



5. February 2021

To the Ministers of health and education in Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark

The formalized network Nordisk Medisinsk Laboratoriegroupe (NML) is represented by the national associations for Biomedical Laboratory Scientists; Danske Bioanalytikere (dbio), Suomen Bioanalyttikoliitto, Félag lífeindafræðinga (FL), Bioingeniørfaglig institutt (NITO/BFI), Institutet för biomedicinsk laboratorievetenskap (IBL) and Vårdförbundet.

The representatives of NML met in December 2020 and the current staff-shortage of Biomedical Laboratory Scientists and future of the profession were discussed. The situation and challenges in the Nordic countries are similar which is the background to this joint letter.

Challenges during Covid-19 pandemic

There is and has been a shortage of Biomedical Laboratory Scientists in the Nordic countries for many years. Despite different Covid-19 testing strategies in the Nordic countries, the shortage became even more visible during the pandemic, when mass testing required employers to recruit, but there are too few with the required education to apply for the positions. Even though the associations in the Nordic countries have long warned that the trend of reduced applicants to the Biomedical Laboratory Scientist programs could cause a huge shortage in the future, the pandemic caused an acute shortage in the Nordic countries. There were too few to analyze tests for Covid-19, in addition to all other analysis that are needed to diagnose other illnesses and conditions in patients.

The future shortage of Biomedical Laboratory Scientist in the Nordic countries.

The average age of Biomedical Laboratory Scientists in the Nordic countries is very high, 50 – 54 years. Biomedical Laboratory Scientists are amongst the most experienced professions in health care and >30% of the current work force employed in clinical laboratories will retire within the next 10 years.

The national associations of NML have worked on different measures to increase the interest in Biomedical Laboratory Scientist programs in our respective countries. It would be of very high value if a political focus and support across the Nordic countries could be achieved in order to act on the required measures. And the aim needs to be, not only recruitment of new students for the Bachelor program, but also further education on Master level/Specialization, to create career paths and better salary development for the hard working, experienced Biomedical Laboratory Scientists in the workforce.

With 1/3 of the profession retiring within the next 10 years, competences, knowledge, and skills will be lost in the clinical laboratories. The education and training that is needed in order to perform high quality and safe analysis has relied on the experience, knowledge and competences of the senior professionals. To speed up the skills and knowledge of the younger Biomedical Laboratory Scientists to handle and assure the quality of the continuous changes in technology, we are convinced that regulated, formalized specialist education is needed to keep a high level of knowledge and quality in the profession, as well as further develop Biomedical Laboratory Science.

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The Biomedical Laboratory Scientist profession has low number of employees compared to other groups of healthcare professions, but is working in areas with a high level of specialization. The numbers of employees in each area in need of specialized education are often too low to motivate for setting up further specialized education in each Nordic country. Thus, the Nordic network would welcome a joint Nordic initiative to consider the opportunities for joint specialist educations on Nordic level.

With this letter, the Nordic representatives of NML, hope respective ministers in each of the Nordic countries, will take the time to meet with the local NML representatives, to elaborate on the national issues faced by the Biomedical Laboratory Scientists.

A similar letter has been sent to The Nordic Council of Ministers/The Nordic Council.

On behalf of the representatives of NML

Martina Jürs
Chair for Nordisk Medisinsk Laboratoriegroupe, 2020/2021