

## European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST AMONG  
EUROPE'S INVESTMENT DESTINATIONS





**fDi Intelligence**



EUROPEAN  
CITIES AND REGIONS  
OF THE FUTURE 2025

**DUB  
LIN**

## LOCAL AMBITION, GLOBAL SUCCESS

### fDi's Small European Regions of the Future 2025

Overall — RANKED **1st**

Economic Potential — RANKED **1st**

Business Friendliness — RANKED **1st**

ATTRACTING THE WORLD'S MOST  
INFLUENTIAL COMPANIES

see their stories on  
**DUBLIN.IE**







- **Largest region in Poland:** 35,559 km<sup>2</sup>, 11.3% of the country's area
- **Population:** Over 5.511 million, more than 14% of Poland's total population
- **Unemployment rate:** 4%
- **Registered entities:** Over 1.05 million in Mazovia
- **Exports:** Over 22% of Poland's exports come from Mazovia
- **GDP contribution:** 23.7% of Poland's GDP, including 18.3% from the Warsaw Capital Region
- **Startups:** Over 22% of Polish startups are from Mazovia
- **Higher education institutions:** 94, with approximately 23% of students
- **Scientific institutions:** Over 150, accounting for 41% of all scientific institutions in Poland
- **Public roads:** The most in Poland, over 55,616 km
- **Airports:** 3 (Warsaw-Chopin, Warsaw-Modlin, Warsaw-Radom)
- **Regional railways:** 1,453 km of lines, approximately 69 million passengers annually

Mazovia is the largest (35,559 km<sup>2</sup> and over 5.511 million inhabitants) and wealthiest region in Poland, boasting immense economic and social potential. Its dynamic development, coupled with the highest national expenditure on research & development, attracts investors and entrepreneurs.

Mazovia is also the largest exporter and importer in the country, a community

possessing purchasing power above the EU average, a skilled workforce and the lowest unemployment rate in Poland. It is the easiest place to find a desired field of study, secure a good job or start a business under favourable conditions with a justified hope for high profitability. The central location of the voivodeship, developed transport infrastructure and rich hotel & conference centre offerings

for many years convinced both small businesses and large international corporations to invest in the region. Mazovia hosts the most foreign investments in Poland. The Mazowieckie Voivodeship also attracts tourists with its vast green areas, cultural sites and entertainment venues.

The heart of Mazovia is Warsaw, the capital of Poland as well as its main commercial hub. It houses central government

offices, the largest academic centre in Poland and offers the best conditions in the country for business and high-return investments.

According to the Financial Times' "European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025" report, Mazovia ranked in the Top 10 Large European Regions in following categories: 1) Human Capital & Lifestyle, 2) Cost Efficiency and 3) Business Friendliness.

Find out more: [www.mazovia.pl](http://www.mazovia.pl)





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Introduction

DATA CENTRE PROJECTS SHORED UP INVESTMENT IN AN OTHERWISE CHALLENGING EUROPEAN FDI LANDSCAPE, **SOPHIE LEWIS** REPORTS

Once again, it was a mixed picture for global greenfield foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2024 – and Europe was no exception.

Despite its critics, the Old Continent once again attracted the most FDI projects among world aregions, and the second-highest number of cross-border capital pledges after Asia-Pacific, according to figures from **fDi Markets**.

Preliminary 2024 figures confirm an increasing level of investment concentration where European locations compete for fewer, but bigger, FDI projects.

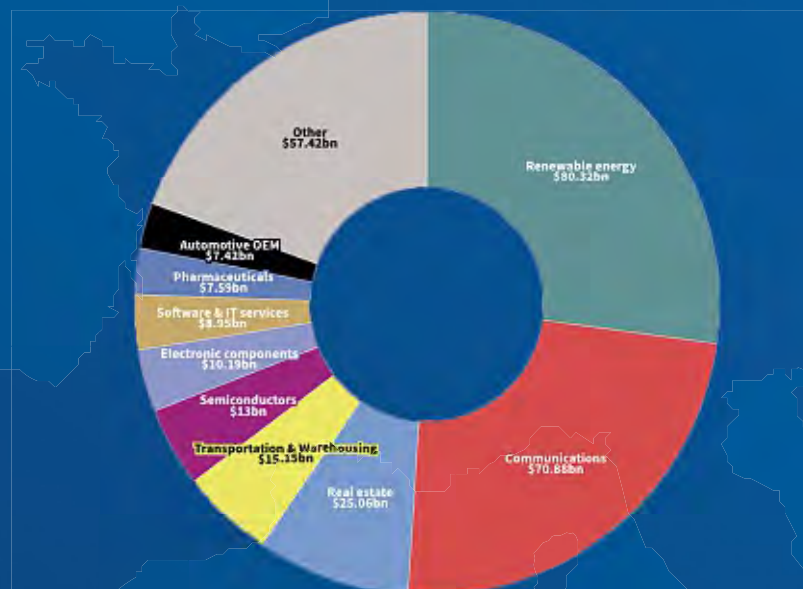
It really boiled down to a couple of capital-intensive strategic sectors that managed to shore up FDI figures at a European level. First and foremost, data centres and semiconductors, as well as renewable energy, although the latter dipped from the highs of the immediate post-Covid years.

Against a backdrop where most European countries saw greenfield FDI fall in aggregate, capital expenditure (capex)-intensive projects in these sectors made the fortunes of a few stand-out FDI countries in 2024.

The UK had one of its strongest years since the global financial crisis, off the back of a handful of multi-billion pound commitments into cloud and artificial intelligence infrastruc-

### RENEWABLES AND COMMUNICATIONS TAKE HALF OF EUROPE'S FDI IN 2024

SECTOR BREAKDOWN OF ANNOUNCED GREENFIELD FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT PROJECTS IN THE REGION



Source: **fDi Markets**

ture across the country, **fDi Markets** figures show.

Italy also had a very strong year – capex-wise, the best on record, **fDi Markets** figures show – thanks to a couple of major commitments by foreign investors in the semiconductors indus-

try and offshore wind. Cleantech and data centres investments were behind Spain's standout performance too.

### Data centre boom

Data centre investors shattered any previous record as they announced a ▶



flurry of mega projects (those with over \$1bn in committed capex) across Europe. They announced FDI projects worth more than \$69bn in 2024, which is a three-fold increase from the previous peak of 2023, **fDi** Markets figures show.

Global technology powerhouses and data services providers such as Amazon, Microsoft and Google dominated the landscape. However, data centres appear to be an appealing asset class for institutional capital (growth potential, predictable revenue stream, high capex requirements), and saw major players in the private equity space wage big bets too.

One of them was the US's Blackstone, which pledged to invest £10bn in Blyth, north-eastern England, via its data centre subsidiary Quality Technology Services. QTS's project was the largest recorded project in Europe in 2024 and the sixth-largest project globally in 2024, **fDi** Markets figures show. Meanwhile, US giant Amazon also pledged to invest £8bn over the next five years across the UK to deploy and maintain its data centre infrastructure in the country.

Another key emerging trend for data centre investment in Europe is the industry's efforts to go beyond primary locations in Frankfurt, London, Amsterdam, Paris and Dublin. Saturation, restrictions and costs are pushing operators to find alternatives – specifically, in locations with plenty of land and access to energy infrastructure and green power. Blyth is a prime example of this, as well as Aragon, a region in north-eastern Spain that has become a key pillar of the country's digital infrastructure.

### Return of pharma

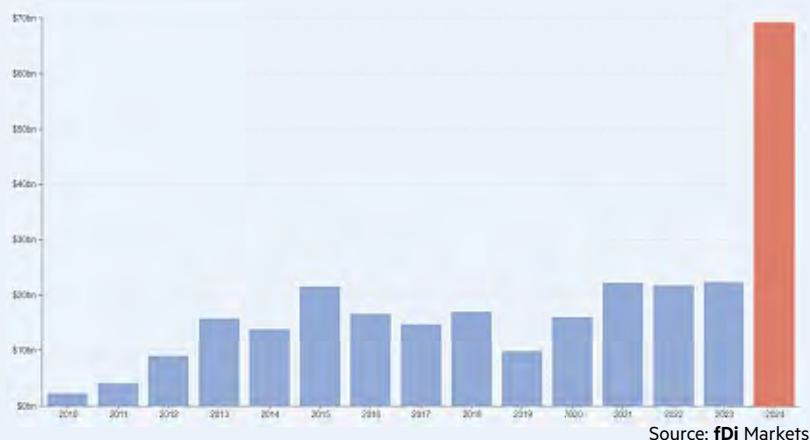
Another standout in 2024 was the pharmaceutical sector.

Post-pandemic, FDI capex in pharmaceuticals has been on a growth trajectory, attracting more than \$7bn in both 2024 and 2023, **fDi** Markets figures show. Never before has the European pharma industry mobilised this level of FDI.

Germany attracted the two largest pharmaceutical investments in Europe in 2024. French Sanofi pledged to invest \$1.45bn to expand its production site in Frankfurt, and Japanese pharmaceutical company Daiichi Sankyo committed to investing \$1.08bn in Pfaffenhofen.

## FDI INTO EUROPEAN DATA CENTRES TREBLED IN 2024

ANNOUNCED GREENFIELD FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN DATA CENTRES, 2010-2024



UK-based biopharmaceutical company AstraZeneca has also made large investments, committing to expanding its sites in Barcelona, Spain and in Dunkirk, France.

### Renewable energy

The renewable energy sector appeared subdued when compared to the previous two years, but still remained the single biggest magnet of FDI in Europe. Foreign investors announced FDI projects worth more than \$80bn in the sector in 2024, down from \$132.7bn in 2022 and \$110.3bn in 2023, but still the third-highest annual performance since **fDi** Markets records began in 2003. Solar power accounted for about 40% of it, wind for another 31.2%, with the remainder going to emerging renewable energy technologies (mostly green hydrogen), **fDi** Markets figures show.

The demise of FDI into European oil and gas is the flipside of the cleantech boom. At its peak in 2008, investment into the sector reached more than \$100bn; fast forward to 2024, it attracted a meagre \$1.3bn in greenfield FDI, its worst performance since record began in 2003.

### North American investment in Europe soars

In terms of sources of investment, intra-European FDI accounted for about half of the total FDI on the continent in 2024, according to **fDi** Markets. Outside the region, US companies have typically been the biggest investors in the Old Continent. In 2024, they accounted for almost a third of total investment going to the region, with the aforementioned tech

companies leading the pack.

But 2024 also saw strong Chinese FDI figures into Europe. Although the EU has been trying to increase the scrutiny of Chinese investment, several member countries like Spain and Germany, and other major European economies like the UK all sent the echelons of their governments and business community to China in an effort to strengthen ties with Beijing. Chinese companies announced major European projects across cleantech, automotive and energy in 2024.

