

BBMRI.be

Biobanking and
BioMolecular resources
Research Infrastructure
Belgium

ISSUE 5

New Action Plan BBMRI.be



In 2019, the new governance structure of BBMRI.be 2.0 was implemented. In line with the new governance structure, a new BBMRI.be Action Plan was worked out. The full document can be found [here](#).

In analogy with the previous Action Plan, we will focus our activities on five different topics: IT, ELSI, Quality, Stakeholder Involvement and Networking & Organisation.

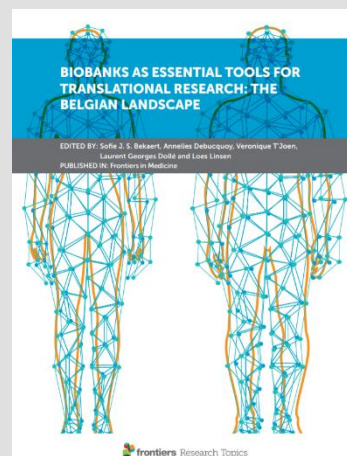
While the three first working groups are working on specific topics in the biobank field, the two last working groups are (partly) horizontally organized; supporting the other working groups. This support can include giving input to the other working groups, providing tools and/or disseminating results in the biobank community and beyond.

The working groups are open to all members of BBMRI.be. To become part of one of our working groups, please inform us about your interest by mailing to secretariat.BBMRIbe@kankerregister.org

News

September 2020

PRESS NEWS FROM BBMRI.BE:



[E-book Biobanks as Essential Tools for Translational Research: The Belgian Landscape. Frontiers in Medicine 2020](#)

[Millions of organic human samples in new biobank. Flanders Today.](#)

[FAIRness Literacy: The Achilles' Heel of Applying FAIR Principles". Data Science Journal](#)

UPCOMING MEETINGS

22-23/10/2020: [ISBER 2020 Virtual Symposium](#)

17-20/11/2020: [Europe Biobank Week](#)

06/10/2020- 02/02/2021: [BBMRI.QM Training & Education on the ISO standards for Molecular in vitro diagnostic examinations](#)

09-12/12/2020: [AI 4 Imaging: Radiomics, Deep Learning and Synthetic Data – A Hands-on Course](#)

31/05/2021: [Annual BBMRI.be meeting](#)

Annual BBMRI.be meeting



On June 10th 2020, the annual BBMRI.be meeting was organized. Due to the COVID19- crisis, our annual meeting this year was organized as a virtual event. The meeting was well attended with 32 BBMRI.be members participating in the meeting.

The meeting was kicked-off with an overview of the BBMRI.be achievements of the last year, followed by a presentation of the new BBMRI.be Action Plan by the Working Group chairs. The last part of the meeting was dedicated to our new biobank partners who showed us a glimpse of the collections and opportunities of their biobank.

We would like to thank all speakers and attendants of the meeting for the nice presentations and the fruitful discussions.

COVID-19 initiatives in the biobank community

Biobanks are crucial in the run towards a COVID-19 vaccine and/or treatment. They can support researchers in multiple ways including sample storage from COVID-19 patients and retrospective samples from healthy individuals. The potential value of European biobank infrastructures and other European Life Science Research Infrastructures is greatly illustrated [in this video](#), created within the H2020-funded project CORBEL.



To facilitate the quest for samples, datasets and services applicable to COVID19 research, BBMRI-ERIC has included in the Directory a [new COVID-19 filter](#). Five of the BBMRI.be biobanks are also included in the COVID19 network of BBMRI-ERIC and share information about available samples and data in the BBMRI-ERIC Directory. If your biobank also has COVID19 samples that you would like to make visible in the Directory, please let us know, so we can add you to the COVID19 network!

Biobanks can not only provide samples, but also give guidance and standards for targeted identification, collection and conservation of important samples. To support this, BBMRI-ERIC has set up a series of web conferences, attended by nearly 900 participants, to discuss relevant quality standards, guidelines and research studies. All information about the BBMRI.QM web conferences: Biobanking in Times of COVID-19, including recordings, presentations and the detailed Q&A document can be found [here](#).

In April 2020, a [COVID-19 Data Portal](#) was launched by the European Commission, EMBL-EBI, ELIXIR and EOSC-Life to bring together relevant datasets to boost COVID-19 research. This portal enables researchers to upload, access and analyses COVID-19 related reference data and datasets. The Belgian activities are coordinated by the Belgian COVID 19 Data Portal National Coordination Team with representatives from EWI, ELIXIR Belgium, Sciensano and the Universities of Antwerp, UCL, Mons and Namur. Prof. Elke Smits (Biobank Antwerp, UZA/UAntwerp) is representing the Belgian biobank community in this initiative.

