employment rate in Germany (as of 2022): 65 per cent of all women of working age are employed. They are very well qualified, with 85 per cent of them being skilled workers.

rangements (national average: 46 per cent), compared with 10 per cent of men.

Women account for more than 82 per cent of employees in the healthcare sector and hold 67 per cent of management and organisational positions in this field. They also form the majority in social and cultural service professions (72.9 per cent) and in retail (67.4 per cent). As in other federal states, the proportion of women in senior management positions in the private sector remains comparatively low at 32 per cent (national average: 27 per cent).

The adjusted gender pay gap in Saxony is 6.7 per cent, placing it in the middle range nationwide. The Federal Statistical Office notes, however, that not all structural factors – particularly temporary career interruptions – are reflected in this calculation. If such factors were fully accounted for, the adjusted wage gap would likely be lower.

Family

In 2023, around 54 per cent of families in Saxony consisted of married parents with children. Twenty-two per cent were unmarried couples living with their children – a comparatively high proportion relative to most western federal states. In Baden-Württemberg, for example, more than 77 per cent of children lived with married parents in 2021.

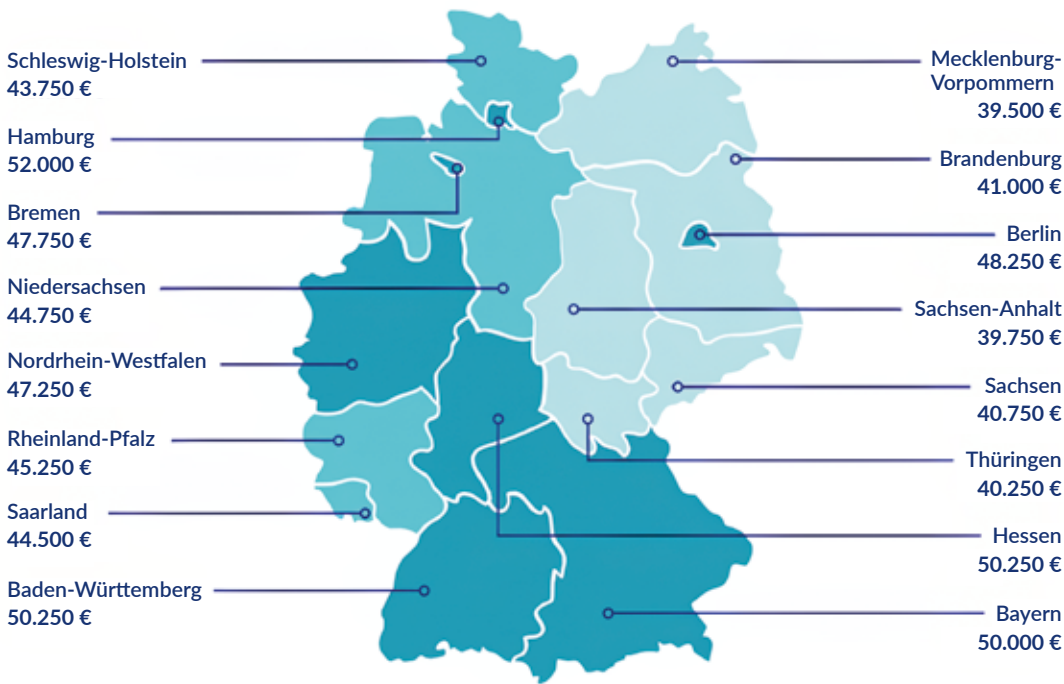
Single-parent households account for just under 24 per cent of families in Saxony. This is partly attributable to social continuities from the GDR era, broad acceptance of non-marital cohabitation and the comprehensive availability of childcare.

Consumer Spending

Income and consumption levels in Saxony remain below the western German average. The wage gap between eastern and western Germany is approximately 19 per cent. In 2023, the median gross monthly wage in Saxony was EUR 3,182, compared with EUR 3,796 nationwide. A lesser degree of tariff binding, smaller company structures and a comparatively

limited presence of large corporate or research headquarters contribute to this disparity.

In 2022, private consumption expenditure in Saxony averaged EUR 22,347 per capita – around EUR 1,273 less than the national average of EUR 23,620, which equalled roughly 95 per cent of the German level. The savings rate stood at 6.8 per cent, significantly below the national average of 11.1 per cent. Housing and energy together accounted for 30.6 per cent of private expenditure. After housing costs, the largest expenditure categories were food and beverages, mobility, and leisure and entertainment.



Median Income by Federal State, 2024

Data: Federal Statistical Office of Germany

More than thirty years after German reunification, average gross salaries in the eastern German federal states still differ from those in western Germany. At the same time, a productivity gap also remains: the small and medium-sized enterprises that dominate the eastern German economy lag behind in productivity by around 20 percent. The situation is very different for large enterprises: here, businesses in eastern Germany in some cases clearly outperform their counterparts in the “West.”

Housing

The average household size in Saxony is 1.9 persons, compared with 2.3 persons in 1991. In 2019, one or more children under the age of 18 lived in almost one in five private households. Households headed by persons aged 65 and over account for approximately one third of all households.

Almost half of all households in Saxony are single-person households (national average: 42 per cent). This high proportion reflects both the overall increase in the number of households and demographic aging, as a growing number of older individuals live alone.

Sport and Leisure



Julia Taubitz, born on 1 March 1996 in Annaberg-Buchholz, is one of Germany's most successful luge athletes. She won the overall World Cup in 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2022/23, became world champion in the sprint in 2019, and in the singles in 2021 and 2023, and won European Championship gold several times, including in 2021 and 2023.

As of 2024, approximately 726,000 members are active in 4,330 sports clubs across Saxony, participating in more than 100 different disciplines. One of the most prominent clubs is SG Dynamo Dresden. The Saxon Football Association (SFV) serves as the umbrella organisation for 876 affiliated football clubs. In the Bundesliga, RB Leipzig regularly competes among the leading teams. In basketball, the Chemnitz Niners play at the highest national level.

Saxon athletes and coaches represent the Free State at Olympic Games and at World and European Championships. Specialised sports grammar schools and sports secondary schools support talented young athletes from an early stage. Public funding for elite sport is administered by the State Sports Federation and its affiliated associations.

Saxony is also renowned for its outdoor recreation opportunities. Between the Vogtland region and Saxon Switzerland, thousands of kilometres of marked trails offer hiking routes of varying difficulty. Climbers are drawn to the Elbe Sandstone Mountains.

Numerous rivers – including the Elbe, Mulde, Weiße Elster and Zschopau – provide opportunities for rafting, kayaking and canoeing. Around Leipzig and Hoyerswerda, former opencast mining areas have been transformed into lake landscapes suitable for sailing and water sports.

Language and Dialects

In addition to Sorbian and Standard German, spoken language in Saxony is characterised by several closely related dialects. Although linguists point to a gradual decline of regional dialects, they remain present in everyday life.

The principal dialect areas include Upper Saxon (Meißnisch), Osterländisch (around Leipzig), Vogtländisch, Erzgebirgisch and the Lusatian dialect. Associations and educational initiatives seek to preserve these linguistic traditions.

Saxon speakers sometimes jokingly refer to themselves as “Gonsonandenschinder” (“consonant torturers”), reflecting characteristic phonetic shifts: k becomes g, p becomes b, t becomes a soft d, and the “ch” sound (as in ich) often becomes “sch”.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe once remarked: “Every province loves its dialect, for it is in fact the element in which the soul draws its breath.”

Typical dialect expressions include Bämme (slice of bread), Mutschekiepen (ladybird), daheeme (at home), Nischl (head), Dämse (sultriness) and Däschdlmäschdl (romance).

Cuisine

Although there is no uniform Saxon cuisine, a variety of regional culinary traditions exist between the Vogtland region and the River Neisse. They are generally characterised by hearty dishes, which in former royal and commercial centres developed more refined variants.

A well-known example is Leipziger Allerlei, a vegetable dish traditionally served with crayfish butter, crayfish tails and semolina dumplings. Dresden is famous for its Christmas Christstollen and for Eierschecke, a layered cake enjoyed throughout the year.

Regional cuisine was historically shaped by economic conditions and climate. In the Ore Mountains, where poverty was widespread well into the eighteenth century, simple dishes such as jacket potatoes with quark and linseed oil, potato soup or bread with linseed oil were staples. The Dörnthal oil mill, in operation since 1650, continues to produce cold-pressed linseed oil.

At Christmas, the Ore Mountain Neunerlei – a festive meal comprising nine dishes or symbolic ingredients – remains a cherished tradition. Typical components may include bratwurst with potato dumplings and sauerkraut, lentil soup, celery, blueberry compote, bread and salt.

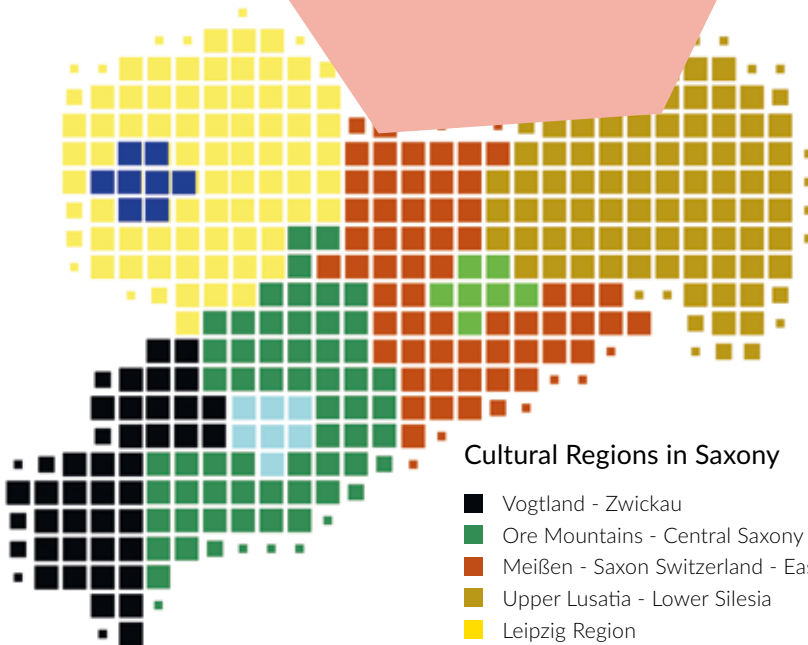
In the Vogtland region, by contrast, the cuisine of prosperous farming communities shaped local traditions. Vogtland Sauerbraten remains a classic Sunday dish.



Sorbian restaurant, Bautzen



ART AND CULTURE



Cultural Regions in Saxony

- Vogtland - Zwickau
- Ore Mountains - Central Saxony
- Meißen - Saxon Switzerland - Eastern Ore Mountains
- Upper Lusatia - Lower Silesia
- Leipzig Region
- Leipzig
- Chemnitz
- Dresden

Saxony ranks among the leading German federal states in per capita public expenditure on culture. Like few other regions in Europe, it is home to an exceptionally high density of cultural and historical sites, museums, theatres, orchestras and festivals. Their preservation and promotion are protected by law.

With its Cultural Area Act, unique in Germany, Saxony has established a solidarity-based funding system for cultural institutions that promotes participation and transparency. Three urban and five rural cultural areas have been designated for this purpose. The legislation seeks to offset structural imbalances in cost distribution between districts and municipalities.

A Distinctive Cultural Landscape

Major events such as the Leipzig Book Fair, the Bach Festival, the Leipzig Documentary Film Festival, the Dresden Music Festival and the Cynet-art Festival for dance and media art enjoy national and international recognition. The designation of Chemnitz as European Capital of Culture 2025 further highlights Saxony's cultural standing.

The state is rich in literary, architectural, musical, theatrical and artistic heritage. The Frauenkirche and the Zwinger in Dresden, the Semper Opera House, the Gewandhaus concert hall in Leipzig, and the Chemnitz Art Collections are widely recognised cultural landmarks.

More than 400 museums and the highest density of theatres in Germany form part of the cultural landscape. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born in Kamenz, attended the Fürstenschule in Meissen and studied in Leipzig. Johann Sebastian Bach worked in Leipzig; Carl Maria von Weber was closely associated with Dresden. Artists such as Max Klinger, Max Beckmann and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff contributed significantly to classical modernism.

The dance educator Gret Palucca advanced modern dance from Dresden. During the GDR period, Karl-Marx-Stadt became a centre of the independent artists' group Clara Mosch. The Leipzig School and its students shaped artistic discourse after reunification.

Music

Saxony's musical heritage is associated with artists like Heinrich Schütz, Johann Sebastian Bach, Carl Maria von Weber, Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Richard Wagner.



Semperoper, Auditorium

The Gewandhaus Orchestra in Leipzig, the Dresden Philharmonic and the Robert Schumann Philharmonic in Chemnitz are among Germany's most distinguished orchestras. Large concert halls and opera houses attract audiences from across Europe. In addition, numerous regional ensembles contribute to a vibrant musical culture, including the New Lusatian Philharmonic in Görlitz, the Sorbian National Ensemble in Bautzen, the Elbland Philharmonic, the Erzgebirge Philharmonic in Aue and the Vogtland Philharmonic.



Opening concert of the KOSMOS Festival, Chemnitz, 2025

Music education plays an important role. Schools, music schools, choirs, electronic music studios and publicly funded rehearsal spaces support young talents.

The electronic music label Raster-Noton, founded in Chemnitz, achieved international prominence. Popular music groups such as Die Prinzen and Kraftklub have also emerged from Saxony. Contemporary music platforms such as the Forum Zeitgenössischer Musik Leipzig and its Ensemble Festival for Contemporary Music further enrich the scene.

Theatre

With more than 80 publicly funded theatres and numerous independent cabaret and puppet stages, Saxony has a particularly dense performing arts landscape. The Saxon State Opera and the Dresden State Theatre are among the leading institutions. The student theatre “die bühne” at the Technical University of Dresden and the Theatre Junge Generation, one of the largest children’s and youth theatres in Germany, also contribute to the cultural profile of the state.

Beyond Dresden and Leipzig, many municipal theatres offer programmes ranging from opera to cabaret and puppetry and dialect theatre. Architecturally notable venues include the Renaissance theatre building in Zwickau, the Mittelsächsisches Theater in Freiberg, founded in 1791, the Eduard-von-Winterstein-Theater in Annaberg-Buchholz and the open-air stage in Rathen.

The Chemnitz Schauspielhaus, closed for renovation since 2022, was regarded as one of the most innovative theatres in the GDR. Since then, performances have taken place at the Spinnbau, a converted industrial building that currently serves as the theatre’s main venue. The theatre provided an early platform for actors such as Ulrich Mühe, Corinna Harfouch and Michael Gwisdek and worked with directors like Frank Castorf and Michael Thalheimer.



Semperoper Ballet “Wonderful World”, 2024

Literature



Panel discussion at the Leipzig Book Fair, 2024

Literary culture depends on creative freedom, institutional support and public engagement. The Leipzig Book Fair, with its reading festival “Leipzig liest” (Leipzig Reads), and the Meissen Literature Festival exemplify this. Numerous readings in libraries and schools, as well as competitions for young readers, strengthen literary life.

Saxony has more than 450 public and 43 academic libraries. Every two years, the state awards the Lessing Prize for outstanding contributions to German-language literature or theatre. The German Literature Institute at Leipzig University offers professional training for aspiring writers.

Visual Arts



Caspar David Friedrich, *Sailing Ship*, around 1815, Chemnitz Art Collections

Art academies, museums, galleries, collections and art fairs form the institutional backbone of Saxony’s visual arts scene. Public commissions, grants and scholarships support artistic production.