UAE-based Eagle Hills accounted for the largest real estate investment in Europe, investing more than \$3.46bn into Riga, Latvia, to develop more than 8000 residential and 1000 commercial units. Amusement and theme parks saw a huge increase in capital investment in 2024, with US-based Walt Disney making its largest investment in Europe since 2018, investing more than \$2.2bn to expand its theme park at Disneyland Paris.

THE DEMISE  
OF FDI INTO  
EUROPEAN  
OIL AND GAS  
IS THE FLIPSIDE  
OF THE  
CLEANTECH  
BOOM



# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Major cities

LONDON STAYS TOP WHILE DUBLIN  
CLIMBS ONE PLACE TO RANK SECOND

### London, UK

The UK capital has retained its title in **fdi**'s European Cities of the Future ranking in the major cities division. Major cities are defined as those with an immediate population of more than 750,000 plus a larger urban zone of more than two million, or a larger urban zone of more than four million.

After 14 years in opposition, following the years of uncertainty that came after the Brexit referendum and the weakening levels of nationwide foreign direct investment (FDI) that ensued, the Labour Party regained power in 2024.

Despite the recent political volatility, central London has continued to attract more inward FDI than any other city in Europe, bringing in almost three times as many FDI projects as any other European city in 2024 up to November.

The UK capital comes out on top in two of the five sub-categories considered in the study: Human Capital and Lifestyle, and Business Friendliness; it is displaced by Dublin in Economic Potential, placing runner-up.

Between January and November 2024, foreign investors announced projects worth a total of \$5.63bn, with

more than one-third of this coming from the US. Real estate has dominated the scene in terms of capital expenditure (capex). The sector has sharply recovered from the lows touched during the Covid-19 pandemic, with capex increasing by 366% between 2020 and 2024. Among the standout development projects announced in 2024, France-based Axa Investment Managers announced a £480m (\$595.2m) investment in a new 36-story commercial building at 50 Fenchurch Street in London in March.

### Dublin, Ireland

The Irish capital advanced one spot in this year's ranking of major European cities, ranking second.

Dublin is renowned for fund management, data centres and global tech companies, and has held onto its reputation as a key player among European cities in attracting multinationals.

The city has emerged as a preeminent choice for global tech companies looking at Europe, thanks to its highly educated workforce, established business environment, low corporate tax rate and EU membership.

Dublin attracted 90 FDI projects in 2024 – the third-highest in Europe. In

particular, the city was triumphant in the Economic Potential category.

Inward greenfield FDI investment in the communications sector got a further boost in 2024, with US-based Vantage Data Centres pledging \$1.09bn to open a new 38,000 sq m data centre campus in Dublin, to be known as DUB1.

### Warsaw, Poland

The Polish capital joins the top-three bracket this year, after gaining one position from last year's ranking. Warsaw ranks second in two of the subcategories, placing just behind London in both Human Capital and Lifestyle and Business Friendliness.

The city has attracted the highest number of FDI related jobs than any other European city over the past five years, with multinationals such as Google and Visa responsible for many of these.

Warsaw is a major hub for software development, with data from **fdi** markets identifying more than \$1bn in FDI in this industry since 2020. Its economic growth trajectory is reflected in the labour market, where the unemployment rate was as low as 1.4% as of June 2024, according to figures from the city statistical office.





# TBILISI EUROPEAN CITY OF THE FUTURE 2025





## Major European cities

**TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	London	UK
2	Dublin	Ireland
3	Warsaw	Poland
4	Paris	France
5	Amsterdam	Netherlands
6	Munich	Germany
7	Berlin	Germany
8	Madrid	Spain
9	Bucharest	Romania
10	Stockholm	Sweden

**TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	London	UK
2	Warsaw	Poland
3	Madrid	Spain
4	Bucharest	Romania
5	Oslo	Norway
6	Berlin	Germany
7	Prague	Czech Republic
8	Brussels	Belgium
9	Amsterdam	Netherlands
10	Barcelona	Spain

**TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Brussels	Belgium
2	London	UK
3	Amsterdam	Netherlands
4	Milan	Italy
5	Madrid	Spain
6	Berlin	Germany
7	Copenhagen	Denmark
8	Stockholm	Sweden
9	Rome	Italy
10	Vienna	Austria

**TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — COST EFFECTIVENESS**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Ankara	Türkiye
2	Gaziantep	Türkiye
3	Kyiv	Ukraine
4	Sofiya	Bulgaria
5	Tbilisi	Georgia
6	Bucharest	Romania
7	Istanbul	Türkiye
8	Budapest	Hungary
9	Warsaw	Poland
10	Prague	Czech Republic

**TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	London	UK
2	Warsaw	Poland
3	Dublin	Ireland
4	Berlin	Germany
5	Amsterdam	Netherlands
6	Bucharest	Romania
7	Munich	Germany
8	Paris	France
9	Prague	Czech Republic
10	Stockholm	Sweden

**TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — ECONOMIC POTENTIAL**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Dublin	Ireland
2	London	UK
3	Paris	France
4	Munich	Germany
5	Amsterdam	Netherlands
6	Warsaw	Poland
7	Stockholm	Sweden
8	Berlin	Germany
9	Madrid	Spain
10	Barcelona	Spain

WARSAW RANKS SECOND IN TWO OF THE SUBCATEGORIES, PLACING JUST BEHIND LONDON IN BOTH HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE AND BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS





## Out now: The fDi Report 2024

### Global greenfield investment trends

The fDi Report 2024 is the annual assessment of crossborder investment, based on data from fDi Markets – a service from the Financial Times.

Key foreign direct investment trends spotted include:

- Renewable energy retains its position as the sector with the highest capital investment for the fourth year in a row
- The US remains the top source and destination country for FDI by capital investment
- The semiconductor sector experiences a large year-on-year decline in capital investment, falling 50% from \$109.5bn to \$55.2bn.

**Download your free copy of the report:**

**[fdiinsights.com/fdi/report2024](https://fdiinsights.com/fdi/report2024)**





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Large cities

### GERMANY CONTINUES TO THRIVE AMONG LARGE CITIES

#### **Frankfurt am Main, Germany**

German cities stand out in fDi's European Cities of the Future ranking in the large cities weight division, which covers cities and urban areas with an immediate population of more than 500,000 plus a larger urban zone of more than one million people (or a large urban zone of more than two million people).

The country's financial centre, Frankfurt, places first this year, followed by Hamburg in second place. Once again, a Polish city, Kraków, has risen through the ranks to finish third.

In 2024 until November, foreign investors announced projects worth a record-breaking \$5.2bn in Frankfurt. Despite being the fifth-most populous city in Germany, Frankfurt punches above its weight for its economic clout, with FDI pledges 4.4 times larger than any other German city in the first 11 months of the year.

Testimony to this is also that the city has retained its position in the Economic Potential subcategory.

In July 2024, US-based CyrusOne Networks, invested \$1.09bn to develop a new data centre in the city, further consolidating its position as Germany's leading data centre market.

#### **Hamburg, Germany**

Germany's Hamburg has retained its runner-up title among large

European cities.

One of the country's three city-states, alongside Berlin and Bremen, it places second after Frankfurt in the Economic Potential data subcategory and third in Human Capital and Lifestyle.

Germany is a major microelectronics force in the European context, with Hamburg being at the heart of the country's semiconductors ecosystem. Among others, Netherlands-based Nexperia first expanded its local production facility in 2023, before announcing a year later that it would invest a further \$200m to develop the next generation of wide-bandgap semiconductors such as silicon carbide and gallium nitride at the site.

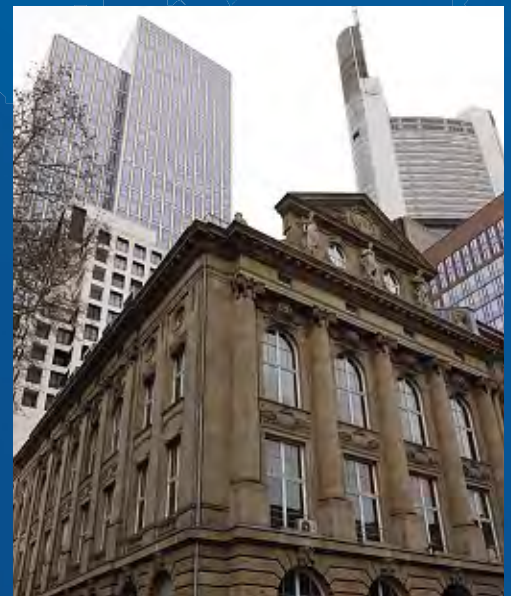
#### **Kraków, Poland**

The Polish city of Kraków has climbed the rankings into third place, after narrowly missing out on a podium finish in last year's ranking.

Poland's second-largest city is awarded first place in two of the subcategories: Human Capital and Lifestyle, and Business Friendliness.

Investors from Western Europe were the top source of inward FDI into Kraków, supplying 83% of its capital investment in 2024.

The city is a major hub for shared services centres (SSCs). In 2024,



Frankfurt punches above its weight for its economic clout

Heineken announced its intention to expand its local SSCs and hire 400 new professionals across finance, management, and IT, with total investment estimated at \$21.5m. Over the years, the city has been able to upgrade the value of its outsourcing offer. In 2024 to November, research and development (R&D) attracted the lion's share of FDI projects across all sectors, with most R&D investors coming from the software and IT sector.



Pomerania Development Agency coordinates Invest in Pomerania initiative and helps businesses flourish by giving them a boost through FDI projects.

# Location search paralysis?



*Let's* Simplify. Decide. Act.



## Winners: Large European cities

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Frankfurt am Main	Germany
2	Hamburg	Germany
3	Kraków	Poland
4	Düsseldorf	Germany
5	Poznań	Poland
6	Cologne	Germany
7	Göteborg	Sweden
8	Antwerp	Belgium
9	Stuttgart	Germany
10	Manchester	UK

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Kraków	Poland
2	Poznań	Poland
3	Hamburg	Germany
4	Cologne	Germany
5	Belgrade	Serbia
6	Lyon	France
7	Göteborg	Sweden
8	Valencia	Spain
9	Frankfurt am Main	Germany
10	Stuttgart	Germany

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Rotterdam	Netherlands
2	Liverpool	UK
3	Hamburg	Germany
4	Cologne	Germany
5	Antwerp	Belgium
6	Sheffield	UK
7	Düsseldorf	Germany
8	Glasgow	UK
9	Frankfurt am Main	Germany
10	Manchester	UK

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3	Antalya	Türkiye
4	Adana	Türkiye
5	Bursa	Türkiye
6	İzmir	Türkiye
7	Mersin	Türkiye
8	Odessa	Ukraine
9	Belgrade	Serbia
10	Poznań	Poland

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS**

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2	Poznań	Poland
3	Frankfurt am Main	Germany
4	Düsseldorf	Germany
5	Manchester	UK
6	Hamburg	Germany
7	Cologne	Germany
8	Göteborg	Sweden
9	Rotterdam	Netherlands
10	Birmingham	UK

INVESTORS FROM WESTERN EUROPE WERE THE TOP SOURCE OF INWARD FDI INTO KRAKÓW, SUPPLYING 83% OF ITS CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN 2024





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# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Mid-sized cities

NO CHANGE IN THE TOP THREE, WITH WROCLAW  
CONTINUING TO DOMINATE

### **Wrocław, Poland**

The Polish city of Wrocław retains its title as the winner of **fdi**'s European City of the Future in the mid-sized cities division. This group is defined as one with an immediate population of more than 200,000 and an urban area of more than 750,000 people or an immediate population of more than 350,000.

