

# North Rhine-Westphalia: Committed to transatlantic business and the digital future

GUEST ARTICLE BY ARMIN LASCHET, MINISTER-PRESIDENT  
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**S**trong and reliable transatlantic relations continue to feature highly among high-ranking German as well as US business leaders. This interest, particularly in a robust and prosperous economic and political exchange, holds true especially for North Rhine-Westphalia. With over 18 million inhabitants and 750,000 companies, our state forms a huge market right in the heart of Europe. No fewer than 160 million people live within a radius of 500 kilometers from North Rhine-Westphalia. Hardly any other European region offers a similar level of purchasing power. We import goods and services worth €200 billion annually, while our worldwide exports amount to €180 billion.

trading partners. The new North Rhine-Westphalian government is strongly committed to an economic policy that provides excellent conditions for business and commerce, at home and abroad. We understand that to do so, we have to accelerate our efforts in two closely linked spheres: globalization and digitization. For one thing is obvious: The economic future will largely be digital; it will be based on data. And both business and political leaders, must act quickly – international markets will not be waiting for us. To meet these challenges even better, North Rhine-Westphalia has formed a new joint Ministry of Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitization and Energy, led by Prof. Andreas Pinkwart.

## *Good bilateral relations are of vital interest for both countries' security, well-being and for our joint future in a globalized world*

At a recent meeting with top-level representatives of AmCham Germany in our capital city of Düsseldorf, all participants agreed that good bilateral relations are of vital interest for both countries' security, well-being and for our joint future in a globalized world. US companies are among the biggest foreign investors and employers in North Rhine-Westphalia. Around 1,700 companies are based in our state, among them 3M, Ford, Mars, Amazon, UPS, FedEx, Hewlett-Packard, Cargill and Johnson & Johnson, to name but a few. The US is one of our most important non-European

Swift action is also needed in another crucial sector: We are going to reduce bureaucratic obstacles to ensure that international companies find the first-class support and infrastructure they depend on to do business in North Rhine-Westphalia. A favorable regulatory framework as well as an entrepreneur-friendly culture will again become our trademark. We therefore intend to simplify and modernize public procurement law and are also working on legislation to ease and accelerate investment.

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