The Venetian painter Canaletto worked in Dresden from 1748. Caspar David Friedrich and Philipp Otto Runge created significant works in the region. The Expressionist group *Die Brücke* was founded in Dresden in 1905. During the GDR period, Chemnitz (then called Karl-Marx-Stadt) developed into an important artistic centre.

Before and after 1989, artists associated with the Leipzig School, including Georg Baselitz, A. R. Penck, Gerhard Richter and Neo Rauch, gained international prominence. The art academies in Leipzig and Dresden continue to bring forth influential contemporary artists.



Exhibition "Breaking Rank. Women Action Artists in the GDR", Albertinum, Dresden

Gabriele Stötzer, *Wool Costume with Mask*, 1989 (left)

Monika Andres, *Name, City, Country (Newspaper Costume and Banner)*, 1988 (right)

Public art projects have also attracted attention, such as the installation *Monument* by the Syrian-German artist Manaf Halbouni, on display in Dresden's Neumarkt in 2017.

Building Culture

Saxony features outstanding examples of architecture from nearly every era of European history, as well as significant engineering achievements.

In addition to Dresden's landmarks, Albrechtsburg Castle in Meissen, completed in 1524 after 53 years of construction, represents an important example of late Gothic architecture. Although it was never permanently used as a residence by the Wettin dynasty, it gained prominence from 1710 onwards as the site of the Meissen porcelain manufactory.



Albrechtsburg Castle, Meissen

The Göltzschtal Bridge in the Vogtland region is the largest brick bridge in the world; the Elster Valley Bridge is the second largest.



Elster Valley Bridge, Vogtland district

The Kaßberg district of Chemnitz is one of the largest contiguous Gründerzeit neighbourhoods in Europe. Developed from the mid-nineteenth century, it features numerous historicist façades. After 1990, most buildings were carefully restored. Since 2021, a new residential development has been under construction around the former Kaßberg prison, incorporating a memorial and museum.

Modern architectural landmarks include the Schminke House in Löbau, a Bauhaus style building designed by Hans Scharoun, and the Niemeyer Sphere in Leipzig, completed in 2020.

The Bundeswehr Museum of Military History in Dresden occupies the historic Arsenal building of the Saxon Army, built between 1873 and 1877, and housed the GDR Army Museum until 1990. Reopened in October 2011 after a redesign by the internationally renowned architect



Chemnitz-Kaßberg, Wilhelminian-era building

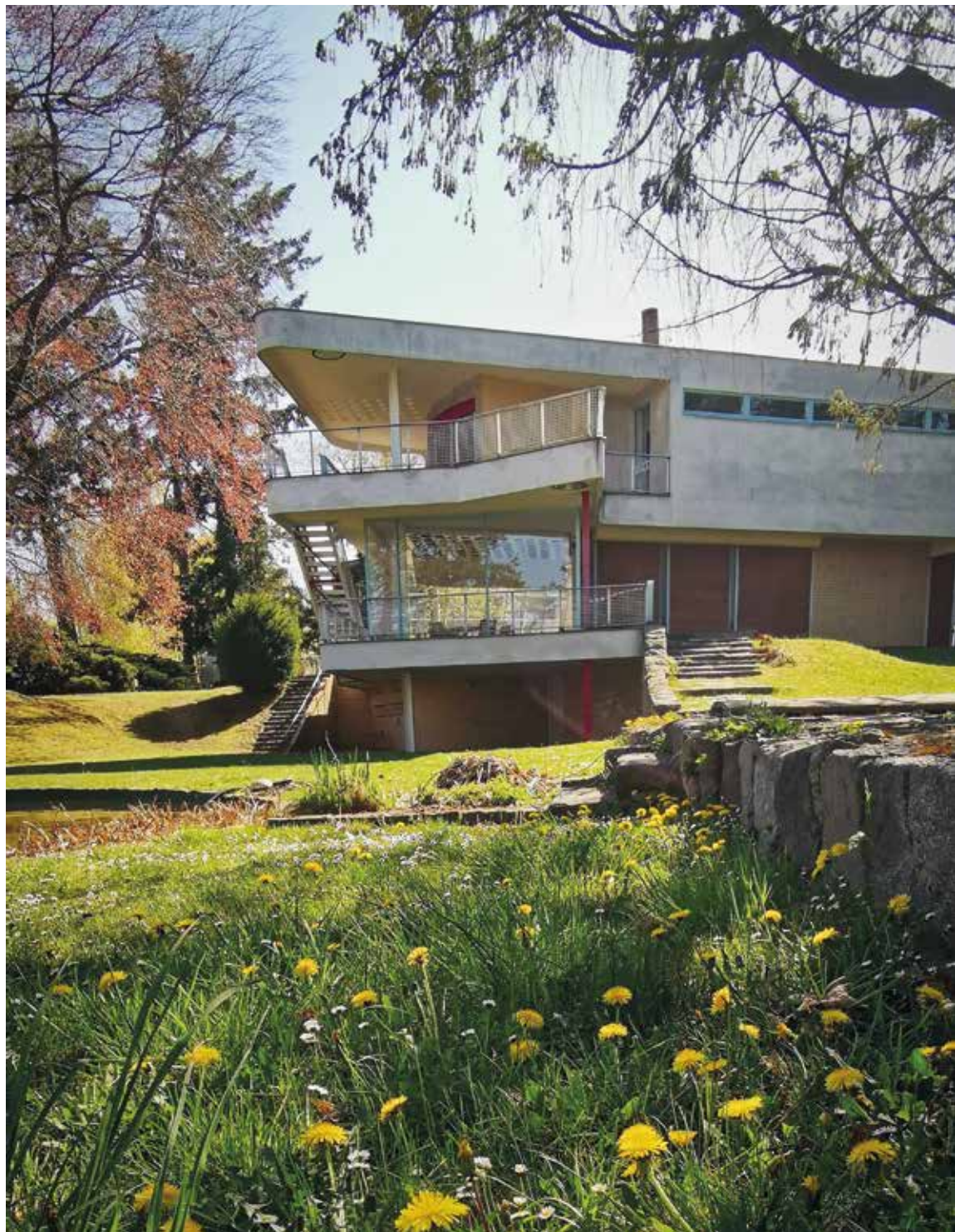
Daniel Libeskind, it ranks among Germany's major military history museums. A huge wedge cuts through the old building structure as a sign of war, pain and destruction, provoking critical reflection on violence.

Further architectural highlights include restored historic town centres in Görlitz and Zittau, the Transparent Factory in Dresden and the New Augusteum at Leipzig University.

Saxony offers six bachelor's degree programmes in architecture and urban planning, e.g., at TU Dresden and Leipzig University of Applied Sciences.



Bundeswehr Museum of Military History, Dresden



Schminke House, Löbau (Upper Lusatia)

Film



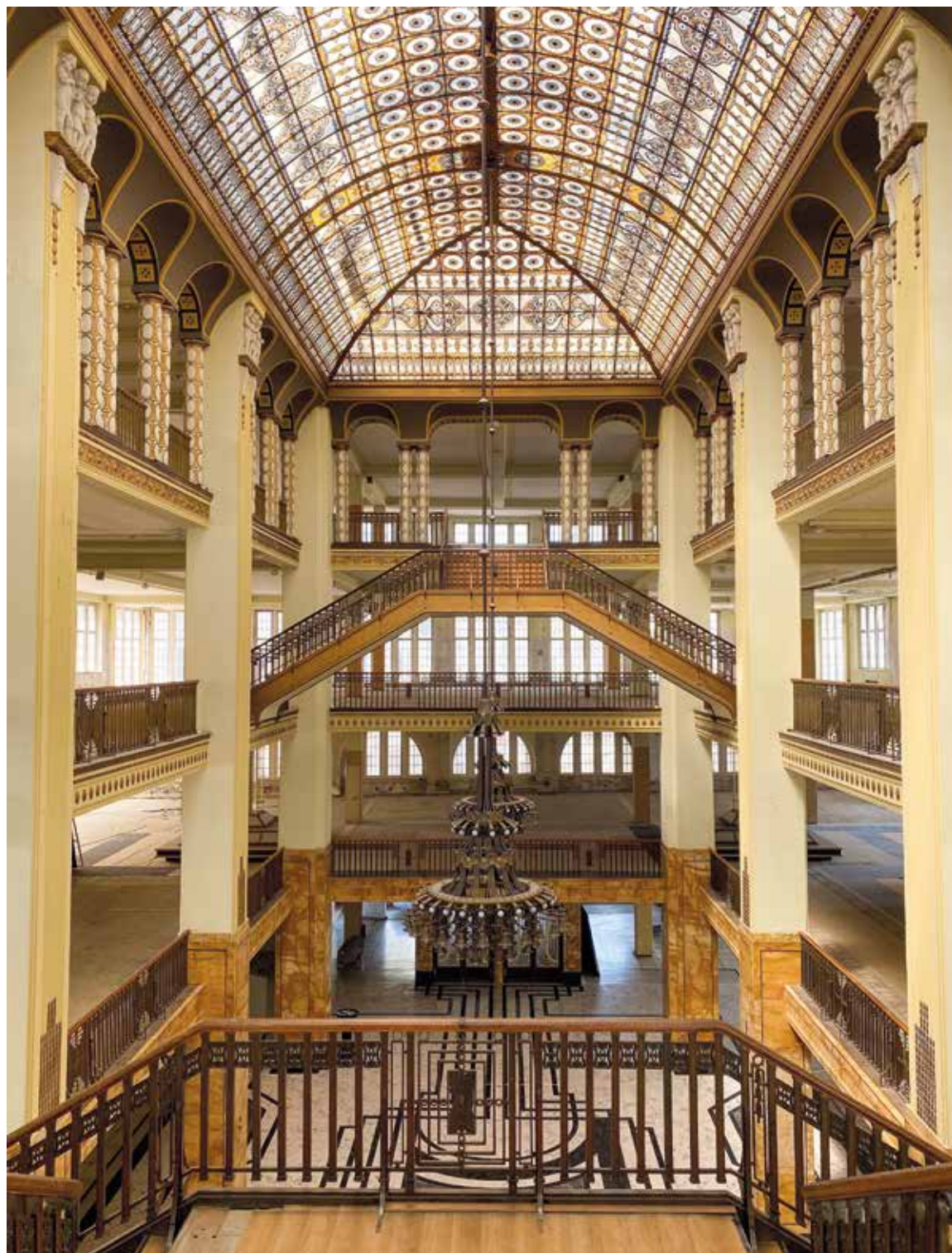
Opening of DOK Leipzig at CineStar, 2024

Saxony has served as a filming location for major international productions. In 2015, Leipzig/Halle Airport appeared in “Captain America: Civil War”. Parts of “Around the World in 80 Days” and Quentin Tarantino’s “Inglourious Basterds” were filmed in Görlitz.

The state also has a vibrant domestic film culture. The DOK Leipzig Festival for documentary film and media art, the Dresden Film Festival for Children and Young Audiences in Chemnitz demonstrate this. The German Institute for Animated Film and the State Film Association further support the sector.



Filming of “Inglourious Basterds”, Görlitz, 2008



*The Görlitz department store served as a principal filming location, among others, for the American film *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014)*

In August 2024, the Saxon Film Academy was founded in Görlitz. In co-operation with the Alliance of German Film Producers and Zittau/Görlitz University of Applied Sciences, it offers certified training courses in cinematography, lighting and production.

Saxony has 45 arthouse cinemas, which contribute significantly to film culture across the state.

Dance

Saxony played a central role in the development of modern expressive dance and continues to host a diverse dance scene. Classical ballet is performed at the Semperoper, whose ballet company was founded in 1825. The repertoire includes works by choreographers such as Mats Ek, David Dawson and William Forsythe.

Dance is also integral to the programmes of the Dresden State Operetta, the Theatre in Chemnitz and the Leipzig Opera. Leipzig is home to the International Choreographic Centre and a dance archive that organises conferences and festivals. The International Dance Week Dresden presents contemporary developments in dance and performance.



Semperoper Ballet, White Darkness, 2023



Leipzig Ballet, Romeo and Juliet, 2024

Libraries and Archives

The German National Library in Leipzig is one of the largest libraries in the world. Since 1913, it has collected all publications issued in Germany, as well as German-language works published abroad and translations of German works. It also houses the German Exile Archive 1933–1945, the Anne Frank Shoah Library and the German Museum of Books and Writing.



German National Library, Leipzig

The Saxon State and University Library Dresden, open to the public since 1788, holds more than 17 million media items. Its collections include the German Photo Library with approximately six million image documents.

The Upper Lusatian Library of Sciences in Görlitz contains valuable medieval manuscripts and early printed works, including the Milich Library.



Upper Lusatian Library of Sciences, historic library hall, Görlitz

The Saxon State Archives in Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz preserve important historical documents. The Mining Archives in Freiberg hold extensive materials relating to mining, geology and mineralogy.

Branches of the Federal Archives in Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz maintain the files of the former Ministry for State Security of the GDR. Individuals have the right to access records concerning themselves or deceased relatives.

Museums



State Museum of Archaeology, Chemnitz

Saxony's museums range from the Dresden State Art Collections and the Grassi Museum in Leipzig to the Saxon Industrial Museum and the Saxon Museum of Archaeology in Chemnitz. Many castles and museums in Saxony's medium-sized towns and smaller communities also offer outstanding exhibitions, including Albrechtsburg Castle and the Porcelain Museum in Meissen, Terra Mineralia in Freiberg and the German Watch Museum in Glashütte. In total, more than 400 museums in Saxony are open to visitors.

Between 2023 and 2025, the number of museums in Saxony declined noticeably as economic pressures led to cutbacks and closures.



Audience Chamber, Dresden Royal Palace



Manufactory of Dreams, Annaberg-Buchholz



August Horch Museum, Zwickau



Saxon Museum of Industry, Chemnitz

Cultural Heritage

In addition to listed buildings and long-established institutions, Saxony's cultural heritage includes restored historic town centres such as those in Torgau and Bautzen; archaeological sites such as the burial mound field in Beilrode; cultural tourism routes including hiking trails in Saxon Switzerland; palaces such as Augustusburg and Pillnitz; and castles such as Mylau and Kriebstein. The landscape park in Bad Muskau, designed by Prince Pückler, has been added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, as has the Ore Mountains mining region.

The preservation of cultural heritage is a constitutional mandate in Saxony (Article 11 of the Saxon Constitution). This includes major museums, which are often housed in significant listed buildings such as the Dresden Royal Palace. At European level, nine important Leipzig music heritage sites have been awarded the European Heritage Label.

Alongside tangible heritage, Saxony also safeguards intangible cultural heritage. Germany has been a signatory to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2013. Customs, dances, music, cuisine, traditional medicine, craft techniques and other cultural practices are recognised as worthy of protection. In Saxony, examples include organ building, Vogtland musical instrument making, choral traditions, charcoal burning and mining parades.

In 2016, the idea of the cooperative was included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as Germany's first contribution. The cross-state nomination was developed jointly in Rhineland-Palatinate and Saxony.

Celebrations and Festivals

Each Whitsun weekend, Leipzig hosts the Wave-Gotik-Treffen, which attracts the alternative and gothic scene from across Germany and beyond. The programme includes film screenings, club events, author readings, exhibitions, church concerts, medieval markets and workshops.



Fürst Pückler Park Bad Muskau, which includes Muskau Castle, covers 830 hectares and forms the largest park in English landscape style in Central Europe. About one third of the landscape park lies in the Saxon town of Bad Muskau, while the larger part extends eastward and northward across the Lusatian Neisse into Poland.

Since 1992, the festival has been an established part of the city's cultural calendar.

The intercultural Africa festival "1000 Drums" has taken place in Leipzig since 2019 and brings world music to the city each summer. For classical and jazz audiences, the Bach Festival in Leipzig, the Dresden Music Festival and the Dixieland Festival Dresden are among the highlights of the year.