Wrocław attracts the second-largest capital investment among all the Polish cities, with an FDI capex of more than \$10.8bn over the past five years, according to data from **fdi** markets.

Wrocław, whose tech prowess gained it the nickname of the Polish Silicon Valley, has attracted 52 FDI projects in software and IT services since January 2020, with globally renowned software developers such as GlobalLogic, a subsidiary of Hitachi, establishing local headquarters in the city.

### **Zürich, Switzerland**

Switzerland's financial centre Zürich, retains its runner-up position in this year's ranking.

Financial services were among the top recipients of FDI in the city between January 2020 and November 2024, with 44 projects recorded. Within the financial service sector, investment banking received the lion's share of this investment, with capital commitments worth \$271m.

The city stood out as the top performer in the Economic Potential sub-category, and it made the top 10 also for Human Capital and Lifestyle, Connectivity and Business Friendliness.

### **Vilnius, Lithuania**

The Lithuanian capital of Vilnius also retained its third-place finish in the mid-sized cities division.

The city ranked within the top 10 for Economic Potential, Human Capital and Lifestyle, and Business Friendliness.

The city is a growing tech hub, and the centre of Lithuania's fintech boom, with more than 200 fintech companies. According to **fdi** markets data, Vilnius has attracted 70% of Lithuania's total FDI in the financial services cluster over the past five years.



Vilnius is the centre of Lithuania's fintech boom



# Krapina Zagorje County

A rising investment hub in Europe

Krapina Zagorje County, Croatia is emerging as a key player in Europe's evolving investment landscape. Strategically positioned in northwest Croatia, just 30 minutes from the capital Zagreb, this region combines a pro-business environment, a skilled workforce, and a commitment to sustainability—making it an attractive choice for investors seeking long-term growth opportunities.

## A proven investment destination

Krapina Zagorje County has established itself as an economic leader, with an impressive €2.7 billion in total revenues in 2023, marking a 12.79% increase. The county maintains a strong industrial base, where the manufacturing sector alone accounts for 44.74% of total revenues. The region's exports reached €824 million, with key trade partners including Germany, Italy, and Slovenia, contributing to a positive trade balance of €273 million. Investments in infrastructure and economic zones ensure a seamless connection between local businesses and global markets.

As a European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) 2025, a title awarded by the European Committee of the Regions, Krapina Zagorje is recognized for its strategic vision and commitment to fostering entrepreneurship. The county's approach blends innovation, digitalization, and sustainability—three core elements that provide stability and growth potential for investors.

## Strategic sectors for high-growth investment

### 1. Advanced Manufacturing & Industry 5.0

- The county is modernizing its industrial landscape through automation, robotics, and AI integration. Companies investing



in this sector benefit from strong value chains, proximity to EU markets, and an innovation-driven workforce.

### 2. Healthcare & Digital Health

- Home to Croatia's leading Health IT Academy and a thriving health ecosystem, the region is supporting cutting-edge developments in telemedicine and health technology solutions.

### 3. Sustainable Tourism & Wellness

- Leveraging its rich natural resources, including thermal springs and eco-tourism destinations, Krapina-Zagorje is developing premium wellness and health tourism experiences, with multi-million-euro investments from leading industry players.

## Sustainability and green investments at the core

Sustainability is a cornerstone of Krapina-Zagorje's investment strategy. The county promotes clean energy initiatives through nearly zero-energy buildings, solar and geothermal projects, and energy-efficient manufacturing processes. The county's Energy Agency plays a key role in guiding investors toward green investments, ensuring a balance between profitability and environmental responsibility. Foreign direct

investments (FDI) are directed toward businesses that align with the county's long-term sustainability goals, helping to future-proof operations.

## Benchmarking against other regions

Compared to other leading investment destinations in Central Europe, Krapina Zagorje offers a compelling mix of affordability, workforce expertise, and strategic incentives. With an average net salary of €1,357 (a 13% increase in 2023), competitive operational costs, and a stable business climate, the county provides an ideal environment for investment.

Unlike larger urban centers facing high congestion and cost pressures, Krapina Zagorje offers a lower cost of doing business while maintaining direct access to EU supply chains. The county's industrial zones provide world-class infrastructure, and a newly developed virtual tour platform allows investors to explore business opportunities remotely.

## A secure and supportive business environment

Krapina-Zagorje is a safe place to do business—a critical factor in today's uncertain global

economy. Political and economic stability, combined with strong legal protections and a business-friendly administration, ensures that investors can operate with confidence. The county's Business and Technology Incubator fosters a dynamic startup ecosystem, with structured investment readiness programs, venture capital connections, and innovation-driven support services.

For companies seeking expansion in an emerging European market that offers sustainability, innovation, and a skilled workforce, Krapina Zagorje County presents a unique and compelling opportunity. With its recognition by Financial Times and its European Entrepreneurial Region title, the county is firmly positioned as one of the top investment destinations in Europe.

For more details on investment opportunities in Krapina Zagorje County, visit the Invest in Zagorje platform ([www.investinzagorje.hr](http://www.investinzagorje.hr)) or contact the regional investment office today.

Zagorje – A Small Region for Big Opportunities



## Winners: Mid-sized European cities

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Wrocław	Poland
2	Zürich	Switzerland
3	Vilnius	Lithuania
4	Edinburgh	UK
5	Belfast	UK
6	Gdańsk	Poland
7	Bratislava	Slovakia
8	Bristol	UK
9	Tallinn	Estonia
10	Eindhoven	Netherlands

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Zürich	Switzerland
2	Wrocław	Poland
3	Edinburgh	UK
4	Vilnius	Lithuania
5	Belfast	UK
6	Bristol	UK
7	Eindhoven	Netherlands
8	Gdańsk	Poland
9	Coventry	UK
10	Málaga	Spain

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Wrocław	Poland
2	Vilnius	Lithuania
3	Riga	Latvia
4	Bratislava	Slovakia
5	Zürich	Switzerland
6	Edinburgh	UK
7	Łódź	Poland
8	Bochum	Germany
9	Bristol	UK
10	Den Haag (The Hague)	Netherlands

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Duisburg	Germany
2	Essen	Germany
3	Den Haag (The Hague)	Netherlands
4	Wuppertal	Germany
5	Dortmund	Germany
6	Bochum	Germany
7	Utrecht	Netherlands
8	Zürich	Switzerland
9	Mannheim	Germany
10	Edinburgh	UK

“THIS AWARD REAFFIRMS OUR STRATEGIC COMMITMENT TO CULTIVATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE BUSINESSES CAN INNOVATE AND THRIVE”

VALDAS BENKUNSKAS,  
MAYOR, VILNIUS

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — COST EFFECTIVENESS

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Skopje	North Macedonia
2	Sakarya	Türkiye
3	Eskişehir	Türkiye
4	Chişinău	Moldova
5	Balikesir	Türkiye
6	Gebze	Türkiye
7	Iaşi	Romania
8	Tirana	Albania
9	Lviv	Ukraine
10	Bydgoszcz	Poland

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Wrocław	Poland
2	Łódź	Poland
3	Gdańsk	Poland
4	Vilnius	Lithuania
5	Tallinn	Estonia
6	Bratislava	Slovakia
7	Szczecin	Poland
8	Zürich	Switzerland
9	Edinburgh	UK
10	Belfast	UK



# ADVERTISEMENT



## Braga: A Hub for Investment and Innovation

Braga has become one of Portugal's top investment destinations. Through InvestBraga, the city attracts global companies, startups, and research centers, driving innovation and economic growth. Named European Rising Innovative City 2024 at the iCapital Awards, Braga stands out for its commitment to digital transformation, sustainability, and collaboration. This recognition reaffirms our mission to foster entrepreneurship, attract talent, and enhance quality of life.

**We invite companies and investors to explore the vast opportunities Braga has to offer!**

Ricardo Rio, Mayor of Braga

**For the third consecutive year, Braga has been recognised among Europe's top small cities for FDI strategy, ranking 1st in 2023 and 2nd in 2024 and 2025 in the fDi Intelligence ranking.**

This achievement stems from a development strategy launched in 2014 by the Municipality of Braga and InvestBraga, in close collaboration with companies, universities, R&D centres, and other stakeholders. The Strategic Plan for Economic Development (2014-2026) is now over 85% implemented, fostering a strong and innovative ecosystem. This was recently recognised by the European Innovation Council, with Braga winning the 2025 European Rising Innovative City award.

Braga's global positioning, strengthened by participation in international city networks, has attracted leading multinational investments. Companies like Bosch, Aptiv, Nestlé, Mercedes Benz.io, Deloitte, Accenture, and many others have found in Braga the ideal conditions to develop cutting-edge projects. Local companies such as CASAIS, DST, Outsystems, Primavera, and Wedo have also gained international prominence.

StartupBraga, InvestBraga's innovation hub, was ranked the 7th best in Europe in 2024, supporting startups in Digital Economy, Health Technologies, Nanotechnology, and Biotechnology. Startups like Nutrium, Rubyanomed, Gloma, and UTrust are developing internationally relevant projects.

Braga is now a hub of knowledge, innovation, and talent—an ideal location for high-value international investments.

**Ready to invest in Braga?**





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Small cities

LUXEMBOURG KEEPS THE TOP SPOT AND CORK MAKES A COMEBACK

### Luxembourg

Luxembourg retained its crown as top European City of the Future among small cities – those with an immediate population between 100,000 and 350,000. The trilingual city outperformed its peers, winning two subcategories – Economic Potential and Business Friendliness.

Luxembourg has the highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in Europe. Its financial industry, combined with an international, multilingual and skilled workforce feature among the key pillars of its economic success.

With finance accounting for 25% of the country's GDP, capital investment in financial services accounted for almost half (45.5%) of total FDI into Luxembourg City between January 2020 and November 2024, **fdi** Markets data shows. Inward capital investment in financial services was 5.5 times larger than the second-highest sector over the same period.

