

European Stroke Organisation (ESO) Department-to-Department Visit Programme Report

Awardee: Louise Maes, University Hospitals Leuven

Host Institution: Erasmus University Medical Center (Erasmus MC)

Firstly, I sincerely thank the European Stroke Organisation and prof. dr. Daniel Bos for providing me with the opportunity to visit Erasmus MC, Rotterdam in June 2025. The visit offered an ideal combination of professional development, clinical teaching, interdisciplinary collaboration, new project ideas, and memorable experiences.

My passion for stroke care has grown significantly in recent years, leading me to combine my neurology residency with a doctoral research project focused on stroke. A key component of my PhD is an imaging sub-study of a randomized clinical trial, aiming to improve diagnostic and therapeutic strategies for stroke patients with atherosclerosis. I have collected and analyzed more than 500 CTA and NCCT scans, assessing plaque characteristics to improve risk stratification in patients with vulnerable plaques.

Prof. Dr. Daniel Bos is a recognized expert in the field of extra- and intracranial atherosclerosis. The ESO Department-to-Department Visit Programme provided me with the opportunity to further analyse these scans using advanced software that enables detailed assessment of plaque volume and composition. In addition, we were able to initiate a new project focusing on intracranial atherosclerosis, thereby expanding our research collaboration.

From the very beginning, I was warmly welcomed by Prof. Bos and his team, whose support and enthusiasm made the experience both productive and enjoyable. During my two-week stay in Rotterdam, I had the opportunity to work closely with the Radiology Department on our ongoing collaborative research projects. I also visited the Neurology Department and participated in teaching activities with medical students and residents. Beyond the professional aspects, I also took the time to explore Rotterdam during a few “running breaks” and visited Hoek van Holland in beautiful weather.

In summary, it was a true privilege to visit Erasmus MC and the city of Rotterdam. I was delighted to learn that ESOC 2026 will be held in Maastricht, right on the border between the Netherlands and Belgium — a great opportunity to reconnect with the Erasmus MC team. I would once again like to express my sincere gratitude to the ESO for offering me the opportunity to participate in the Department-to-Department Visit Programme.

