



Tumour Biobanking in Belgium:

a central role for the BVT, the nationwide Belgian Virtual Tumourbank

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1. The BVT catalogue (BVTc)

The Belgian Virtual Tumourbank catalogue is a custom-made web application that aims at facilitating the search for biospecimens scattered among different institutions by collecting data from material of human tumours in one central database. The biospecimens themselves, however, remain physically located at eleven Belgian university hospital biobanks (see partner biobanks below).

Data collected in the BVT registration module is made available for researchers via the BVTc. The quality of the data queried at the BVTc is improved by three levels of quality control. The BVTc contains general, patient, medical, and technical data (but excludes identifying information to ensure privacy of individuals) (Table 1).

General variables	Patient variables
Local biobank storing the sample	Gender
Reference ID	Age at resection
Medical variables	Technical variables
Type of specimen	Sample ID
Sample localisation (ICD-O)	Year of resection
Laterality	Vital state of the patient (at time of resection)
Morphology (ICD-O) (histology and behaviour)	Conservation mode
Degree of tumour differentiation	Conservation delay
Pathological TNM	Tumour associated materials (e.g. normal associated tissue, blood...)
Clinical TNM	

Table 1. Main BVTc variables.

On February 1st, 2017, a total of 61,245 registrations were available in the BVTc, of which 51,956 registrations of primary tumours (Fig. 1).

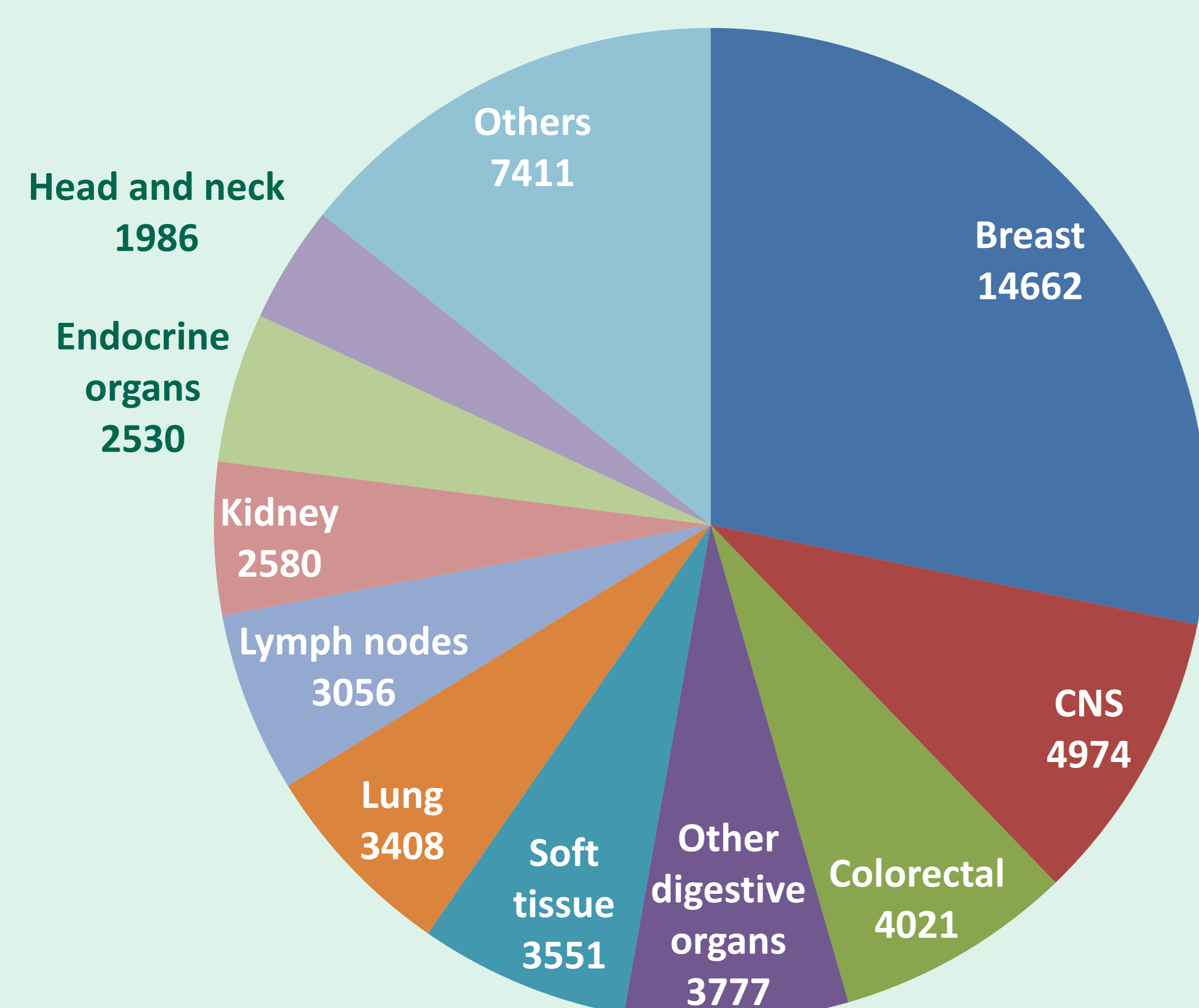


Figure 1. Registrations of primary tumours available in the BVTc according to sample localisation on February 1st, 2017.

2. Access to the BVTc

WHO: Belgian researchers of non-profit research organisations.

WHAT: Full access to the BVTc, to obtain detailed sample level information.

HOW:

Go to www.virtualltumourbank.be, click on **Catalogue of Biobanked Samples** and then click on **Access to the catalogue** to display the catalogue access procedure.

- Download and fill in the catalogue application form and send this (with requested attachments) to biobank@kankerregister.org
- After positive evaluation of the request by the BVT Steering Committee, the Belgian Cancer Registry sends the catalogue access agreement.
- After signing and returning this access agreement, access to the BVTc is provided.

3. How to query the BVTc

- After receiving access to the BVTc, go to www.virtualltumourbank.be, click on the **BVTc button**.



- **Identify** yourself by means of your Belgian electronic identity card and corresponding pin code.
- **Search** for samples of your interest using the query possibilities of the BVTc (simple search or advanced search).



- Request to the BVT team an additional **quality control** on the data of tumour biospecimens of interest.
- Start the **exchange procedure** with the local biobank(s).

4. Quick search for sample availability

WHO: Any researcher active in the broad field of oncology (both from non-profit and profit organisations).

WHAT: Quickly verify the number of samples of interest registered in the BVTc.

HOW:

Go to www.virtualltumourbank.be, click on **Catalogue of Biobanked Samples** and then click on **Sample availability request form**.

- Complete the sample availability request form and click on send.
- The Belgian Cancer Registry performs the search in the BVTc.
- The Belgian Cancer Registry sends you the total number of samples corresponding your request and the contact information of the local biobanks hosting the samples.

Contact us: biobank@kankerregister.org or biobank@registreducancer.org; Tel: +32 (0)2 250 10 10; www.virtualltumourbank.be

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