Festivals are not confined to urban centres. Open-air events are held regularly in places such as Commerau, Soland, Torgau and Neukieritzsch, drawing visitors from across Germany and neighbouring countries. Musical styles range from punk, rock, metal and electronic music to gothic, medieval music and folk.

For literature enthusiasts, the Meissen Literature Festival is a prominent fixture, as is the Theatre Festival in Chemnitz for younger audiences. Since 1990, festivals have experienced a notable revival, not least because public gatherings in the GDR were subject to strict state control.

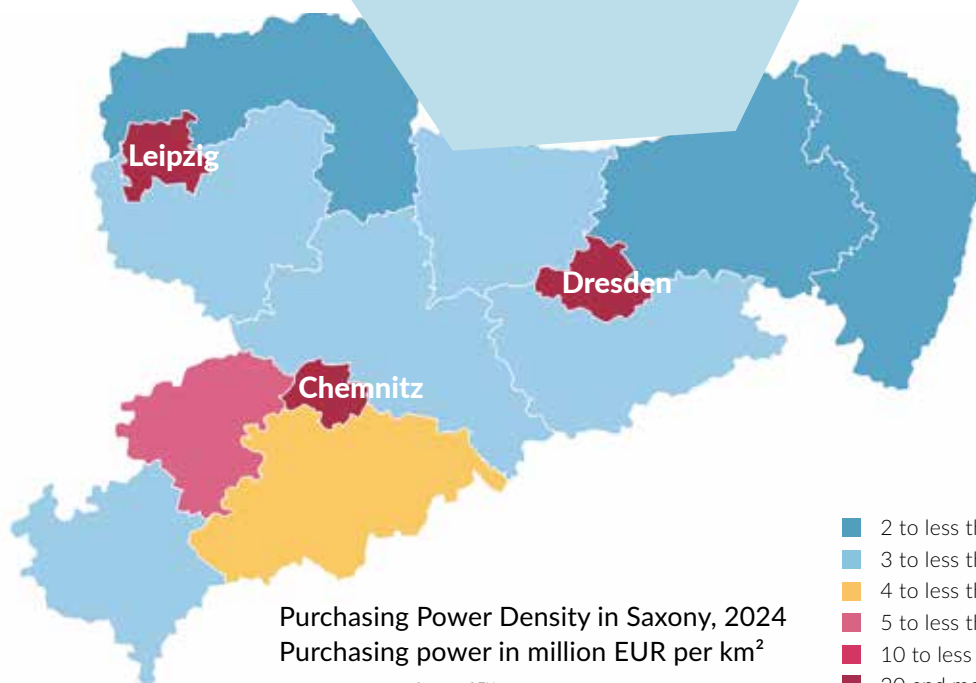
Traditional community festivals have also been re-established, including the Day of the Saxons, held on the first weekend in September at a different location each year since 1992. During Advent and Christmas, traditional mining parades in the Ore Mountains recall longstanding customs. The festive season culminates in Christmas markets, with the Striezelmarkt in Dresden among the best known, alongside markets in Plauen, Görlitz and Herrnhut.



Chemnitz: opening ceremony of the European Capital of Culture 2025, 18 January 2025



ECONOMY AND LABOUR



Building on a long industrial tradition, Saxony has strong sectors in automotive manufacturing, mechanical and plant engineering, electrical engineering, rail, aerospace and aviation technologies, as well as the chemical, paper and food industries. The state remains internationally competitive as an investment location. A highly developed education and research landscape, together with a well-qualified workforce, underpins Saxony's capacity for innovation. Dresden's role as a major European microelectronics and ICT cluster and the growth of a dynamic start-up scene illustrate this strength. Universities, extra-university research institutions and companies are closely interconnected. This co-operation is supported by a well-developed infrastructure.

Saxony's central location in Europe and the Leipzig/Halle air freight hub provide significant locational advantages. Five vehicle and engine plants are located in the state. Porsche manufactures the Macan in Leipzig, although the company, like the wider automotive industry, faces structural and sales challenges. BMW produces around 1,500 vehicles per day at its Leipzig plant and is expected to be connected to the hydrogen core network from 2027. Despite the current crisis, the Volkswagen plant in Zwickau remains an important centre for innovation in powertrain technologies.

The pharmaceutical industry also invests, conducts research and manufactures in Saxony. In 2023, the investment rate stood at 15.3 per cent, above the federal state average, but has since stagnated. As in many European regions, structural transformation, geopolitical challenges and uncertain markets have weighed on investment momentum.

For structural reasons, many companies in eastern Germany are still less resilient in times of crisis than those in the west, even more than thirty years after reunification. On average, they have less capital and cannot offer comparable wage levels. As in other eastern German states, Saxony hosts few headquarters of large international corporations. Decision-making centres are often located in western Germany or abroad, slowing strategic development and limiting the effective use of local advantages.



By cargo volume, Leipzig/Halle Airport ranks second in Germany after Frankfurt and fourth in Europe. Worldwide, it ranked 20th in 2025.

Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

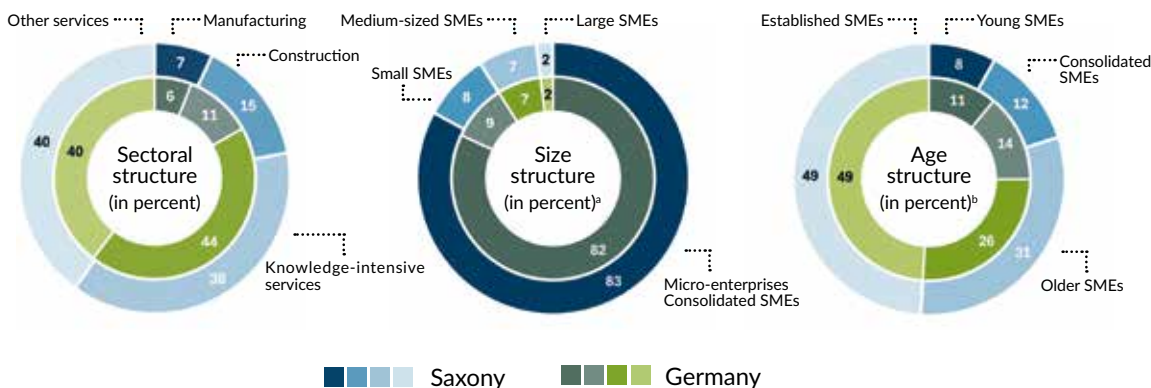
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of Saxony's economy. They are particularly prevalent in services, accounting for around 77 per cent, as well as in construction and, to a smaller extent, manufacturing. Around one third of service providers operate in knowledge-intensive areas such as IT, consulting and technical services.

In 2023, there were around 150,000 companies in Saxony, including 141,000 micro-enterprises, employing more than 1.1 million people. SMEs invest above average in research and development and benefit from a strong research infrastructure that supports cooperation between industry and academia. At the same time, the transition towards energy-efficient and climate-neutral production presents major challenges.

Since 2022, economic stagnation, rising energy prices, skilled labour shortages and volatile demand, particularly in construction and technology-oriented services, have dampened growth.

New opportunities are also emerging. Spin-offs from the Technical University of Freiberg (Bergakademie Freiberg) have gained national recognition in resource-efficiency technologies, and Chemnitz University of Technology is emerging as a hub for hydrogen technology, supported by numerous SMEs.

The SME Sector in Saxony at a Glance

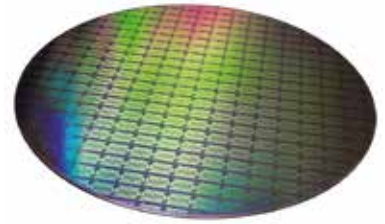


Source: KfW SME Atlas © KfW 2024

Hidden Champions

“Hidden champions” are comparatively little-known companies that hold global market leadership in specific niches. Although structural conditions have historically been less favourable in eastern Germany, Saxony is home to a number of internationally competitive niche leaders. These include global market leaders in railway cranes and slag transport, as well as highly specialised semiconductor producers for wafers in microelectronics and optoelectronics.

Rapidly growing firms operating within international consortia, such as manufacturers of connectors for vehicle electronics, also belong to this group. Another example is the world’s oldest harmonica manufacturer still in operation. Based in the instrument-making town of Klingenthal, it exports high-quality handcrafted instruments worldwide.



With the production of wafers from high-purity silicon for the manufacture of computer chips, and with the development and production of compound semiconductor substrates, Dresden and Freiberg rank among the core regions of modern high technology in Europe.

Craftsmanship

Watches from Glashütte, porcelain from Meissen, Dresden Christmas stollen and wood carvings from the Ore Mountains are emblematic craft products that shape regional identities and enjoy global demand. With more than 54,000 craft businesses, Saxony has a strong tradition of skilled trades.



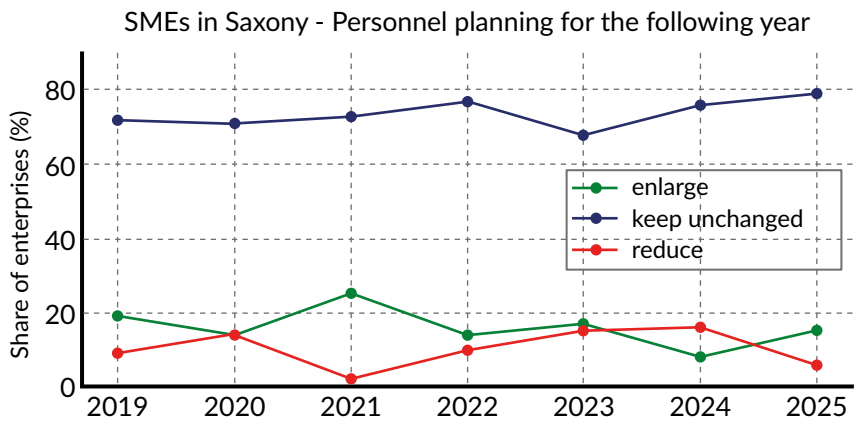
Instrument making in Vogtland

Highly specialised manufacturers continue to emerge, for example in bicycle production and bespoke manufacturing. Alongside these, a large number of crafts serve everyday needs, from bakeries and painting workshops to media production, plumbing and heating services.

As elsewhere in Germany, skilled trades face shortages of qualified workers and declining numbers of applicants for apprenticeship. At the same time, new requirements arising from ecological transformation create pressure to adapt. Digitalisation also offers opportunities, including improved cooperation across companies and new forms of partnership.

Labour Market

Just over two million people are employed in Saxony (as of 2021), including commuters and the self-employed. In June 2021, 1.62 million employees were subject to social insurance contributions. The unemployment rate averaged 5.9 per cent in 2021. Following the coronavirus pandemic, the main challenge was not a lack of jobs but a shortage of labour. Since February 2022, the energy crisis and high inflation rates have further negatively affected the economic climate.



Source: Creditreform Economic Research: Economic Situation and Financing in the SME Sector, Autumn 2025

Saxony competes with many European regions for qualified skilled workers. Average wages remain around 15 per cent below the national average. Although living costs, particularly for housing, are lower in many parts of Saxony, wage differentials still entail a disadvantage in attracting talent.

In the major cities, wage gaps compared with western Germany are smaller, while housing costs remain comparatively moderate. As elsewhere, digitalisation and demographic change are reshaping labour market demand and qualification requirements. Sustained economic growth at its current pace will depend in part on continued immigration of skilled workers in fields such as microelectronics and biotechnology, as well as on additional labour in the nursing and service sectors including hospitality.

Between City and Countryside

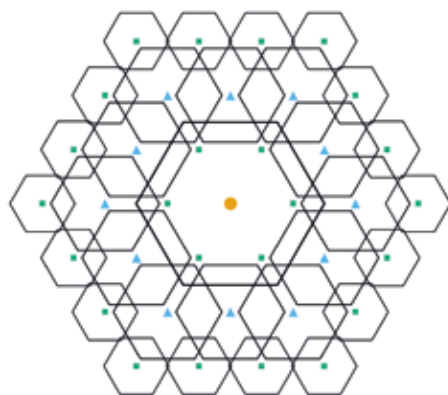
Saxony's cities tend to be younger and more economically dynamic than many rural regions. Rural areas nevertheless offer potential, including a high density of modern craft businesses, a growing food industry, sustainable agriculture and tourism. Projects in geothermal energy and raw-material extraction are also largely located outside urban centres.

With substantial investment and European Union funding, structural transformation in the former lignite region of Upper Lusatia is advanced. The German Centre for Astrophysics is planned for the region, intended to pool astrophysical data from around the world and to drive innovation in computing and technology development. Plans also include a highly complex space telescope. In addition, a Centre for the Transformation of Chemistry is envisaged in Delitzsch near the border with Saxony-Anhalt. This large-scale research centre aims to support the development of sustainable circular systems in the chemical industry. Both projects are expected to attract specialised companies and international experts and to generate broader economic effects.

In Zinnwald (Ore Mountains), plans are underway to establish a centre for extracting lithium hydroxide from domestic deposits, a material regarded as a key raw material for batteries: mining, chemistry and the regional economy are already closely integrated into the concept.

Saxony's low mountain ranges, shaped by mining, host companies and research institutions with extensive experience in remediating legacies of uranium and lignite extraction. Expertise in contaminated-site rehabilitation and modernising wastewater systems is in demand internationally.

Not all rural areas benefit equally from such advantages. Many regions remain dominated by agriculture. Subsidies, low-interest loans and premium payments support ecological restructuring and regional marketing. The State Ministry for Regional Development funds local projects and capacity building in the agricultural sector.



The system of central places was developed in the 1930s by the geographer Walter Christaller. It is based on three units of order (places of differing size) within a regional area. In terms of their most important function, the provision of services, the spheres of influence of these places generally do not overlap; at the same time, however, there must be no unserved areas. By arranging central places systematically in a regular triangular grid around each place, Christaller developed a system on the basis of which an area can be supplied continuously with no interruptions.

Many small communities located far from major cities are strongly affected by out-migration and population aging. This raises questions of healthcare provision and long-term care. To maintain services and accessibility, districts apply the system of central places, a spatial planning concept that concentrates public services in selected locations and helps sustain economic viability and basic provision in rural areas.

Economic Development

Economic development in Saxony is supported by European programmes, federal funding schemes and state-level business promotion. Between 2021 and 2027, around EUR 1.95 billion from the European Regional Development Fund, together with additional resources from the European Social Fund, is available to support innovation, structural adjustment and climate protection.



Robotics in agriculture is one of the funding priorities of Saxony's economic development agency

More than EUR 200 million from the European Social Fund have been designated for education-related measures. Federal programmes, including the Climate Action Initiative, provide further support.

Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen, a state-owned agency, promotes Saxony as a business location, advises potential investors and supports export strategies.

The Sächsische Aufbaubank, the state development bank, advises applicants and manages funding schemes.

Tourism

As one of Germany's leading cultural destinations, the state capital Dresden in particular attracts visitors from around the world. Chemnitz also experienced an exceptional upswing in 2025 when it was named European Capital of Culture. Preliminary data suggest that tourism increased by around 20 per cent, with even higher peaks in individual months, reflected both in overnight stays and in turnover in the hospitality sector. Despite these positive developments, the hospitality industry remains under considerable pressure. While demand is rising slightly in many regions, real turnover in the catering sector has declined noticeably, in some cases with double-digit losses compared with the previous year.

For many businesses, rising costs are increasingly threatening their economic viability.

The tourism strategy of the Free State of Saxony therefore focuses on sustainable development and structural stability. Cycling and hiking routes, spa and wellness facilities, and winter sports offerings under changing climatic conditions are to be expanded in a targeted manner.

Industrial heritage, museums, palaces and castles are also seen as areas with growth potential. Target groups include cultural tourists as well as younger city and event visitors, families, and active and nature-oriented holidaymakers.