### Cork, Ireland

Cork bounced back in the 2024 ranking, reclaiming second place among European small cities. The city placed in the top two for Economic Potential and

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Luxembourg	Luxembourg
2	Cork	Ireland
3	Geneva	Switzerland
4	Cambridge	UK
5	Ghent	Belgium
6	Espoo	Finland
7	Basel	Switzerland
8	Oxford	UK
9	Reading	UK
10	Leuven	Belgium

in the top three for Business Friendliness. With more than 190 multinational companies, software and IT services accounted for 75% of the city's total FDI capital expenditure, according to data from **fdi** markets.

US-based investors Results CX, IBM and ProofPoint all announced investments in Cork in the first half of 2024. Cumulatively, US investors have invested more than \$2bn into Cork since January 2020, with an average of 11 US companies investing in the Irish city each year. As the second-most densely populated city in Ireland, it is home to six higher education institu-

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Luxembourg	Luxembourg
2	Cork	Ireland
3	Geneva	Switzerland
4	Basel	Switzerland
5	Espoo	Finland
6	Ghent	Belgium
7	Cambridge	UK
8	Oxford	UK
9	Leuven	Belgium
10	Reading	UK

tions and boosts a highly educated and skilled workforce.

### Geneva, Switzerland

Geneva retains its third overall ranking among European small cities and holds onto its third-place finish in the Economic Potential subcategory. The second-most populous city in Switzerland is a major centre of international diplomacy, home to the UN's European headquarters and the Red Cross.

The city's share of financial services FDI jumped considerably in 2024, up by 76% from the previous year.



## Winners: Small European cities

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Oxford	UK
2	Nicosia	Cyprus
3	Linz	Austria
4	Graz	Austria
5	Bergen	Norway
6	Geneva	Switzerland
7	Kaunas	Lithuania
8	Leuven	Belgium
9	Delft	Netherlands
10	Cambridge	UK

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Slough	UK
2	Crawley	UK
3	Bolton	UK
4	Bracknell	UK
5	Oberhausen	Germany
6	Ghent	Belgium
7	Neuss	Germany
8	Delft	Netherlands
9	Guildford	UK
10	Warrington	UK

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — COST EFFECTIVENESS

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Ruse	Bulgaria
2	Burgas	Bulgaria
3	Banja Luka	Bosnia and Herzegovina
4	Oradea	Romania
5	Plovdiv	Bulgaria
6	Varna	Bulgaria
7	Pitești	Romania
8	Kragujevac	Serbia
9	Arad	Romania
10	Constanța	Romania

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Luxembourg	Luxembourg
2	Gliwice	Poland
3	Cork	Ireland
4	Cambridge	UK
5	Reading	UK
6	Novi Sad	Serbia
7	Cluj-Napoca	Romania
8	Oxford	UK
9	Gdynia	Poland
10	Milton Keynes	UK

## ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

# Katowice - the prime hub for your technology business!



AMC-Andrzej M. Chodzyński

Like many global metropolises, Katowice & Metropolis (with 2.1M residents) have a successful story of an industrial hub which changed into the place of modern technologies. As the heart of the region which supplied coal to energy plants and manufactured steel, it always invested in the most advanced technological solutions. Development of the industry was encouraged by an education offer which included specialised and unique courses

as well as numerous R&D facilities where hundreds of engineers and scientists improved efficiency of their products. Over the course of time, they evolved into modern innovation labs and technology centres while 19 universities and colleges embraced new requirements of the technology sector.

They supported over 140 technology driven companies which transformed their business profile into R&D and KIBS, the fastest growing sector in Katowice. Some of the well-known technology companies in the city include: Accenture Advanced Technology Centre, Diebold Nixdorf, EPAM Systems, ING Hubs, L3Harris Technologies, Rockwell Automation, Siemens, and Vaillant.

To provide companies,

including R&D centres and start-ups, with state-of-the-art space for collaboration, which will also meet sustainable criteria, Katowice has decided to convert facilities of the former coal mine into the Katowice Gaming and Technology Hub. Its core mission is to create value through platform building. By advancing knowledge, fostering community engagement, and creating an inspiring environment for business and education, the Hub will integrate local and global insights.

Its foundations rest on four key pillars:

- Gaming and E-Sports
- AI Knowledge Exchange
- Digital Bridge
- Network Accelerator

The Hub will encourage partnership between universities,

educational platforms, global tech companies, and local innovators. Its development is backed up by a solid vision and strategy: we have already secured nearly EUR 70M from European funds and twice that much from our budget. We believe that this investment will restore a neglected urban tissue and provide residents as well as companies with a much sought-after space.

Want to know more? Download our report "The Katowice Experience! Technology sector in Katowice - analysis, challenges, and trends" to make an informed decision about your next step!

Find more on [invest.katowice.eu](https://invest.katowice.eu) or contact us: [oi@katowice.eu](mailto:oi@katowice.eu).





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Micro cities

ZUG, LIMERICK AND GALWAY STILL TOP THREE

### **Zug, Switzerland**

The Swiss town of Zug has retained its crown in the European City of the Future ranking of mid-sized cities – those with an immediate population below 100,000.

The town offers foreign investors the lowest tax rate in Switzerland, which has significantly contributed to its success in attracting foreign investment across a range of sectors.

From January 2020 to November 2024, **fdi** Markets data recorded 43 greenfield FDI projects in the city, with the business services sector attracting the lion's share of these projects and capital investment.



Zug offers foreign investors the lowest tax rate in Switzerland

### **Limerick, Ireland**

Ireland's third-largest city, Limerick, retains its second-place position for the third consecutive year.

Limerick ranks in the top three in four subcategories, taking first in the Human Capital and Lifestyle category.

Figures from **fdi** markets show that in the five years to November 2024, it attracted \$3.23bn in FDI, with considerable investments in pharmaceuticals, semiconductors and biotechnology.

More than a third of these projects were involved in research and development, with companies such as Dell Technologies and Analog Devices

investing in Limerick.

### **Galway, Ireland**

Like Limerick, Galway also holds onto its 2024 position, placing third.

The city ranks second in both the Economic Potential and Business Friendliness subcategories.

The city is home to Ireland's third-largest and growing student population. Last year, US-based Harrison Street Real Estate Capital announced the city's largest investment since 2017, to build a 345-bed student accommodation project, set to open in 2026.

GALWAY IS HOME  
TO IRELAND'S  
THIRD-LARGEST  
AND GROWING  
STUDENT  
POPULATION



# ***OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE?*** ***MUST BE OUR DIFFERENT KIND OF ENERGY***

Ranked No.1 for FDI Strategy and  
Human Capital and Lifestyle in fDi's  
Micro European Cities of the Future 2025

ATLANTIC EDGE

# **LIMERICK**

EUROPEAN EMBRACE



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick City  
& County Council**

Accelerate your business in Limerick  
**Limerick.ie**

## Winners: Micro European cities

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Zug	Switzerland
2	Limerick	Ireland
3	Galway	Ireland
4	Garching	Germany
5	Hasselt	Belgium
6	Mechelen	Belgium
7	Livingston	UK
8	Dartford	UK
9	Lugano	Switzerland
10	Wageningen	Netherlands

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Zug	Switzerland
2	Galway	Ireland
3	Limerick	Ireland
4	Monaco	Monaco
5	Walldorf	Germany
6	Ballerup	Denmark
7	Athlone	Ireland
8	Shannon	Ireland
9	Lugano	Switzerland
10	Vaduz	Liechtenstein

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL & LIFESTYLE

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Limerick	Ireland
2	Wageningen	Netherlands
3	Konstanz	Germany
4	Sligo	Ireland
5	Hasselt	Belgium
6	Galway	Ireland
7	Genk	Belgium
8	Lugano	Switzerland
9	Athlone	Ireland
10	Geel	Belgium

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Machelen	Belgium
2	Theale	UK
3	Mechelen	Belgium
4	Dartford	UK
5	Monheim am Rhein	Germany
6	Crewe	UK
7	Ratingen	Germany
8	Hasselt	Belgium
9	Beveren	Belgium
10	Marly-la-Ville	France

“THIS PRESTIGIOUS AWARD PROVIDES A RINGING ENDORSEMENT OF THE POLICIES THAT HAVE SEEN 72 IDA CLIENT MULTINATIONALS ESTABLISH A PRESENCE IN LIMERICK”

JOHN MORAN,  
MAYOR, LIMERICK

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — COST EFFECTIVENESS

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Bilecik	Türkiye
2	Çayırova	Türkiye
3	Dilovası	Türkiye
4	Leskovac	Serbia
5	Panevėžys	Lithuania
6	Nitra	Slovakia
7	Ștefănești de Jos	Romania
8	Mszczonów	Poland
9	Bük	Hungary
10	Legnica	Poland

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Zug	Switzerland
2	Galway	Ireland
3	Limerick	Ireland
4	Dartford	UK
5	Lutterworth	UK
6	Livingston	UK
7	Crewe	UK
8	Waterford	Ireland
9	Nitra	Slovakia
10	Blonie	Poland





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – FDI Strategy (Cities)

LONDON BOUNCES BACK AS TOP MAJOR CITY, WHILE PORTO WINS AMONG THE LARGE CITIES

**T**he winners of this year's FDI Strategy awards were selected by a judging panel of six leading figures in the world of foreign direct investment (FDI; see page 37). They reviewed the submissions from investment promotion agencies from 60 cities across the continent. Within the major cities, London has bounced back to regain the judges' favour as the main major city for its investment promotion strategy. After a third-place finish in 2024, Portugal's Porto wins for its FDI strategy among large cities, while Vilnius stands victorious among mid-sized cities. Basel has won top recognition among the small cities, while Limerick shines among micro cities.

### London, UK — Major cities

The UK's capital takes the top spot for FDI strategy among the major cities in this year's ranking. In 2024 up to November, London had more than twice as many inward FDI projects than the second-highest European city, according to data from **fdi** Markets. Furthermore, in the same period the city created over 10,000 jobs, which aligns with the city's FDI Strategy, with an emphasis on job creation and sustainable growth.

London is a hotbed for tech investors. Among others, Coreweave opened its European headquarters in the city in May 2024, citing its artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure and AI talent as motives. The city's data centre ecosystem was further strengthened by Microsoft's decision to invest \$1.27bn into a new data centre in the city.

As part of its FDI strategy, the city focuses on new and innovative technology verticals, such as AI and deep tech. The city is a global hub for life sciences, with a strong academic and clinical research base.

With four of the top 100 universities for life sciences based in London, a large talent pool exists for companies to invest in.

Advanced Research Clusters, a subsidiary of Canada-based Brookfield Asset Management, cited London's academic attainment as a motive for the development of the ARC West London Refinery, a life sciences laboratory.

