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LifeTrain: towards a European framework for continuing professional development in biomedical sciences.

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The medicines research and development process has recently undergone considerable change and will continue to change: biomedical professionals are now expected to be much more agile than previously, moving and collaborating between disciplines, sectors and geographical locations. This necessitates that they continually develop and maintain the required competencies to work most effectively.

LifeTrain is an emerging pan-European framework for continuing professional development in the biomedical sciences. It has been developed with four major stakeholder groups – professional/scientific bodies, course providers, employers and individual professionals. The LifeTrain framework comprises four sets of agreed principles (one for each stakeholder group) and has a growing list of signatories who have agreed to the principles of the framework and to continue working together to implement LifeTrain.

LifeTrain's approach focuses on working collaboratively to develop competency profiles for the different roles required in medicines research and development, spanning the entire value chain. Responsibility for learning lies with the individual professional, but is supported by employers, professional/scientific bodies and course providers working together to provide an appropriate environment for learning. This stimulates mutual recognition of competencies to facilitate mobility: across disciplines; between academia, industry and Regulatory Authorities; and across geographical boundaries.

LifeTrain is coordinated by the EMTRAIN project (www.emtrain.eu), on behalf of all the Education and Training projects funded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI). IMI (www.imi.europa.eu) is Europe's largest public-private partnership, and aims at improving the research environment in all sciences involved in medicines research and supporting European science in this broad field in the context of world-wide competition.

Several stakeholder groups, including the IMI projects Eu2P (www.eu2p.eu), PharmaTrain (www.pharmatrain.eu) and SafeSciMET (www.safescimet.eu) as well as professional bodies like EPHAR (www.epar.org) are currently developing certification processes to recognise that bearers excel in standards of education, skills, experience and professional standing in their respective disciplines. LifeTrain provides the framework for them to work together.