In response to the COVID19 crisis, the Research Data Alliance (RDA) has also set up a COVID-19 Working Groups which has developed detailed guidelines ([RDA COVID-19 Recommendations and Guidelines for Data Sharing](#)) that aim at developing a system for data sharing in public health emergencies that supports scientific research and policy making.

New Biobank Partner!

In 2020, the Biothèque UCLouvain joined the BBMRI.be network. Below a short introduction of our new biobank:

Over many years, university research departments have collected human biological material (HBM) for research purposes. Following the Belgian Royal Decree of 9.01.2018 related to biobanks, the UCLouvain Biolibrary has been created in 2019 to meet the goals below:

- centralize all the historical and prospective HBM collections that belong to the university research departments
- ensure that the entire process from the collection phase through processing and using of the samples in research projects complies with ethical requirements and the applicable Belgian laws and regulations
- share HBM, offer scientific expertise and foster research collaborations



A major characteristic of the Biolibrary is that the structure participates to the collection but does not store the collected HBM. The biological material is stored in the research department that will use it. After registration of the sample in the biobank database, the Biolibrary takes care of all the necessary subsequent steps in order to make the HBM available for internal research projects and/or collaborations outside the university. The UCLouvain Biolibrary is composed of a wide range of collection types related to different research fields, these collections could be a good starting point for win-win collaborations.

Registration of consent for post-mortem samples

9 FEBRUARI 2020. — Koninklijk besluit betreffende de registratie van wilsverklaringen over de wegneming van menselijk lichaamsmateriaal, met inbegrip van organen, na overlijden, bl. 16166.

9 FEVRIER 2020. — Arrêté royal relatif à l'enregistrement des déclarations de volonté concernant le prélèvement de matériel corporel humain, y compris les organes, après le décès, p. 16166.

Until recently, all Belgian citizens were considered to be a post-mortem donor of tissue and organs for therapeutic purposes and/or scientific research, unless an explicit objection was raised. From July 1st 2020, in accordance with the [new Royal Decree published on February 9th 2020](#), all Belgian citizens have the possibility to register their opposition or explicit consent for the use of human bodily material removed post-mortem both for therapeutic purposes and scientific research (biobanks).

This implies that before the post-mortem tissue can be stored at the biobank, the biobank manager needs to check the registration of this patient in the Orgadon database. In case of explicit consent or no registration, the tissue can be stored and used. In case of an objection, the tissue can not be used.

This raises a lot of questions in the biobank community:

- Given the rapid publication of this new law, the access to the Orgadon website for (most) biobank managers is not yet available. The biobanks can thus not check if the samples can be stored at their biobank!
- The planned information campaign about this new law, has not yet taken place. Therefore, the Belgian citizens are not aware of this new procedure and the consequences.



NEWS FROM HQ

Jens Habermann appointed Director General of BBMRI-ERIC

The Assembly of Members of BBMRI-ERIC appointed Professor Jens K. Habermann as new Director General! The distinguished scientist, clinician and recognized expert in biobanking, translational cancer research and human genetics has taken office in Graz on September 1st, 2020. He succeeds Erik Steinfeldler, who served as Director General of BBMRI-ERIC from August 2017 to January 2020.

[Find out more about our new Director General!](#)

BBMRI-ERIC Annual Report

BBMRI-ERIC



The BBMRI-ERIC Annual Report, summarizing the main activities of the BBMRI-ERIC headquarters and the national nodes is available [here](#). The report includes an overview of the main achievements of BBMRI-ERIC in the last year, financial information, an overview of the current

projects in which BBMRI-ERIC is involved and an overview of the activities at the different National Nodes.

Europe Biobank Week



Europe Biobank Week 2020 will take place between 17-20 November in a virtual format for the first time. Have a look at [the program of #EBW20](#) and register today!

BBMRI webinar on "Ethical handling of incidental findings in research"

On June 4th 2020, BBMRI-ERIC organized a webinar on "Ethical handling of incidental findings in research. Have a look at the [recording of the webinar](#). For an overview of our ELSI Services by our Interim Co-Director Michaela Th. Mayrhofer, listen to the most recent webinar [here](#).

BBMRI.QM Training & Education

The BBMRI.QM team provides in cooperation with the H2020 project SPIDIA4P GA 733112, an in-depth training on the pre-analytical standards relevant for biomedical research and biobanking.

All practical details and dates can be found [here](#).

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