

LES Pan-European Conference 2025

Host: LES BENELUX

29–30 September 2025

The Hague Marriott Hotel, Netherlands

General Report¹

LES Benelux's 50th anniversary in 2025 provided the perfect occasion to host the LES Pan-European Conference on 29–30 September. Blessed with unusually mild and sunny weather, the conference brought together more than 80 speakers and over 200 participants to the city of The Hague in the Netherlands to discuss how intellectual property (IP) assets can enable the transformation of innovative ideas into sustainable and successful business solutions.

Welcome and Keynotes

The opening speeches by Carmen Correa, President of LES Benelux, and Jean Christophe Troussel, President of LESI, set the tone for the conference as a place of community building, friendship making, and shared ambition to advance innovation.

The first keynote by Reinoud Mangelmans, Head of IP and Standards at Philips, drew inspiration from the Draghi Report and emphasised IP as an integral part of industrial strategy. With Philips generating annual licensing income of €300 million, Mangelmans identified four priority discussion areas: licensing in the context of increased trade secret protection; how the Unified Patent Court (UPC) will change licensing strategies and litigation costs; the impact of conflicting opinions on compulsory licensing, FRAND licensing, and alternative dispute resolution; and how artificial intelligence is transforming the profession. He concluded that LES provides the essential ecosystem and platform for licensing professionals to address these complex issues effectively.

Petra Vonck, Head of IP & Royalty at Studio 100, presented the next keynote, demonstrating how IP enables a children's and family entertainment company to create and protect new characters and build long-term, trustworthy customer relationships. IP protects Studio 100 against counterfeits and unfair competition, whilst enabling a comprehensive 360-degree distribution strategy across books, television, clothing, films, live streaming, and theme parks. The commercial success of characters such as Mega Mindy and Maya the Bee, the K3 girl group's substantial fanbase, and the Plopsaland amusement park illustrate IP's transformative potential for the entertainment sector.

On the second day, Filip De Corte, Head of IP at Syngenta, used artistic and mythological analogies to explore Europe's pathways forward. He cautioned against risk aversion and overregulation, arguing that Europe penalises innovation similarly to how Greek mythology portrayed Prometheus's punishment. De Corte called for the European Patent Office (EPO) to strengthen its European focus and prioritise high-quality patents over quantity. Clear claim scope is particularly important for licensing negotiations, as ambiguous claims require more extensive

¹ Felipe de Andrade, Ph.D. researcher (FWO fellow) at the University of Antwerp and KU Leuven, Belgium, and member of LES Benelux. Please note that, as attendance in all parallel sessions was not possible, certain presentations have not been commented on or summarised in the same level of detail, in order to avoid any risk of misrepresentation.

negotiation about what is permitted under a licence. He also advocated for patents grounded in scientific reality and an increased duty to disclose relevant information in patent applications. De Corte concluded that renewed European focus on growth and competitiveness could offer a distinctly European approach to navigating this new landscape—the best way to lose a race is by following someone else.

Leopold Summerer, Head of Technology at the European Space Agency (ESA), closed the keynotes. The ESA, which is also celebrating 50 years, employs more than 3,000 people and operates with a budget close to €8 billion. Summerer highlighted the importance of European cooperation for securing independent access to space. Concerning figures included relatively low per-capita investment in space in Europe and declining market share for European companies. The ESA's future priorities are protecting the planet and the future, exploring and discovering new possibilities in outer space, strengthening European autonomy and resilience, boosting growth and competitiveness, and inspiring Europe and European talent. LES has a clear role to play in contributing to these objectives.

Workshops

Two informative workshops complemented the main programme.

The EPO Observatory workshop, led by Pere Arques Castells, Stream Leader for Legal and Innovation Policies at the EPO, demonstrated how the EPO assists in creating a better innovation ecosystem and supports innovation from early stage to scale-up. The EPO uses patent information and technology trends to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as exemplified in Technology Platforms describing the patent landscape and technology trends in sectors including digital agriculture, water innovation, plastics, clean energy, firefighting, and cancer research.

