

# Guide for victims of violence

**LWL**

Für die Menschen.  
Für Westfalen-Lippe.

**LVR** 

Qualität für Menschen

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## 1 Preface

Anyone can become a victim of violence; we are all confronted by crime in society on a daily basis. We hope that, if it comes to the worst, you will be shielded and supported by your family, your relations, and your friends. Nevertheless, victims of violence also have a claim against the state. They have a right to have their physical and psychological integrity restored. Compensation for victims of violence is provided based on the "Gesetz über die Entschädigung für Opfer von Gewalttaten" (Opferentschädigungsgesetz – Crime Victims Compensation Act – CVCA). The staff at the regional authority of the Rhineland (LVR) and Westphalia-Lippe (LWL) give counselling and information to victims of violence and their relatives. In doing so, they maintain close contact with the police, for example, but also with a number of non-governmental organisations, such as the "Weisse Ring e.V." (Association White Ring). Such cooperation is intended to help the victims receive the best possible aid available. This brochure aims to help you deal with the violence you have been subjected to. We outline possible consequences, and try to help you with the process of working through these extremely distressing situations, so that you may be able to lead an untroubled life again. At the same time, we would also like to inform you about the basics of the Crime Victims Compensation Act, and, in the Appendix, list a number of useful addresses.

Köln/Münster 2008



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LVR-Direktor



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LWL-Direktor

## 2 Violence

If you have been a victim of violent assault, you may have experienced this event in a way very different from everyday experiences. Such a situation is frequently perceived “as if it were a movie”, sped up, or in slow motion. Some people may find themselves as if they’re observing from an outsider’s perspective, or may even actually believe it is not them that the events are happening to. The sensation of pain itself may only begin later, once it is all over. They may find they are unable to recall important events, while other details may have been retained with unusual clarity. Many victims are extremely confused (they may not know where they are, what really happened, how it happened), or they may do quite unusual things. This suggests the important conclusion: the psychological well-being itself has been affected, and professional help is needed.

## 3 Reactions

Reactions to undergoing an act of violence can be divided in to three phases, taking place in sequence:

- shock
- working through
- recovery

As a rule, the first phase involves a shock-like state, in which the person affected is still very agitated, confused, sad, or angry. Some victims may feel numb. This condition usually passes after some hours or days. The period after this is termed by trauma psychiatrists as a working-through phase. This phase may last a few weeks. The victims will try to work through the experience of violence, and return to normal life. During this period, the experience tends to overshadow most things. Still quite frequently, feelings of anger, fear, depression, self-doubt, or sleeping problems and other difficulties may be experienced. At last, after a certain period, people tend to recover from their terrifying experiences. It is important that you give yourself time, do not force yourself to process the experience. Take all the time you need. Moreover, don’t let yourself be rushed by others either. The slower you proceed,

the quicker you will reach your goal. However, not all victims will eventually reach a recovery phase, where the violent experience is allowed to recede into the background. Unfortunately, some victims must reckon with considerable and lasting damage to their health as the result of the psychological trauma and injury they have undergone. In some cases, these consequences may linger for years. This clearly affects some people more than others. It depends, among other things, on the severity and the circumstances of the violence, and on the possibility that they can feel safe again. Particularly during the shock and working-through phases, they may still feel too changed. However, even in such cases it is possible to reach the recovery phase, in which you will successfully return to normal life, and, work through the trauma.

## 4 Consequences of Violent Crime

Victims of violence may experience the consequences of trauma in a variety of guises, among others:

- sleep disorders,
- nightmares,
- continual re-experiencing of the act of violence,
- depression, and
- anxiety states.

A few suffer from

- nervousness,
- difficulty in concentration, or
- a deep mistrust in other people.

Places and situations that even remotely remind the sufferer of the assault will quickly trigger feelings of anxiety again. This is why some victims hardly dare so much as leave the house. Not infrequently, there are subtle changes that the victim won't connect to the traumatic experience. They may for instance notice that they no longer find pleasure in things, that nothing matters much any more. Or they may feel constantly unwell, they may respond irritably to their relatives, friends and colleagues. Some may have difficulties concentrating, may be absent-minded or extremely forgetful. Not all of these problems necessarily have to occur. With most victims, these complaints are not very intensive, or pass again after a short time. If however this is not the case, this can be a sign that you belong in the group of victims (at-risk group) who run a higher risk of developing long-term effects.

Therefore, do ask yourself again and again if you're feeling better, or in what way you may have life changed in comparison to what it was like before.

