

Protecting Innovations

Innovations consume time and money. So it is very logical to protect these investments against imitation. However, many entrepreneurs underestimate the risks of not seeking for protection.

For that reason the Netherlands Patent Office (NPO), an agency of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, actively stimulates SME's (Small and Medium sized Enterprises) to use patent documents in their innovation strategy. To enable that, the Dutch Patent Law will be adapted to improve the accessibility of the patent system. According to Mrs Karin Streng, leader of the Group Patent Grants of NPO, 'These changes give these companies better legal security. We want to improve the awareness of those SME's on their interest and demonstrate the advantages very clearly. Apart from that, the costs are downsized in order to overcome the threshold for innovative companies.'

Archi Leenaers is president of Anatech, a company specialized in the development of analytical instruments. 'Anatech uses patents in two ways. One is to protect our own intellectual property. The other is to gain insights in the technology and the know-how that has been documented in other patents. We can learn a lot from these documents. Though much time consuming, it is certainly worthwhile studying them. We believe that many more SME's should make patent research an integral part of their business strategy. And certainly do so before they start an expensive and risktaking new project.'

Apart from the application of new patents, the stimulation of patent research is indeed an important spearhead in the new information campaign for the near future. 'We want to be more visible', tells Peter van Dongen, accountmanager. 'By posting our employees regionally at Syntens, another agency of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, we can get into contact with the SME's much easier. And improving our website gives our relations easier access to more information.'

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