For technology commercialisation and scaling, the EPO Observatory has developed data intelligence tools as part of its Financing Innovation Programme. The Deep Tech Finder is an interactive mapping tool identifying European startups, spin-outs, and universities with European patent applications. Users can search for organisations active in specific sectors and owning particular technologies, and can identify investors with relevant track records. The EPO Chief Economist has also produced studies on technology commercialisation, including the Technology Inventor Score (TIS), which identifies inventors with experience engaging with innovative startups.

Conference attendees expressed keen interest in using these tools, and LES and other stakeholders indicated willingness to contribute to future observatory workplans. Particular interest was shown in integrating licensing data such as reassignments and licensing willingness into EPO datasets.

The second workshop addressed evolving European legislation and regulations in the life sciences sector. Chaired by Dr Agnieszka Sztoldman, Counsel at Osborne Clarke Poland, the workshop included Vytenis Šemeta and Lena Pauschenwein, representatives of the EU Commission's Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, as well as Woiciech Bieszh, Head of Licence Agreements at Polpharma, and Brigitte Carion-Taravella, Lead of Biologics IP EU and Patent Policy EU at Sanofi, Paris, Member of IP Expert Group EFPIA

Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs)

The workshop covered proposed reforms to supplementary protection certificates, compulsory licensing, the Bolar exemption, and data and market exclusivity. The EU has identified a fragmented European landscape regarding SPCs, with procedures costing up to 60% more than in the United States. The proposed solution comprises two elements: a centralised procedure for granting national SPCs and a unitary SPC for medicinal products and plant protection products with coverage matching the unitary patent. A single access register would provide information on SPC status for all applications and granted certificates. The European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) would implement this centralised procedure and registry, in close cooperation with experienced national SPC examiners.

The SPC reform also includes a manufacturing waiver allowing European generic and biosimilar companies to manufacture in the EU to serve non-EU markets, as well as to stockpile for six months before serving the EU market.

The creation of a unitary SPC presents both opportunities and challenges. Whilst strategically important, SPC litigation is currently limited. A unified register and protection system could facilitate SPC use as a valuation tool. However, concerns remain about increased rather than reduced fragmentation, particularly because unitary SPCs would only apply in UPC member states, coexisting with national SPC frameworks outside the enhanced cooperation framework. Generic industry representatives noted that the six-month stockpiling period may be insufficient, suggesting one year would be more realistic. Concerns about EUIPO examination quality were also raised, with some preferring greater involvement from the UPC. However, the current EU framework designates the General Court, not the UPC, to hear appeals against EUIPO decisions. The limited pool of available expertise in this field also requires attention.

Compulsory Licensing

Political agreement on the EU compulsory licensing framework was reached in May 2025. The proposal includes an EU-wide compulsory licensing system triggered during crises, enabling the EU to issue licences for producing products relevant to addressing these crises. This new instrument also permits issuing a Union compulsory licence for exporting pharmaceutical products to non-EU countries, complementing existing national mechanisms. The trigger requires an EU crisis instrument, going beyond health crises, with the crisis duration determined by the respective EU crisis instrument. The compulsory licence applies to patents only and does not cover trade secrets. Workshop participants expressed concerns about the workability of this tool, as identifying relevant products and IP owners is necessary for its application. Trade secrets (including market authorisation data) fall outside the scope of the EU-wide instrument, making it difficult to locate capable licensees for complex products. The tool remains a last resort, with voluntary approaches preferred. A measure of success would be that the threat of compulsory licensing would be enough to encourage voluntary licensing arrangements.

Bolar Exemption

Ongoing discussions address reforming the scope of the Bolar exemption, which permits generic and biosimilar companies to conduct research and clinical tests before patent expiry to obtain regulatory approval. Current proposals expand exempted activities beyond regulatory approval to include post-grant activities such as health technology assessments, pricing determination, and tender procedures. These changes would facilitate generic market participation; however, patent-owning pharmaceutical companies stressed the importance of notification when applicants intend to use the Bolar exemption. Generic companies counter that notification procedures would disclose sensitive business strategy information to competitors. Implementation

challenges also arise—depending on harmonisation levels, an EU-wide solution might create more fragmentation and legal uncertainty rather than less.

