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*Ranking of Universities: Why Continental European Universities – Except TU Zürich – are not Among the First 25 Universities of the World*

Among the best ranked 25 universities of the world, there are 15 private universities, all based in North America. Five among the 25 are public universities in the United Kingdom. The majority of the 500 highest ranked universities of the world are public. The private status seems to be the first criterion for top universities. The 25 highest ranked universities are well funded and have (with the exception of Beijing University) a high degree of autonomy, a further criterion for top universities. Basic research is also a part of these universities.

On the European continent, German, French and Belgian universities are not as rich as the 25 top world universities. In addition, they differ in their nature from the “best” universities. In Germany basic research is organized outside the universities in special basic research units. In France, higher education is split between universities and “grandes écoles.” The elite of the country come from the grandes écoles. In 1968 many French universities were split into several universities (Paris into more than ten), which weakened the smaller institutions. In Belgium, because of ethnic differences between Flemish- and French-speaking citizens, the famous University of Leuven was divided into the Flemish-language Leuven University and the French-language University of Louvain. The former leading library of Leuven University was divided into two libraries. These organizational differences are among the reasons why some well-known European universities are not listed among the highest ranking world institutions.