

Utrecht – the beating heart of the Netherlands’ life sciences and health industry

1. Introduction

The Netherlands’ central geographic position, combined with its accessibility and excellent infrastructure, makes it the ideal home to 2,200 life science and medical technology companies and research organisations, all within a 120-mile radius.

Dutch companies hold strong positions in the fields of molecular imaging, medical informatics, biopharmaceuticals, human and veterinary vaccines, regenerative medicine and biomaterials, medical technology, and health infrastructure.

In general:

- The World Economics Forum ranked the Netherlands 8th in its Global Competitiveness Report 2014-2015.
- The country has the most open, excellent and effective research system in the EU, according to the Innovation Scoreboard 2014.

In Life Sciences and Health:

- The Netherlands ranks 8th worldwide in life sciences and health patents and 6th in life sciences and health citations.
- 70% of Dutch life science and health companies are commercially active abroad and more than half cooperate with non-Dutch companies or knowledge institutions.
- Dutch companies were involved in five of the EU’s top ten biotech deals in the last four years.
- Dutch participants were involved in 49% of initiatives in the health sector of the European Commission’s R&D Programme (a total budget of €2.48 billion).

Utrecht is the beating heart of the Netherlands' life sciences industry, particularly strong in:

- Public Health: One Health initiative, cardiovascular research, food & health, and translational neuroscience.
- Cancer: Biology of cancer, personalized cancer care, and image guided therapies.
- Regenerative medicine & the biology of stem cells
- Healthcare Innovation: Self-management, active ageing & long-term care, healing environments, and serious gaming.

In general, the Utrecht Region, or the Province of Utrecht to give it its official name, is smart, central, and offers an excellent quality of life:

- Smart: Utrecht is known for its world-class universities and research institutions, and boasts the most highly educated workforce in the Netherlands.
- Central: Conveniently located in the heart of the Netherlands, it's a mere 30 minutes from Wageningen University and offers easy access to Europe and the rest of the world.
- Excellent quality of life: The region is a unique combination of vibrant cities and villages, and a variety of beautiful landscapes and recreational opportunities.

And what's more, the European Commission has twice named Utrecht the most competitive region in the EU.

II. Excellent ecosystem

A. Context

Most of the region's innovative life sciences companies can be found in or around the [Utrecht Science Park](#) (USP), where around 1,700 researchers, 250 professors, 1,300 PhD students and over 2,000 BSc & MSc students collaborate in top level research.

USP is also home to [Utrecht University](#), the Netherland's biggest and best university, and the [University Medical Center Utrecht](#) (UMCU). Life sciences companies can also be found in Bilthoven, the former location of the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment.

B. Facilities

The Utrecht Science Park houses [incubator facilities](#) and offers a strong network for life sciences companies, including venture capital firms and supporting business services. On top of that, a number of [shared facilities](#) are available for both academic and commercial use.

C. Support

The life sciences sector is supported by various joint initiatives involving educational institutions, local government, and companies including [Utrecht Life Sciences](#), [ImmunoValley](#), [Pontes Medical](#), [Utrecht Science Park](#) and [Holland BIO](#).

- [Utrecht Life Sciences](#) is an open innovation network that facilitates strategic partnerships in education, research and entrepreneurship between academia, public institutions and private organisations to drive innovations in human and veterinary health care.

Its activities include:

- Providing state of the art shared research facilities and clinical research infrastructure
- Offering access to unique expertise, databases and cohorts
- Educating & scouting talented people
- Increasing access to external grants & funds
- Facilitating open innovation & co-creation in public-private partnerships
- Accelerating business to business transactions

- Public affairs and marketing

- [Immuno Valley](#) is a business-driven public-private consortium at the interface of human and animal health. Scientific and business partners collaborate in order to translate research & development expertise into products that combat infectious diseases.
- [Pontes Medical](#) bridges the gap between the medical industry and clinics for innovation, co-creation and the sharing of knowledge.
- Quickly becoming one of the most important science hubs in Europe, [Utrecht Science Park](#) is a dynamic environment for education, business, and fundamental, translational and clinical research.
- [Holland BIO](#) (website in Dutch) is the Dutch biotech industry body.

