

The European Association for Professions in Biomedical Sciences

Who are we?

Biomedical Scientists (BMS) are scientists who work in the health services throughout Europe providing a clinical laboratory service, working in such a diversity of areas like microbiology, haematology, medicine transfusion, biochemistry, public health, molecular biology, virology, flow cytometry, cell culture, histology, cytology, research in cancer, HIV quality control assurance and others. Many of us also work in clinical laboratories in Universities and on clinical research projects. The continued health and wellbeing of our citizens is dependent on having competent scientists in this area.

What is European Association for Professions in Biomedical Sciences and who are its members?

The Association was established to promote the best practice and ethics of the European professionals in Biomedical Laboratory Science (herein after referred to as Biomedical Science) in Europe. These objectives are achieved through the following activities:

1. Coordinating the mutual and official recognition of equivalence of standards concerning Biomedical Science and its harmonization, in matters of information, procedures, education, training, testing, measurement resources, laboratory standards, quality management and competence, regulation and codes of ethics;
2. Promoting the essential role of Biomedical Science in the Health Care System to the general public;
3. Co-operating with teaching establishments offering biomedical education;
4. Promoting training and continued professional programmes for education development and coordinating activities;
5. Providing advice to its members and others concerned with the provision of health care and its services to humanity;

6. Establishing formal contact with international organizations active in the field of Laboratory Medicine;
7. Establishing formal links with relevant European organizations;
8. Providing advice, consultation and recommendations on facets of Biomedical Science to the European Commission and other relevant European Bodies and organizations;
9. Promoting the European ideology of Biomedical Science among its members.

Zusammenfassung

Fernando Mendes, Generalsekretär des europäischen Dachverbandes der Biomedizinischen Wissenschaftler/-innen (European Association for Professions in Biomedical Science - EPBS) beschreibt in seinem Artikel den Aufbau und die Ziele des EPBS sowie deren bildungspolitische Forderungen.

Der EPBS wurde 1999 in den Niederlanden als Non-Profit-Organisation gegründet und ist seit 2006 als internationaler Non-Profit-Verband in Brüssel (Belgien) registriert. Momentan setzt sich der EPBS aus 23 nationalen Verbänden zusammen, zu denen auch der DVTVA gehört. Das höchste Entscheidungsgremium des EPBS ist die jährlich stattfindende Mitgliederversammlung (General Governing Body - GGB), zu der jeder Mitgliedsverband Delegierte entsendet. Auf dem GGB wird der Vorstand des EPBS gewählt (Management Body - MB), der den europäischen Dachverband offiziell vertritt. Das Ziel des europäischen Dachverbandes ist es, die unterschiedlichen Handlungsfelder der Biomedizinischen Wissenschaftler/-innen (BMS), zu denen in Deutschland die MTLA gehören, zu fördern, die ethischen Grundsätze der Biomedizinischen Analytik weiterzuentwickeln, die Mitgliedsverbände auf europäischer Ebene berufspolitisch zu vertreten sowie die Berufsfelder zu harmonisieren und Informationen auszutauschen.

Der EPBS hat in den letzten Jahren zahlreiche Richtlinien herausgegeben, die sich insbesondere mit der Ausbildung der BMS beschäftigen. Fernando Mendes bekräftigt in seinem Artikel, dass für den EPBS nur eine akademische Ausbildung der BMS akzeptabel sei. Das Minimum an Ausbildung, das der EPBS in der „Policy on Education“ für BMS fordert, ist die akademische Ausbildung auf Bachelor-Niveau. Fernando Mendes weist darauf hin, dass fast alle Mitgliedsländer des EPBS die Ausbildung auf Hochschulniveau anbieten, mit Ausnahme von Deutschland, Spanien und Teilen der Schweiz. Mendes wirft in seinem Artikel der deutschen Regierung vor, die internationalen Begebenheiten zu ignorieren und die deutschen MTLA zu „Gefangenen“ des eigenen Ausbildungssystems zu machen, die sich aufgrund der fehlenden hochschulischen Ausbildung nicht frei auf dem europäischen Arbeitsmarkt bewegen können. Des Weiteren führt er an, dass die restriktive deutsche Bildungspolitik die Weiterentwicklung des Gesundheitswesens sowie der Biomedizinischen Analytik hemmt und die bestmögliche Patientenversorgung verhindert.

Der EPBS hat zur besseren Vernetzung von unterschiedlichen Ausbildungseinrichtungen das „Academic Network of EPBS“ ins Leben gerufen. Alle Mitglieder dieses Netzwerkes haben die Möglichkeit, sich mit europäischen Kollegen/-innen über bildungsrelevante Themen auszutauschen. Fernando Mendes weist darauf hin, dass alle interessierten Bildungseinrichtungen herzlich zur Teilnahme eingeladen und weitere Informationen dazu unter www.epbs.net zu finden sind.