Despite structural challenges, tourism remains a key pillar of Saxony's economy.



Terra Mineralia exhibition at Freudenstein Castle, Freiberg

Overnight Stays in Saxony

Absolute figures for 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 in millions



Source: Statistical Office of Saxony - Accommodation Sector in the Free State of Saxony - December 2024

Renewable Energies

Saxony still has ground to make up in expanding renewable energy for electricity generation. While the share of renewables in Germany's gross electricity consumption averaged 42.1 per cent in 2021, Saxony set a target of 28 per cent for 2023. A survey by the Saxon State Government



Schematic illustration of a geothermal plant (c) State Office for Environment, Agriculture and Geology

indicates that 57 per cent of the population support further expansion. More than two thirds of residents choose renewable heating when building homes, and the share of heat pumps and district heating in existing buildings has risen to 40 per cent. Saxony also has the highest proportion of buildings in the top energy efficiency classes A+ and A in Germany.

The Free State of Saxony is also investing in further climate-neutral technologies. One of Germany's four national hydrogen competence centres is being established in Chemnitz in cooperation with the Technical University, the Hydrogen and Mobility Innovation Centre, receiving EUR 72.5 million in federal funding. The hydrogen industry cluster HZwo and ENERGY SAXONY are planning supply infrastructure for green hydrogen and the development of components for fuel cell vehicles. The cluster brings together expertise from companies and research institutions in fuel cell technology, hydrogen and energy systems, vehicle powertrains, manufacturing and production technology, and specialised machine and plant engineering.

In addition to hydrogen, Saxony's mining legacy provides considerable potential for geothermal energy as a climate-neutral source. The number of geothermal installations is steadily increasing.

Mining

Mining has been practised in Saxony for centuries. Lignite extraction in the Lusatian and Central German coalfields continues to account for the largest share. For climate protection reasons, however, opencast lignite mining will be phased out in the medium term. Germany is scheduled to end the use of lignite by 2035, and by 2038 at the latest.

At the same time, other raw materials are gaining importance. The Ore Mountains in particular are unique in Europe due to the density and

variety of deposits, including rare metals. The Saxon Mining Authority in Freiberg currently lists 419 active mining operations.

Extracted materials range from rock and gravel to kaolin, clay and loam, as well as quartz sand. In response to rising demand and industrial transformation, licences have also been issued for the exploration and extraction of metal ores. These include lithium in Zinnwald, tin, tungsten and indium in Pöhl and in the Rittersgrün field, and copper and other ores in the Weißwasser area.

Agriculture and Forestry

If there were a symbol of agriculture in Saxony, it would be the apple. Fruit cultivation has a long tradition in the Leipzig Lowlands, the Saxon Hills and on the slopes of the Elbe. With 2,400 hectares, apples are the most important crop. Sour cherries, strawberries, pears, sweet cherries, plums and soft fruit are also economically significant. Saxony ranks fourth among Germany's fruit-growing regions.

Climate change is increasingly affecting cultivation. The growing season is shifting, late spring frosts are becoming more frequent, and irrigation needs are rising during dry periods. Research institutions in Saxony are investigating the adaptations required for agriculture under changing climatic conditions.

Cereals remain the most important arable crop in Saxony. After a temporary decline, the area devoted to root crops such as potatoes, carrots and sugar beet is increasing again. Price trends have also made rapeseed cultivation more attractive. Following the European Commission's removal of the set-aside obligation, the amount of fallow land has decreased significantly.

Livestock farming has traditionally played a comparatively minor role. However, after Bavaria, Saxony is Germany's second-largest producer of edible carp. Aquaculture has been established for decades. In terms of total fish output from inland waters, Saxony ranks fourth nationwide.

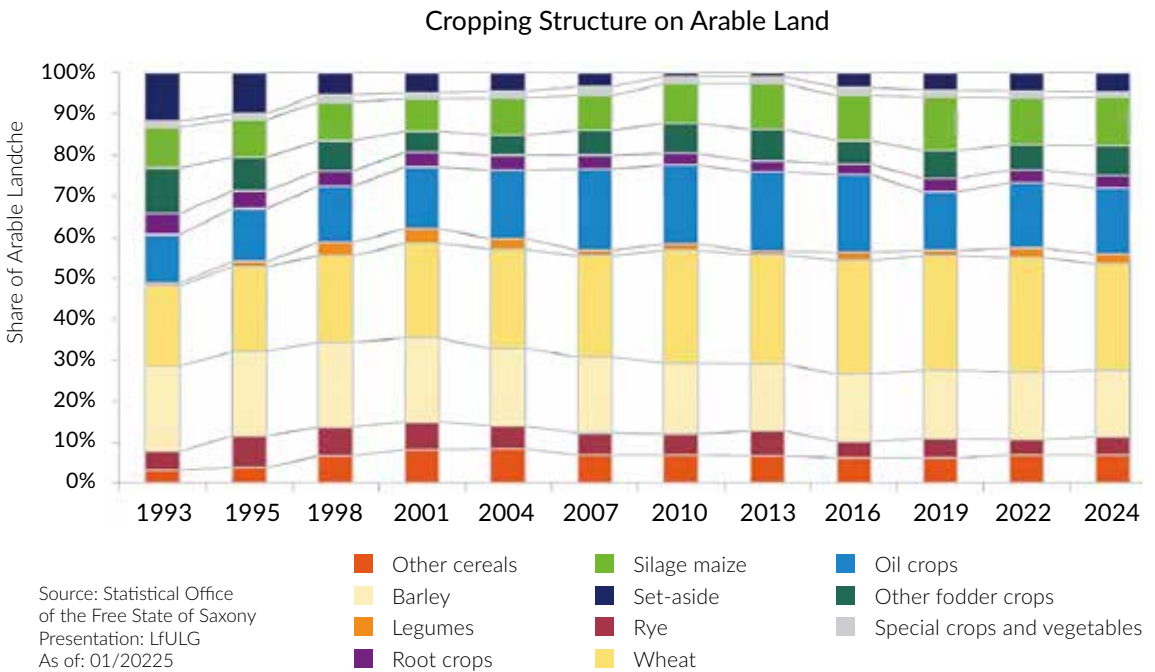


Ores in the Ore Mountains: among the elements found here are lithium, nickel, indium, tungsten and those belonging to the rare earth group. They are needed for high technologies such as electric mobility (rechargeable batteries) and energy generation by wind power (permanent magnets). Fluorspar is indispensable for the manufacture of non-stick frying pans and outdoor functional clothing. Baryte is used in deep drilling.



When it comes to honey production, the nearly 7,000 beekeepers in Saxony can register a positive development: there are more than 55,000 bee colonies in the Free State, 8,500 more than in 2015. The bee population is increasing.

In forestry, young and middle-aged conifer stands of pine and spruce predominate, accounting for roughly three quarters of the forest area. Since 1992, efforts have focused on long-term conversion to ecologically stable mixed forests, with the aim of significantly increasing the proportion of deciduous species.



Winegrowing

Saxony is home to Germany's easternmost wine-growing region and, at only 489 hectares, one of its smallest. The vineyards begin in the Elbe Valley near Dresden at 51 degrees north latitude. Viticulture has a tradition of more than 800 years. Documentary sources first mention vine cultivation in 1161 and, at its peak in the seventeenth century, vineyards covered around 5,000 hectares.

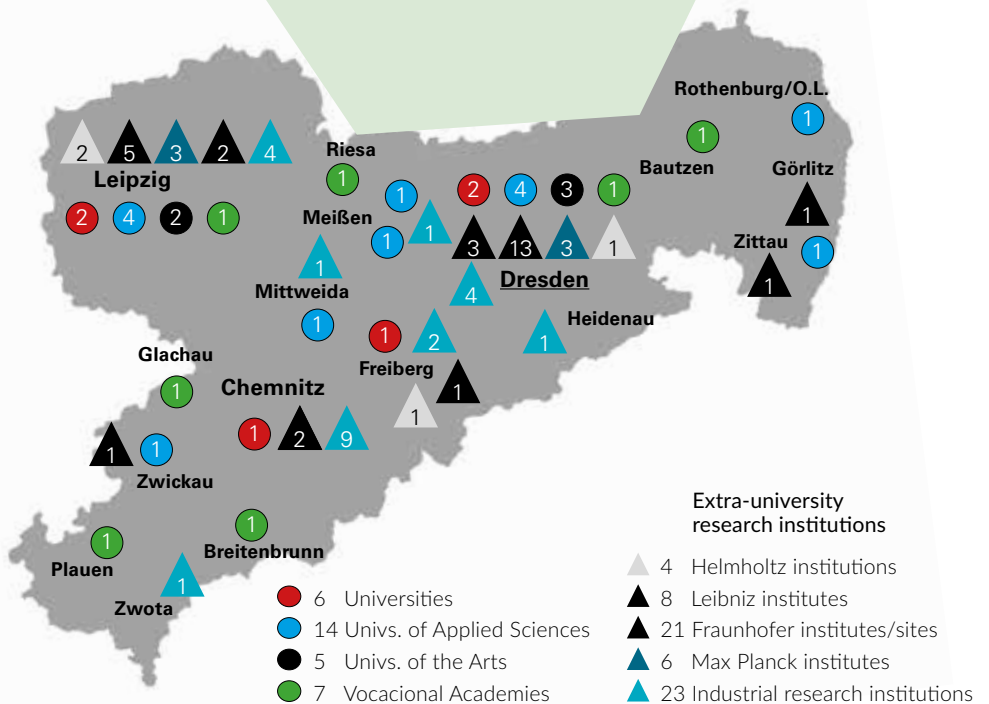
Meissen remains the centre of Saxon viticulture, and the region's largest wine festival is celebrated there. Winegrowers' houses, vineyard churches and wine taverns have been part of local culture for centuries. Saxon white wines regularly achieve high quality, reflecting the favourable microclimate of the Elbe Valley.



Vineyards in the Elbe Valley



SCIENCE AND RESEARCH



With its centuries-old mining tradition and Leipzig as one of Europe's oldest university cities, Saxony was already a destination for scholars long before the modern scientific era. The mathematician Adam Ries, whose arithmetic textbooks were so influential that the German phrase "nach Adam Riese" ("according to basic calculation") is still used today, moved to the flourishing mining town of Annaberg in 1522 and remained there for the rest of his life. His arithmetic textbook *Rechnung auff der Linihen und Federn* ("Calculation on Lines and with the Pen"), written in German rather than Latin, was widely used and repeatedly reprinted until the seventeenth century. The polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz was born in Leipzig in 1646, attended school there and studied at the university. As a philosopher, jurist, mathematician, physicist and alchemist, Leibniz is also regarded as a key theoretical figure in the development of the binary number system. The symbolic language based on 0 and 1 that he advanced from philosophical considerations remains foundational to modern computing.

To mark the 200th anniversary of Leibniz's birth, the Royal Saxon Society of Sciences was founded in 1846. Continuing since 1919 as the Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Leipzig, it conducts interdisciplinary research projects at an international level.

The Mining Academy in Freiberg was founded in 1765 to meet the needs of the mining industry. Established at the initiative of Prince Xaver of Saxony, it is the oldest mining science educational institution in the world still in existence.

More than 103,700 students are currently enrolled at Saxon universities. Twelve per cent are from the western federal states and more than 18 per cent from abroad. The largest groups of international students are from India, China and Austria. At the universities in Chemnitz and Freiberg, international students account for more than one third of enrollments.

Significant advances in fields such as cancer research, materials science, biotechnology and microelectronics have emerged from Saxony's universities and institutes. Close cooperation between institutions, togeth-



Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz
(* 1 July 1646 in Leipzig;
† 14 November 1716 in Hanover)

er with excellent staff and technical infrastructure, attracts researchers from around the world.

Universities and Colleges

Saxony has four major universities in Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz and Freiberg. Leipzig University, founded in 1409, is one of the oldest universities in Europe. With 158 degree programmes, ranging from African Studies to dentistry, it offers a broad spectrum. In teaching, it is particularly strong in public-service-related fields such as law, medicine, teacher training and pharmacy. More than one third of its more than 31,000 students are enrolled in these subjects.

The Technical University of Dresden developed from an educational institution founded in 1828 as the Royal Technical Educational Institution in Dresden. It became the Royal Saxon Technical University in 1890 and received its current name in 1961. Since 1992, it has been a comprehensive university with 121 degree programmes and 17 faculties. TU Dresden is funded as a University of Excellence within Germany's Excellence Strategy and is therefore among the eleven universities holding



New Augusteum, Leipzig University

this status. It regularly achieves strong positions in international rankings such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities and the Times Higher Education ranking. In the Reuters Top 100 ranking, it was again among the twenty most innovative universities in Europe in 2024.

With more than 8,300 students, Chemnitz University of Technology is Saxony's third-largest university. Founded in 1836 as a vocational school, it became the State Academy of Technology in 1929. It later developed into a technical university following structural expansions and the establishment of additional faculties. Its profile has been strengthened by three closely affiliated Fraunhofer institutes near the campus, the new national hydrogen competence centre and successful spin-offs from internationally active start-ups.



Dresden University of Technology: "Spectral Symphony of the Elements" in the foyer of the new chemistry building

TU Bergakademie Freiberg, founded in 1765, is the oldest mining academy still in existence. It educates more than 4,000 students, 84 per cent of whom study STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Thirty-nine per cent are from abroad and 30 per cent are women. More than 200 years ago, renowned scientists such as Abraham Gottlob Werner, a co-founder of modern mining science, and Alexander von Humboldt conducted research there.

Saxony's universities cover almost the entire range of academic disciplines. In addition to state universities, there are three privately funded institutions: Dresden International University, Leipzig Graduate School of Management and Dresden Private University of Applied Sciences.



TU Bergakademie Freiberg, study setting

Among the art colleges, three are located in Dresden and two in Leipzig. They focus on teaching and research in the fine arts, performing arts and music.

Saxony also has universities of applied sciences with practice-oriented teaching and research in Dresden, Leipzig, Mittweida, Zwickau, Zittau and Görlitz. In addition, there are eight specialised higher education institutions run by private or independent providers, including Leipzig Graduate School of Management, the Dresden University of Church Music, a university of applied sciences for public administration and a police academy.



Oktogon - Art Hall of the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts (HfBK)

University Research

Saxony's 14 higher education institutions are among the main pillars of the state's research landscape. Many professorships and institutes are connected through joint appointments, meaning that directors of research institutions are involved in both research and teaching at universities. The spectrum of university research ranges from basic research to applied research and industrial development. Universities have also established independent research centres and affiliated institutes organised under private law. These act as intermediaries between academia and the regional economy and promote technology transfer to commercial enterprises within the respective knowledge areas.

Clusters of excellence in specific research fields, as well as Universities of Excellence such as the Technical University of Dresden, are funded jointly by the federal and state governments as a strategic instrument to support cutting-edge research.

Applied research is a particular strength of universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen). Research centres have been established at three of the five universities of applied sciences, providing platforms for interdisciplinary cooperation with domestic and international partners and for joint projects with industry. This strengthens technology transfer.



At the Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies (HAIT) at TU Dresden, research focuses on the history of National Socialism, communism and post-1989 transformation, as well as manifestations of political extremism, past and present. These focal areas are divided into three fields of research and one cross-cutting task:

- Dictatorships and autocracies in the 20th century and their reappraisal
- Transformations in an international comparative perspective
- Comparative research on extremism and autocracy
- Cross-cutting task: conceptual and conceptual-historical foundations

The common denominator of HAIT's fields of research consists of contemporary historical and political science research on dictatorships / autocracies and on the tension between democracy, political extremism and autocracy.

Extra-university Research Centres

Around fifty extra-university research institutions operate in Saxony and are in continuous exchange with universities and industry within the research landscape of networks.

