

Leiden very urgently needs more space to keep and reinforce its top-position as a European knowledge-based economy centre

Leiden is one of the European powerhouses of knowledge based-economy. Our institute CWTS developed a method to calculate the overall strength and R&D potential of a university in terms of size, productivity and international influence. The CWTS indicators are worldwide accepted as the international standard of scientific performance. On the basis of these calculations, we established the Leiden Ranking 2008 of all European universities. The results can be found at www.cwts.leidenuniv.nl .

The results clearly show the position of Leiden in comparison with around 20 European medium-sized cities with agglomeration size comparable to Leiden. These cities define the context and the league in which Leiden has to play a tough competition to attract and to keep the best scientists and students. These cities are: Lausanne, Basel, Genève, Zürich, Bristol, Leuven, Southampton, Aarhus, Nottingham, Lund, Heidelberg, Gothenburg, Freiburg, Uppsala, Mainz, Karlsruhe, Bern, Gent, Tübingen.

The difference in scientific strength is not very large for these cities. Therefore, the decisive factor in keeping and reinforcing the position as European powerhouse is city quality. A crucial element of city quality is available space. A city cannot maintain its top-position in a knowledge-based economy without sufficient space for transferring knowledge into applications, by attracting new businesses, from small start-ups and spin-outs of the university, to subsidiaries of large multinational corporations.

Precisely here, available space, Leiden is at a disastrous disadvantage. We prove this statement by showing a graphical representation of the R&D potential of the above mentioned university cities including Leiden against the municipal space in terms of the total surface area of the municipality. A somewhat more advanced calculation by taking into account population density hardly changes the overall picture.

Leiden has by far the least space available. The great majority of the Leiden competitors has three times or more total space. To give an example, Leuven has a municipal surface area of 57 km² (Leiden 23 km²) and a total science park area approaching 180 hectare (Leiden 80 hectare). Leiden will need much more space to attract progressive companies involved in science, technology or R&D, in order to maintain and reinforce its position as a prosperous, job-creating, innovative knowledge-based economy centre with a top-position in Europe.

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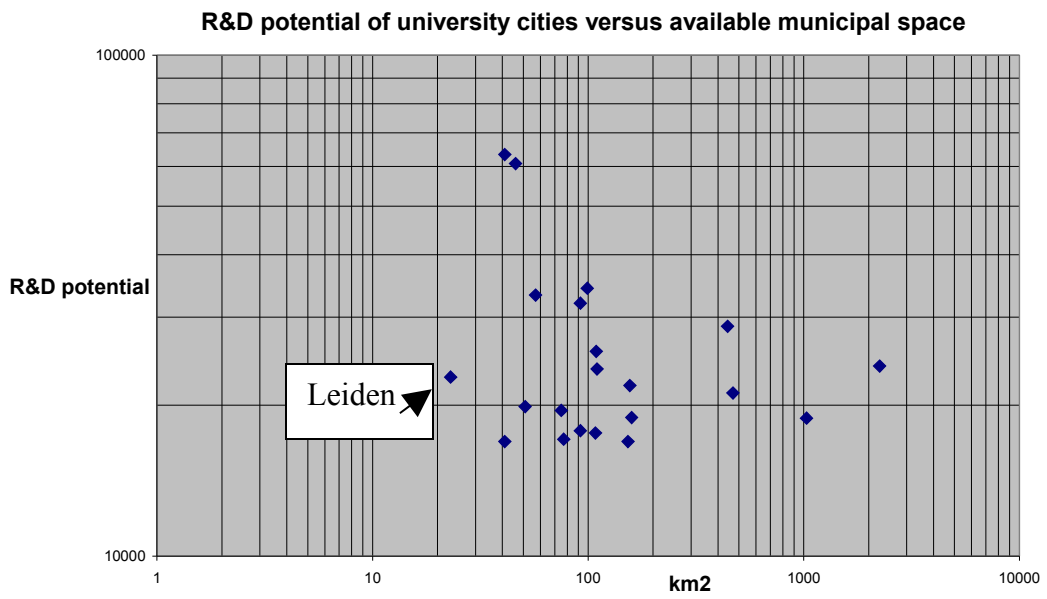


Figure: Comparison of R&D potential versus available municipal space (in km²) for Leiden and its competitive European cities (see main text). R&D potential is similar to the 'brute force' indicator used in the Leiden Ranking 2008, see www.cwts.leidenuniv.nl.