

## **MIRRI-IT JOINT RESEARCH UNIT: THE ITALIAN NETWORK OF MICROBIAL RESOURCES**

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The Microbial Resource Research Infrastructure (MIRRI) (<http://www.mirri.org/>) has been launched in 2010 within the Biomedical Research Infrastructures of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) initiative.

The current configuration of MIRRI involves several countries (Portugal, Spain, France, Greece, Belgium, Poland and Latvia have already signed a Memorandum of Understanding), which are called to support the implementation of the Central Coordination Unit (CCU), their National Nodes (NN) and the needs of the national communities. While the CCU is clearly defined at the European level by an agreement among interested countries, the NN may follow various forms.

In Italy there are numerous collections of microorganisms disseminated in the country, which can be exploited to boost technological innovations and to face different societal challenges. Indeed, these collections are often not managed according to international standards and their catalogues are not online displayed. Moreover, coordination among these collections is still limited. In this contest, the creation of an effective Italian network of microbial culture collections can be fundamental to implement the recently presented national bioeconomy strategy and to support the needs of the companies acting in different sectors, as well as to foster the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding of MIRRI, which has not yet been done by the relevant National Agency.

For these reasons, a Joint Research Unit for the implementation of the Italian node of MIRRI (MIRRI-IT JRU) (<http://www.mirri-it.it>) has recently been founded with the contribution of the Universities of Turin, Perugia, Modena and Reggio Emilia, the University Hospital San Martino Genoa and the Italian National Research Council. The main goal of the MIRRI-IT JRU is the development of a tight network of Italian collections of microbial resources. The mission is to overcome fragmentation in availability of resources and services, enhancing the quality management system of the collections while focusing on needs and challenges of the stakeholders interested in the biotechnological transfer of these resources.

Therefore, the main activities of the MIRRI-IT JRU are meant to:

- a. coordinate and support the operation of the Microbial Culture Collections in Italy according to the established international quality standards;
- b. harmonize the procedures of the Collections in order to comply with national and international rules (i.e. Nagoya Protocol, Intellectual Property Rights, privacy, biosafety, etc.);
- c. propose actions to relevant State authorities in order to fortify the functioning and sustainability of the Collections;

- d. promote interdisciplinary cooperation and represent Italy in relevant national and international Networks and Organizations;
- e. provide an unique entry point to quality microbiological services and microbial Biological Resource Centres (mBRC) holdings.