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NRW Startup Report 2025: NRW Defies Global Startup Decline; Growth in Ecosystem Value and Scaleups Signal Global Ambition

Startup Genome and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Industry, Climate Action and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia Release the NRW Startup Report 2025 - a Data-Driven Analysis of North Rhine-Westphalia's Startup Ecosystem

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — September 11, 2025 — Startup Genome and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Industry, Climate Action and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia have unveiled the **NRW Startup Report 2025**, providing an in-depth, data-driven analysis of the state's startup ecosystem. Now in its third edition, the report captures the progress, momentum, challenges, and opportunities shaping North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)'s entrepreneurial landscape.

Key Findings from the NRW Startup Report 2025

- **Startup Creation Surges by 26%:** NRW recorded 674 new startup formations in 2024, marking a 26% increase from the previous year and signaling a strong rebound after two years of decline. NRW ranked second in Germany for startup creation in 2024, just behind Berlin.
- **Ecosystem Value Defies Global Trends:** Despite a global median decline of 24% in Ecosystem Value across the Top 50 ecosystems, **NRW's Ecosystem Value grew by 9% to \$12.6 billion USD**. Cologne, Düsseldorf, Aachen, and Bonn together account for over 75% of NRW's total Ecosystem Value.
- **AI Leads Investment Growth: Venture capital investment in NRW rose by 58%** in 2024, with Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerging as the leading sector. The standout was DeepL's \$300 million Late-Stage Funding Round, representing ~68% of the year's total AI funding.

- **Scaleup Momentum Accelerates:** In 2024, the **number of scaleups** (startups valued at \$100 million or more) in NRW **more than doubled** compared to the previous year, approaching the record level last set in 2021. Startups participating in the **Scale-up. NRW program continued to outperform**, scaling 30% faster than comparable German startups and 55% faster than NRW startups outside the program. These participants have collectively raised over \$967 million USD.
- **Employment Impact:** Startups in NRW created approximately **6,200 new direct jobs in 2024**, reaching a record for the region. Since 2020, startups have generated **over 26,000 direct and 100,000 indirect jobs** in Germany.
- **Deep Tech Strengths and Global Reach:** With **52% of all startup funding in NRW flowing to Deep Tech sectors between 2020-2024**, the ecosystem is well-positioned to capitalize on global trends. However, NRW startups still have limited international presence, with only 0.7% establishing offices abroad, predominantly in the U.S.

"This year's report underscores NRW's resilience and strategic positioning within the global startup landscape. With rising investment, a record number of scaleups, and progress in Deep Tech, NRW is making tangible strides. Our collaboration with the Ministry enables us to provide this rigorous analysis to help shape policies and initiatives that further elevate the ecosystem." –

Stephan Kuester, Managing Partner at Startup Genome

Drawing on extensive data from over 16,000 startups and 10 key entrepreneurial ecosystems in NRW, the 2025 edition benchmarks NRW's performance across critical metrics including Startup Creation, Venture Capital, Startup Exits, Ecosystem Value, and Diversity and Impact.

View the full report [here](#). Explore previous editions of the NRW Report and other insightful Startup Genome reports [here](#).

ABOUT STARTUP GENOME

[Startup Genome](#) is the world-leading innovation ecosystem development organization, having worked with more than 185 economic and innovation ministries and public/private agencies in over 65 countries. We work to catalyze startup success and ecosystem growth and ensure that all cities and countries capture their fair share of the new economy. Startup Genome strategy clients grew their ecosystem values 59% faster than peers (41% vs. 25%). On average, Startup



Genome clients produced \$1.4 billion per year more in ecosystem value from an average starting point of \$9.2 billion. Our evidence-based ecosystem research, advisory, and scaleup programs are rooted in global experience with the world's largest AI-curated startup dataset and proprietary instruments developed from over a decade of primary research.

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