Their research fields cover a wide range of topics, with a focus on microelectronics and nanoelectronics, materials science, production technologies, energy, environmental sciences, biotechnology, the natural sciences and medicine.



Fraunhofer IWU, Chemnitz

Key organisations include the Fraunhofer Society, the Leibniz Association, the Max Planck Society and the Helmholtz Association. Saxony funds research institutions in the natural sciences and engineering, with a focus on sensor technology, nanoelectronic materials, radiation protection and the Internet of Things.

The Centre for the Transformation of Chemistry (CTC), a new large-scale extra-university research facility dedicated to sustainable circular chemistry, is being built in Delitzsch and is scheduled for completion in 2027.

State-funded research institutions also include humanities and social science organisations such as the Saxon Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Leipzig, the Institute for Saxon History and Folklore in Dresden, the Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies and the Sorbian Institute in Bautzen.

Research Clusters

The science region extending from Dresden to Freiberg and Chemnitz features an exceptional concentration of companies and research institutes with expertise across almost all areas of microelectronics. The *Silicon Saxony* research cluster provides a platform for cooperation between science, industry and politics. Founded by manufacturers, suppliers, service providers and university institutes, Silicon Saxony has developed into the largest microelectronics network in Europe.

A comparable initiative exists in biotechnology. Through *biosaxony*, one of Germany's densest biotech research networks is being developed,

centred around Dresden and Leipzig. More than 65 biotechnology companies, ten pharmaceutical companies and 30 research institutions employing over 6,000 people are continuing to expand this high-tech cluster.

Research clusters are also emerging in Saxony in fields such as neuroscience, resource technologies, materials science, medicine, and medical technology.

One example is the Centre for Regenerative Therapies Dresden (CRTD), which studies stem cell and tissue biology to better understand how organs regenerate. The aim is to develop new treatments for diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.



biosaxony: The Medical Forge Leipzig, laboratory

Research-based Companies

Research-based companies in Saxony are predominantly young spin-offs from technical universities and universities of applied sciences. They conduct research at the forefront of science and technology and develop solutions to complex contemporary challenges in areas such as autonomous driving, new cancer therapies, advanced materials and medical technology.



Medical laboratory

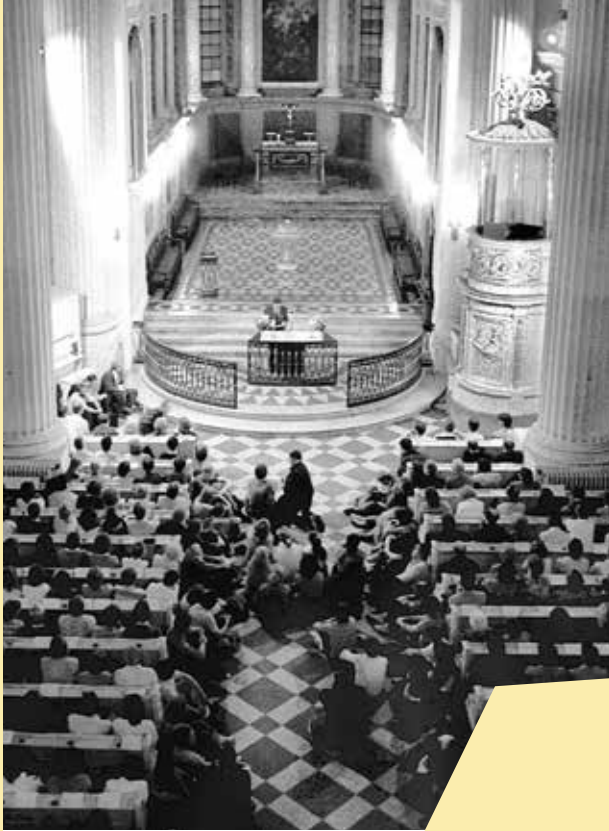
In Dresden, for example, companies are researching new immunotherapies for cancer treatment and the role of lipids in cell function. In Leipzig, new approaches to breath analysis are being researched and developed. In Chemnitz, start-ups in autonomous driving and mobile workforce communication have emerged and are growing rapidly. Spin-offs from the Technical University *Bergakademie Freiberg* are developing new methods of resource analysis and new approaches to improving resource efficiency.

Saxony-based companies are also working on lightweight materials for aircraft construction, synthetic fuels and innovations in vehicle engineering.

As in other parts of Germany, companies in Saxony are investing increasing amounts in research and development. The share of companies focused on research and innovation has risen steadily and now stands at just over 15 per cent. Almost 60 per cent of all companies are considered innovation-active, meaning they systematically use their development potential to create new products and improved processes. In 2016, 45 per cent of Saxony's companies were classified as innovation-active.



TU Dresden, Faculty of Computer Science, foyer of the Andreas Pfitzmann Building. Sculpture by André Tempel



HISTORY AND MEMORY



To trace the long history of the region that is now Saxony, selected highlights often illuminate the past more effectively than strict chronology, and key episodes can convey more than a sequence of dates. This historical arc begins with evidence of early settlements at Eythra near Leipzig, Bronze Age excavations near Nochten in Upper Lusatia, and traces of Slavic settlement, including nearly one hundred Slavic ringforts discovered across Saxony.

The decisive battle for the Slavic stronghold of Liubusua (later known as Gana) in 932, which ultimately led to the defeat of Slavic tribes in the region, remains unresolved. Its location is thought to have been near Löbsal close to Meissen, though other theories propose Lebusa or Bad Liebenwerda in Brandenburg.

After the defeat of Slavic tribes in the early Middle Ages, German eastward settlement and Christianisation opened a new chapter. Meissen Castle laid the foundations for the long rule of the Wettin dynasty and, later, for the Kingdom of Saxony. Princely rule ended with the revolution of 1918 and 1919. Only fourteen years later, Saxony was plunged into the catastrophe of Nazi dictatorship. On its ruins, the GDR was established under Soviet occupation. The Peaceful Revolution of 1989 and the re-establishment of the Free State of Saxony led directly to the present, following severe economic upheaval and phases of large-scale emigration. Saxony's history is marked by profound changes.



Linear Pottery culture, find from Eythra near Leipzig

Prehistoric Artefacts

Alongside finds from the Linear Pottery culture, such as those in Eythra dating to around 5000 BC, important evidence from the Bronze Age can also be found in Saxony. One outstanding site is the burial ground on the Schafberg hill in Niederkaina. With over 26,000 finds, it is among the largest and most rich in material prehistoric burial sites in Central Europe and the most important cemetery of the Western Lusatian culture. From the late Middle Bronze Age, around 1400 BC, it was used continuously through the Lusatian culture and into the early Iron Age Billendorf culture, until around 500 BC.

Archaeological excavations took place from 1948 to 1971. The most notable finds are now exhibited at the State Museum of Archaeology in Chemnitz.



Cassiterite crystals (tin oxide)

In 2018, teams of archaeologists discovered pre-historic tin mining pits near Schellerau in the Ore Mountains that had been buried for millennia. Using airborne laser scanning, ground structures were mapped with such precision through forest canopy that the roughly 4,000-year-old pits could be identified. Traces of charcoal, pollen and sediments provided evidence of early mining. The discovery also suggests that the region was already connected to the developing trade routes of Europe and to its centres in the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age.

From Tribal Wars to the Division of Leipzig



Arminius of the Cherusci, statue, Pushkin Museum, St Petersburg

In AD 17, a battle between Germanic tribes is thought to have taken place in the Leipzig Lowland Bay. The forces of the Cheruscan prince Arminius, also known as Hermann, fought the Marcomannic confederation led by King Marbod, who had come from what later became Bohemia. Marbod lost and retreated to Bohemia.

Like Arminius, who had previously fought the Romans successfully in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, Marbod had been educated in Rome. Unlike Arminius, however, he was regarded as a protégé of Emperor Augustus. Some Germanic princes aligned themselves with the pro-Roman Marbod, which contributed to conflict between their tribes. The Hermunduri, who were dominant east of the Elbe, ultimately submitted to Arminius.

During the migration period from the fourth to the sixth century, Germanic tribes increasingly left the landscapes between the Elbe, Saale and Oder. Slavic groups then settled in areas that were sparsely populated. Many Saxon place names ending in -itz, such as Miltitz, or -ow and -au, such as Torgau, derive from Slavic origins. The Sorbian minority, protected by the Saxon constitution, traces its roots to these Slavic settlers.

At the beginning of the fifth century, the Huns advanced from Central Asia under Attila and extended their power as far as to central Germany. After their retreat, the eastern border of the Frankish Empire ran through parts of what is now Saxony.

In 929, the East Frankish king Henry I (876 to 936) founded Meissen Castle as a frontier stronghold against Slavic groups and promoted the Christianisation of territories east of the Elbe. The fortress stood on the rock on which Albrechtsburg Castle now stands.

The chronicler Thietmar of Merseburg (975 to 1018) described the battle for the Slavic stronghold of Liubusua, from which Henry emerged victorious. German settlement and Christianisation progressed rapidly, but it was not until the Peace of Bautzen in 1031 that Meissen's position in relation to the Polish Piasts was secured.

In 1046, Margrave Dedo of Lusatia from the House of Wettin began the dynasty's long rule. The Wettins governed Meissen, later Electoral Saxony, and finally the Kingdom of Saxony until 1918.

In 1423, Margrave Frederick the Warlike of Wettin was granted the Duchy of Saxony-Wittenberg. For the first time, the name Saxony shifted from historical Old Saxony upstream along the Elbe to the Meissen area. This marked the emergence of the Electorate of Saxony.



The tomb of Dedo III in the basilica of Wechselburg Monastery, with his wife Mechthild at his right side

The Division of Leipzig

In 1485, the Wettin princes Albert and Ernest divided the territories of Electoral Saxony. The Albertine line, named after Duke Albert, henceforth ruled from Dresden. The Ernestine line, named after Elector Ernest, shifted its focus to territories that largely correspond to present-day Thuringia.

Almost a century later, during the Schmalkaldic War of 1546 and 1547, the Albertine Duke Maurice of Saxony, allied with imperial forces, defeated the Protestant princes' alliance, which included his Ernestine cousin. Maurice was subsequently granted the electoral dignity and substantial territories from the Ernestine lands. Saxony was reconstituted as a more unified political entity under Albertine leadership.



Albert the Bold (* 31 July 1443 in Grimma; † 12 September 1500 in Emden) was Duke of Saxony, Governor of Friesland, and founder of the Albertine line of the House of Wettin.



Ernest (* 24 March 1441 in Meißen; † 26 August 1486 near Colditz) was Elector of Saxony, Landgrave of Thuringia and Margrave of Meißen. He was the progenitor of the Ernestine line of the House of Wettin.

During the Thirty Years' War from 1618 to 1648, the Electorate of Saxony further expanded its territory and firmly integrated Lusatia into Saxony. After the war, Albertine Saxony rose to become one of the leading powers among the German princely houses.

When the Polish throne became vacant in 1696, the Saxon Elector Augustus the Strong secured the crown as King Augustus II of Poland. Through the Saxon-Polish union, Saxony entered a period of heightened international influence.

This era brought major achievements in art and culture, architecture and science, and Augustus's son established Dresden's Baroque splendour as a capital and residence city.

The union's heyday was brought to an end by the Silesian Wars and the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763. With the death of King Augustus III in 1763, the union ended. In 1806, during the Napoleonic Wars, a smaller and independent Kingdom of Saxony was created, and its rulers were permitted to bear the royal title once more. The kingdom existed until 1918.



Augustus the Strong (* 12 May 1670 in Dresden - † 1 February 1733 in Warsaw), of the Albertine line of the House of Wettin, served from 27 April 1694 to 1 February 1733 as Frederick Augustus I, Elector of Saxony, and from 15 September 1697 to 1706 and again from 1709 to 1 February 1733, in personal union, as Augustus II, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania.

The Nineteenth Century and Industrialisation

As early as the late Middle Ages, proto-industrial regions had developed in Lusatia, the Ore Mountains and the Vogtland. These areas participated in long-distance trade through textiles, metal goods and wooden products, giving Saxony favourable conditions for industrialisation. With the division of labour and the introduction of steam power in the early nineteenth century, mechanisation accelerated and entrepreneurial activity became more systematic. By the mid-nineteenth century, industrial production processes were firmly established in mining, raw materials pro-

cessing and textile manufacturing. Saxon companies supplied textiles, metal and wood products, and musical instruments worldwide.

Hard coal mined in the coalfields around Zwickau, Oelsnitz and Freital became the main energy source for the region. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, coal was delivered directly to factories through an increasingly dense railway network.

On the initiative of Leipzig merchants, the first German long-distance railway line between Leipzig and Dresden opened in 1839. A new legal framework enabled private financing, and investors subscribed to shares worth 1.5 million thalers. By the end of the nineteenth century, Saxony had one of the densest railway networks in Europe.

With the founding of the German Empire under Bismarck in 1871, Germany became a coherent market with uniform weights and measures.



Richard Hartmann's machine factory in Chemnitz, lithograph, 1856

Customs barriers were removed and free trade expanded across former state borders. Driven by new industrial knowledge and a steady stream of inventions, a wave of start-ups followed. Machine tool factories were established in Chemnitz, banks and construction firms in Dresden, and Leipzig's publishing industry flourished.

In the nineteenth century, Saxony also became a stronghold of the labour movement. Western Saxony, and Chemnitz in particular, played a key role. On 28 October 1871, around 6,500 metal workers began what was then the largest strike in the German Empire. Mass demonstrations were held where workers demanded a statutory ten-hour working day.

Despite support from workers' organisations across Germany, the strike was called off in mid-November without success. Representatives of the Social Democratic Workers' Party and the trade unions attributed the failure to weak organisation within the labour movement.



Rally of workers' associations, Limbach, around 1890

The unsuccessful dispute contributed to a growing drive towards coordination among the working class. In the same month, at a congress in Berlin on 20 November 1871, trade union organisations from 23 trades and factory associations jointly founded the Berlin Workers' Association.

World War I and the Abdication of the King



Landsturm Reserve Battalion 182, Freiburg, 1915

After many Saxons went to war in 1914 with enthusiasm, disillusionment spread after the first years. The hoped-for victories in France did not materialise. Thousands of soldiers were killed or returned as disabled veterans. The Statistical Yearbook 1918 and 1920 records 125,874 war deaths for the period from 1914 to 1918.

Large parts of the Saxon economy were already severely affected at the beginning of the war. Tourism, an important sector in the Kingdom of Saxony, experienced a dramatic decline. Many manufacturers of confectionery and hygiene products went bankrupt. Metalworking, leather and tobacco industries recorded rising turnover, but production was constrained because tens of thousands of men were conscripted. Important raw materials were scarce due to the naval blockade.



King Frederick Augustus III visits wounded soldiers in a military hospital, 1917

At the same time, war industries expanded rapidly. Automobile factories in Zwickau, Plauen and Chemnitz, as well as aircraft factories in Leipzig, grew strongly. Some universities

achieved notable advances in research on new technologies, though this did not influence the course of the war.

After 1918, the economic and social situation continued to deteriorate, as it did across Germany. Strikes and mass protests occurred in Saxony, and demands for democracy grew louder. On 6 November 1918, uprisings broke out in Chemnitz, Leipzig, Dresden and other cities. On 9 November, the unrest reached the Saxon court.



Insurgents with banner, Leipzig, 1918

On 13 November 1918, two days after the end of the war, King Friedrich August III abdicated as the last Saxon monarch.

Saxony During the Weimar Republic

Following a revolutionary transitional government under the Lipinski cabinet, the first free elections in Saxony took place on 2 February 1919. The SPD and USPD won a clear majority in the newly elected Saxon People's Chamber, and Dr. Georg Gradnauer became Prime Minister. On 1 November 1920, the Constitution of the Free State of Saxony entered into force. For the first time, it established a republican form of government and a parliamentary democratic system at state level. In state elections, the SPD consistently achieved the largest share of the vote until 1930.