## 5 Memory

Most victims find themselves unable to recall what took place exactly. Memory may return only after a certain period, bit by bit. Often, it's also quite hard to understand how the situation could have come about in the first place. In some cases it is not possible to clear up the background to the act of violence.

## 6 Your own fault?

Some victims of violent crime may hold themselves at least partly to blame. They may even have been blamed by outsiders, even by friends or relatives, particularly in case of rape. This can easily happen in a covert manner ("It wouldn't have happened to me ..."). This type of recrimination is very damaging and can lead to deep-rooted self-doubt. And: they're almost always false! In most cases, the victim is blamed only because there is no effort made to find sufficient explanation for the act of violence, or an explanation is not possible.

## 7 Rape

Rape belongs among the most distressing forms of assault a person can undergo. It is correspondingly very difficult to find a way to recovery. Rape will result in deep sense of indignity, humiliation, and violation of human dignity. It can profoundly shake one's trust in people, oneself, and one's own body. It is a very difficult task to work through and to forget all this. Revulsion at others, or at oneself, vomiting, and partner problems frequently result, and remain for a long time. Effective working through without professional help is rarely possible. Unfortunately, rape victims often do not receive enough understanding from friends, relatives, or colleagues. On the contrary, self-doubt, which the women thus affected are often beset by to begin with, often receives reinforcement.

## **8 The offender is a friend or relative**

If the victim knows the offender from before the assault, the situation can be particularly distressing. Many will find themselves wondering how it could come to the outbreak of violence, and whether they have done something wrong. How is one to act when the offender is also an old acquaintance, perhaps even the life partner, or a relative? The reluctance to take legal action against the offender, for example, is not unnatural. Very often, the entire situation may seem so complicated that you yourself lose perspective, and are no longer sure how to go on. In such situations, assistance from a counselling centre, for example family counselling or other similar organisations (for addresses, contact your local authority), should be an option to consider.

## **9 Coping with Violence**

Take all time you need to recover! Make sure that you feel absolutely secure; speak to friends and relatives that you really trust. Above all, do not deny yourself the peace and tranquillity you need. Some victims will relive some of the very distressing memories again and again. Others have difficulty remembering, and avoid thinking about the incident. Do try to find the right balance between remembering and trying to forget, to allow yourself to process the experience without taxing yourself too much or putting yourself under pressure. Find the persons you can trust, and don't be ashamed to reveal your worries and fears.

## 10 What is a psychological trauma?

In many cases, victims of a violent assault suffer a psychological trauma. A trauma is a wound, an injury sustained by the mind. As such, it is comparable to physical injuries: this kind of wound, too, needs care and time to heal. A trauma is such an overwhelming experience that the mind develops automatic protective reactions in defence. It may happen for example that a victim convinces herself that the event never in fact took place, or where the victim avoids all memories and feelings connected with the events. Most of the unusual changes in the person observed in such cases are just such protective strategies.

## 11 When do you need help?

It is quite normal to seek help with psychological injuries, just as one seeks medical help with physical ones. Already during the first phases, while you're feeling particularly distressed, you should have no hesitation in contacting the appropriate counselling centre, for instance a trauma ambulance (addresses in the Appendix on page 16). Here, specialists will determine whether you belong in a risk group with regard to developing long-term consequences, and how you can be helped. Psychological aid has these aims:

- help with everyday living
- help with the often-overwhelming feelings and emotions

This helps restart or accelerate at an early stage the natural process of working through.

## 12 Who can help?

Often what matters to the victim of violence even more than criminal proceedings is the official recognition as such, and the consequences of this recognition. This is one task undertaken by the regional authorities LVR and LWL, assuming special responsibility for victims of violent crime. It is possible that you have a claim to Crime Victims Compensation Act (CVCA). The staff will gladly help you with the application procedure. They are trained to deal with those affected by violence, and will sensitively respond to all your questions. Personal interviews will generally be held in a discreet and undisturbed atmosphere. And of course you may bring with you anyone you trust. Please consider: as a victim of violent crime, you are not asking for a form of state benefit. On the contrary, you are a person with a legal claim to special aid, even if you yourself may be reproaching yourself for not having recognised the danger in time. The regional authorities aim to help you overcome the consequences of violence. Hence, they work in close cooperation with the police. Any police officer will be able to place you in contact with the Victim Protection Officer soon after the assault. Don't be afraid to request this.

