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**BCCM**  
BELGIAN  
COORDINATED  
COLLECTIONS OF  
MICROORGANISMS



## Press release: 40 YEARS BCCM

Celebration: Symposium "*The role of microbial culture collections in science and society*" and opening of the exhibition "*Micro heroes with mega powers*" - 19 September 2023 at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences

*The Belgian microbial biobanks have been supporting the life sciences and biotech sector for 40 years.*

**Brussels, 17 August 2023**

The consortium of the Belgian Collections of Microorganisms (BCCM) has been serving researchers and industry worldwide for 40 years, both for the preservation and distribution of microbial material as for specialised services, research and training.

This milestone will be festively highlighted on 19 September 2023 with a symposium on "***The role of culture collections in science and society***" and the opening of the exhibition "***Micro heroes with mega powers***" by the Federal State Secretary in charge of Science Policy, Mr Thomas Dermine.

Venue: the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences.

### The programme - 19 September 2023

The celebration leads the public into the wonderful world of micro-organisms and (micro)biodiversity and provides an overview of the expertise and achievements of the BCCM consortium as well as its perspectives.

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By analogy with the slogan "BCCM, great at small things", we want to highlight the essential impact that these tiny organisms can have, or the power of "small" solutions to major societal challenges such as the conservation of biodiversity, the search for medical solutions, the sustainable production of healthy food or the clean-up of polluted environments.

In practice (details in annex):

13:00 – 14:00	Welcome coffee / networking
14:00 – 16:30	Symposium
16:30 – 17:00	Opening of the exhibition by the State Secretary
17:30 – 18:30	Reception
19:00 – 22:00	Buffet / musical entertainment

### **BCCM – the Belgian microbial biobanks**

Microbial biobanks are hubs that preserve microbiological and genetic material for the long term, accumulate data and expertise relevant to these biological resources, and constitute a strategic reservoir of materials and knowledge.

Microorganisms or parts of it are essential in all stages of development of research & innovation, from the onset of fundamental research to the final stage of development, validation and quality assurance for bio-based products that are put on the market.

In the frame of the BCCM consortium the Universiteit Gent, the Université catholique de Louvain, Sciensano, the Institute of Tropical Medicine and the Université de Liège work together with the Federal Science Policy to preserve and distribute microbial and genetic resources, increase the understanding of these micro-organisms and their functions in ecosystems and foster their use in various applications.

*"BCCM is an essential infrastructure for life sciences and biotechnology" (BCCM Advisory Board, letter to policymakers)*

The strength of the BCCM consortium lies in the cooperation between decentralised and complementary collections and the research laboratories of the institutes hosting them. The combination of scientific expertise and technical knowledge into binomials allows for biobanking of documented material. Each binomial taps in its own pool of resources and professional networks. Within these binomials, the technical, scientific and administrative staff trained for the specific profession of managing a collection is closely integrated in the host lab.

In addition, the collections exchange and implement best practices for the conservation of microbial genetic resources and ensure the harmonised application of international standards and regulations in microbiology.

*"BCCM is a model for all culture collection networks" (Kevin McCluskey, an experienced leader with deep expertise in genetic resources and biomaterials, Bolt Threads).*

For the BCCM's 40th anniversary a public activity report will be released.

**In annex:** the programme

**About BELSPO**

The Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO) is tasked with preparing, implementing and evaluating federal science policy on behalf of the Government and in support of the powers of the Federal Authority. The Department for Research Programmes and Infrastructures provides funding for research activities in support of federal competencies and international commitments made by the federal authorities. In this context, the Department prepares and manages a portfolio of funding actions including various research programmes, research infrastructures (as BCCM) and science-policy interfaces, and participates in national and international cooperation initiatives. Visit our website: <https://www.belspo.be>

**About BCCM**

Since 1983 the BCCM consortium is funded by the Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO) as a support action for the life sciences and biotechnology. In 1995, a central cell was established at BELSPO to support the collections in the field of quality and information management, external communication, marketing and business development, regulatory affairs and international cooperation. More information is available on the BCCM website <https://bccm.belspo.be>

**For more information**

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