The Reichswehr takes action against the "Proletarian Hundreds" in Freiberg, 1923

Against the backdrop of inflation and economic crisis, Prime Minister Erich Zeigner (SPD) appointed Communist Party (KPD) politicians as ministers in his cabinet on 10 October 1923. The Reich government in Berlin feared revolutionary preparations, not least because paramilitary units known as the *Proletarian Hundreds* were recognised and armed in Saxony. When the Saxon government refused to dissolve these units and did not dismiss the KPD ministers, the Reich government imposed Reich execution. On 23 October 1923, Reichswehr troops marched in and deposed the state government. From 29 to 31 October, Saxony was placed under the authority of Reich Commissioner Rudolf Heinze (DVP). The situation then stabilised under the new Prime Minister Alfred Fellisch (SPD).



The Dresden Ständehaus, one of the most distinctive buildings in Dresden's Old Town (built 1901-1907), served as the seat of the Saxon Landtag during the Weimar Republic from 1919 to 1933. Its final session on 21 February 1933 marked the temporary end of democracy in Saxony.

After 1930, however, the party landscape changed. The National Socialists gained increasing electoral support. In the Reichstag elections of 31 July 1932, the NSDAP won 41.2 per cent of the vote in Saxony.

When Adolf Hitler became Chancellor in Berlin on 30 January 1933, Saxony was governed by the DVP politician Walther Schieck as Prime Minister. His cabinet resigned on 10 March 1933. The NSDAP leader Manfred von Killinger, appointed Reich Commissioner, then seized power in a coup.

Saxony from 1933 to 1945

The Law for the Coordination of the States with the Reich of 31 March 1933 dissolved the last democratically elected state parliament. With the Law for the Reconstruction of the Reich of 30 January 1934, the Free State of Saxony ceased to exist under constitutional law.

In 1935, the NSDAP Gauleiter Martin Mutschmann was appointed Reich Governor and also assumed the title of Prime Minister. Under his leadership, Jews, political opponents and other oppressed groups were persecuted ruthlessly. Saxony was also implicated in the murder of people with disabilities and illnesses under Aktion T4. Mutschmann remained in office until the end of the war.

Saxony became one of the most important regional centres of National Socialism. By 1935, 234,681 party members were registered, and Mutschmann ranked among the most powerful regional leaders.

From October 1938, the National Socialists carried out mass deportations of thousands of Polish Jews throughout the Reich, encountering little organised resistance. Political opponents, homosexuals and other persecuted groups were subjected to severe repression and torture. Prisons in Bautzen and Waldheim, as well as the military prison in Torgau, became entry points into the penal and extermination system for many victims. Concentration camps existed in Sachsenburg, at Hohnstein Castle, Königstein Fortress and Colditz Castle.

At the Pirna-Sonnenstein psychiatric and care institution, the National Socialists murdered almost 14,000 mentally ill and disabled people in 1940 and 1941 in a gas chamber in the basement of the institution as part of the so-called "Action T4". In the summer of 1941, more than a thousand prisoners from other concentration camps were also murdered here.

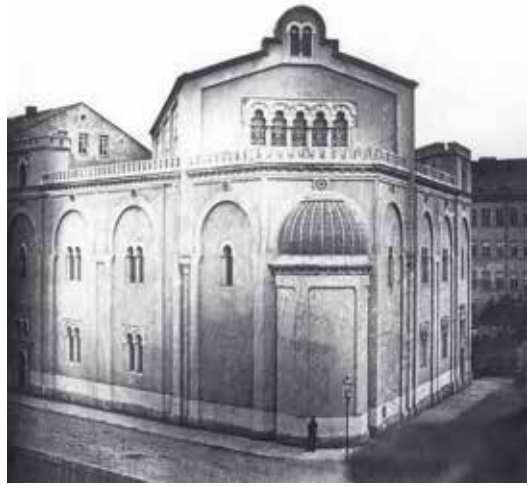
The photo shows a room in the memorial site.



The Fate of the Jews under National Socialism

Until 1933, around 20,500 Jewish citizens lived in Saxony, representing only about 0.4 per cent of the population. Anti-Jewish pogroms had already occurred in Saxony during the plague outbreaks of the fourteenth century. Until 1866, Jews in Saxony did not enjoy full civil rights.

In 1882, the first international anti-Jewish congress took place in Dresden. In 1907, the inflammatory pamphlet *Handbuch zur Judenfrage* was published in Leipzig and later went through 49 editions during the Nazi era.



The Great Community Synagogue in Leipzig before the pogrom night of 9 November 1938

In April 1933, the NSDAP called for a boycott of Jewish shops, medical practices and law firms. At the same time, 1,803 Jewish civil servants were dismissed from the Saxon administration under the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service. During the November pogroms of 1938 ("Kristallnacht"), synagogues and Jewish businesses were vandalised and looted, and Jewish citizens were assaulted. A total of 558 Jews were imprisoned in concentration camps.

From 1939 onwards, Jews were forced into so-called Jewish houses, often in extremely cramped conditions. They were later deported in freight wagons to Theresienstadt and other concentration camps; for many, these deportations ultimately led to their murder in Auschwitz.



As the remaining Jewish population in Saxony was almost entirely deported, transports of concentration camp prisoners, many of them Jewish, arrived from eastern Europe and were compelled to work in Saxony's armaments industry. Many died in labour camps in Saxony. Those who survived forced labour were later deported to extermination camps in large numbers.

As early as 2021, the city Dresden council decided to transform the Old Leipzig Station in Dresden into a place of remembrance and encounter. Between 1942 and 1944, it was the point of departure for the deportation of more than 500 Jews, mainly to Auschwitz and Riga. A support association is developing a concept that is intended to focus not only on remembrance, but also on the role of the station as a transport hub and on contemporary Jewish culture. (Photo: the site in 2021)

After 1945

Following Germany's surrender in May 1945, large parts of Saxony were initially under American control. Under the Four-Power Agreement, however, the Soviet Military Administration assumed authority on 5 July 1945.

Saxony was one of the five states in the Soviet occupation zone. State elections were held on 20 October 1946 for the first time since 1930. The Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), formed through the forced merger of the SPD and KPD, secured a narrow majority together with the Farmers' Mutual Aid Association (Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe, VdgB) and the Cultural Association (Kulturbund). Dr. Rudolf Friedrichs was elected Prime Minister. On 28 February 1947, a new Saxon constitution entered into force.

While the first post-war state parliament was still formed according to democratic electoral principles, the second was already fully characterized by the principle of enforcing the "dictatorship of the proletariat". In a controlled and staged form of democracy under Soviet occupation, other parties were formally permitted, but their political role remained largely ineffective owing to massive interference, restrictions on local organisation and enforced bloc structures in favour of the SED.



German prisoners of war shortly before the end of the war on 15 April 1945 in Chemnitz



Dresden in ruins, 1945



Town centre of Plauen, 1945

Saxony in the GDR from 1949 to 1989

On 7 October 1949, the German Democratic Republic was founded as a socialist state on the territory of the Soviet occupation zone.

On 23 July 1952, the state of Saxony was dissolved and divided into the districts of Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz. From 1953 to 1990, the latter district was re-named Karl-Marx-Stadt.



During the popular uprising on 17 June 1953, Soviet tanks moved up in front of the building of the Georgi Dimitroff Museum (today the Federal Administrative Court) in Leipzig.

As in the rest of the Soviet occupation zone, the economy remained severely weakened until 1952 due to reparations to the Soviet Union and extensive dismantling. By the end of 1946, more than 1,000 enterprises, mainly in mechanical engineering and the chemical, optical and related industries, as well as all multi-track railway lines, had been dismantled and transported to the Soviet Union. Saxony, previously highly industrialised, lost around

half of its industrial capacity.

The expropriation of farms and businesses, at times enforced with brutal force, went hand in hand with profound socio-political transformation in line with the ideology of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Fundamental rights, including freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, occupational freedom and property rights, were effectively suspended.



SED party membership book

When uprisings broke out across the GDR on 17 June 1953, they were crushed with the assistance of Soviet troops.

Despite repression and poor economic conditions, the GDR achieved a comparatively high level of material prosperity by the 1980s. Within the Soviet-dominated Warsaw Pact states, it reached the highest level of prosperity.

More than thirty years after the end of the GDR, experiences from that period still shape the biographies of many people in Saxony. For



View over Görlitz, 1961



Machine embroiderer at VEB Plauener Spitze, Plauen, 1989



Mechanic at VEB Wirkmaschinenbau, Karl-Marx-Stadt, 1971



Nicaraguan guest students at a concert in Zöblitz, 1988

those who suffered under the repressive system of the Ministry for State Security or who were forced to abandon studies for political reasons, memories are often linked to traumatic experiences.

At the same time, achievements in reconstruction, individual ingenuity, artistic and cultural creativity, and knowledge development associated with the GDR period are seldom acknowledged appropriately.



Computer model K 8915 by VEB Kombinat Robotron, 1985

The GDR Prison System

The centrally controlled GDR state, dependent on the Soviet Union, managed to maintain itself for four decades through internal repression and a brutal border regime.

Prisons in the Saxon districts of the GDR became notorious symbols of oppression, including Bautzen, Hoheneck and Chemnitz. The phrase “Off to Bautzen” still evokes painful associations. The total number of political prisoners in the GDR is estimated at 200,000 to 250,000.



The former Kaßberg prison in Chemnitz before its transformation into the now widely recognised site of learning and remembrance

Peaceful Revolution and Reunification

Starting with the strikes of the Solidarność movement in Poland in the summer of 1980, protests and strikes spread across several Soviet-dominated socialist states, including the GDR. The opening of the border between Austria and Hungary, the independence movements in the Baltic states and the student-led protests in Beijing also influenced developments.



Monday demonstration on Karl Marx Square, Leipzig, 1989

The Peaceful Revolution, which unfolded primarily in Leipzig and also in Dresden, Görlitz, Plauen and Karl-Marx-Stadt, culminated in the fall of the Berlin Wall and sealed the end of SED rule. Less than a year later, on 3 October 1990, the day of German reunification, the Free State of Saxony was re-established at Albrechtsburg Castle in Meissen. Eleven days later, state elections were held. On 24 October, Professor Kurt Biedenkopf (CDU) was elected Prime Minister by the state parliament. After extensive deliberation, the constitution of the Free State of Saxony was adopted on 26 May 1992.

After 1990

Even before reunification, monetary, economic and social union between the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR entered into force on 1 July 1990. Citizens of the GDR were able to exchange East German marks for Deutsche Marks under a tiered system. Wages, salaries,



Kurt Biedenkopf (with his wife Ingrid Biedenkopf) after his election as Saxon Prime Minister, 1990

scholarships, pensions, rents and leases were converted at a rate of 1 to 1. However, the monetary union sharply worsened the competitiveness of large parts of East German industry, as price advantages disappeared. Plant closures led to rapidly rising unemployment.

After 3 October 1990, the *Treuhandanstalt*, a federal agency, was tasked with privatising former state-owned enterprises. Closures and radical restructuring triggered widespread resistance and deep frustration. In cities such as Chemnitz and Zwickau, whole streets became deserted as despair and pessimism prompted many to move to western Germany.



Protests against company closures carried out by the *Treuhand* agency, 1990

With a policy focused on strengthening key urban centres and attracting new industries, the state government concentrated resources on maintaining Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz as cultural, economic and scientific hubs. Investment also flowed into transport routes and infrastructure, in the expectation that this would stimulate surrounding regions. Critics argued that this approach reinforced inequalities and accelerated divergence between urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, the growth of metropolitan regions and the estab-

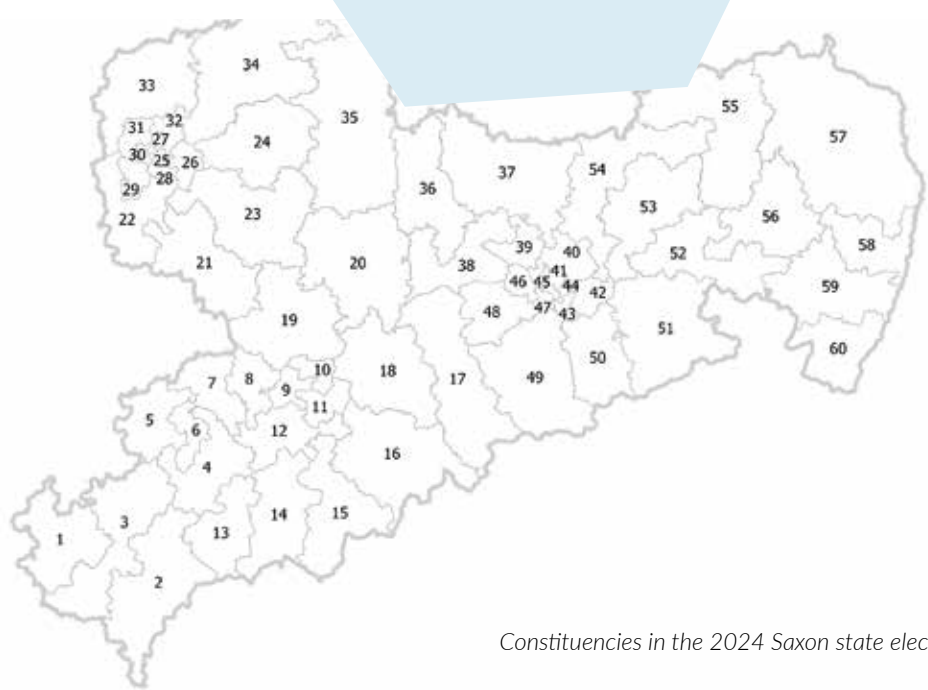
lishment of high-technology companies are widely regarded as major successes. Since 2011, net out-migration from Saxony has reversed, to a large part due to foreign immigration. The former "lighthouse policy" was formally abandoned in 2017, with renewed emphasis on achieving more equal living conditions across the state.



Dresden Frauenkirche during reconstruction, 1995



**POLITICS AND THE
ELECTORAL SYSTEM**



Constituencies in the 2024 Saxon state election

“**W**e are the people!” was the best-known slogan of the civil rights movement during the Monday demonstrations in Leipzig in 1989. Protesters used it to assert their claim to be recognised as the sovereign in a democratic order. For the same reason, Article 20, paragraph 2 of the Basic Law states: “All state authority is derived from the people. It is exercised by the people through elections and votes and through specific organs of the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.”

A little over two months after the first and only free People’s Chamber election in the GDR on 18 March 1990, the State Coordination Committee began its work in the former Dresden district and set out the steps required to re-establish the Free State of Saxony prior to the state elections. Saxony was re-established on 3 October 1990. On 27 October, the Saxon state parliament approved the official name “Free State of Saxony”.



After 1990, the “Haus der Kirche” in Dresden served as the venue for plenary sessions of the Saxon Landtag for three years. The Saxon Constitution was also adopted there in 1992. In 1993, the parliament moved into the glass circular building in Dresden’s Old Town.

Constitution

The constitution of the Free State of Saxony was adopted by the Saxon State Parliament on 26 May 1992 and entered into force on 6 June 1992. It was the first state constitution to be adopted in the new federal states after the Peaceful Revolution. Its preamble states: “Building on the history of the Margraviate of Meissen, the Saxon state and the Lower Silesian region, based on the painful experiences of National Socialist and Communist tyranny, the people of the Free State of Saxony have adopted this constitution thanks to the peaceful revolution of October 1989.”

The Saxon constitution contains a comprehensive catalogue of fundamental rights that goes beyond the German Basic Law. This strong emphasis on the rule of law and the broad protection of freedoms stands

in deliberate contrast to the GDR, which disregarded fundamental rights and severely curtailed civil liberties.

