Have you already started managing your risks?
How a risk management plan can be implemented in a biobank

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Background

In each field of human working activities, risk assessment, determination, identification and management are highly important and recommendable. In literature a risk is described as an event or condition that, if it occurs, could have negative effects on a person, process or organization. Therefore, in an organization a risk management strategy should define how risks associated with the organization will be identified, analyzed and managed.

Very surprising, a variety of biobanks do not have any risk management strategies and/or they only rely on policies that were adopted form the home organization (e.g. university) and thus are incomplete since these policies are not specific enough for a biobank (e.g. general risk management of labs). Such insufficient plans will not hold up if a worst-case scenario strikes. Hence, each and every biobank needs a specific risk assessment and as result a sustainable risk management tool to be ready for challenges and worst-case scenarios that may arise.

Methods

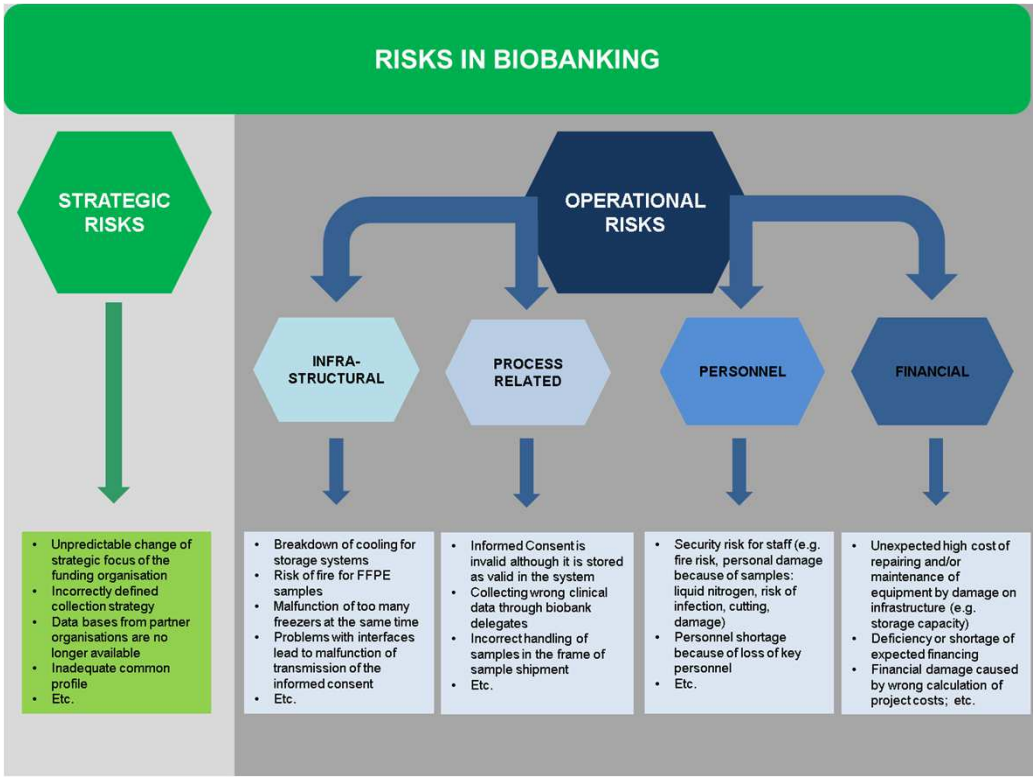
One of the methods that can be used to identify risks is a SWOT (Strengths and Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis. When using this tool internal factors (Strengths and Weaknesses) as well as external factors (Opportunities and Threats) are analyzed. For analyzing and managing risks a risk management template should be developed. For each identified risk a specific template should be established and prioritized. To provide a structure for a risk management plan, the identified risks should be categorized.

Results

At Biobank Graz, the result of the risk management assessment was the development of a risk management strategy.

To provide a structure for risk management the detected risks were categorized into strategic (e.g. political risks) or operational risks (e.g. infrastructural, process-related, ethical, personnel and financial risks).

For Biobank Graz it has been important to link this plan with the quality management system to ensure that the risk management strategy is used in practice and daily routine.



Conclusions

In planning and operating of biobank infrastructures and processes a specific focus should be put on risk management to be prepared in the case of disasters and unexpected occurrences. In future risk management needs to be a core competency of each and every biobank.

Funded by

bmwfw Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft

BBMRI.at Biobanking and BioMolecular resources Research Infrastructure Austria
GZ 10.470/0016-II/3/2013

ZUKUNFTSFONDS STEIERMARK