Data and Market Exclusivity

Legislative proposals aim to reform the current "8+2+1" regime. Currently, eight years of regulatory data protection prevent generics and biosimilars from referencing data in their applications. This is followed by two years of market protection, with the possibility of extending by one year if the original product gains approval for new therapeutic use. Ongoing discussions address modulating these periods, with proposals ranging from a minimum of 7.5 years' data protection to eight years' data protection with reduced one-year market exclusivity. The EU is also considering conditional data exclusivities to incentivise development of priority antimicrobials and European manufacturing. The Commission proposes transferable data exclusivity vouchers as an incentive for companies tackling priority antimicrobials. Workshop participants welcomed incentives for European innovation but questioned whether proposals adequately considered SME realities and capacities.

Unitary Patent Implementation

The EU Commission noted that as part of the Unitary Patent Package, it will prepare an implementation report in 2026. Attendees expressed general optimism regarding the system's functioning but raised concerns about the unitary patent becoming "a victim of its own success" and creating backlogs in the unitary patent court. LES members expressed interest in participating in ongoing consultation processes.

Plenary Sessions

The first plenary session addressed the EU regulatory and contractual framework for data sharing. Chaired by Dario Paschetta, Partner at FVA Law, it featured Annarita Nicoletto, Legal Counsel at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Lausanne; Hila Staib, Policy Officer at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers; Arthur van der Wees, Managing Director at Arthur's Legal, Strategies & Systems; and Arved Waltermathe, Attorney-at-Law at Waltermathe Anwaltskanzlei.

The session addressed model contractual clauses on data sharing being prepared by an expert group. European Commission recommendations should be published in October 2025. Model clauses address relationships between users, data holders, and data recipients, covering data protection compliance, compensation, and disclosure hypotheses.

Industry participants noted that companies have diverse value propositions and business cases. Beyond managing access requests, companies should consider opportunities upstream. EU policy proposals aim to build a data union strategy maximising opportunities across the European Union.

Discussion centred on protecting IP during mandatory data sharing. EU data sharing provisions typically apply to raw data, pre-processed data, and metadata, not content data. Trade secrets based on processed data usually fall outside scope. Companies can negotiate protection measures including encryption and organisational rules, and can decline sharing if measures cannot be respected. Economic damages arising from data sharing provide an additional escape clause—even non-processed data may reveal competitors' economic situations.

Data access modes include direct (on-device) or indirect access, both permitting precautionary measures before sharing begins. Access may be requested through administrative complaint, judicial settlement, or alternative dispute resolution by mutual agreement.

The final segment addressed the interface between GDPR and the Data Act. Data classification is essential, particularly for mixed datasets containing both personal and non-personal information, as concurrent frameworks may apply. Coordination is critical: sharing personal data without consent violates GDPR, whilst refusing to share non-personal data may violate the Data Act. Licensing professionals should define datasets properly, narrowly define data sharing purposes, draft deletion clauses with written confirmation, clearly identify mixed datasets requiring anonymisation before use, and include non-compete and no-resending clauses reflecting current legislative developments.

The second plenary session examined AI and copyright issues across multiple jurisdictions. Moderated by Yann Dietrich, Group Head of IP, AI & Tech Regulations at Eviden, the session included Alex Brodie, Partner at Gowling WLG in London; Nathalie de Quatrebarbes, Avocat au Barreau de Paris; Bern Quarmby, Partner at MoloLamken in New York; and Allen (Jun) Wang, Managing Partner of Beijing TA Law Firm.

In the United States, fair use guidance for large language models (LLMs) is only now emerging through developing case law. Cases remain specific and judgments narrow. High settlement rates suggest significant time will pass before major precedent develops. China lacks broad fair use exemptions. Litigation is underdeveloped because many LLM owners are also copyright owners. The EU has few cases but discusses the scope of text and data mining exceptions in the Copyright in the Digital Single Market Directive, particularly research exceptions for software training. The United Kingdom, with a strong entertainment and publishing sector, seeks balance between the interests of copyright holders and LLM developers.