In order to achieve its objectives, EPBS shall develop contacts with the European governing bodies, publish brochures, facilitate exchange programmes for students and professionals, draw up regulations intended to harmonize professional practices within the member countries and carry out any other activity which is consistent with the objectives described above. Membership is only open to professional bodies committed to developing the skills and knowledge of the biomedical scientist in order to become an effective member of the health care team.

The EPBS was formed in May 1999 at The Hague, Netherlands, a non-profit organization committed to promoting best practice and ethics for BMS throughout Europe. It was officially registered in Brussels, Belgium in 2006 as an international non-profit association, being the official address is Place Jean Jacobs, 3 w B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium.

EPBS Members

Actually EPBS counts 23 members, namely from:

- Austria - biomed austria - Österreichischer Berufsverband der Biomedizinischen AnalytikerInnen;
- Belgium - Belgische Vereniging van Laboratorium Technologen v.z.w (BVLT); Association Belge des Technologues de Laboratoire (ABTL);
- Bosnia Herzegovina the Association of Laboratory and Sanitary Technicians in Bosnia and Herzegovina;

- Croatia - Croatian Chamber of Health Professionals: Professional Department for Medical Laboratory Activities;
- Cyprus - Association of Clinical Laboratory Directors and Biomedical Scientists;
- Denmark - Danske Bioanalytikere (dbio);
- Estonia - Eesti Bioanalüütikute Ühing (MTÜ);
- Finland - Association of Medical Laboratory Technologists in Finland, Suomen Bioanalyttikoliitto ry;
- France - Association Nationale des Techniciens en Analyses Biomédicales;
- Germany - Dachverband für Technologen/-innen und Analytiker/-innen in der Medizin (DVTA);
- Greece - P.E.T.I.E - Panhellenic Association Of Medical Laboratory Technologists;
- Iceland - The Icelandic Association of Biomedical Scientists;
- Ireland - The Academy of Medical Laboratory Science;
- Italy - SIMeL - Società Italiana di Medicina di Laboratorio;
- Netherlands - Nederlandse Vereniging van bioMedisch Laboratoriummedewerkers (NVML);
- Norway - Bioingeniørfaglig Institutt;
- Portugal - Sindicato Nacional dos Técnicos Superiores de Saúde das Áreas de Diagnóstico e Terapêutica;
- Serbia - Association of Laboratory Technologist and Technicians in Serbia;
- Slovakia - Slovenská komora Medicínsko-Technických Pracovníkov;
- Spain - Asociación Española de Técnicos de Laboratorio;
- Sweden - The Swedish Association of Health Professionals/Vårdförbundet;
- Switzerland - labmed schweiz suisse svizzera;
- United Kingdom - Institute of Biomedical Science.

EPBS Structure and Organization

EPBS has the General Governing Body (GGB) being the Association's sovereign power and has the broadest powers

awarded by law that allow the realization of the Association's objectives. Each member associations nominate representatives, a Chief Delegate and a Delegate, to the GGB of the EPBS which meets annually, management of the EPBS is entrusted to the Management Body (MB) elected by the GGB.

The MB of EPBS shall carry out all administrative and management duties for the proper operation of the Association and shall dispose of all powers not expressly reserved by the Statutes or by law to the GGB.

The MB of EPBS is constituted by a President – Marie Culliton from Ireland, a General Secretary – Fernando Mendes from Portugal, a Treasurer – Anneke Geurts-Moespot from Netherlands, Two Directors – Anne Berndt from Sweden and Sonia Daadoucha Perroud from Switzerland and Student Forum Facilitator – Barbara Kappeller from Austria.

EPBS Student Forum

Parallel to the GGB of EPBS each year we have the Student Forum, an EPBS project, a place where we can empower our future colleagues who are now students, to understand their motivations, their concerns and their professional expectations for the future, as well as the expectations of their profession in their country, and in this big territory to which everyone contributes that is European Union. The main purpose is to give a generous contribution in order to enrich even more EPBS. We know that our biggest investment is the youngsters, the future professionals, who can give strength and good future to our profession.

The first Student Forum was held in Ireland in October 2002, to which some countries brought their representatives, but year after year the participation has increased, being nowadays a very important part of EPBS meeting, in 2013 in Berlin major steps towards the strengthen and construction of the Academic Network of EPBS, were made thanks to the BMS students from several countries who participated actively.



From left to right, Sonia Daadoucha-Perroud, Anneke Geurts-Moespot, Barbara Kappeller, Marie Culliton, Fernando Mendes, Anne Berndt and Paulo Polónio.

Policy Documents

During the last years EPBS has produced several Policy Documents, like a Policy Document on Education, Policy document on Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and a Policy Statement on Point of Care Testing (POCT). All documents are accessible in www.epbs.net.

