**A plea to preserve microbial diversity in public microbial resource centres**

*Pierre Becker 1, Peter Chaerle 2, Marijke Hendrickx 1, Wim Vyverman 2, Anne-Catherine Ahn 3, Marleen Bosschaerts4, Heide.-Marie Daniel5, Ann Hellemans6, Anneleen Olbrechts7, Leen Rigouts8, Annick Wilmotte3\**

*1BCCM/IHEM, Sciensano,* *Rue J. Wytsmanstraat 14, B-1050 Brussels, Belgium*

*2BCCM/DCG, Laboratory of Protistology and Aquatic Ecology, Department of Biology, Ghent University, Krijgslaan 281 S8, 9000 Gent, Belgium*

*3BCCM/ULC Cyanobacteria collection, InBioS-Centre for Protein Engineering, University of Liège, Liège, Belgium,*

*4BCCM Coordination Cell, Belgian Science Policy, Brussels, Belgium*

*5BCCM/MUCL, Mycothèque de l’Université catholique de Louvain, Earth and Life Institute, Mycology Laboratory, Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium*

*6BCCM/LMG Bacteria Collection, Laboratory of Microbiology, Faculty of Science, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium*

*7BCCM/GeneCorner Plasmid Collection, Department of Biomedical Molecular Biology, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium*

*8BCCM/ITM Mycobacteria Collection, Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium*

*\*awilmotte@uliege.be*

Open science aims at sharing scientific output in order to maximize the impact of research. This allows follow-on studies, facilitates new discoveries, improves reproducibility of experiments and favours transparency of results. Although open data is becoming a well-known concept, less attention is given to the availability of research materials. In life sciences, public microbial collections represent an historical example of open science, thanks to their longstanding experience in the preservation of living microbial strains and their distribution for further scientific investigations or development. These microbial resource centres provide well-characterized, quality-controlled and authenticated strains and associated data (1). In microbiology, the diversity of bacteria, fungi and algae is an invaluable source of applications for the bio-industry. It needs to be secured following (inter)national legislations for future utilizations and research questions. The responsibility to make microorganisms available is shared by researchers, funding agencies and publishers (1). Microbiologists need to be more aware towards strain conservation. Governmental funding policies should request the deposit of strains isolated during financed projects. Regarding publishers, most journals encourage authors to deposit their datasets (codes, sequences, etc) in public repositories but very few specifically require deposit of biological material and cultivated strains in scientific collections. However, this is a key prerequisite to “make it possible to repeat the experiments and perform future research”(2). Editors should therefore implement mechanisms for active agreement by authors to deposit strains when submitting an article. Such mechanisms could follow Transparency and Openness Promotion guidelines (3) for journals that include standards for research materials.

1. P. Becker, M. Bosschaerts, P. Chaerle, H.-M. Daniel, A. Hellemans, A. Olbrechts, L. Rigouts, A. Wilmotte, M. Hendrickx. 2019. Public microbial resources centres: key hubs for FAIR microorganisms and genetic materials. Applied and Environmental Microbiology, AEM.01444-19; DOI: 10.1128/AEM.01444-19

2. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/15298817/homepage/forauthors.html

3. Nosek BA et al. (2015). Promoting an open research culture. Science 348: 1422-1425.