### 13 Counselling for Victims

Both the Compensations Department (Fachbereich Soziales Entschädigungsrecht) of the regional authority for the Rhineland, and the Pension Office of the regional authority for Westphalia-Lippe are at your service as a one-point contact for victims of violence. Information and counselling is available on the Infoline for Victims of Violence.

### 14 Infoline 0800-654-654-6 for Victims of Violence

You can call free the central number 0800-654-654-6 in North Rhine-Westphalia; this will connect you to the appropriate regional authority. You will be confidentially advised regarding the available help, and given further contacts. Outside regular working hours, please leave your name and telephone number on the answering machine. They will call you back as soon as possible.

### 15 The “Cologne Crime Victims Support Model” and Trauma Ambulances

The Cologne Crime Victims Support model is an initiative by the Ministry for Social Affairs (Sozialministerium) under the scientific monitoring of the Institute for Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy (Institut für Klinische Psychologie und Psychotherapie) of the University of Cologne, with the goal of improving the available help for victims of violent crime. The model is extended to all regions in NRW, in order to be able to counsel victims through local organisations. When the mind is in need of first aid, it must receive this quickly. This is why, as part of this model, the NRW Region has set up special Trauma Ambulance units for victims of violent crime. The addresses of these trauma ambulances in North Rhine-Westphalia can be found in the Appendix. If you consider that you need quick help, please contact one of these facilities. If there's no trauma ambulance unit established in your area, please contact your regional authority (addresses in the Appendix). Here you can obtain

information about expert counselling options. These organisations will also give you support in your search for:

- a self-help group for people with similar experiences;
  - a counselling centre for special victim groups;
  - a therapist specially trained and experienced in the treatment of traumatic experiences;
- and for longer-term outpatient psychotherapy. Counselling and information can be obtained from the Victim Protection Officer of the police, and non-governmental organisations, such as the Weisse Ring e.V. and the Paritätische Wohlfahrtsverband e.V. (Equal Welfare Organisation) (addresses in the Appendix).

## 16 The Crime Victims Compensation Act

Persons who have suffered damage to their health as a result of an act of violence may receive aid as set out in the Crime Victims Compensation Act (CVCA).

## 17 Scope of Application

The Act applies for claims for acts of violence committed after 15th May 1976 in federal territory, or on board a German vessel, or on board a German aircraft. Since 1st July 2009, financial aid can also be received in case of violence committed abroad in the form of one-off payments and financial aid with the necessary medical treatment.

Persons who suffered damage to their health due to an act of violence between 23rd May 1949 and 15th May 1976 in federal territory can likewise receive aid in the form of "hardship allowance provisions". In such cases, however, the prerequisites are that the claimant

- suffers from a disability solely as a result of this damage (Degree of injury consequences / Grad der Schädigung (GdS) at least 50 v.H.) and
- is experiencing financial hardship, and
- is resident within the geographical limits of the CVCA.

Whether or not a person is “in financial hardship” is determined on a case by-case-basis, and is also dependent on the person’s income.

## 18 Eligibility Criteria

It must be a clear case of an act of violence. The Act defines an act of violence as a “deliberate, unlawful violent assault against a person.” Also included are, according to the Crime Victims Compensation Act: the deliberate administering of poison, the “negligently causing risk to life or physical condition of another person through a criminal act with dangerous means, for example arson or explosives.” A person also counts as affected in health if he has suffered damage in lawful defence against intentional assault. Eligible are persons affected in health, or surviving German or foreign dependents. From 1st July 2009, this circle of people was expanded to include third-degree relatives: nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, who are visiting in the federal territory.

For foreigners residing in Germany, tourists and visitors, there are **special eligibility** criteria and rules regulating the kind and scope of aid available in individual cases. Aid is available on request only. Aid is provided starting from the time of application. It is therefore recommended that an application be made immediately in such cases. An informal application to one of the relevant regional authorities suffices. You can also use the prepared reply card (in the Appendix) for this purpose. The regional authority will then get in touch with you regarding any further information. The application can also be made at any other social service funding agency, for example, a medical insurance company or a pension insurance company, and at your local authority. The person affected should report the offence to the police, or else press charges, without any delay. This contribution to the clarification of facts, and to prosecuting the offender, help the person affected by crime to keep their claim to compensation.

