From 2017-2019, Sofie Bekaert was the president of BBMRI.be, driving the strategic route of BBMRI.be.

During her presidency, BBMRI.be has matured into a solid partner network on biobanks in Belgium.

A new structure was defined allowing us to accept new biobank partners and biobank user partners into our biobank network.

New working groups were set up to involve all stakeholders in the biobank community and to increase the visibility of BBMRI.be.

We would like to thank Sofie for all her enthusiasm and all the energy she has put in the continuous development of BBMRI.be and we hope that we can still steal her mind from time to time to get some input for BBMRI.be.

On September 4th 2019, Laurent Dollé was officially appointed as the next president of BBMRI.be. He will take up this position for the next two years. We would like to congratulate him with the new position and are looking forward to his vision on the further development of BBMRI.be!

Laurent earned his PhD degree in Cell Biology and Life Sciences from the University of Science and Technologies of Lille (France) in 2003.

After several positions at different Universities or Institutions of Belgium, Laurent has over 16 years of experience working in the Life Sciences field. In 2012, Laurent became Assistant Professor at the Free University of Brussels VUB), and developed several skills in stem cells isolation, maintenance and differentiation and was the first to identify liver stem cells from healthy non-manipulated livers by playing with an innovative technique based on Aldehyde dehydrogenase.

Laurent Dollé is also the Operating Director of BWB (Biobanking Wallonia-Brussels; Belgium), which regroups an impressive number of biobanks.
Welcome to our new partners!

The Jessa Biobank is located at the Jessa Hospital (Hasselt). It supports the scientific research conducted at the Jessa Hospital and its network partners, but is also open to support researchers from other institutions. The goal of the Jessa Biobank is to register, collect, process, analyze (for quality assurance) and store high-quality human body material and related information in order to make it available for a broad range of clinically relevant studies, as well as for the development of new diagnostic tests or procedures. The purpose of the Jessa Biobank is to improve the quality of patient care and accelerate the impact of research on such care. To this end, the Jessa Biobank will implement the highest standards regarding biobanking in order to provide excellent clinical, medical, demographical and analytical data to its researchers.

To achieve this goal, the Jessa Biobank has following objectives:

1. Function as a registration, collection, processing and storage facility for human body material acquired at the Jessa Hospital or its network partners.
2. Stimulate translational research by providing relevant human body material and/or data.
3. Act as contact point and center of expertise on biobanking in all its facets for internal and external stakeholders.
4. Offer services to third parties.
5. Fit with (inter)national laws and guidelines concerning biobanking.
6. Inform stakeholders.

The aim of the biobank of the department of Oncological Research of the GZA Hospitals is to collect and store samples and data of patients with cancer that will be used for cancer research only. The biobank will support translational cancer research by collecting and storing high-quality samples and follow-up data of patients with cancer. The department of Oncological Research of the GZA Hospitals hosts a translational cancer research unit. The primary aim of the biobank is to support the cancer research in this unit. The focus lies on breast cancer. The biobank of the department of Oncological Research of the GZA Hospitals is interested in interaction with other biobanks and BBMRI.be concerning standard operating procedures, GDPR-compliance and ISO 20387 accreditation. They are currently setting up a quality system with the intention to apply for external audit to obtain the accreditation according this norm.

Official opening Biobank Antwerpen

The University of Antwerp and the Antwerp University Hospital are announcing the opening of Biobank Antwerpen in Flanders, Belgium. You are all invited to join us on Wednesday 18th December for an afternoon of lectures that discuss the position of biobanks in the local environment as well as in the broader international perspective. The scientific session is followed by the ceremonial academic opening of the Biobank Antwerpen.

The Biobank Antwerpen builds upon the existing Tumorbank@UZA, which was set up in 2009 in the context of the Belgian National Cancer Plan Initiative as an integrated part of the Multidisciplinary Oncological Center of Antwerp (MOCA). It also integrates with the Center for Medical Innovation (CMI) initiative for biobankinfrastructure which was funded with the support of the Flemish Government.

The recent implementation of the Belgian Royal Decree on biobanks is expected to significantly increase the performance and the quality levels regarding the procurement and use of human substances for scientific research. Biobank Antwerpen is established with the aim of harboring a wide variety of human biological sample collections, both from UAntwerpen and UZA. Its main objective is to contribute to translational, biomedical and clinical research.