Additionally, more than 180 accelerators and incubators bring tech solutions to life in London, such as MedTech SuperConnector and DigitalHealth London. As part of London's FDI strategy, the city's agency,

### TOP 10 MAJOR EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — FDI STRATEGY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	London	UK
2	Barcelona	Spain
3	Madrid	Spain
4	Helsinki	Finland
5	Milan	Italy
6	Munich	Germany
7	Dublin	Ireland
8	Warsaw	Poland
9	Berlin	Germany
10	Tbilisi	Georgia

London & Partners, strives to support local start-ups to scale by providing access to these accelerator programmes, with 'Grow London Global' helping businesses to expand internationally.

Forming an integral part of the 'golden triangle' with Oxford and Cambridge, it is fitting that its FDI strategy has a large emphasis on sustainability and tracks green projects across sectors such as renewable energy, waste management and green building technologies.

### Porto, Portugal — Large cities

Portugal's second-largest city has climbed the FDI Strategy rankings ►

### TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — FDI STRATEGY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Porto	Portugal
2	Antwerp	Belgium
3	Glasgow	UK
4	Leeds	UK
5	Düsseldorf	Germany
6	Torino	Italy
7	Kraków	Poland
8	Poznań	Poland
9	Katowice	Poland
10	İzmir	Türkiye

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — FDI STRATEGY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Basel	Switzerland
2	Braga	Portugal
3	Bradford	UK
4	Ghent	Belgium
5	Cork	Ireland
6	Derby	UK
7	Doncaster	UK
8	Debrecen	Hungary
9	Burgos	Spain
10	Nicosia	Cyprus

### TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — FDI STRATEGY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Vilnius	Lithuania
2	Belfast	UK
3	Coventry	UK
4	Newcastle	UK
5	Leipzig	Germany
6	Wrocław	Poland
7	Riga	Latvia
8	Łódź	Poland
9	Nottingham	UK
10	Bydgoszcz	Poland

### TOP 10 MICRO EUROPEAN CITIES OF THE FUTURE 2025 — FDI STRATEGY

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Limerick	Ireland
2	Ventspils	Latvia
3	Panevėžys	Lithuania
4	Stara Zagora	Bulgaria
5	Waterford	Ireland
6	Kakanj Municipality	Bosnia and Herzegovina
7	Paphos	Cyprus
8	Jelgava	Latvia
9	Valmiera	Latvia
10	Vinkovci	Croatia

this year, impressing the judges and winning the FDI Strategy award among European large cities.

A major hotbed for talent in science, technology, engineering and maths with more than 300 tech start-ups, it is an emerging hub for innovative, digital business in Europe. Software projects dominate investment into the city, with more than half of these investing in research and development.

Porto continues to build on its clusters in digital and IT services, attracting multinationals such as Dachser and Volkswagen Digital Solutions.

Additionally, the judges scored investment promotion agency InvestPorto highly for its economic development strategy, establishing itself as a hub for health and life sciences, with the World Health Organization set to establish a centre of excellence in Porto. The first of its kind, focusing on technology, robotics and entrepreneurship in health, this will help to put Portugal at the forefront of technological innovation in health services.

The judges were also impressed with InvestPorto's actions to support local start-ups through programmes such as 'ScaleUp Porto'. This connects start-ups with investors to drive growth and sup-

ports international talent relocation through start-up and tech visas.

Additionally, InvestPorto impressed the judges with its awareness of the city's challenges as an investment destination and scored highly on its actions to work around this.

#### Vilnius, Lithuania — Mid-sized cities

Vilnius was crowned the winner of this year's FDI Strategy award in the mid-sized cities category. Lithuania is a major fintech hub in the European context and the country has recently put in place a five year fintech strategy (2023-2028) to consolidate its position as a hub in Europe.

Alongside fintech, Lithuania's capital is known for cybersecurity, ranked as the EU's top city for its cybersecurity industry in the StartupBlink Global Ecosystem Index 2024. Often considered a 'hidden gem' in Europe, the city is home to three unicorns — among them is Vinted, Europe's largest online C2C marketplace for second-hand fashion.

The city's investment promotion agency, Go Vilnius, impressed judges with its FDI strategy for facilitating access to venture capital, through local funds and the Lithuanian Private ►

“BY POSITIONING THE BASEL AREA AS EUROPE’S LEADING LIFE SCIENCES HUB, WE CONNECT GLOBAL INNOVATORS TO AN ECOSYSTEM RICH IN TALENT”

CHRISTOF KLÖPPER, CEO, BASEL AREA BUSINESS & INNOVATION



# Business center of the region - Debrecen

Debrecen, the second largest city of Hungary is a significant economic, educational, scientific and cultural centre in CEE. In recent years, the city has won prestigious international awards: in the benchmark global survey of fDI Intelligence, Debrecen has been included in the TOP 10 list of best investment promotion destinations in the world alongside New York or Dubai. In 2025, six times in a row, Debrecen was ranked among the TOP 10 cities in the category of Small European Cities of the Future - FDI Strategy, which reflects the hard work and vision driving the city's continued growth and success.

The city's dynamic growth is well recognized by new foreign direct investments attracted to Debrecen in the volume of EUR 12+ billion, creating 20,000+ new jobs since 2015.

## The flourishing business environment of Debrecen standing on multiple feet

Debrecen has demonstrated its competitiveness in investment promotion in recent years and its long-term objective is to strengthen its position. The city focuses on three sectors, to ensure that a properly diversified economic structure is created and maintained in the city. These three verticals are e-mobility, healthcare and business services. While healthcare industry has a centuries-old tradition in Debrecen, business services and e-mobility are relatively new verticals, but are now playing a crucial role in the city's economy.

E-mobility, the automotive and battery industry is growing dynamically in the city. In 2018 BMW decided to invest in Debrecen, their iFactory starts mass production this year. More suppliers of BMW Plant such as EVE Power, ZF Chassis Modules and Schedl Group are also in the construction phase. Furthermore, battery giant CATL



and its suppliers are building their new European plant in Debrecen, further strengthening the position of the city in the CEE region.

Pharmaceutical firms like Richter Gedeon, Teva and the National Vaccine plant have significant production facilities in the city, supplying the global market with world-class products. Richter has a biotechnology plant in the city, and all these companies have significant local R&D, in collaboration with the University of Debrecen.

Debrecen is an important center of business services, which sector employs ~5,000 people, with a modern office stock of 125,500 m<sup>2</sup>, where well-known BSC's such as Deutsche Telekom IT Solutions, British Telecom and Transcosmos, providing high value-added services, requiring specialised expertise globally from Debrecen - thus ensuring long-term sustainability of operations in the location. Besides that, Big4 companies EY, Deloitte and PwC opened their local office in the city. Debrecen sees further development potential in the BSC sector regionally and locally too, which is consciously encouraged by emphasising the competitive advantages in the sector and by targeted investment promotion activities building on these factors. The city has all the potential to become the region's outstanding business centre as the next step in its economic development.

## Business hub of the region

The robust educational system and 1+ million inhabitants in the region provide a broad range of qualification, language skill portfolio and experienced labour pool to serve business needs. Strategic partnership and dual training opportunities with the University of Debrecen and the Debrecen Vocational Training Centre are also popular among companies. Moreover, as the expat community is growing rapidly, Deutsche Schule and the International School of Debrecen have become more popular. To align the labour market supply with the demands, the Municipality aims to increase the current number of students at local educational institutions by 30% by 2030, with focusing on the skills and knowledge required by local businesses.

Additionally, the city provides excellent healthcare, a wide range of services and cultural activities, and a safe environment, which together contributes to a high quality of life that attracts both local and international professionals.

The city is seriously committed to sustainable investments both in urban and industrial areas concerning energetics, circular economy, carbon neutrality, transportation, and digital literacy. To ensure sustainability, companies are encouraged to use environmentally friendly

alternative utility resources, like using purified sewage instead of drinking water as industrial water and solar energy. Several collaboration activities for companies are also organized to increase CSR activities, such as waste collection and tree planting.

## Favourable business environment

The highest possible regional aid intensity in the EU is available in Debrecen region. On top of this, the city provides full-scale professional support for investors via EDC Debrecen. In addition, to support local SMEs, a supplier program, including several trainings and supplier forums, was launched to help them get involved in global value chains and establish relationship with large enterprises.

Large-scale business infrastructure developments have been conducted in the last decade. Two new industrial parks were developed with a total area of 1,300+ ha, with full access to high-capacity utilities and public roads; moreover, an International Airport located in Debrecen complying with Schengen criteria, where cargo license is available and the construction of a high-capacity truck terminal and rail container terminal are in progress, which further highlights the city's central role in regional logistics.

All these factors contribute to strengthen Debrecen's dominant role as a cross-border hub in CEE, and to become the leading business center in its international region. The available resources, including strong talent pool, business-focused education system, state-of-the-art infrastructure, diverse business environment, and the supportive mindset of the city leaders ensure that this vision is within arm's reach.

Grow with Debrecen!

**EDC Debrecen Urban and Economic Development Center**  
invest@edc.debrecen.hu



Equity & Venture Capital Association, alongside Startup Lithuania which plays a key role in attracting capital to the region.

The judges were also impressed by the city's dedication to sustainability. For instance, the city uses a prioritisation model to analyse projects for their 'green criteria' and ranks inward FDI projects against the eight strategic green technologies identified in the Net Zero Act.

#### **Basel, Switzerland — Small cities**

Switzerland's third-largest city and most culturally centric city wins this year's Small Cities category for FDI Strategy.

The Switzerland Innovation Park Basel Area impressed judges with its investment promotion strategy, building on its strengths as the leading hub for life sciences in Switzerland. The Basel Area Business & Innovation investment promotion strategy has a focus on life sciences, with a specific focus on pharma, biotech and medtech and has attracted a range of globally renowned companies such as Moderna and Bayer.

The area impressed the judges with its USP as the only area in Switzerland which offers commercial talent, academic research institutions and lab space within a single ecosystem. The area is home to more than 700 life sciences companies, 200 research institutions and is supported by accelerators such as DayOne, a digital health and medtech accelerator and BaseLaunch, a biotech accelerator.

The city secured a major investment win in April 2024, with Johnson & Johnson opening a J&J Innovation Hub in the Switzerland Innovation Park Basel Area. Over the past five years, biotechnology has attracted \$635m in capital investment, with US-based Moderna forming a strategic collaboration with Basel-based CDMO Lonza to enable the manufacturing of Moderna's Covid-19 vaccine.

#### **Limerick, Ireland — Micro cities**

Limerick retains its title in the Micro Cities category this year.

Last year marked a historic milestone for Limerick, announcing the city's first budget with a directly elected mayor, ensuring economic development as a focal point for the city.

With historical expertise in engineering and medical device manufac-



Porto won the FDI Strategy award among European large cities

turing, the city has a highly skilled workforce and, unsurprisingly, many US companies choose Limerick as a destination for their foreign investment. Limerick impressed the judges with its FDI strategy on nurturing and growing a local technology ecosystem, focusing on medtech, film tech and fintech. The city's survey response highlighted that the city is home to Ireland's largest film production facility, Troy Studios, and offers a Regional Film Development Uplift, which offers a 35% tax credit, enhancing Limerick's position in this industry.