D. Financial support

- [National/European subsidies & financing initiatives](#)

There are a number of programmes within the Netherlands and the EU to support life sciences and health companies conduct or finance their innovation.

- [Bio-economy Horizon 2020](#), for example, is a means of stimulating innovation in the field of food security, bio-economy, sustainable agriculture, and marine biotechnology.
- With [credit facilities for SMEs](#) the Dutch National government can offer banks a guarantee, enabling companies to access the finance they need to expand their operations or increase innovation.
- [Eurostars](#) enables Dutch SMEs to connect to others across Europe to develop new market-oriented technologies.

- [Eureka](#) is an EU-wide innovation programme aimed at supporting companies conducting market-driven R&D.
- [Health in Horizon 2020](#) is a programme of innovation aimed at stimulating R&D in the field of healthcare.

Regional financing initiatives

A **regional co-financing initiative** was launched by the Economic Board Utrecht to support R&D projects in the region's areas of focus, including life sciences. To qualify, a company has to be established in the province of Utrecht, and contribute at least 30% of the total project costs. In addition, the innovation project must include substantial involvement from knowledge centres and/or companies operating in the Utrecht region.

A **fund for life science start-ups** was recently launched to further stimulate growth and innovation in the region's life sciences sector. The fund offers up to €1.25 million in the form of subordinated loans or guarantees conditional on the private financial contribution being at least three times as high as the public contribution.

E. Inspiring companies & partners for collaboration

-  [Nutricia Research, Danone](#) carries out R&D for baby nutrition and clinical foods combining research into food technology and human health.
-  [Micareos Human Health and Micreos Food safety](#) develops phage-based products against specific dangerous bacteria to guarantee human/animal health and food safety.
-  [Genmab](#) is involved in clinical phase drug development of monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) with a special focus on oncology.
-  [Bilthoven Biologicals](#) (website in Dutch) is part of the [Serum Institute of India](#), the biggest vaccine manufacturer in the world.
-  [Intravacc](#) features CROs reducing development risks and costs of new vaccines by bridging the translational gap between laboratory bench and market.

- ❑ [The Julius Center](#) is a joint venture between the Julius Center for Health Sciences and Primary Care, focusing on the methodology of medical research, [Julius Clinical's](#) CRO clinical testing, and the Dutch Cochrane Center.
- ❑ [Elana](#) is part of the Brain Technology Institute, focusing on medical device development for neurovascular diseases.
- ❑ [GenDx](#) is developing a comprehensive line of In Vitro Diagnostic (IVD) tests and services, analysis software, and education.
- ❑ [Johnson&Johnson Medical](#) (website in Dutch) is a subsidiary of the pharma giant, J&J Utrecht is the Dutch coordinating body for sales & marketing, R&D, and clinical studies in the field of medical devices
- ❑ [AM-Pharma is](#) a biopharmaceutical company developing proprietary recombinant human Alkaline Phosphatase (AP) therapeutics to treat chronic or life-threatening inflammatory diseases. Pfizer Inc recently acquired a minority equity interest in AM-Pharma and secured an exclusive option to acquire the remaining equity in the company.

III. Education, talent & knowledge

The region's universities, medical centres, knowledge institutions and research centres include:

- ❑ [Utrecht University](#), includes a faculty of science and one of the world's top 3 veterinary faculties.
- ❑ [University Medical Center Utrecht](#) (UMCU) including Wilhelmina Children's Hospital and the medical faculty of Utrecht University.
- ❑ [University of Applied Sciences](#) which trains lab technicians.
- ❑ [TNO](#): The Netherlands organisation for applied scientific research

- ■ [Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences](#) includes the Hubrecht Institut which focuses on developmental biology and stem cell research, and the Fungal Biodiversity Center
- ■ Princess Maxima Center for pediatric oncology
- ■ [NKI-AVL](#): Netherlands Cancer Institute
- ■ [RIVM](#): National Institute for Public Health and the Environment

All of these institutions are located within 35 miles of Utrecht.

IV. For more information, please contact:

- ■ **Jan Zuidema** - Head of Invest Utrecht & International Affairs
T: +31 6 2112 4552
E: jan@investutrecht.com