Biobank Antwerpen is reaching out to regional hospitals and research institutions and to local biotech and pharma and is taking up an active role in national and international biobanking communities such as BBMRI, ESBB and ISBER. Together, this will bring important new insights into specific health conditions and enable novel biomarker discoveries and therapeutics for better patient care and quality of life.

To celebrate this milestone with us, please register before December 1, 2019 via www.uza.be/opening-biobank-antwerpen. The full agenda is displayed in the link.
In Belgium, only notified biobanks are compliant with the national legal framework and are allowed to collect, store, use and make available the human body materials (or HBM) for scientific research purposes. Briefly, the current message is crystal clear: “no science without biobanks in Belgium! No notification, no mercy” said Laurent Dollé, managing director BWB (Biothèque Wallonie Brussels).

Indeed, the Royal Order (RO) of 9 January 2018 on biobanks, published in the Belgian Official Journal on February, 5th 2018 in implementation of Article 22 of the Law of December, 19th 2008 regarding the procurement and use of HBM destined for human medical applications or for scientific research purposes, entered into force on November 1st 2018. This one has important consequences for the organization, functioning and activities of biobanks. Notably, among others new rules are applicable, particularly with regard to the procedures for encoding, traceability and donor identification, but the most important one was related to the timely notification process of the biobanks to the FAMHP (Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products) (see Art.3 of RO). Indeed, without the joint approval of Ethical Committee and FAMHP for getting the legal right of performing biobank activities, biobanks were committed to vanish. On top, biobanks had to hurry to get their notification in good standing (6 months was the period from the date of entry into force of this RO- see Art.12 of RO).

The transitory phase was extremely short and BWB acknowledged it as a serious obstacle for biobanks, though we considered this new legal framework more as an opportunity than a regulation by itself. Our priority to launch a communication campaign within our network partners (UCL, ULB & ULg). Our primary aim was to raise the awareness of the actors in the Walloon and Brussels regions, then to make them aware of the importance of their existence and their key role as crossroads in conducting translational research, and finally, to identify, help and support biobanks in notification steps. We had an important feedback from all biobanks of our network with the creation of a non-negligible number of biobanks and their respective notification to the FAMHP along.

Today, we are collecting the fruits of our labor. This campaign has enabled us to move from 8 existing biobanks to 30 notified biobanks. The BWB team played a leading role in this work to monitor biobanks helping them to complete, submit and follow up their notification files with the different institutions. This, of course, now requires upgrading work so that these biobanks are in total agreement with the law, and therefore, among other things, procedures need to be put in place, as well as a quality system, frameworks, collaboration agreements, a register of follow-up activities of the biobank and reports of activities to submit to the ethics committee. Our front-office ensures today a very important follow-up of our biobanks making BWB project a success for all universities engaged.

“A beautiful synergy is born and we are very happy. In the coming months, BWB will manage the recognition of these new biobanks both at the national (BBMRI.be) and European levels, and later, in their entries into BBMRI-ERIC Directory” quote Laurent Dollé.

Visit our website:

https://bwb.creatix.be/en

Contact us:

contact@biotheque-wallonie-bruxelles.be

There are opportunities behind the rules that will allow biobanks to expand and sustain their activities. BWB is here to indicate the paths and proposes solutions to our partners. This is the reason why BWB is taking actions and puts in place processes with regard to this new legislation to help and support its biobank partners and end-users in their daily-life.
On November 4th, BBMRI.be and Greiner will organize the 4th Biobanking Day. The theme of the conference is “success stories & special population biobanks” during this day, several Belgian biobank experts will showcase their (population) biobanks and the successfull research that was performed with the collected samples.

Have a look at the programme here and don’t forget to register for this full day of biobank success stories.

BBMRI-ERIC RELEASES NEW SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The purpose of the BBMRI-ERIC Self-Assessment Surveys is to encourage researchers and biobanks that are based in Member/Observer States of BBMRI-ERIC, to implement quality requirements and give them a free tool to assess their sample quality and overall quality management. Based on the relevant quality management standards and the ISO standard for biobanks, the new released “Quality Management Systems-General Requirements for Biobanking” survey is a great tool for biobanks looking to evaluate their quality management system.

You can now choose from a total of ten Self-Assessment Surveys! Check your collections now with the self-assessment surveys and earn a Quality mark in the Directory!

Are you also interested to join our BBMRI.be network as biobank or biobank user?
Please complete the contact form for biobanks or biobank users or contact us via secretariat.BBMRIbe@kankerregister.org and we will get in contact with you as soon as possible!

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