



# Code of Conduct on Biosecurity for Biological Resource Centres (BRCs)

## I. PREAMBLE

Accumulated and advancing knowledge on biological systems offers substantial benefits to mankind, to research and to development in all areas of basic and applied bio-medical and bio-technological sciences. However, this improved knowledge is intrinsically associated with the potential for dual application: for beneficial or malicious purpose. The possibility of using scientific knowledge for peaceful or non-peaceful purposes reflects the *dual-use dilemma* and confers a responsibility on both those with the knowledge and with the biological resources. The responsibilities of those engaged in the life sciences have an increasing role for in-depth implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC). Scientific openness and a sense of security are prerequisites for freedom of scientific work, publication of findings and exchange of bio-resources to carry out activities in the life sciences. This Code of Conduct on Biosecurity is to help microbial Biological Resource Centres (BRCs) promote a basic ethical understanding of science compliant with the BTWC and raise awareness to prevent misuse in the life-sciences context.

This Code intends to raise awareness on biosecurity within and outside BRCs and to clearly demonstrate that BRCs are fully compliant with national and international legislation and support the BTWC as an international norm prohibiting biological weapons. It is not the aim of this Code to influence the range of bio-resources maintained or life science activities performed at BRCs. Above all, this Biosecurity Code of Conduct is meant to complement legislative procedures.

## II. SCOPE

The aim of this Code of Conduct is to prevent microbial BRCs from directly or indirectly contributing to the malicious misuse of biological agents and toxins, including the development or production of biological weapons.

BRCs commit themselves to this Code of Conduct on Biosecurity considering their specific situation and key role as an essential part of the international infrastructure underpinning biotechnology: providing the world-wide scientific and industrial communities with authentic biological materials required in research, application and teaching as well as related information and services. Being part of the scientific community they conduct activities in the life sciences, offer training courses, expertise and knowledge and they support the bioeconomy.

Many BRCs are entrusted with the collection and controlled supply of potentially hazardous bio-resources. This requires high responsibility, well-established biorisk analyses and management, and appropriate BRC internal infrastructures, profound knowledge of relevant bio-legislation including export control and respective protective measures. This Code calls for implementation and compliance of awareness, accountability and oversight and targets all those engaged in life sciences activities, laboratory workers, managers, stakeholders and others.

### **III. CODE**

#### **(1) BIORISK MANAGEMENT**

- Integrate biorisk management throughout the organization and seek its continuous improvement.
- Assign adequate resources and responsibility to guarantee compliance with legal requirements, communication to staff and relevant third parties, and carry out reliable and appropriate risk assessment.

#### **(2) RAISING AWARENESS**

- Devote specific attention in the education and further training of all staff on:
  - the dual use dilemma i.e. the risks of misuse of biological material, information and life sciences research
  - the requirements of regulations in this context.
- Provide regular training and carry out auditing to maintain up to date knowledge on biosecurity.
- Raise awareness of related third parties on their responsibilities.

#### **(3) REPORTING MISUSE**

- Encourage a culture of reporting misuse.
- Report any finding or suspicion of misuse of biological material, information or technology directly to competent persons or commissions.
- Protect persons reporting on misuse and ensure that they do not suffer any harassment as a consequence.

#### **(4) INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

- Prevent access by unauthorised persons to internal and external e-mails, post, telephone calls and data concerning information about potential dual-use research or potential dual-use materials.
- Regulate the communication of sensitive information.

#### **(5) RESEARCH AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE**

- Assess possible dual-use aspects of research during the application for and the execution of research projects.
- Minimize the risk that publication of results on potential dual-use organisms will contribute to misuse of that knowledge.
- Consider biosecurity implications when sharing knowledge.

#### **(6) ACCESSIBILITY**

- Ensure physical security of and access control to stored potential dual-use material in accordance with its risk classification.
- Implement access control for staff and visitors where potential dual-use biological materials are stored or used.

#### **(7) SUPPLY, SHIPMENT AND TRANSPORT**

- Screen recipients of potential dual-use biological materials, in consultation with the relevant authorities and parties.
- Select transporters suitable to handle potential dual-use biological materials.
- Perform export control in accordance with applicable regulations.