

## Tumour biobanking in Belgium

*Biobanks play a critical role in cancer research by providing high quality biological samples for research. However, the availability of tumour samples in single research institutions is often limited, especially for rare cancers.*

In order to facilitate the search for samples scattered among different Belgian institutions, a nationwide virtual tumourbank project was launched by the Belgian Minister of Health, Ms. Laurette Onkelinx (initiative 27 of the Belgian Cancer Plan) in March 2008 (for full history, click [here](#)).

The Belgian Virtual Tumourbank (BVT network) encompasses the tumour biobanks from eleven Belgian university hospitals (Fig. 1 or click [here](#) for the list) that collect and store residual human tumour samples locally.



**Figure 1: Overview of the eleven Belgian University hospital biobanks that make out the BVT network**

The ultimate goal is to promote multidisciplinary cancer research (i.e. pathogenesis, prediction, prevention, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment) for the benefit of all cancer patients.

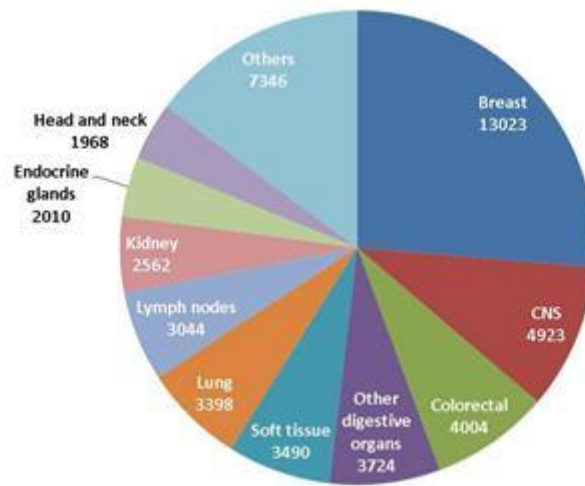
The BVT Steering Committee is responsible for the strategic decisions in the BVT network and the BVT project team at the Belgian Cancer Registry coordinates the activities, including the central database.

## The BVT catalogue (BVTc)

The BVT project team developed a web application consisting out of 2 modules. The **registration module (BVTr)** centralises the tumour sample data from the local partner biobanks. The **catalogue module (BVTc)** allows researchers to trace the tumour samples. This custom-made application is live since February 2012.

Data collected at sample level in the BVT registration module is made available for researchers via the BVTc after quality control by the BVT project team. Automatic and manual controls guarantee a high quality of the data on the samples requested by scientists for research purposes in oncology. To obtain more information on the dataflow, click [here](#).

The BVTc contains patient, medical and technical data, but excludes identifying information to ensure privacy of individuals (for full dataset, click [here](#)). On November 1<sup>st</sup> 2016, a total of 58,661 registrations were available in the BVTc (Fig. 2). For biannually updated aggregated data, click [here](#).

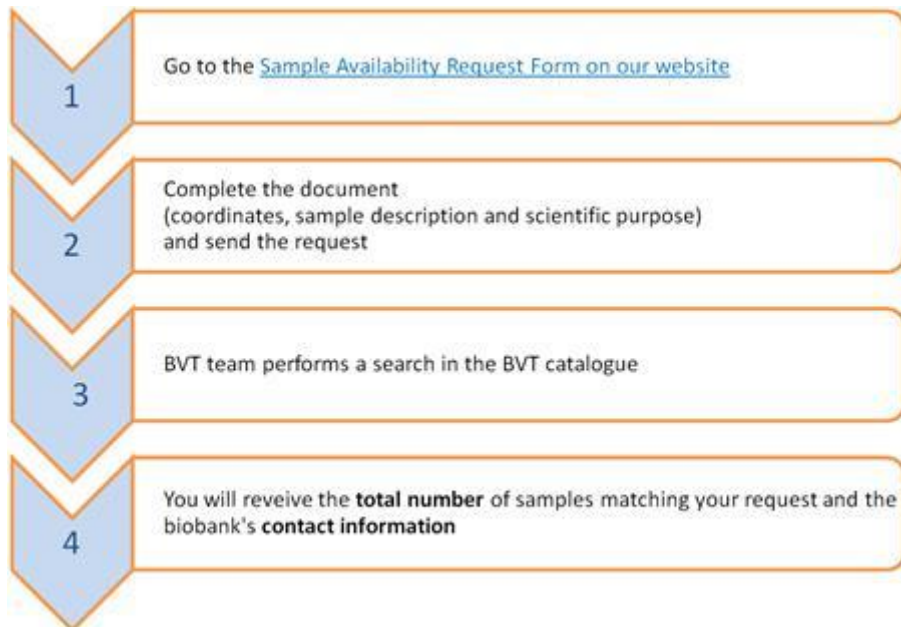


**Figure 2: Registrations of primary tumours available in the BVTc according to sample localisation on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.**

## Accessing information on tumour samples in the BVTc

### A. Quick search for sample availability (**NEW!**)

Any researcher active in the broad field of oncology and working for a European academic organisation, a research related organisation, or even industry, can verify the number of samples of interest registered in the BVTc:

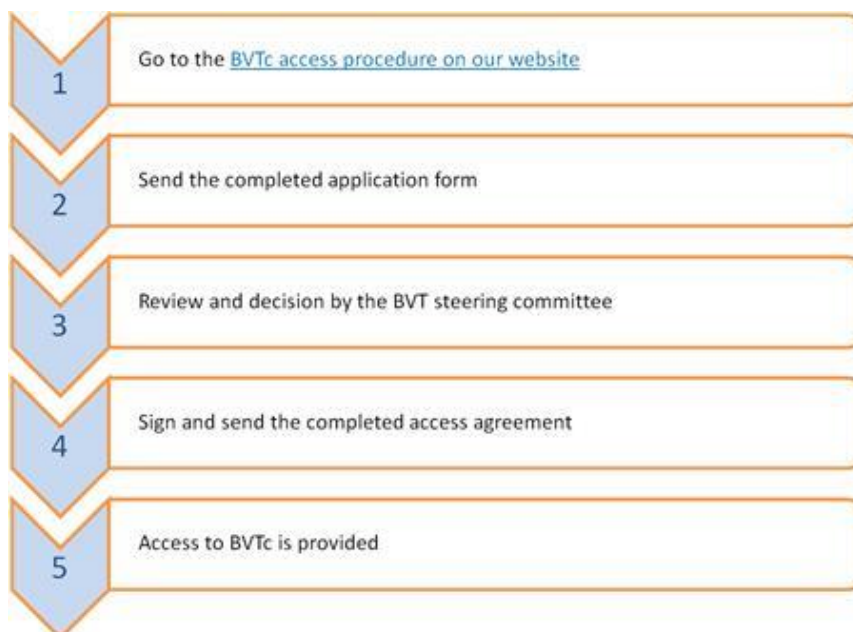


A first response can be expected within a week!

More information on the sample availability procedure, can be found on our [website](#).

#### B. Full access to the BVT catalogue

Belgian researchers, active in the broad field of oncology, can request access to the BVT catalogue where they can query the database and locate samples of interest:



Detailed information on the procedure to gain access to the catalogue can be found [here](#).

**For further information: [www.virtualtumourbank.be](http://www.virtualtumourbank.be)  
[biobank@kankerregister.org](mailto:biobank@kankerregister.org) or [biobank@registreducancer.org](mailto:biobank@registreducancer.org)**

Do you wish to be kept informed in the future? Click [here](#).  
Click [here](#) if you do not wish to receive our information any longer.  
Cancer Registry | Brussels | [www.kankerregister.org](http://www.kankerregister.org)