Regarding LLM development strategy, jurisdictions must be selected carefully, considering injunction strength and damages in copyright infringement cases. Some jurisdictions, including the United States, view AI from commercial rather than pure rights-based perspectives, showing reluctance to shut down emerging industries. OpenAI's open-sourcing of models and strategic computing partnerships raise questions about deal terms and conditions, reputation, and visibility. Given substantial investment levels, concerns about free riders and market bubbles are warranted.

The EU General-Purpose AI Code of Practice's effectiveness in operationalising AI remains unclear. Parties resist publicly disclosing copyrighted data use in training datasets. Disclosure obligations extending to domain names used for training create implementation challenges.

Looking forward, China considers whether collective management organisations could negotiate LLM training transactions. The United States emphasises commercialisation, with disputes currently resolved through settlement rather than regulation. The EU actively pursues AI regulation as part of its competitiveness strategy, positioning itself as a regulatory frontrunner as part of international standard-setting. The United Kingdom prioritises discussing text and data mining exceptions, legal protection status of computer-generated works, and deep fake protection.

Emerging consensus suggests human involvement is necessary for copyright protection of LLM outputs. Concerns exist whether LLM outputs imitating others' styles constitute infringement.

China and France address this through unfair competition law; the United States and United Kingdom provide reduced style protection, limiting this discussion.

Regarding AI investment protection, discussions address whether AI models can be patented, constitute trade secrets, or be protected through non-compete clauses. Industry investment levels are substantial, meaning infringement and damages claims may not deter competitors from crossing legal boundaries.

It was brought to the attention of participants the AI & Copyright resolution approved during the AIPPI World Congress in Yokohama in 2025, which addressed many of the discussion points of the plenary. Negotiated by delegates from over 110 countries, these soft law resolutions, whilst non-binding, inform interpretation of binding law and influence future developments.

Parallel Sessions

The conference featured 20 parallel sessions. The following sections cover selected sessions attended.

- AI Act and Licensing Implications

Moderated by Ward Verwaeren, Managing Associate at Cresco, this session featured Ivo Emanuilov, Intellectual Property Lawyer and Founder of I/O Consulting; Dane Tacchini, Head of Intellectual Property at CERN Knowledge Transfer Group; and Ruben Miessen, CEO and Co-Founder of LEGALFLY. Speakers explained that the EU AI Act categorises AI systems by risk: minimal or no risk, limited risk, high-risk, and unacceptable risk. Each category implies different responsibilities for providers, deployers, importers, and distributors. To address AI system complexity, the European Commission proposed a specific liability regime for AI systems and reform of the Product Liability Directive. The first proposal was withdrawn for reconsideration, with ongoing discussions about regulating software, which encompasses AI systems, as a product. To mitigate risks of navigating different liability regimes—contractual, tort, and strict liabilities—AI vendors should carefully select training data and be transparent in system terms and conditions.

Regarding licensing, discussion addressed the enforceability of responsible use clauses. Model clauses on Responsible AI Licensing (RAIL) and updated EU AI model contractual clauses exist. These clauses import a "no-harm" principle into contract law, with effectiveness limited to connecting responsibility with particular behaviour. The AI Act presents new challenges for open-source licensing, as statutory obligations require maintaining control over AI system use. This control may prove too restrictive for open-source communities. When negotiating licences, clarity of scope, auditing clauses, walk-away rights, and indemnification are essential. Licensees making improvements to licensed AI systems should note that this may change their role under the AI Act—from deployer to provider—creating additional obligations. Clarity remains limited in this area.

- Regulatory Updates from the EU on Horizon Grant Programme

This session, moderated by Bruno Vandermeulen of Impact Licensing, examined the implications of licensing within EU funding programmes. Speakers included Marc Kaptein, Senior Director Policy & Public Affairs at Pfizer; Laura MacDonald, LES Benelux member and Chief Executive of ASTP; Federica Baldan, Legal and Policy Officer at the European Commission; and Maarten Nollen, European Patent Attorney at ETEX Services NV.