## 19 Scope of Aid

Aid is awarded in accordance with the regulations of the Federal War Victims Relief Act. It includes in particular

- medical treatment
  - disability pension
  - provision for dependents for widows, orphans, and parents
  - death benefit and funeral allowance
  - lump-sum payment / severance payment
- Compensation for pain and suffering will not be paid. No compensation is paid for damage to property. Exceptions are aids worn on the body, such as eye-glasses, contact lenses, or dentures. In addition, provisions for war victim relief are also available. These include:

- nursing aid
- aid for continuation of a household
- aid for the elderly
- recovery aid
- aid with participation in a working life
- individual case support/help in special circumstances
- medical aid
- educational aid
- maintenance aid
- supplementary aid with maintenance

## 20 Grounds for Refusal

Applications will be refused in cases where the damage was done by the applicant himself or herself, or if the damage to health arose as a result of the applicant's conduct. Active participation in political or military conflicts of foreign citizens in the home country, or involvement in organised crime, are also grounds for rejection. CVCA provisions may be denied if the victim has failed to contribute to the clarification of the facts or the prosecution or arrest of the offender, and in particular, by not reporting the offence to the authorities.

## 21 Exceptions

The Act does not apply in the case of damage to health from a violent assault committed by the offender through operating a motor vehicle or motor vehicle trailer. In such a case, an application may be made to the compensation fund for damages resulting from road accidents.

Address: Verein Verkehrsofferhilfe e.V.  
(Address in the Appendix).

## 22 Addresses

### Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe

#### LWL-Versorgungsamt Westfalen

Von-Vincke-Str. 23-25

48143 Münster

Tel.: +49 (0) 251 / 591 – 80 00

Fax: +49 (0) 251 / 591 – 80 09

Internet [www.lwl-versorgungsamt.de](http://www.lwl-versorgungsamt.de)

### Landschaftsverband Rheinland

#### LVR-Dezernat Soziales und Integration

#### – Fachbereich Soziales Entschädigungsrecht –

Deutzer Freiheit 77

50679 Köln

Tel.: +49 (0) 221 / 809 – 58 45

Fax: +49 (0) 221 / 809 – 59 36

Internet [www.soziales.lvr.de](http://www.soziales.lvr.de)

## Trauma Ambulances in NRW

### Universitätsklinikum **Aachen**

Tel.: +49 (0) 241 / 808 08 08 (Adults)

und +49 (0) 241 / 808 07 70 (Children)

### LVR-Klinik **Bedburg-Hau**

Tel.: +49 (0) 28 21 / 81 37 90

### **Bielefeld**, Evangelisches Krankenhaus

Traumaambulanz

Tel.: +49 (0) 521 / 772 – 785 26

### LVR-Klinik **Bonn**

Tel.: +49 (0) 228 / 551 – 26 03

### Vestische Kinderklinik **Datteln**

Tel.: +49 (0) 23 63 / 975 – 470

### St.-Vinzenz-Hospital, **Dinslaken**

Tel.: +49 (0) 20 64 / 44 12 40

### Elisabeth Klinik **Dortmund**

Tel.: +49 (0) 231 / 91 30 19 – 700

- LWL-Klinik Dortmund**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 231 / 45 03 - 638 oder -694
- Marien-Hospital Düren**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 24 21 / 805 - 118
- Stadt Düsseldorf, Gesundheitsamt**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 211 / 899 53 68
- Klinikum Duisburg**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 203 / 733 32 51
- LVR-Klinik Essen**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 201 / 7227 - 521 (Adults)  
and +49 (0) 201 / 7227 - 450 (Children)
- Marien-Hospital Euskirchen**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 22 51 / 900  
or +49 (0) 22 51 / 90 11 02
- LWL-Klinik Hamm** Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie,  
Psychotherapie und Heilpädagogik Hamm  
Tel.: +49 (0) 23 81 / 89 34 44
- LWL-Klinik Herten**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 23 66 / 80 21 91 oder 80 21 95
- LWL-Klinik Hemer – Hans-Prinzhorn-Klinik Hemer**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 23 72 / 861 – 0
- Deutsches Institut für Psychotraumatologie e.V.  
in Köln**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 172 / 267 17 27
- Klinik für Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie  
und Psychotherapie – Institutionsambulanz Köln**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 221 / 890 72 11
- LVR-Klinik Köln, Traumaambulanz**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 221 / 899 39 39
- Alexianer Krankenhaus Krefeld**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 21 51 / 34 72 80
- LVR-Klinik Langenfeld**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 21 73 / 102 20 44

LWL-Klinik **Marsberg** Kinder- und  
Jugendpsychiatrie und Psychotherapie  
Psychiatrie und Psychotherapie – Erwachsene –  
Tel.: +49 (0) 29 92 / 601 40 00 (Children) and  
Tel.: +49 (0) 29 92 / 601 10 00 (Adults)

Universitätsklinikum **Münster**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 251 / 835 29 05

St. Alexius-Krankenhaus **Neuss**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 21 31 / 13 62 40

LWL Klinik **Paderborn**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 52 51 / 29 51 14

DRK-Kinderklinik **Siegen** gGmbH  
Tel.: +49 (0) 271 / 23 45 – 206

LVR Klinik **Viersen**  
Tel.: +49 (0) 21 62 / 96 52 11

You can reach the ambulance units on the telephone numbers listed here.

