

# Designing a Public Awareness Campaign on Biobanks with Participatory Research Techniques

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## Biobanks and the Belgian Research Ecosystem

Despite being strong assets for Belgian university hospitals and academic research centres, biobanks do not gather much interest in the media or in general health communications in Belgium.

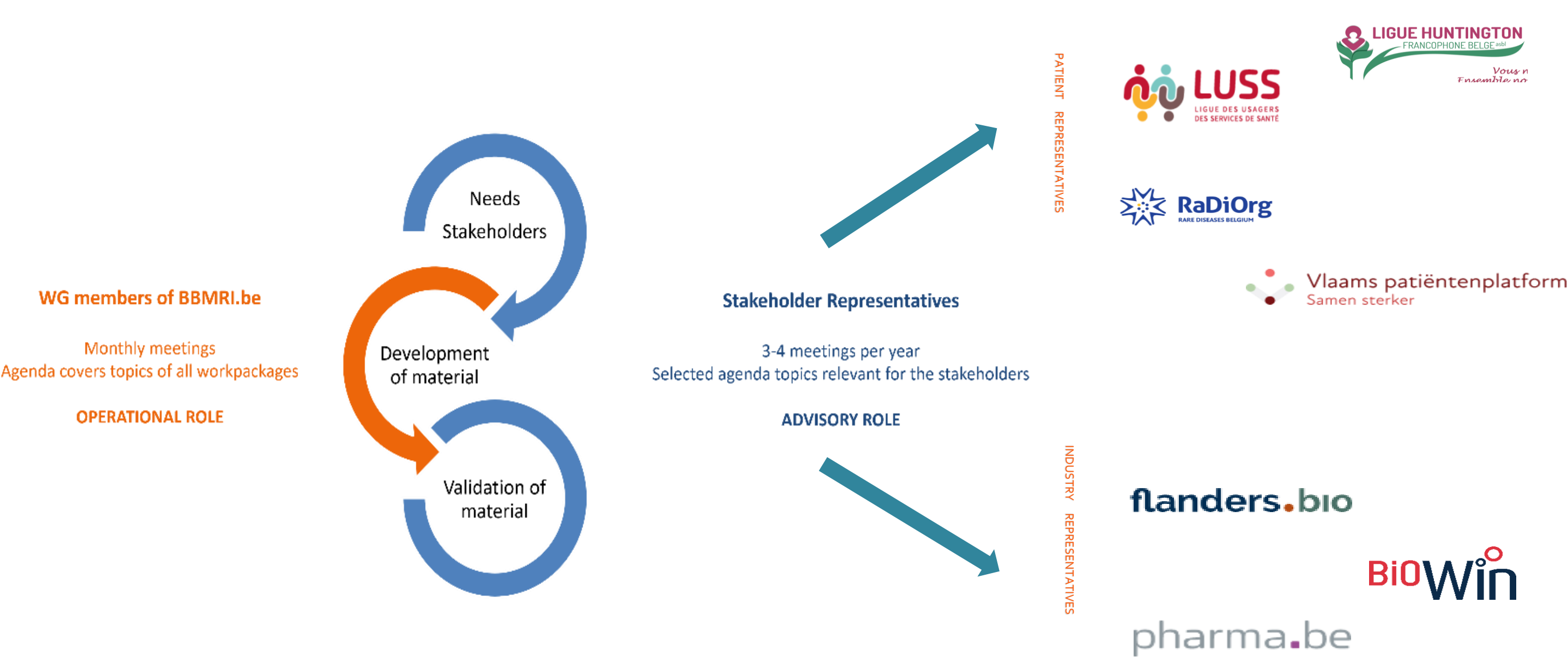
BBMRI.be, the not-for-profit initiative that connects 20 Belgian public biobanks, is concerned by this lack of awareness in the public sphere.



## Stakeholders' Involvement

To propose solutions to enhance public and patients' interest on biobanking - and on research in general - the BBMRI.be Stakeholder Involvement Group has been formed.

The BBMRI.be Stakeholder Involvement Group gathers together scientists, patients, members of patient organisations, professionals from pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, biobankers and hospital representatives



The group's mission is to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders through an iterative process of needs assessment, followed by the development and validation of materials to meet those needs. This unique engagement methodology has the potential to build strong communities.

## Participatory Research

To address the lack of public awareness, the BBMRI.be Stakeholder Involvement Group and its partners have involved patients and patient organizations in participatory activities such as workshops, visits to anatomopathological laboratories and focus groups, leading to a public awareness campaign on biobanks.

**1. WORKSHOP**

During this first workshop, we discussed the communication on biobanks with different stakeholders.

Phase 3: Dreaming our own Campaign

- What information on biobanks is needed?
  - General biobank information for the broad public?
  - Information for researchers/industry?
  - Educational material for students/schools?
- Which information should be in it?
- How should it be made available?
  - Printed folder
  - Website

**2. BIOBANK INFO DAY**

The Bordet Institute's tumour bank opens its doors to patients associations

BBMRI.be organized in collaboration with the Jules Bordet Institute and the LUSS (League of health users), a biobank info day to discuss the way biobanks are perceived by patients and citizens.

**3. WEBSITE**

Based on the feedback received during the participatory activities, a stakeholder-oriented website was developed with a dedicated page for donors: [www.bbmri.be](http://www.bbmri.be)

**4. FLYERS AND POSTERS**

To guide donors to our website, flyers and posters were developed in 3 languages with some information on biobanks and a link to the website.

The flyers and posters were disseminated to all BBMRI.be biobanks for distribution in their hospital/university.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the participatory activities of the BBMRI.be Stakeholder Involvement Group allowed to grasp patients' understanding and perspective on biobanking. Based on this feedback, communication material on biobanks was developed. Hopefully, the actions of this community shall result in significantly increasing research literacy of both the public and the patients and in paving the way towards a better engagement of citizens in research.