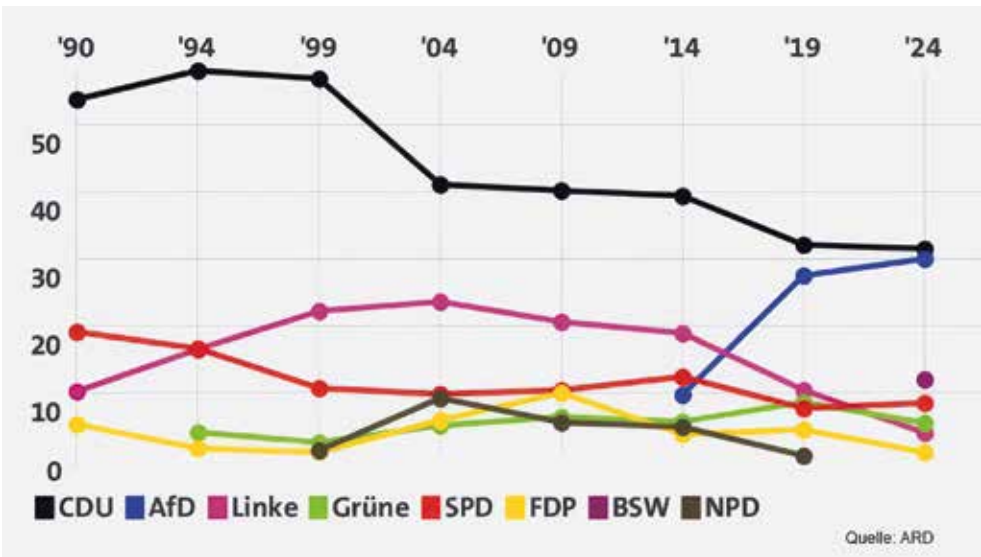
The constitution also includes elements of direct democracy that are largely excluded at federal level under the Basic Law. In addition, it defines specific social objectives, including employment, housing, education, gender equality, the protection of children and young people, the protection of natural resources, the promotion of art and culture and cross-border cooperation. In these areas it goes beyond the general social-state principles of the Basic Law.

Special provisions protect the Sorbian minority. In response to experiences under the Stasi (the secret police and intelligence service of the GDR), the constitutional drafters also placed particular emphasis on individual privacy and data protection. Overall, the Saxon constitution sets distinct priorities within the framework of the Basic Law.

State Elections

The legal basis for state elections is defined by the Saxon Electoral Act, while organisational procedures are set out in state electoral regulations. The system combines two principles: the election of individual candidates and the election of parties through party lists. State elections

State elections in Saxony, 1990-2024



therefore have both a personal and a party dimension. This is reflected in the fact that voters have two votes.

The first vote elects an individual candidate, and the second vote elects a party. Half of the members of the Saxon State Parliament are elected via the first vote, accounting for 60 seats, and the other half via the second vote, also 60 seats.

All German citizens aged 18 or over who have had their principal residence in Saxony for at least three months are eligible to vote. Anyone eligible to vote who has had their principal residence in Saxony for at least twelve months is eligible to run for office in elections.

The second vote is decisive for the distribution of seats in the State Parliament. The first vote determines the direct election of a constituency candidate, who is elected by a simple majority. The candidate who receives the most first votes wins the constituency seat.

If a party wins more direct constituency seats than it would be entitled to under its share of second votes, there will be overhang seats. In such cases, Saxony's electoral law provides for compensatory seats allocated to other state lists. The number of compensatory seats may not exceed the number of overhang seats.

State elections are held every five years.

The State Parliament

The Saxon State Parliament is the legislative body of the Free State. Members of the State Parliament also elect the Prime Minister. The outcome of the state election therefore directly influences government formation.

The State Parliament carries out the following functions: electing the Prime Minister passing legislation, scrutinising the state government and administration, electing the judges of the Constitutional Court, electing the President of the Court of Auditors, and appointing the Commissioner for Foreigners and the Commissioner for Data Protection.

Because legislative powers are divided between the federal level and the states under the Basic Law, the State Parliament's powers are restrict-



New Landtag (State Parliament) building in Dresden

ed mainly to policy areas where the federal government has little or no competence. These include education and other cultural matters, higher education, the press, radio and television, healthcare, local government, police law and public order, and civil service law.

Bills may be introduced by the state government or by members of the State Parliament. Budgetary powers are of particular importance. By adopting the state budget, the parliament determines and limits the financial scope of the state government. Since 1999, Saxony has adopted a two-year “double budget”.

State election results and the resulting government formation also affect Saxony’s representation in the Bundesrat. The Bundesrat is a key body in federal legislation and is composed of members of the state governments. Saxony has four votes (out of 69) in the Bundesrat, and these must be cast uniformly.

State Government

The state government consists of the Prime Minister and ten ministers. State secretaries may be appointed as additional members. The seat of the government is the state capital Dresden.

The Prime Minister is elected in the first round by an absolute majority of the members of the State Parliament. If no candidate achieves this, the candidate who receives the majority of votes cast in a subsequent ballot is elected. The Prime Minister appoints and dismisses ministers and designates a deputy.



Michael Kretschmer has been Prime Minister of the Free State of Saxony since 13 December 2017

The Prime Minister sets the general policy guidelines. Within these guidelines, each minister manages their department independently and under their own responsibility.

Under the Saxon constitution, the state government heads the Saxon administration. It also participates in legislation by introducing bills in the State Parliament. This corresponds to the separation of powers.

The government takes joint decisions on draft laws and bills to be submitted to the State Parliament, as well as on responses to major parliamentary questions. It also decides collectively on Bundesrat initiatives and the state's voting behaviour in the Bundesrat.

Local Elections

The constitutional basis for democracy at the local level is Article 86, paragraph 1 of the Saxon constitution, which states: "The people must have elected representatives in the municipalities and districts. In small municipalities, the municipal assembly may take the place of elected representatives."

District council elections are held every five years. Each district is divided into constituencies in which parties and voter associations nominate candidates. Individual candidacies are not permitted under Saxon law. Each voter has three votes, which can be distributed across candidates, cumulated on one candidate, or used as fewer than three votes.

Local council elections are also held every five years. The electoral area is the municipality. Constituencies may be formed, but this is not mandatory.

If at least two nominations are submitted by parties or voter associations, the election is conducted under proportional representation. If, in very small municipalities, there is only one nomination or none, a majority vote takes place without restrictions on candidates. Voting follows the same rules as for district council elections.

German citizens and EU citizens aged 18 or over who have lived in the electoral area for at least three months are eligible to vote. Unlike in some other federal states, the voting age in Saxon local elections is 18.



In recent years, tens of thousands of citizens in Saxony have taken part in demonstrations against right-wing extremism, thereby sending a clear signal in favour of democracy and the rule of law. At the same time, far-right groups and small parties such as "Freie Sachsen" gained influence in several municipalities and districts and contributed to the growing political polarisation in the state. In the 2024 local elections, they won seats in 36 municipalities; in the 2024 state election, they received 2.2 percent of the vote. In some respects, they appeal to voter groups similar to those of the AfD.

City and Municipal Councils

In cities, the representative body is called the city council, and in municipalities it is called the municipal council. The term can refer both to the council as an institution and to its individual members.

Under the municipal code, the council sets the principles for the administration of the municipality and decides on all municipal matters unless the mayor is responsible by law or the council delegates specific matters.

A key responsibility includes approving the municipal budget. Councils also decide on measures relating to road construction, allotments, waste collection, utility networks, childcare provision, school administration and municipal associations.



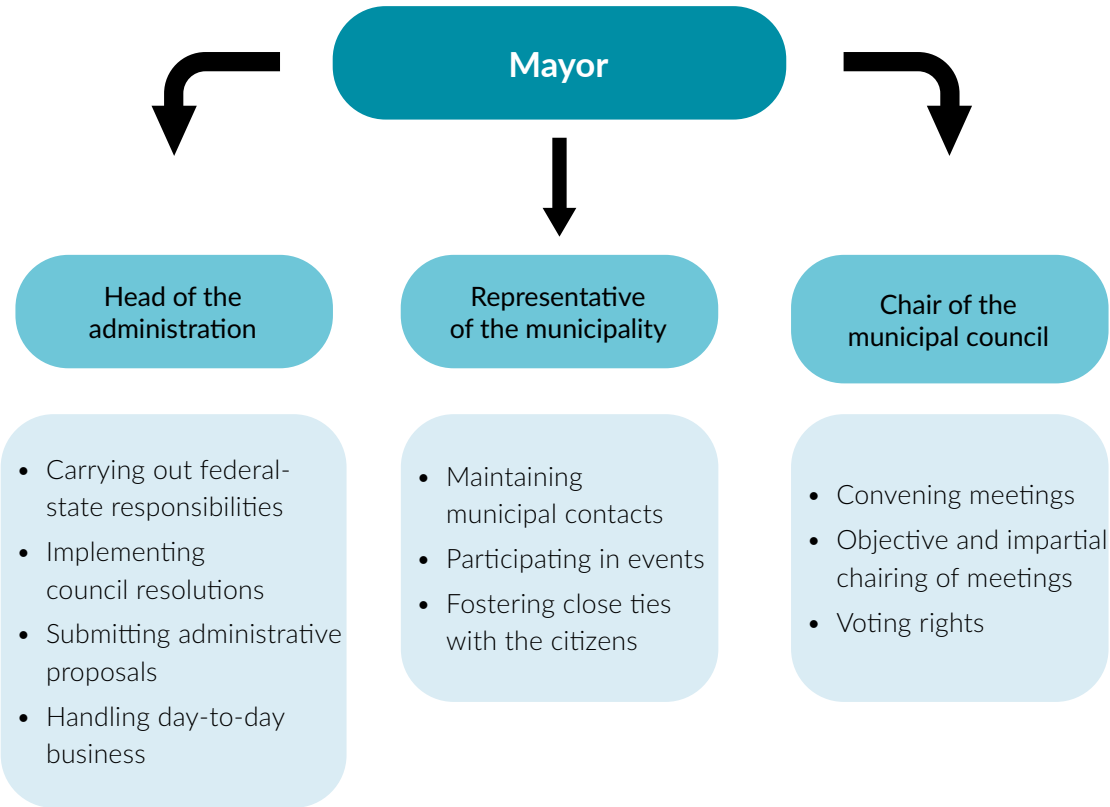
Electoral districts, city of Dresden as a case in point

The size of a council depends on the population of the municipality. It ranges from 8 councillors in municipalities with up to 500 inhabitants to 70 councillors in municipalities with more than 400,000 inhabitants.

Mayoral Elections

Mayors in Saxony are elected directly. The municipal council sets the election date. The term of office is seven years. If no candidate achieves an absolute majority in the first round of voting, a second round may be held. All candidates from the first round may stand again, but no new candidates may be added.

The mayor holds the most important political office in a municipality. The mayor heads the municipal administration and chairs the municipal or city council. In large district towns and in the three independent cities, the title is Lord Mayor.



Since 2013, the minimum age for candidates has been 18 rather than 21, and the maximum age is 64. Since 2002, mayors in municipalities with more than 5,000 inhabitants have held full-time positions. In municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, the mayoral role is always honorary.

A mayor can be removed from office early through a formal recall procedure initiated by the electorate.

Saxony in Europe

The European Union has become increasingly relevant for Saxony in political, social, cultural and economic terms. Following the eastern enlargements of 2004 and 2007, the Free State shifted from the external eastern border of the European Community to a central position within the EU. At the same time, the competences of the European Union have steadily expanded, increasing its influence over key policy areas at national, regional and state levels.

The Free State of Saxony represents its interests vis-à-vis the European Union through several channels: the Bundesrat, the Conference of European Affairs Ministers, its representatives in the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Free State's liaison office in Brussels.

With additional liaison offices in Prague and Wrocław, Saxony promotes direct cooperation with neighbouring regions within the EU.

European affairs are institutionally anchored within the state government. It currently rests with the Saxon State Chancellery.

Through the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Plus, the European Union plays a significant role in Saxony's funding landscape.



Liaison Office of the Free State of Saxony in Prague, Czech Republic

Jurisdiction in the Free State of Saxony

The Saxon judiciary comprises the courts of ordinary jurisdiction, including local courts, regional courts and the Higher Regional Court, as well as administrative courts, labour courts, social courts and the finance court. It also includes the public prosecutor's offices and the prison system.



The Constitutional Court of the Free State of Saxony is located in the building of the Regional Court of Leipzig

The Saxon Constitutional Court is responsible for interpreting the Saxon constitution in disputes between state organs, reviewing the compatibility of state laws with the constitution, and conducting specific judicial review proceedings if a court has referred a matter under Article 100 of the Basic Law. It also rules on constitutional complaints filed by individuals who believe their rights under the Saxon constitution have been violated.

In addition, the court decides on matters directly affecting Saxon constitutional law, including election reviews, popular petitions, referendums and constitutional amendments.

Social Engagement

There are almost 30,000 registered associations in Saxony. Many are leisure and sports clubs, which continue to experience growth in membership and are often active in smaller towns and rural communities. Citizens are also engaged in cultural, educational and social initiatives. Other forms of organisations include foundations, church communities, volunteer fire brigades and civic initiatives that promote democratic participation. Beyond traditional club structures, civic engagement has increased slightly in recent years. Younger people in particular often prefer flexible or project-based forms of involvement, such as initiatives campaigning to preserve schools or hospitals, rather than over fixed membership in political parties etc.



Saxon Volunteer Card

The Free State of Saxony supports voluntary engagement through training programmes, awards, the Saxony Volunteer Card and the "We for Saxony" (Wir für Sachsen) support programme. This scheme provides

volunteers in social sectors with a monthly allowance of 40 euros. In 2024, nearly 29,000 people participated in around 5,700 projects. The Dresden Community Foundation administers the programme and plays a central role in supporting voluntary work.

The Saxony Volunteer Agency, established in 2021 and based in Dresden, serves as a central advisory and networking body. It advises volunteers and civil society actors, promotes good practice and organises workshops, special events and exchange forums that strengthen and develop voluntary engagement.

The Saxony Volunteer Card was reissued in 2025 in its sixth edition. It offers volunteers discounts throughout the state and symbolises Saxony's culture of recognition.

Voluntary engagement in Saxony extends beyond traditional areas and increasingly includes intercultural initiatives, democracy promotion and projects that foster social participation. This diversity contributes to social cohesion and reinforces voluntary work as an integral element of democratic culture in the Free State.



In Görlitz, the Fokus Festival has taken place each summer for two days at the RABRYKA site since 2021. It brings together more than 100 initiatives, artists and associations to present the city as a creative and cosmopolitan community.

Literature on Saxony (selection)

Amm, Joachim; Rellecke, Werner (2024): Wahlen und Parteien in Sachsen. Dresden: Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung.*

Bastian, Olaf; Mannsfeld, Karl (2012): Sächsische Landschaften. Zwischen Dübener Heide und Zittauer Gebirge. Leipzig: Edition Leipzig.

Bohmann, Ulf; Laux, Thomas (Hrsg.) (2025): Kulturhauptstadt Chemnitz 2025. Sozialräumliche Erkundungen. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bielefeld: Transcript.*

Dannenberg, Lars-Arne; Donath, Matthias (Hrsg.) (2020): Die Verwandlung des Landes. Ländlicher Raum in Sachsen. Sächsische Heimatblätter 1/2020, zugl. Dresden: Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung.*

Hehl, Ulrich von; John, Uwe; Rudersdorf, Manfred (2009): Geschichte der Universität Leipzig 1409–2009. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.

