

## Foreword to the Special Issue

By Benoît Battistelli and Peter K. Hess

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are attributed with bringing great innovation, energy and productivity into traditional and new sectors. Patents help them to foster innovative solutions by encouraging and rewarding investment. But if the full potential of intellectual property (IP) is to be exploited by SMEs, we need a better understanding of how exactly IP can be commercialised by innovative companies, regardless of their size, sector or location.

The LESI and EPO have published this special edition of *les Nouvelles* together to demonstrate how SMEs are effectively leveraging the power of patents to achieve business success. The 12 case studies—which range in sector, location and size—provide comprehensive accounts of the different ways in which IP is playing an integral role in the development of established as well as emerging enterprises. Each case study by the EPO features a number of recommendations highlighting factors that have contributed to effective IP strategy and management development.

Among the different ways in which patents are being used by SMEs, licensing is highlighted as a flexible yet powerful tool that can contribute to growth and success. Some have chosen to actively grant licenses for their technologies according to a number of different licensing models and depending on the business partner, the product licensed, the technology and the commercial environment. Another case study explores how its licensing model safeguards further Research and Development investments by generating up to 90% of company revenues. And, among university spin-offs, one enterprise attributes its ability to successfully market products based on licensed IP.

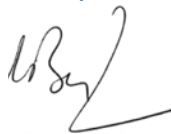
Both the EPO and the LESI have an integral role in this process by helping SMEs to make effective use of patents and reach their full potential. On the one

hand, LESI members and many other *les Nouvelles* readers are involved in the successful commercialisation of patents. The expansive network of business executives, lawyers, researchers, patent agents, brokers, consultants and many others all help SMEs to build patent portfolios and commercialise accordingly. On the other, successful use of patents is dependent upon those same patents being legally robust and of the highest quality. To do that, the EPO has implemented a rigorous quality and efficiency policy that has secured its role as a leader in the field.

Effective use of patents by SMEs therefore involves both the EPO and the members of the LES and our collaboration on this special issue symbolises that wider relationship. In addition, both organisations are striving to achieve similar goals. When the LES was formed, its mission statement included the need to promote and educate on the economic significance of IP. Similarly, part of the EPO's vision is to empower inventors to use their knowledge and skills to the full. It is our hope that this publication will help us to reach those objectives and to give SMEs the full support that they so keenly deserve. ■

■ Benoît Battistelli,  
President,  
European Patent Office  
E-mail: [president@epo.org](mailto:president@epo.org)

■ Peter K. Hess,  
President,  
LESI International  
E-mail: [hess@bardehle.de](mailto:hess@bardehle.de)



Benoît Battistelli  
President  
European Patent Office



Peter K. Hess  
President  
LESI International