According to its survey response, Limerick prioritises sustainability by focusing on renewables, specifically offshore wind, due to its coastal location. It has put the Limerick Climate Action Plan 2024-2029 in place and is looking to position the Shannon estuary as a renewable energy hub.

UK-based green-gas company CycleO has announced it will open a new biomethane plant in Limerick, in line with the Irish government's ambition to generate 5.7 terawatt hours of domestically produced biomethane by 2030.

**"PORTO IS PROUD TO ACCEPT AN AWARD THAT PROVES AND CARRIES ON ITS HISTORIC STATUS AS A HUB FOR INITIATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT"**

**RUI MOREIRA,  
MAYOR, PORTO**





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Large regions

GREATER LONDON MAINTAINS ITS REPUTATION AS A MAGNET FOR TALENT

### **Greater London, UK**

The Greater London region takes the title for best European Large Region – defined as those with a population of more than four million. Greater London encompasses the urban area's 33 local government districts – 32 boroughs plus the City of London.

The region has a reputation for big-ticket investments, attracting more than \$29.7bn in FDI over the past five years. Greater London is triumphant in three subcategories – Economic Potential, Business Friendliness and Human Capital and Lifestyle, and comes second for Connectivity, narrowly missing out to North Rhine-Westphalia. The region has been leading in Europe, attracting 1755 inward FDI projects, almost twice as many as any other region in Europe according to data from **FDI** Markets since January 2020.

Often described as a 'talent magnet', Greater London's software and IT sector produced nearly twice as many FDI jobs as any other industry over the past five years, with companies such as Google, Accenture and SAP investing in the region.

London was the top global financial centre of the year, according to the City of London Benchmarking analysis. This was reflected in the capital investment in financial services, with

more than \$2.4bn invested over the past five years.

### **Île-de-France, France**

The Paris region (Île-de-France) retains its top-three position, coming in as runner-up in the Large Regions category. The host of the 2024 summer Olympics places second in the Economic Potential, Business Friendliness and Human Capital and Lifestyle subcategories.

FDI capital pledges in the region have reached their highest level since 2018, with FDI capex reaching \$6.13bn between January and November 2024. More than two-fifths of this investment was in the communications sector, with tech giants Microsoft and Amazon Web Services both committing to investing in the region in the form of data centres and cloud infrastructure projects.

### **North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany**

Retaining its third-place position is the North Rhine-Westphalia region in Germany. The region ranked highly across several sub-categories – first for Connectivity and within the top five for Economic Potential, Business Friendliness, and Human Capital and Lifestyle. In the five years to November 2024, capital investment into the

FDI CAPITAL  
PLEDGES IN  
THE PARIS  
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SINCE 2018,  
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REACHING  
\$6.13BN

region reached almost \$18.5bn, with communications taking the lion's share of this investment.

North Rhine-Westphalia is Germany's most populous state and covers an area of over 34,000 sq km. Home to the centre of Germany's main industrial area, the region has attracted the highest number of industrial projects than any other region in Germany over the past five years.

## Winners: Large European regions

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Greater London	UK
2	Île-de-France	France
3	North Rhine-Westphalia	Germany
4	Bavaria	Germany
5	Baden-Württemberg	Germany
6	South East England	UK
7	Scotland	UK
8	Community of Madrid	Spain
9	Catalonia	Spain
10	Hesse	Germany

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Greater London	UK
2	Île-de-France	France
3	Community of Madrid	Spain
4	South East England	UK
5	North Rhine-Westphalia	Germany
6	Baden-Württemberg	Germany
7	Masovian	Poland
8	Bavaria	Germany
9	Scotland	UK
10	Catalonia	Spain

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	North Rhine-Westphalia	Germany
2	Greater London	UK
3	Hesse	Germany
4	East of England	UK
5	Scotland	UK
6	South West England	UK
7	South East England	UK
8	Flanders	Belgium
9	Bavaria	Germany
10	Baden-Württemberg	Germany

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — ECONOMIC POTENTIAL**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Greater London	UK
2	Île-de-France	France
3	Bavaria	Germany
4	Baden-Württemberg	Germany
5	North Rhine-Westphalia	Germany
6	Catalonia	Spain
7	South East England	UK
8	Scotland	UK
9	Flanders	Belgium
10	Hesse	Germany

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — COST EFFECTIVENESS**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Ankara	Türkiye
2	İzmir	Türkiye
3	Istanbul	Türkiye
4	Silesia	Poland
5	Masovian	Poland
6	Valencian Community	Spain
7	Andalucia	Spain
8	Occitanie	France
9	Nouvelle-Aquitaine	France
10	Grand-Est	France

**TOP 10 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS**

RANK	CITY	COUNTRY
1	Greater London	UK
2	Île-de-France	France
3	North Rhine-Westphalia	Germany
4	Catalonia	Spain
5	Masovian	Poland
6	Bavaria	Germany
7	Silesia	Poland
8	Hesse	Germany
9	South East England	UK
10	Scotland	UK

“AS WE LOOK TO DRIVE THE NEXT PHASE OF LONDON’S GROWTH TOWARDS A FAIRER, GREENER, AND MORE PROSPEROUS FUTURE, WE STAY TRUE TO THE VALUES THAT MAKE LONDON EXCEPTIONAL”

NEIL BRIGDEN, DIRECTOR OF FDI, LONDON & PARTNERS



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FT LOCATIONS



EUROPEAN  
CITIES AND REGIONS  
OF THE FUTURE 2025  
BEST FDI STRATEGY  
MICRO CITIES  
TOP 10  
PANEVEŽYS



EUROPEAN  
CITIES AND REGIONS  
OF THE FUTURE 2025  
BEST COST EFFECTIVENESS  
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# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Mid-sized regions

STOCKHOLM COUNTY IS THE NEW ENTRANT INTO THE TOP THREE

### North Holland, Netherlands

North Holland retains its title as Europe's best Mid-sized Region – a category covering those with a population between 1.5 million and 4 million. It is home to the country's capital, Amsterdam, which is the largest contributor to the nation's gross domestic product. North Holland has accounted for almost one-third of the Netherlands' total capital investment over the past five years, attracting big-ticket projects such as data centre investments from large US multinationals such as Amazon Web Services and Equinix.

The region ranked first for economic potential, second for Business Friendliness and in the top 10 for Connectivity.

North Holland has a thriving manufacturing industry, with companies such as Coca-Cola and Siemens operating in the region.

The Netherlands is the world's largest exporter of biodiesel and attracted one of the largest investments in biodiesel in Europe in 2024, from UK-based Greenergy. The company has committed to increasing its fuel production by 25% at its biodiesel manufacturing plant in North Holland.

### Berlin Region, Germany

The Berlin region holds onto its second-place position in the Mid-sized Regions category.

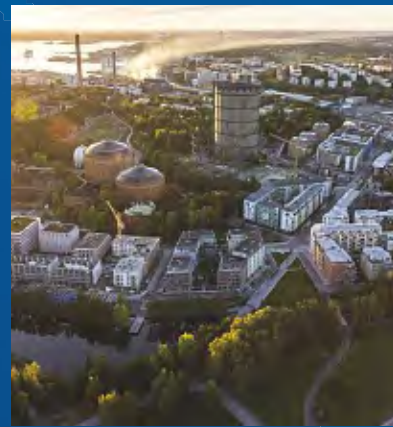
Home to the German capital, the region retains pole position in Human Capital and Lifestyle subcategory and climbs into second for Economic Potential.

The software and IT services sector has driven success in the region, with 277 projects recorded in the past five years.

Rated in PWC's top four locations for real estate in Europe in 2024, the Berlin region is often considered an up-and-coming property goldmine. Real estate has dominated FDI in the region, accounting for more than two-fifths of total capital expenditure into the region since 2020. Commercial and institutional building construction made up the lion's share of this investment, through office buildings and data centre construction.

### Stockholm County, Sweden

Home of the Swedish capital, the Stockholm region climbs three places in this year's ranking, reaching a podium finish in the Mid-sized Regions category. The region ranks in the top 10



Stockholm region climbed three places in the ranking

in four subcategories – Economic Potential, Human Capital and Lifestyle, Connectivity and Business Friendliness.

FDI capital pledges in the region increased by 186% between 2023 and 2024, with some notable wins. In March 2024, the region attracted a large investment from US-based semiconductor giant, Coherent Corp, which is planning to establish the world's first capability for 6-inch indium phosphide wafer fabrication – widely used in applications such as optical communications, wearables and AI interconnects – in the region.



# Winners: Mid-sized European regions

## TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – OVERALL

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	North Holland	Netherlands
2	Berlin Region	Germany
3	Stockholm County	Sweden
4	Greater Zürich Area	Switzerland
5	Uusimaa	Finland
6	Hamburg Region	Germany
7	Capital Region of Denmark	Denmark
8	South Holland	Netherlands
9	Lower Silesian	Poland
10	București – Ilfov	Romania

## TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – CONNECTIVITY

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Greater Zürich Area	Switzerland
2	Stockholm County	Sweden
3	Berlin Region	Germany
4	Hamburg Region	Germany
5	South Holland	Netherlands
6	North Holland	Netherlands
7	Wallonia	Belgium
8	Northern Ireland	UK
9	Capital Region of Denmark	Denmark
10	Vienna Region	Austria

## TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	North Holland	Netherlands
2	Berlin Region	Germany
3	Stockholm County	Sweden
4	Capital Region of Denmark	Denmark
5	Hamburg Region	Germany
6	Greater Zürich Area	Switzerland
7	Uusimaa	Finland
8	North Brabant	Netherlands
9	South Holland	Netherlands
10	Bucuresti-Ilfov	Romania

## TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Berlin Region	Germany
2	Bucuresti-Ilfov	Romania
3	Vienna Region	Austria
4	South Holland	Netherlands
5	Attica	Greece
6	Lisboa	Portugal
7	Stockholm County	Sweden
8	Central Hungary	Hungary
9	North Holland	Netherlands
10	Uusimaa	Finland

NORTH HOLLAND HAS ACCOUNTED FOR ALMOST ONE-THIRD OF THE NETHERLANDS' TOTAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS

## TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – COST EFFECTIVENESS

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Bosnia	Bosnia and Herzegovina
2	Kyiv Oblast	Ukraine
3	Kocaeli	Türkiye
4	Nord-Est	Romania
5	Sud-Vest	Romania
6	Sud-Est	Romania
7	Vest	Romania
8	Sud	Romania
9	Nord-Vest	Romania
10	Centru	Romania

## TOP 10 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Lower Silesian	Poland
2	North Holland	Netherlands
3	Lesser Poland	Poland
4	Stockholm County	Sweden
5	Greater Poland	Poland
6	Berlin Region	Germany
7	Greater Zürich Area	Switzerland
8	Pomerania	Poland
9	South Holland	Netherlands
10	North East England	UK



# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – Small regions

THE LUXEMBOURG REGION MAKES ITS DEBUT IN THE TOP THREE

### **Dublin Region, Ireland**

For the eighth consecutive year, the Dublin Region has dominated this category, once again winning **fdi**'s category for Small Regions of the Future, defined as those with a population of less than 1.5 million.