Discussion started with how to integrate socially responsible licensing principles into funding programmes and maximising societal value through knowledge valorisation. EU initiatives include a framework for responsible licensing (ERA Agenda), a blueprint for licensing and spinoff creation (Startup and Scaleup strategy), and new requirements in FP10 funding. The Commission is implementing its knowledge valorisation strategy through an IP Assets Management Code of Practice, extending beyond IP-protected assets to encompass all knowledge assets. Principles guiding this code include strategic management tools, knowledge transfer facilitation, IP strategies for societal benefit, and support for open science alongside IP protection.

Horizon Europe places technology valorisation and results exploitation at its core, with SDGs central to this mission. A Horizon results platform permits public access to project results and enables collaboration opportunities. The Commission wishes to increase adoption of the Guiding Principles for Knowledge Valorisation, welcoming LES position papers. A planned call for top-up funding for proof-of-market exploitation provides additional technology commercialisation support.

Laura MacDonald provided an overview of IP licensing and technology transfer professionals from public research organisations. Socially responsible licensing has long concerned this community. Numerous initiatives exemplify this commitment, including the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres' Ten Principles for Socially Responsible Licensing, Universities Allied for Essential Medicines' Equitable Technology Access Framework, the Tilburg Tranzo Centre for Care and Wellbeing's co-creation model, the City Deal Knowledge Making Initiative, the IMPAC3T IP toolbox for sustainable IP licensing, the Kiva Antibullying Programme of the University of Turku, and the AUTM Better World Project. Participants were encouraged to share best practices on the Knowledge Valorisation Platform hosted by the European Commission.

Bruno Vandermeulen demonstrated how repurposing IP-protected technologies into different fields and markets creates win-win situations. He illustrated this with cooling technologies owned by a Belgian supermarket company, repurposed as a passive cold chain solution for pharmaceutical transportation in low-income countries. This addressed a critical transportation problem whilst opening new business opportunities for the technology owner, previously inactive in temperature-controlled transport.

The Pfizer representative presented an industry-led impact initiative. In 2022, Pfizer launched the Accord for a Healthier World, offering its full vaccine and medicine portfolio—for which it holds global rights—on a not-for-profit basis in 45 lower-income countries. Fifteen countries have been activated, with Pfizer's commitment covering current and future products. The ETEX representative demonstrated how IP licensing relates to business models. ETEX operates in the plaster market, normally developing new technologies in-house to avoid competitor technology spillover. However, pursuing sector sustainability, ETEX established a joint venture with Heidelberg Materials for recycled fibre cement production, with plans to licence it to other market players.

- Equity, Royalties and Early Cash

This session featured Shin Kang, Chief Scientific Officer at Healthcare Royalty, and Andrew Tingey, Director Licensing & IP Transactions at Symbiosis IP (part of Gateley).

Tingey compared institutional equity holding and licensing approaches in spinout formation. Universities may take equity whilst assigning IP rights free to the company, take royalties through fully commercial licences, or combine moderate equity with royalty-capped licences. Deal

structures vary substantially depending on IP type, sector, spinout support requirements, and other factors. In the UK, equity at foundation typically ranges from 20 to 30 percent, though this can vary from 5 to 50 percent.

Royalty structures similarly vary: fixed percentages, milestone payments, instalments, royalty caps, and assignment triggers are common. Royalty-based structures offer predictability, simplified administration, and licensor ownership retention, but create licensor dependence on spinout economic success. Financial comparison reveals equity provides large one-time payouts whilst licensing provides stable income. Equity offers greater influence and operational control, though this dilutes as investors enter. Licensing without assignment permits greater technology control. Examples from software, engineering, and biotechnology sectors demonstrated that licensing remains the most profitable option except for companies experiencing very short product cycles.

Kang presented private royalty as a third spinout funding alternative alongside traditional private equity and private credit. Royalty-based financing is undervalued because monetisation typically occurs late in company development, yet represents an attractive early cash source. Upfront liquidity in substantial sums provides significant value. When drafting licences for future royalty monetisation, important considerations include clarity on IP ownership, risk management through assignment of IP prosecution to licensee to encourage investment in IP protection, and royalty compliance achieved through negotiated audit access rights to verify licensee royalty payment accuracy.

