

Building a National BRC – the Case MICCO in Finland

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Abstract:

Introduction: Finland is a modern welfare state with a high quality education and science. It is Europe's most heavily-forested country, with forests covering 74.2% of the land area. Finland also has lots of lakes, more than 187000, and is partly surrounded by The Baltic Sea, the largest brackish water reservoir in the world. Regardless of the unique nature, Finland has no agenda for the conservation of its environmental or industrial microorganisms. The medical sector has well organized culture collections for pathogens, based on national and EU legislation. Since lack of legislation, the collection situation for environmental microorganisms is poorly developed. Microbial culture collections in Finland: In 2006, the Finnish Guild of Microbiologists organized a survey to find out, what kind of public microbial collections exist in Finland and what are their levels of resources. The results revealed 27 collections and over 150000 strains. Most of the specimens are more or less of medical character, environmental and industrial collections cover 27 000 strains. A majority of the collections suffer from chronic lack of funding. Only two Finnish collections (HAMBI, WDCM779 and VTT Culture Collection, WDCM139) act as public service collections with open internet catalogues. Building MICCO BRC: The results of the collection survey were introduced to the Ministries of Education and Culture and of Employment and the Economy in 2007. These ministries were interested in the situation and the Guild of Microbiologists was invited to make a proposal to the Steering group for National Research Infrastructure Roadmap. The proposal was named "Finnish Microbial Culture Collections coordinated as the Microbiological Resource Center, MICCO". The target of MICCO is to promote the awareness of Finnish microbial resources, and enhance their preservation and use by gathering Finnish culture collections together under a coordinating body to form a national BRC. An international panel recommended the MICCO to be accepted for the National Research Infrastructure Roadmap, but the RI Management Group dropped MICCO out. After this minor setback, the active people behind MICCO decided to go on without state support. MICCO was established in April 2010 as a registered association. In the near future, an inauguration seminar is planned to start activities on a broader scale.

Key words: BRC, culture collection, Finland