Home to Ireland's capital and largest city, Dublin Region ranked top in both Economic Potential and Business Friendliness, attracting 94 FDI projects across 91 companies in 2024.

Despite its size, the Dublin region ranked sixth in Europe for the number of jobs created in the past five years. Over the past year (to November), its top FDI sectors included business services, communications, financial services and software and IT.

### **Luxembourg Region, Luxembourg**

Moving into second place this year was the Luxembourg Region, thanks to its prominent financial centre and pro-business government.

The region ranked in the top 10 across Economic Potential, Business Friendliness and Connectivity.

The financial services sector has attracted the highest number of projects and capital investment in the

region in the past five years, and has created the highest number of jobs. The region's political and economic stability makes the region a popular destination for companies looking to establish operations in Europe.

In 2023, the Bank of London announced it would establish its EU headquarters in the region, representing a €200m investment alongside the creation of 300 new jobs. The China Taiping Insurance Group announced a similar strategy, establishing a new EU headquarters in the region in June 2024.

### **Prague Region, Czech Republic**

The Prague Region retains a top-three finish this year. The region, which encompasses Prague city and a portion of the Central Bohemian Region, has once again impressed with its skilled workforce, ranking first in Human Capital and Lifestyle, third in Business Friendliness and tenth in Connectivity.

At around 2.8% (as of November), the Prague region has the lowest unemployment rate in the country, according to the Czech Labour Office. According to **fdi** Markets, last year the region secured its first aerospace pro-



Luxembourg rose to second place

ject since 2015.

In March 2024, US-based GE Aviation announced it would invest in its manufacturing facility in Prague, as part of its €64m investment into its manufacturing facilities across Europe, creating 300 new jobs.





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Tionól Réigiúnach an  
Oirthir agus Lár Tíre  
Eastern and Midland  
Regional Assembly



pobal  
government supporting communities



REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PLAN  
MIDLANDS

The Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan Pathway for Just Transition project is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union through the EU Just Transition Fund Programme 2021-2027

## Winners: Small European regions

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — OVERALL

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Dublin Region	Ireland
2	Luxembourg Region	Luxembourg
3	Prague Region	Czech Republic
4	Brussels Capital Region	Belgium
5	South-West Region	Ireland
6	Canton of Zug	Switzerland
7	Vilnius County	Lithuania
8	Oslo County	Norway
9	Canton of Geneva	Switzerland
10	Bratislava Region	Slovakia

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Prague Region	Czech Republic
2	Oslo County	Norway
3	Brussels Capital Region	Belgium
4	Canton of Vaud	Switzerland
5	Skåne County	Sweden
6	Vilnius County	Lithuania
7	Riga Region	Latvia
8	Bratislava Region	Slovakia
9	Sofia City	Bulgaria
10	Dublin Region	Ireland

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — CONNECTIVITY

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Southern Denmark	Denmark
2	Balearic Islands	Spain
3	Canton of Geneva	Switzerland
4	Skåne County	Sweden
5	Rogaland County	Norway
6	Luxembourg Region	Luxembourg
7	Bremen Region	Germany
8	Brussels Capital Region	Belgium
9	Oslo County	Norway
10	Prague Region	Czech Republic

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — COST EFFECTIVENESS

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Skopje Statistical Region	North Macedonia
2	Stara Zagora	Bulgaria
3	Burgas	Bulgaria
4	Sofia (province)	Bulgaria
5	Ruse	Bulgaria
6	Plovdiv	Bulgaria
7	Varna	Bulgaria
8	Tbilisi Region	Georgia
9	Kaunas County	Lithuania
10	Sofia City	Bulgaria

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Dublin Region	Ireland
2	Bratislava Region	Slovakia
3	Prague Region	Czech Republic
4	Harju County	Estonia
5	Canton of Zug	Switzerland
6	Vilnius County	Lithuania
7	Oslo County	Norway
8	Luxembourg Region	Luxembourg
9	Brussels Capital Region	Belgium
10	Utrecht	Netherlands

### TOP 10 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 — ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Dublin Region	Ireland
2	Luxembourg Region	Luxembourg
3	South-West Region	Ireland
4	Canton of Zug	Switzerland
5	Brussels Capital Region	Belgium
6	Canton of Vaud	Switzerland
7	Oslo County	Norway
8	Canton of Geneva	Switzerland
9	Prague Region	Czech Republic
10	Vilnius County	Lithuania

THE BANK OF LONDON ANNOUNCED IT WOULD ESTABLISH ITS EU HEADQUARTERS IN THE LUXEMBOURG REGION, REPRESENTING A €200M INVESTMENT





# European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025

## Winners – FDI Strategy (regions)

ÎLE-DE-FRANCE AND NORTHERN IRELAND CONTINUE TO IMPRESS

**T**he winners of this year's regional FDI Strategy awards were chosen by the judging panel after reviewing the submissions of 23 investment promotion agencies responsible for drawing investment into their regions.

The Paris Region (Île-de-France), retains its crown as the top European large region for its FDI strategy. Northern Ireland fought off competition for another year to retain its title as the best European Mid-Sized Region for its investment promotion strategy. Among small regions, Ireland's South-East Region came on top.

### **Île-de-France, France — Large regions**

The Paris region continued to impress judges in this year's rankings, retaining its crown as the best Large Region for its investment promotion strategy.

Its investment promotion agency, Choose Paris Region, which promotes Île-de-France abroad, has adopted a range of mechanisms to attract and retain talent, focusing on up-and-coming verticals, with sustainable practices at its core. Judges were impressed with the region's competitive advantages, citing AI, GreenTech and MedTech as strong areas.

Additionally, judges scored the region highly on its accessible funding opportunities for start-ups. Home to incubators such as Station F and Campus Cyber, the region has a vibrant start-up ecosystem, offering support, mentorship and networking opportunities for investors.

In the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the region has hosted multiple high-profile events such as the 2023 Rugby World Cup and the 2024 Olympic Games, driving investment in the tourism and hospitality industries, and boosting GDP growth and enhancing its global profile.

### **Northern Ireland, UK — Mid-sized regions**

Northern Ireland has once again trumped its competition, winning the FDI Strategy award for Mid-sized Regions for a third consecutive year. The country's investment promotion agency, Invest NI, works more than 30 global locations, helping companies to discover NI as an investment destination.

At the heart of Invest NI's investment promotion strategy is an emphasis on sustainability, launching its own ESG strategy in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, to ►

“BEING RECOGNISED  
AS EUROPE'S TOP  
ATTRACTIVENESS  
STRATEGY  
VALIDATES OUR  
TRANSITION FROM  
QUANTITY TO  
QUALITY IN FDI AND  
TOURISM, BUILT ON  
ROBUST  
METHODOLOGIES”

LIONEL GROTTO, CEO,  
CHOOSE PARIS REGION

### TOP 8 LARGE EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – FDI STRATEGY

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Paris region (Île-de-France)	France
2	Catalonia	Spain
3	Community of Madrid	Spain
4	Lombardy	Italy
5	Emilia-Romagna	Italy
6	Piemonte	Italy
7	Andalucia	Spain
8	Silesia	Poland

### TOP 7 MID-SIZED EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – FDI STRATEGY

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	Northern Ireland	UK
2	Greater Zürich Area	Switzerland
3=	Pomerania	Poland
3=	West Yorkshire Combined Authority	UK
5	Tuscany	Italy
6	North Macedonia	North Macedonia
7	Dnipropetrovsk Oblast	Ukraine

### TOP 8 SMALL EUROPEAN REGIONS OF THE FUTURE 2025 – FDI STRATEGY

RANK	REGION	COUNTRY
1	South-East Region	Ireland
2	Midlands Ireland	Ireland
3	Stara Zagora	Bulgaria
4	Krapina	Croatia
5	Upper Austria	Austria
6	Medimurje	Croatia
7	West Herzegovina	Bosnia and Herzegovina
8	Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship	Poland

“THIS ACHIEVEMENT IS A STRONG ENDORSEMENT OF THE APPROACH WE’RE TAKING TO PROMOTE NORTHERN IRELAND AS A TOP LOCATION FOR INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS EXPANSION”

ANNE BEGGS, INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS & SKILLS, INVEST NI

set its ambitions for 2030, prioritising decarbonisation. This emphasis on renewables is apparent through its inward investment, with Ireland-based Steam BioEnergy committing to extending its biomass plant in Ballymena, in order to increase its throughput to 200,000 tonnes per year, from 40,000 today.

The judges were impressed by the region’s recent wins, attracting multiple major investments from US-based firms and creating hundreds of local jobs. As the number-one international investment destination for US cybersecurity firms, the region has a reputation for expertise and knowledge in tech development. Additionally, Northern Ireland is the only region globally which boasts tariff-free access to both Great Britain and EU markets, which makes the region more attractive for manufacturing, and gained valuable marks with the judges.

#### Ireland South-East Region, Ireland — Small regions

Ireland South-East has worked its way back up the rankings to gain a podium



Integer Holdings Corporation recently opened a \$60m expansion project in New Ross, County Wexford

place yet again, thanks to its continued success in attracting high-quality projects.

Established in 2014, the Ireland South East Development Office covers the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford, and has developed an ecosystem that nurtures talent development and provides networking opportunities and aftercare support.

The judges scored the region highly on its recent investment promotion wins and its focus on renewable energy

technology. One of the region’s high-growth sectors is financial services cybersecurity, with the region securing an additional 800 jobs in research and development, following an investment from IBM, through its subsidiary Red Hat Software. Medical device manufacturing is another high-growth area for the region, with Integer Holdings Corporation recently opening its \$60m expansion project in New Ross, County Wexford. The investment forms part of the company’s European expansion plans.



## JUDGING PANEL

### Carolina Arriagada Peters



Carolina Arriagada Peters is a premier consultant specialised in the complete investor lifecycle. Her book *Investment Aftercare Explained*, provides step-by-step methodol-

ogies of how to excel in post-investment. As MD of Cities & Collaboration and founder of online training portal [www.fdi-campus.com](http://www.fdi-campus.com), she is a sought-after advisor and trainer for investment promotion and economic development agencies whom she helps master FDI faster, for it to become a driver of sustainable economic growth.