**Weisser Ring e. V.**  
**Landesbüro Rheinland**  
Josef-Schregel-Straße 44  
52349 Düren  
Tel.: +49 (0) 24 21 / 166 22  
Fax: +49 (0) 24 21 / 102 99  
Internet [www.weisser-ring.de/nrw-rheinland](http://www.weisser-ring.de/nrw-rheinland)

**Weisser Ring e. V.**  
**Landesbüro Westfalen-Lippe**  
Caldenhofer Weg 138  
59063 Hamm  
Tel.: +49 (0) 23 81 / 69 45  
Fax: +49 (0) 23 81 / 69 46  
Internet [www.weisser-ring.de/westfalen-lippe](http://www.weisser-ring.de/westfalen-lippe)

**Verein Verkehrsofferhilfe e.V.**  
Wilhelmstr. 43 G  
10117 Berlin  
Tel.: +49 (0) 30 / 20 20 - 58 58  
Internet [www.verkehrsofferhilfe.de](http://www.verkehrsofferhilfe.de)

**Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband  
Landesverband NW e. V.**

Camillo-Sitte-Platz 3  
45136 Essen

Tel.: +49 (0) 201 / 895 33 - 17

Fax: +49 (0) 201 / 895 33 - 25

Internet [www.frauenprojekte.paritaet-nrw.org](http://www.frauenprojekte.paritaet-nrw.org) und  
[www.selbsthilfenetz.de](http://www.selbsthilfenetz.de)

**Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft autonomer Frauen  
Notrufe in NRW**

c/o Frauenberatungsstelle Düsseldorf e.V.

Ackerstr. 144

40233 Düsseldorf

Tel.: +49 (0) 211 / 68 68 54

Fax: +49 (0) 211 / 67 61 61

Internet [www.frauennotrufe-nrw.de](http://www.frauennotrufe-nrw.de)

**Dachverband der autonomen Frauenberatungs-  
stellen NRW e.V.**

Grabenstraße 13

45964 Gladbeck

Tel.: +49 (0) 20 43 / 68 16 60

Fax: +49 (0) 20 43 / 92 97 95

Internet [www.frauenberatungsstellen-nrw.de](http://www.frauenberatungsstellen-nrw.de)

**Deutsche Allianz Kapitalverbrechen e.V.**

Unter den Linden 39

10117 Berlin

Tel.: +49 (0) 30 / 36 46 66 27

Fax: +49 (0) 30 / 36 46 66 25

Internet:

[www.deutsche-allianz-kapitalverbrechen.de](http://www.deutsche-allianz-kapitalverbrechen.de)

**Landschaftsverband Rheinland  
LVR-Dezernat Soziales und Integration  
50663 Köln**

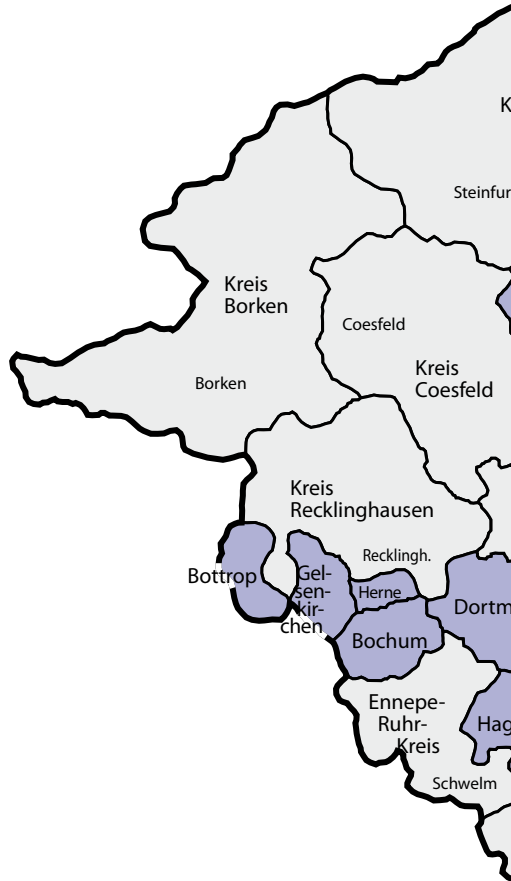
Jurisdiction Area:



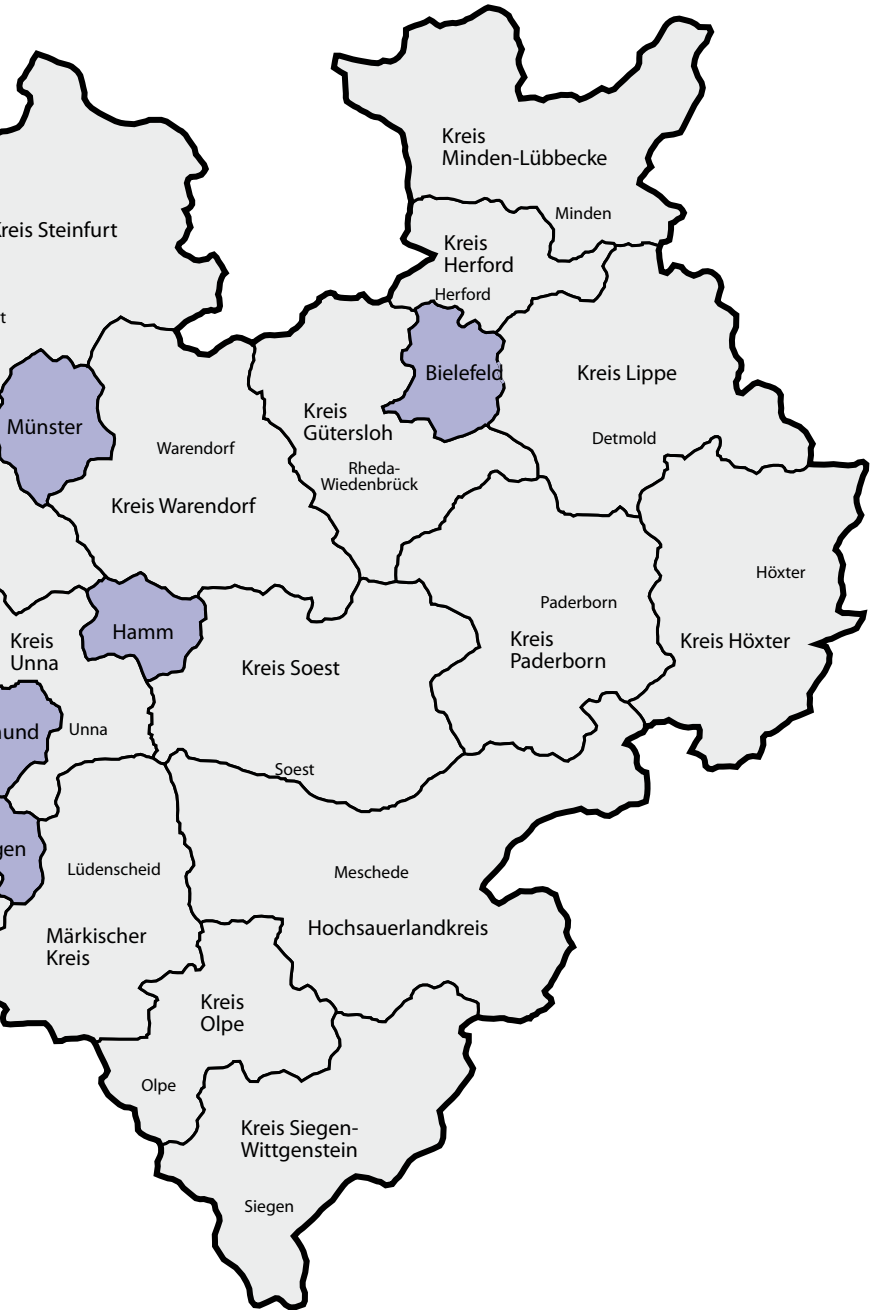


**Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe  
LWL-Versorgungsamt Westfalen  
48133 Münster**

Jurisdiction Area:



- County boundary
- County-City
- District administration office



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Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe  
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Layout: Druckerei des LVR  
Druck: DCM Druck Center, Meckenheim



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