As we are scientists and health professionals, a code of ethics is fundamental, due to this EPBS endorsed the IFBLS code of Ethics for BMS, having a Professional code of conduct, so important to the profession, as the level of education, recognizing the autonomy and importance of BMS in Europe and at International level.

Biomedical Science Education and EPBS Policy on Education

For BMS and EPBS the Policy Document on Education is one of the most important policy documents. It proposes a European Curriculum for BMS education in Europe, that can, and should be used by all Schools, Colleges and Universities where Biomedical Sciences is taught. EPBS recommends that education programmes for BMS should equip graduates to be employed as decision makers in clinical laboratories. We advocate that the programmes should prepare graduates to participate in leading and developing the clinical laboratory service ensuring patient safety, quality assurance and scientific rigor. The minimum standard of education for Biomedical Scientists acceptable to EPBS is a Bachelor level or 1st cycle under the Bologna Process. The standard envisaged is a minimum of 4 years of higher Education with 240 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), including supervised clinical practice. Before being registered or licensed for independent practice as Biomedical Scientist candidates should undergo a supervised and assessed clinical placement.

The majority of our members, nowadays are at Higher Education level, with a minimum of 180 ECTS, 210 ECTS or 240 ECTS, with some minor exceptions of countries (that are at the moment, working their best to change their education and achieve this level of education). Once the level of education as reflexing on the European Qualification Framework (http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/eqf_en.htm) and on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications regulated by the Directive 2005/36/EC (http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/qualifications/index_en.htm).

Governments in countries like Germany, Spain, Switzerland and others across Europe by not changing the level of education of their BMS and not understanding the reality already existing in the rest of European Union and International level, contribute enormously to the impossibility of profession mobility across Europe of their citizens, making them "prisoners" inside their borders. These regressive practices contribute enormously to not providing the best clinical laboratory service, not developing the health care system and the best practices for the patients and not developing Biomedical Science knowledge in Europe.

EPBS Projects ongoing

EPBS has several projects ongoing, namely through working groups, and these are:

- Vision for the Profession
- Continuous Professional Development
- Sponsorship
- Joint Master Degree in Biomedical Laboratory Sciences
- European Academic Network in Biomedical Sciences
- Point of care Testing and Patient Self-testing.

These Working Groups are coordinated by one element of the MB of EPBS and work with several elements from our members.

Academic Network of EPBS

The Academic Network of EPBS is a network of Universities, Colleges and Schools that teach Biomedical Science across Europe, by being Academic Network of EPBS member, educators in this field of Health Sciences will have access to relevant information, the opportunity to participate in European projects, develop new BSc, Master and PhD programs in Biomedical Science.

The Network may enhance ERASMUS exchange programs by finding new partnerships, in the near future the website of EPBS will have a dedicated area for the Academic Network of EPBS where your contacts will appear and also a reserved area for working projects under Academic Network of EPBS.

For each month of the year, one institution will have a special focus in EPBS website, where you can promote and make a brief history of your course, student number, post-graduation studies and number of publications, partnerships and ongoing projects.

The overarching purpose of the Academic Network of EPBS is to promote a synergistic relationship between the national societies united in EPBS and the educational institutions united in Academic Network of EPBS, this would be the ideal combination to act as influential policymakers for the profession across Europe. Professional societies and educational institutions united in the EPBS will form the biggest possible pressure group to work for the Biomedical Scientist profession at the European level.

Many strategies that the EPBS plans to carry out are related to Biomedical Science education matters. Educational institutions, reinforced by the knowledge and manpower from the EPBS expert network will have an excellent workforce available to carry out and to share the workload and ensure an effective and efficient use of knowledge, manpower and finances this should best be organized within the structure of EPBS. European Universities and other educational institutions which offer Biomedical Science education are warmly invited to join the Academic Network of EPBS and become affiliated members of the EPBS. These are some of the benefits of being a member:

- International visibility
- Inspiration for professional development
- Discussions of mutual concern
- Possibilities of international co-operation/collaboration – research and other
- Contributions to Quality Assurance and benchmarking for BMS in Europe
- Researching the extent of Evidence Based Practice
- Exploring and sharing learning & teaching methods
- Strong student involvement
- New perspectives and views of different cultures
- Promote an European identity for BMS.

In summary EPBS has been and will be an umbrella Association for Biomedical Sciences in Europe and specifically in this unique geographical, political and economic space that is the European Union. One voice that represents all the BMS in Europe in issues so important as education, professional development, vision for the profession, continuous professional development, Point of Care testing, Quality Control among others, maintaining the highest level of knowledge and the most advance practices.

By combining strategies, sharing knowledge and working together EPBS and all its members, have work towards the visibility of this profession in Europe, always in mind that BMS should deliver the best services for the most important ones on Health System: the patients. ■

Fernando Mendes

General Secretary of EPBS

Associate Professor at ESTeSC-Coimbra Health School

E-Mail: generalsecretary@epbs.net