

Education and Training in microbiology in Europe: comparison of the current offer to needs of the customers of the MIRRI consortium.

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MIRRI (the Microbial Resource Research Infrastructure, www.mirri.org) is a pan-European distributed research infrastructure in its preparatory phase which aims to support research and development in the field of biotechnology. Currently, more than 40 public culture collections and research institutes from 19 European countries collaborate to establish this infrastructure. One of the aims of MIRRI is to promote knowledge transfer via the access to various expert clusters for consultation and to education and training (E&T) programme. In order to achieve this last objective, it was necessary to compare the existing E&T offer to the needs identified in the microbiology field.

MIRRI conducted surveys targeting the different E&T providers (microbial domain Biological Resource Centre (mBRCs), research institutes, schools, universities, training organizations...). The survey aimed to identify the current and future offer and to highlight possible gaps regarding the needs of MIRRI customers as studied earlier in the frame of MIRRI. Replies from a total of 43 mBRCs (19 countries) and 235 other E&T providers (mainly universities/graduate schools and research institutes from 11 countries) were collected and further analyzed.

Some of the results are presented here. A lot of similarities were observed between the training offers of research institutes and mBRCs with similar targets, format and numbers of attendees... Comparing the global offer to the needs, some topics appeared to be completely missing in the global offer (for example, "Legal aspects related to microbial/genetic resources" and "Handling of hazardous microorganisms") while some others appeared to be clearly insufficiently tackled (for example, "Cultivation in particular conditions e.g. anaerobic, fermenters, intracellular bacteria...", "Biological safety"). Beside these lacks, one major problem is the absence of awareness of the availability of existing training and the lack of clarity and visibility of some of the existing choices.

The potential role of the future MIRRI-ERIC in improving the awareness of students and scientists of the existing E&T offer as well as in improving the E&T offer itself will be discussed.



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