Ismayr, Wolfgang; Fleck, André (2021): Freistaat Sachsen, S. 483–489 in Uwe Andersen u.a. (Hrsg.): Handwörterbuch des politischen Systems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. 8., überarb. und erw. Auflage. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Jesse, Eckhard; Schubert, Thomas; Thieme, Tom (2013): Politik in Sachsen. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Kailitz, Steffen (Hrsg.) (2021): Rechtsextremismus und Rechtspopulismus in Sachsen. Dresden: Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung.*

Kiess, Johannes (Hrsg.) (2020): Arbeit in Sachsen. Trends und Analysen der sächsischen Arbeitswelt. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Leipzig: Edition Überland.*

Kiess, Johannes / Nattke, Michael (2024): Widerstand über alles. Wie die Freien Sachsen die extreme Rechte mobilisieren. Leipzig: Edition Überland.

Kossmatt, Franz (2012): Übersicht der Geologie von Sachsen. Nachdruck der Ausg. von 1916. Paderborn: Salzwasser.

Künzel, Werner; Rellecke, Werner (Hrsg.) (2008): Geschichte der deutschen Länder. 2. überarb. Aufl. Münster: Aschendorff.

Mannewitz, Tom (2021): Politische Kultur und gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt in Sachsen. S. 145–163 in: Kailitz, Steffen / Pickel, Gert / Genswein, Tobias (Hrsg.): Sachsen zwischen Integration und Desintegration. Politisch-kulturelle Heimaten. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Menzhausen, Joachim (2007): Kulturgeschichte Sachsens. Erg. u. akt. Neuaufl., Leipzig: Edition Leipzig.

Pälchen, Werner (2009): Die Geologie von Sachsen 2: Georessourcen, Geopotenziale, Georisiken. Stuttgart: E. Schweizerbart'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung (Nägele u. Obermiller).

Pohl, Norman; Deutsch, Matthias (2013): Umweltgeschichte Sachsens. Ausgewählte Text- und Bilddokumente. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Leipzig: Edition Leipzig.*

Querengässer, Alexander (2025): Sachsen und Preußen. Nachbarn und Rivalen 1410–1871. Dresden: Thelem, zugl. ebenda: Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung.*

Ragnitz, Joachim (Hrsg.) (2023): Wirtschaft in Sachsen. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Leipzig: Edition Überland.*

Retallack, James (2023): Das rote Sachsen. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und politische Kultur im Deutschen Kaiserreich. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag.*

Rellecke, Werner; Schötz, Susanne; Stanislaw-Kemenah, Alexandra-Kathrin (Hrsg.) (2022): Frauen in Sachsen. Politische Partizipation in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Dresden: Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung.*

Richter, Michael (2004): Die Bildung des Freistaates Sachsen. Friedliche Revolution, Föderalisierung, deutsche Einheit 1989/90. Schriften des Hannah-Arendt-Instituts für Totalitarismusforschung, Bd. 24, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Spring, Thomas (Hrsg.) (2020): Boom. 500 Jahre Industriekultur in Sachsen. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Dresden: Sandstein Kultur.*

Thüsing, Andreas (2000): Landesverwaltung und Landesregierung Sachsen 1945–1952. Dargestellt am Beispiel ausgewählter Ressorts. Berlin: Peter Lang.

Verfassung des Freistaates Sachsen, 6. Aufl. (2023). Dresden: Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung (Hrsg.).*

Wolff, Nikolaus von (2018): Altes Land und Neue Wege. Perspektiven des Strukturwandels in Sachsen. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Chemnitz: Chromaland Medienverlag.*

Wunnicke, Christoph (2021): Kleine Geschichte der Demokratie in Sachsen. Vom Gottesgnadentum zum Grundgesetz. Sonderausgabe für die Sächsische Landeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn: Dietz.*

** These titles are available free of charge as a printed book or eBook from The Saxon State Agency for Civic Education (as of May 2026).*

Image Credits

- Malerweg: Aussichtsplattform an der Basteibrücke © TMGS Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Dennis Stratmann
- Porphy-Steinbruch, Rochlitzer Berg © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff,
- Fichtelberg, pixabay
- Elbtal © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Woff
- Bienitz Panorama; Martin Geisler, CC-BY-SA-3.0,
- Hochwasserschutzanlage Burkhardtsdorf © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Europäische Wildkatze: pixabay
- Blick auf Leukersdorf © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- A 72 bei Rötha © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Breitbandausbau, Kabeltrommel; Foto: pixabay
- Erzgebirgsbahn © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Frauenkirche, pixabay
- Landwirtschaftsflächen Erzgebirge © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Stadtfest in Dresden © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Sven Döring
- Kunstakademie Dresden, Kuppel © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Bootstour durch Leipzig, © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Giulio Gröbert
- Wirkbau/Europa-Installation, © Kulturhauptstadt Chemnitz 2025, C2025 Press Kit, Ernesto Uhlmann
- Alter Marktplatz, Görlitz, pixabay
- Plauen, St.-Johannis-Kirche, pixabay
- Johannisbad Zwickau © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Matthias Rose
- St. Annenkirche, Annaberg-Buchholz © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Katja Fouad-Vollmer
- Schauwerkstatt Musicon © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Danny Otto
- Besucherbergwerk Zinnkammern Pöhla © BBWZ Besucherbergwerk Zinnkammern Pöhla
- Münzen © CHROMALAND stock
- Berg Oybin, pixabay
- Vogtshof Herrnhut, pixabay
- Vogtshof Herrnhut - Sitz der Evangelischen Brüder-Unität - Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine, CC BY 3.0, GNU-Lizenz

- Parkschoppenfest auf Schloss Wackerbarth © Sächsisches Staatsweingut Schloss Wackerbarth
- Blick über Weifa zum Valtenberg (587 m) in der Oberlausitz, SchiDD, CC BY – SA 4.0
- Tagebau Nochten © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Elbsandsteingebirge, pixabay
- Burg Kriebstein, pixabay
- Lettner in Wechselburg/Sachsen, Kolossos, CC BY-SA 3.0 GNU-Lizenz
- Ferienhäuser am Hainer See im Leipziger Neuseenland © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Sören Wurch
- An der Frauenkirche, Dresden, pixabay
- Chemnitz Johannisplatz 1930, Public Domain
- Sorbisches Nationaltheater "FOLKOLORA!", Jan Kamenz
- Kubanischer Vertragsarbeiter, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1985-0314-004 / Wolfried Pätzold / CC BY-SA 3.0
- Plattenbauten Hoyerswerda © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- CC BY-SA 3.0 GNU-Lizenz, Nikolaikirche Leipzig
- Neue Synagoge Chemnitz © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Neubau Oberschule Chemnitz © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Klinik Bavaria Kreischa, Foto: KLINIK BAVARIA Kreischa
- Beschäftigte am Bildschirm, pixabay
- Julia Taubitz, CC BY-SA 4.0, Sandro Halank
- Kanupark Markkleeberg © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Katja Fouad-Vollmer
- Sorbisches Restaurant in Bautzen © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Tobias Ritz
- Kosmos Festival, Publikum, © Kulturhauptstadt Chemnitz 2025, C2025 Press Kit, Omari Taylor
- Rebecca Horn, Installation, © Kulturhauptstadt Chemnitz 2025, C2025 Press Kit, Johannes Richter
- Semperoper, Großer Saal © Semperoper Dresden/Klaus Gigga
- Eröffnungskonzert KOSMOS Festival, © Kulturhauptstadt Chemnitz 2025, C2025 Press Kit, Omari Taylor
- "Wonderful World", Semperoper, Admill Kuyle
- Podiumsdiskussion Buchmesse, Leipziger Buchmesse Press Kit
- Performance Gabriele Stötzer, Ausstellung "Aus der Reihe tanzen. Aktionskünstlerinnen in der DDR", Albertinum, Dresden (Archiv)
- Performance Monika Andres, Ausstellung "Aus der Reihe tanzen. Aktionskünstlerinnen in der DDR", Albertinum, Dresden (Archiv)

- Segelschiff, Caspar David Friedrich, public domaine
- Albrechtsburg Meißen, Istockphoto 2085931923
- Elstertalbrücke, pixabay
- Chemnitz-Kaßberg Gründerhaus © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Haus Schminke in Löbau, Mario Förster, CC BY – SA 4.0
- Militärhistorisches Museum © Militärhistorisches Museum Dresden
- Filmset Inglorious Basterds; Foto: Stadtverwaltung Görlitz
- Eröffnung DOK 2024, DOK 24 Press Kit, Susann Bargas
- Kaufhaus Stöcker / Warenhaus Görlitz © Europastadt Görlitz- Zgorzelec GmbH HM 2022
- „White Darkness“, Semperoper, Press Kit, © Jubal Battisti
- Leipziger Ballett, Pressefoto, © Ida Zenna
- Deutsche Nationalbibliothek Leipzig, Concord, CC BY SA 3.0
- Historischer Büchersaal der Oberlausitzischen Bibliothek der Wissenschaften
in Görlitz © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Kash Bhattacharaya
- smac Ausstellungsbereich © Landesamt für Archäologie Sachsen/Staatlichen Museum für Archäologie Chemnitz, Michael Jungblut
- Residenzschloss Dresden, K_Wieland, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Manufaktur der Träume in Annaberg-Buchholz © Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Dirk Rückschloß
- August Horch Museum © HM August Horch Museum Zwickau gGmbH
- Industriemuseum Chemnitz; Foto: Industriemuseum Chemnitz | Wolfgang Schmidt
- Schloss Bad Muskau © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Chemnitz: Eröffnungsfeier der Europäischen Kulturhauptstadt, © Kulturhauptstadt Chemnitz 2025, C2025 Press Kit, Nasser Hashemi • Chip Produktion in Dresden © Global Foundries
- Flughafen Leipzig © Mitteldeutsche Flughafen AG
- Porsche. Leipzig Montagelinie
- Instrumentenbau ©Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH, Danny Otto
- Zinnwald, GNU Lizenz, Jens Jäpel
- Robotik in der Landwirtschaft, Grafik, Press Kit Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen
- Freiberg Schloss Freudenstein Ausstellung Terra Mineralia ©Tourismus Marketing Gesellschaft Sachsen mbH
- Erzgestein, Ko_Plan, CC BY SA-4.0
- Imker bei der Arbeit, pixabay
- Weinanbau © Sächsisches Staatsweingut Schloss Wackerbarth
- Wissenschaftlerinnen im Labor © biosaxony/ Philipp Kirschner I

pkfotografie.com

- Fraunhofer Institut Chemnitz © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Leibniz Portrait, public domaine
- Neues Augusteum Leipzig, pixabay
- Technische Universität Dresden: "Spektralsymphonie der Elemente" im Foyer des Chemie Neubaus; Foto: Technische Universität Dresden
- TU Freiberg; Foto: TU Bergakademie Freiberg/Name des Fotografen / Detlev Müller
- Oktogon, Kunstakademie Dresden, CC BY-SA 4.0, Derbrauni
- Hannah-Arendt-Institut; Foto: Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung e. V. an der TU Dresden
- Fraunhofer IWU Chemnitz © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
- Biosaxony: Medical Forge © biosaxony/ Philipp Kirschner I pkfotografie.com
- Laborgegenstände; pixabay
- TU Dresden, Pfitzmann-Bau, Presse KIT TU Dresden, Iven Mokry • Thomaskirche Leipzig; Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-0921-309 / Grubitzsch (geb. Raphael), Waltraud / CC-BY-SA 3.0
- Albrechtsburg Meißen, Istockphoto 2085931923
- Linienbandkeramik, CC BY-SA 3.0, GNU-Lizenz, Martin Geisler
- Kassiterit Kristalle, CC BY-SA 3.0
- Büste Arminius CC BY-SA 3.0 Wikipedia / Shakko
- Wechselburg Grab Dedo III. und Mechthild CC BY-SA 4.0
- Herzog Albrecht, public domaine
- Kurfürst Ernst, public domaine
- Friedrich August I. Kurfürst von Sachsen, public domaine
- Maschinenfabrik Hartmann, public domaine
- Kundgebung Arbeiterverein, public domaine
- Landsturm Ersatzbattailon Freiberg; public domaine
- König August II, Lazarettbesuch, public domaine
- Aufständische mit Banner, Leipzig, 1918, public domaine
- Reichswehr in Freiberg, public domaine
- Dresdner Ständehaus, pixabay
- Gedenkstätte Pirna Sonnenstein © Stiftung Sächsische Gedenkstätten, Jürgen Lösel
- Große Gemeindesynagoge in Leipzig, public domaine
- Alter Leipziger Bahnhof Dresden, pixabay
- Deutsche Kriegsgefangene am 15. April 1945 in Chemnitz, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Zerstörtes Dresden 1945, CC BY-SA 4.0
- Zerstörter Postplatz, Plauen 1945; Foto: Stadtarchiv Plauen
- Leipzig 1953, Bundesarchiv, B 285 Bild-14676 / Autor/-in unbekannt / CC-BY-SA 3.0

- SED Parteibuch, Kresse-Völkner Collection, CC BY-SA 3.0
- Blick über Görlitz, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1988-1221-015 / CC-BY-SA 3.0
VEB Plauener Spitze; Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1989-0120-004 / Thieme, Wolfgang / CC-BY-SA 3.0
- VEB Wirkmaschinenbau, BA, Bild 183-79084-0002 / Gahlbeck, Friedrich / CC-BY-SA 3.0
- Nicaraguanische Gaststudenten bei einem Konzert in Zöblitz, 1988, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1988-0614-311 / CC-BY-SA 3.0
- Der Robotron K 8915, ein Bürocomputer, der in der DDR vom VEB Robotron-Elektronik Zella-Mehlis hergestellt wurde. 1985 erstmals gebaut, wurde hauptsächlich in Industrie und Landwirtschaft eingesetzt. CC BY-SA 3.0 (c) Enrico Grämer
- Gefängnis Chemnitz-Kaßberg © CHROMALAND stock, Nikolaus von Wolff
Montagsdemonstration Leipzig 1989, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-0922-002 / Friedrich Gahlbeck / CC-BY-SA 3.0
- Kurt Biedenkopf, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-1012-022 / CC-BY-SA 3.0
Proteste gegen die Treuhandanstalt 1990, Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-1219-006 / Franke, Klaus / CC-BY-SA 3.0
- Dresdner Frauenkirche, Baustelle, 1995, iStock-Foto 2087044068
- Plenarsaal mit Besuchertribüne © Sächsischer Landtag / Oliver Killig
- Plenarsaal im Haus der Kirche 1993 © Sächsischer Landtag / Matthias Hiekel
- Außenansicht des Plenarsaals © Sächsischer Landtag / Oliver Killig
- Portrait Michael Kretschmer, © CDU-Landesverband Sachsen
- Demonstration „Zusammen gegen Rechts“, CC BY-SA 4.0, Michael w
- Verbindungsbüro des Freistaats Sachsen in Prag: Sächsisches Staatsministerium der Justiz und für Demokratie, Europa und Gleichstellung, Frank Thomas
- Hauptgebäude des Landgerichts Leipzig und Sitz des Sächsischen Verfassungsgerichtshofes: CC BY-SA 3.0, GNU-Lizenz
- RABRYKA Fokus Festival 2025, Görlitz; mit freundlicher Genehmigung durch Der Second Attempt e.V.

Why Saxony?

Saxony is far more than a German federal state. With more than a thousand years of statehood, it is a European region of distinctive landscapes, cultural treasures, scientific and industrial achievement, and rich historical heritage. It also offers an insightful example of transformation: from an industrial heartland through forty years under the GDR to its place in reunited Germany. This first English-language edition of this book is intended for readers from abroad, for those settling in Saxony, and for all those engaged with the region in business, politics or academia. Thoroughly revised and updated, it provides a compact, richly illustrated introduction to Saxony's geography, economy, history, culture and science.

