

The European Association for Professions in Biomedical Science



Marie Culliton, MSc, MBA, FACSLM
President Elect,
International Federation of Biomedical Laboratory Science

The International Association For Biomedical Laboratory Science (IFBLS) was established in 1954 as the world's widest reaching international organization for Biomedical Laboratory Scientists, bringing the profession, the professionals and health priorities to the world stage.

Following the conclusion of World War II in 1945, the leaders in Europe sought to ensure that such a calamity would never happen again. In 1957 the Treaty of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC), or 'Common Market,' a grouping of 6 nations. In 1973 this group expanded to 9 countries and by 2013 the group had grown to 28 countries. Each of these countries elects members to a European Parliament and a Commission, essentially the administration of the Union, now termed European Union or EU.

One of the principles of the EU is mobility of its citizens. There is an EU Directive specifically laying down the principles relating to the free movement of professionals between member states.

The European Association for Professions in Biomedical Science (EPBS) was formed in May 1999 at The Hague, Netherlands. This International Non-Profit Association (AISBL) is committed to promoting best practice and ethics for Biomedical Laboratory Scientists throughout Europe. It was officially registered under the Belgian law in Brussels in 2006 as an international non-profit association. It now represents more than 250 000 Biomedical Scientists from 22 countries in Europe

The aims of the EPBS are to:

- promote the maintenance of the highest possible standards of practice within biomedical science
- develop the ethical and professional values of the biomedical scientist
- support the training and education of the biomedical scientist in order to improve health care provision
- foster co-operation between member societies in areas of education, continuing professional development, competences and research
- liaise with EU Commission on all issues relevant to biomedical science
- utilise this shared knowledge between the societies to the benefit of all.

The two organizations IFBLS and EPBS both work towards similar objectives, one with a global remit and the other focusing on the role and education for biomedical scientists in Europe. They have a Memorandum of Understanding outlining their relationship. The membership of each organisation is drawn from the professional bodies representing biomedical scientists. Many members are members of both organizations and indeed many Presidents of IFBLS have been drawn from the profession in Europe with reputations within EPBS.

EPBS has furthered its aims by producing a policy of education of Biomedical Scientists for practice which can form the basis for the free movement of biomedical scientists in Europe. In 2021, a long-time goal has been achieved with the launch of a European Joint Master Degree in Biomedical Science offered by a consortium of colleges in 4 countries (Austria, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden).

In May 2021 members of EPBS, mindful of the continuing evolution of the Covid-19 pandemic globally and within Europe decided that a position paper outlining the issues involved in providing a service for the safe testing for the Sars-CoV-2 virus and highlighting the pivotal role of Biomedical Scientists in this service should be prepared. This position paper could be used by EPBS and its members to petition the EU Commission and their national health services to ensure that the testing provided meets quality standards and ensures the safety of European citizens.

A task force led by Anneke Geurts-Moespot and Neven Sucic from the EPBS management body, along with the past-president Marie Culliton with representation from Iceland, Portugal, Malta, and Sweden worked to prepare the executive summary and position paper which is published in this issue.