### Jacopo Dettoni



Jacopo Dettoni is the editor of **fdi** Intelligence and spearheads the title's editorial vision and strategic growth. A seasoned journalist, Jacopo has reported on some of the world's

most dynamic economies and transformative industries in Europe, Asia and Latin America for international and local media. He is a regular speaker and moderator at forums on international trade and investment and holds a master's degree in economics and finance from the Catholic University of Milan.

### Guy Douetil



Guy leads a global team of location consulting and site selection experts at GWD Advisors. He is a seasoned business leader with more than 35 years of experience in helping clients optimise portfolios and streamline global operations. He specialises in advising on the strategic location of manufacturing, distribution, R&D, headquarters and shared services. A former corporate solutions leader at Cushman & Wakefield and Colliers International, and managing director at Hickey & Associates, Guy has guided renowned clients such as Nike, IKEA, Nestlé, Uber, and Unilever. His expertise in global footprint optimisation has consistently delivered value to organisations across industries, transforming operations and driving growth.

### Sean Duggan



Sean Duggan is a director with a specialist location development consultancy, ILSA Consulting. He is an economist and investment promotion specialist. He has more than 35 years' experience in economic and industry policy and strategy. This includes more than 20 years in economic and location development and competitiveness, and investment promotion. During his career, Sean has delivered more than 140 programmes and projects in 30 countries, working with numerous government, economic development, and investment promotion organisations.

### Alex Irwin-Hunt



Alex Irwin-Hunt is an editor at **fdi** Intelligence, a specialist publication at the Financial Times focused on FDI and economic development. Alongside extensive reporting on innovation, tech entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystems, he has reported on business stories in markets around the world. He specialises in sourcing, visualising and analysing data trends through his weekly newsletter Graph Time and is a regular speaker at international conferences. He has moderated panels on topics including tourism, sustainability, urban planning, real estate, technology and investment climates.

### Danielle Myles



Danielle is an editor at **fdi** Intelligence and curates the weekly op-ed newsletter **fdi** Unscripted. She has written extensively on the policies and reforms reshaping global investment, and has a particular interest in economic development, sustainability, urban regeneration and emerging markets. She is now based in Milan, Italy, after working for more than a decade as a financial journalist in New York and London, most recently as an editor at The Banker. Danielle started her career as a corporate lawyer with Clayton Utz in Australia after graduating in law and journalism from Murdoch University in Perth, Australia.

### METHODOLOGY

To create a shortlist for **fDi**'s European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025, the **fDi** Intelligence division of the Financial Times collected data using the specialist online FDI tools – **fDi** Benchmark and **fDi** Markets as well as other sources. Data was collected for 521 locations (379 cities, 142 regions), under five categories: Economic Potential, Human Capital and Lifestyle, Cost Effectiveness, Connectivity and Business Friendliness. Locations scored up to a maximum of 10 points for each data point, which were weighted by importance to the FDI decision-making process to compile the sub-category rankings as well as the overall 'European Cities and Regions of the Future 2025' ranking.

In addition, surveys were collected under a sixth category, FDI Strategy, for which there were 89 submissions. In this category, locations submitted details about their strategy for promoting FDI, which was then scored by **fDi**'s judging panel.

Bonus points were awarded to locations ranking in the top 10 for FDI Strategy within their population

brackets. The highest-ranking location was awarded an extra one point, on a sliding scale to 10th position, which was awarded an additional 0.1 point. Bonus points contributed to the scores for the overall results tables, but not the five categories as mentioned above.

#### Population categories methodology

To categorise cities, **fDi** considered both the population of the immediate city and that of the larger urban zone (LUZ). In addition, where locations were in the large or major categories, we took into consideration the location's receipt of FDI as a percentage of the country's overall total.

#### City size categories

**Major cities:** The cities in this category had an immediate city population of more than 750,000 plus a LUZ of 2 million, or a LUZ of more than 4 million

**Large cities:** Cities with an immediate city population over 500,000 plus a LUZ of over 1 million, or a LUZ over 2 million people

**Mid-sized cities:** Cities with an immediate

city population over 200,000 plus a LUZ over 750,000, or an immediate city population over 350,000

**Small cities:** Cities with an immediate city population between 100,000 and 350,000

**Micro cities:** Cities with an immediate city population below 100,000

#### City FDI parameters

Where a capital city was not classed as major by its population, we looked at its inward FDI figures. Any capital city with a LUZ of over 1 million which received more than 30% of its country's FDI was upgraded to the 'Major' category. In addition, we looked at FDI statistics for any non-capital cities whose populations classed as 'Major'. Any city which received less than 10% of its country's FDI was classed as 'Large'.

#### Regional size categories

**Large regions:** More than 4 million people

**Mid-sized regions:** Between 1.5 and 4 million people

**Small regions:** Fewer than 1.5 million people

### DATA POINTS

#### ECONOMIC POTENTIAL

- Population growth rate
- Unemployment rate (%)
- Inflation
- GDP (PPP current intl \$) (millions)
- GDP per capita (PPP current intl \$)
- GDP forecast (average annual growth rate, %) (2024-2028)
- GDP average annual growth rate (%)
- Outward FDI (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Outward FDI per 100,000 people (H2 2018 – H1 2023)
- Inward FDI H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Inward FDI per 100,000 people H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Nominal growth in inward FDI projects per 100,000 people (H2 2013 – H1 2019) vs (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Inward FDI in R&D and DDT per 100,000 people (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Inward FDI in advanced manufacturing per 100,000 people (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Number of mega projects by jobs (over 1000 jobs)
- Number of mega projects by capex (over \$100m) (H2 2019 – H1 2024) per 100,000 people
- Number of mega projects by capex (over \$100m)
- Number of mega projects by jobs (over 1000 jobs) (H2 2019 – H1 2024) per 100,000 people

- Capital expenditure on R&D projects (\$) (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Number of patents 2013 – 2023
- Number of patents per 100,000 people 2013 – 2022

#### HUMAN CAPITAL AND LIFESTYLE

- Labour force participation rate, total % of total population ages 15+ (modelled ILO estimate)
- Secondary educational attainment
- Tertiary educational attainment
- Education expenditure (% of GDP)
- Number of students
- Number of students per 100,000 people
- Number of higher education institutions
- Number of higher education institutions per 100,000 people
- Number of IB Schools
- Number of Top 500 Universities
- Overqualification rates by economic activity
- Life expectancy
- Social Progress Index
- Human Development Index
- Number of physicians per 1000 people
- Ease of finding skilled employees

#### COST EFFECTIVENESS

- Average annual salary (\$) for a semi-skilled worker

- Average annual salary (\$) for a skilled worker
- Annual rent for prime Grade A office space (\$ per sq m)
- Annual rent for prime Grade A industrial space (\$ per sq m)
- 4\*/5\* hotel in city centre (\$ per night)
- Minimum wage (\$)
- Bank overhead costs, % of total assets
- Household consumption: price levels in 2023
- Cost of Living Index
- Petrol prices (\$)
- Cost of electricity (\$ per kWh)
- Corporation tax rate (%)
- VAT/common indirect tax rate (%)
- Tax as % of GDP

#### CONNECTIVITY

- Download speed (mb/s)
- Mobile Connectivity Index
- Number of airports within 80 km of the city
- Number of international destinations served
- Distance to nearest international airport (km)
- Number of ports within 100km (medium +)
- Logistics performance index
- Network Readiness Index
- Environmental Performance Index
- LPI Infrastructure Score

- Average commute time
- Rail network
- Companies in the transportation sector per 100,000 people

#### BUSINESS FRIENDLINESS

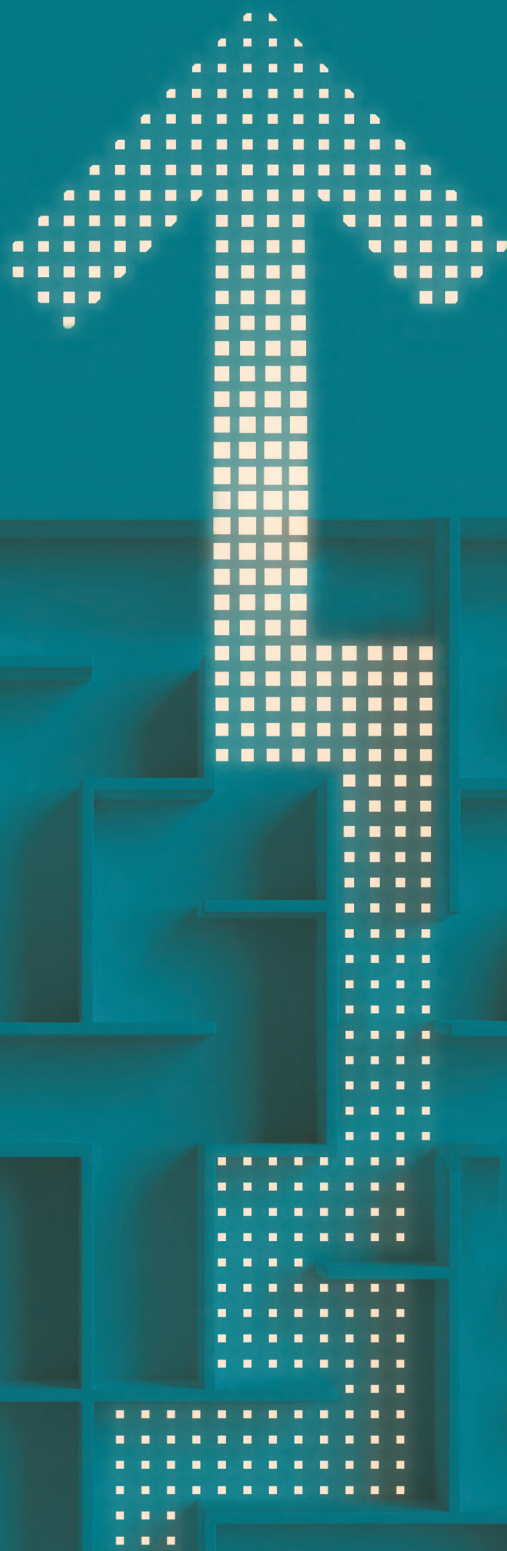
- Total number of companies within the knowledge-based sector 2024
- Proportion of companies within the knowledge-based sector 2024
- Total number of companies within the knowledge-based sector 2024 (per 100,000 people)
- Number of jobs created by all inward FDI (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Number of jobs created by all inward FDI per 100,000 people (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Number of expansion/colocation projects per 100,000 people (H2 2019 – H1 2024)
- Fragile States Index
- Number of top 1000 World Banks
- Corporation tax rate (%)
- Enterprise Conditions Index (Legatum Institute)
- Index of Economic Freedom
- Corruption Perception Index
- Investment Environment Index (Legatum)
- Safety and Security Index (Legatum Institute)
- Credit rating



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