

HOW EUROPE TURNS ITSELF INTO A “PROVIDER COUNTRY” WHOSE MICROBES ARE THEY STORING?

EU Starting Microbe Storage Network

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NEW YORK (GenomeWeb News) - The European Union will spend 4.2 million (\$5.8 million) to create a pan-European network of microbial specialty centers that will collect, analyze, and preserve microbe samples such as bacteria, viruses, and microscopic fungi, and will include a DNA bank.

The European Consortium of Microbial Resource Centers project, dubbed EMBARC, is a three-year initiative that involves ten research groups in seven countries, and it will be funded through the Seventh Framework Programme's Infrastructure Theme, according to the EU's Community Research and Development Information Service.

The ten centers involved already house around 200,000 lines of microbiological material, including what it said is the world's oldest conserved bacterial line, which was isolated in 1892 and is stored at the French National Center for Agricultural Research, which is one of the partners involved in the program.

The consortium will aim to create a new bank of DNA materials to support "growing demands" from the scientific community. "Existing DNA preservation techniques need to be improved, particularly for samples that need to be kept for a long time," said CORDIS.

The centers also will work together to harmonize the methods that they use to conserve and identify samples. They also will explore new ways to identify and classify microorganisms that are housed in the centers and are used in academic research, education, and in the agro-food and pharmaceutical industries and in hospitals.

EMBARC will launch calls for proposals to make their resources, equipment, and expertise available to the research community. They also will provide services such as high-throughput screening for comparing large numbers of samples, identifying species, authenticating material, and education.

The EMBARC partners also plan to lay the foundation for the creation of a project called the Global Biological Resource Centre Network.