- Licensing in Patent Landscapes of Breakthrough Technologies

Moderated by Greg Corcoran, Patent Attorney and Founder at Greg Corcoran IP, this session featured Catherine Combes, Partner at Haseltine Lake Kempner LLP; Peter Camesasca, Partner at Peter Camesasca Advokaat BVBA; and Claudia Zeri, Advocaat at Coupry Lawyers.

Catherine Combes addressed CRISPR - a gene-editing technology - complexity, existing priority filing disputes, and available licensing groups. She noted that licensing becomes exceptionally difficult when technology patentability changes over time. Negotiating effectively requires clarity on one's market position.

Peter Camesasca commented on the European Commission's October 2024 fine of €462.6 million against Teva for abuse of dominant position seeking to delay competition to Copaxone (Teva's multiple sclerosis treatment). Teva's disparagement and patent procedure misuse—staggered divisional patent filings and strategic pre-appeal patent withdrawals—was deemed anti-competitive. The Commission considered the availability of patent validity challenges to be an expression of competition between parties, and obstructing its effectiveness violated competition law. Questions remain whether Commission-imposed guidelines will impact future patent enforcement strategies. Competition law aspects of patent enforcement have been extensively discussed for Standard Essential Patents (SEPs); the Teva decision may broaden this discussion to general patent enforcement.

Camesasca views the Teva decision as a red herring, arguing competition law is concerned with the effect of actions in market openness and dynamism rather than specific and isolated actor behaviour. The Technology Transfer Block Exemption Regulation explicitly addresses competition and licensing law interfaces, creating safe harbours for technology transfer agreements between entities holding less than specified market thresholds. Agreements containing hardcore restrictions such as price-fixing forgo safe harbour protection and require anticompetitive effects

self-assessment. Cross-licensing, sublicensing, and patent pools also contact competition law, as do grant-back clauses, no-challenge clauses, and closed patent pools which may have anticompetitive consequences. Involving antitrust lawyers early is essential for technology licensing professionals involved in this field.

Claudia Zeri discussed Teva implications for patent owners. Rule adherence alone may prove insufficient. Zeri addressed technologies that, whilst not Standard Essential Patents, function as de facto sector standards. She referenced Dutch law, where courts did not consider de facto standards grounds for reducing patent owner injunction rights. However, courts considered contract law good faith principles should guide licensor behaviour assessment against licensees.

- Startups from Academia and Licensing

This session was moderated by Jean-Christophe Troussel, LESI President and Partner at Bird & Bird. Speakers represented different innovation and valorisation ecosystem actors—inventors, investors, technology licensing professionals, entrepreneurs—and included Robert Al, TTO Director at Erasmus MC; Will Crowcombe, Managing Director at FSO Instruments B.V.; Dr Tatiana Litvin-Vechnyak, Vice-President of Technology Commercialisation at Georgetown University Office of Technology Commercialisation; and Michael Briejer, Managing Partner at Thuja Capital.

Discussion began by exploring each participant's role in the technology commercialisation ecosystem, followed by substantive discussion on commercialising academic inventions. Robert Al noted that Erasmus MC's TTO employs a dual approach: the TTO focuses on licensing, while spinout equity is managed by a separate holding company. Tatiana Litvin-Vechnyak noted that US universities commonly hold equity. Early-stage US startups frequently use public funding and subsidies, which insufficiently cover early fees; university equity becomes important here. Michael Briejer considers university spinout equity holdings do not deter his investment.

Discussion addressed how licensing agreement terms and conditions influence spinout success. In pharmaceuticals, the objective typically involves acquisition by a major company, eventually leading to IPO. From investors' perspectives, anti-shelving clauses complicate matters, as they may require IP surrender as a consequence of strategic business decisions. From TTOs' perspectives, such clauses remain important to avoid fighting for licensed technology renegotiation when investors arrive. Strong clauses prove particularly important for universities building knowledge valorisation credibility. Templates such as AUTM Bold licensing offer assistance. Bold approaches to licensing and equity structures can unlock new opportunities across the innovation ecosystem.

- Licensing with impact, access to medicines: principles to consider

This session was moderated by Kevin Nachtrab, Senior Counsel (Retired) at Johnson & Johnson. The panel brought together diverse perspectives: Andrew (Andy) Goldman from the Medicines Patent Pool, a UN-backed international public health organisation facilitating access to medicines and other health related innovations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs); Frank Landolt, Chief Counsel, Intellectual Property and Legal at Confo Therapeutics (previously Ablynx); and Laetitia Szaller, General Counsel & Head of Compliance at Egetis Therapeutics. The panel also included Carmen E. Correa M., legal counsel and Team Coordinator at Erasmus MC, and Wouter Pors Lawyer and partner at Windt legal.

This session explored the intersection of IP, licensing practices, and equitable access to medicines in LMICs, featuring perspectives from research institutions, intermediaries facilitating LMIC access, and industry stakeholders.

Andy Goldman introduced the Medicines Patent Pool's mission to improve access to essential medicines in LMICs, highlighting the Affordable Access Plan (AAP) model clause, which is increasingly adopted by universities to embed social impact considerations into licensing agreements. Carmen Correa provided an overview of how academic institutions approach socially responsible licensing (SRL), referencing several guiding frameworks: AUTM's "Nine Points to Consider" (2007); Dutch Federation of Universities' SRL Principles (2019); VLIR Guidelines (2021); and the University Association for Essential Medicines document (2020). She also emphasized the unique socio-political context in the Netherlands, particularly regarding medicine pricing and availability.

Frank Landolt and Laetitia Szaller discussed the practical challenges faced by biotech companies in entering LMIC markets, including regulatory compliance, quality assurance and patient safety. These concerns are especially pronounced for startups and smaller firms with limited resources. Wouter Pors addressed enforceability issues in licensing agreements, particularly clauses related to reasonable commercial efforts and access obligations.

The panel explored how licensing terms can balance commercial viability with equitable access. Concepts such as royalty-free licensing for public markets and tiered pricing models were discussed. The Medicine Patent Pool's approach was identified as a promising framework to address industry concerns whilst promoting global health equity.

The session underscored the complexity of implementing licensing strategies that achieve meaningful social impact. While models like the Affordable Access Plan offer pathways to reach patients in need of solutions, panellists agreed that no single solution fits all contexts. Continued dialogue, awareness, and innovation in licensing practices are essential, not only in healthcare but across all sectors where technology can address pressing societal challenges.

Conclusion

The conference offered rich, substantive content. However, a LES conference would be incomplete without outstanding social events that facilitates network opportunity among participants. The first evening featured an exclusive Mauritshuis visit, where museum guides explained celebrated paintings including Johannes Vermeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring and Paulus Potter's The Bull. During dinner, many participants wore gold clothing, with some taking the challenge particularly seriously. Former LES Benelux president, Nigel Wagstaff, provided an entertaining speech. Current President Carmen Correa received a gift from Saskia van Dijk-Struyk LES former secretary and founder of LES BENELUX: a ceremonial gavel with which she used to close the 2025 LES PAN EU Conference. The conference Farewell Party and YMC networking event was held as a beach party in Barbarossa, Scheveningen, where attendees enjoyed a beautiful sunset alongside relaxed conversation, music, and an excellent buffet. We look forward to welcoming many participants again in the regular events LES BENELUX organises throughout the year. Stay connected by visiting the LES BENELUX website <https://les-benelux.org>, and we hope to see you at the LESI Conference in Dublin from 26 to 29 April 2026.

Special EPO visit

Following the conference, participants who registered for the post-conference programme enjoyed a visit to the EPO's premises in Rijswijk. This visit was organised by LES in cooperation with ASTP. After a warm welcome and sited tour, attendees explored patent intelligence and search tools developed by the EPO, including tools that provide enhanced technological information to users and AI tools that assist patent examiners. The morning concluded with presentations and discussions between EPO, LES and ASTP representatives on power of intellectual property in creating positive social impact, followed by lunch at the EPO canteen. Particular thanks are due to Mr Piotr Wierzejewski, Mr Pere Arque Castells, Mr Lluís Gimeno-Fabra and Ms Roberta Romano-Götsch for their kind welcome and fruitful conversations.