

Minutes from NCMBM Board Meeting

Time: Thursday 18th June 2026, 10.15 – 13.00

Place: Room Kilo, Forskningsparken

Board Secretary: Hanna Ekeli, Medical Faculty Director

Executive officer: Elizabeth Smethurst

	Present	Apologies
Professor Jan Bjålie , Faculty of Medicine, Chair	X	
Professor Øystein Prytz , Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	X	
Professor Janne E. Reseland , Faculty of Dentistry	X	
Professor Melinka Butenko , Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	X	
Professor Philippe Collas , Faculty of Medicine	X	
Dr Lars Eikvar , South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority (HSØ)	X	
Dr Plamena Markova , EMBL		X
Professor Janna Saarela , Director, NCMBM	X	
Hanna Ekeli , Faculty Director, Faculty of Medicine		X
In attendance:		
Anthony Mathelier , Associate Director, NCMBM	X	
Ingrid Kjelsvik , Head of Office, NCMBM	X	

Agenda: (O = information item, D = discussion item B = decision item)

	Declaration of conflict of interest No conflicts were declared.
Case 20 – 26D	Presentation from NCMBM Associate Director and Group Leader, Anthony Mathelier The Board welcomed NCMBM Associate Director and Group Leader Anthony Mathelier to present the research focus and strategic direction of his group. Dr Mathelier provided an overview of his group's work on understanding how cells with identical genomes acquire different functions through differential gene expression, and how disruptions in these regulatory mechanisms contribute to disease. The research focuses primarily on transcriptional regulation and the role of non-coding regulatory elements in controlling gene expression. The Board heard how the group develops computational approaches and machine learning methods to characterise transcription factor binding and understand how DNA sequence influences gene regulation. Dr Mathelier highlighted the development of community resources including JASPAR, which provides information on DNA sequence motifs recognised by transcription factors, and UniBind, which maps transcription factor binding sites across living cells and links transcription factors to their regulatory elements. The presentation also described how these resources are being applied to investigate the molecular basis of disease, particularly cancer, and to identify genetic

variants that may contribute to disease development and progression. Examples of ongoing collaborative work in breast cancer research were presented.

During the discussion, Board members explored the relationship between fundamental and translational research. Dr Mathelier emphasised the importance of understanding the underlying biological mechanisms as a foundation for future clinical applications and noted that patient-derived data are already being incorporated into several projects.

The Board also discussed opportunities for comparative analyses across species using UniBind, as well as challenges associated with studying regulatory mechanisms that suppress gene expression or involve RNA degradation pathways. Dr Mathelier noted the latter area remains technically challenging and are comparatively understudied, representing potential directions for future research.

Decision:

The Chair thanked Dr Mathelier for the presentation, and the Board noted the update.

Case 21 – 26B Approval of the minutes from the last meeting

The minutes from the previous Board meeting, held on 23 April 2026, were approved with minor amendments. The Board discussed item 16 regarding PhD enrolment at MN, and it was agreed that additional comments would be incorporated into the public summary of the discussion.

The revised public summary was subsequently updated to reflect the Board's comments.

Decision:

The Board approved the minutes from the meeting, requesting an update in the public summary of the discussion.

Case 22 – 26O Updates on actions from previous meeting

1. Update on the NCMBM SAB Visit 2026

The Director informed the Board that the NCMBM Scientific Advisory Board visit will take place on 16–17 November 2026. The programme for the visit has now been finalised, and Board members are invited to meet with the SAB from 10:30 to 11:00 on Tuesday 17 November at Forskningsparken. A calendar invitation will be circulated to Board members.

2. Update on the NCMBM Senior Presence Working Group

The Director provided an update on the NCMBM Senior Presence working group, which held its first meeting on 27 May 2026. The meeting was well attended and focused on defining the role of the group, identifying how members can contribute, and discussing broader perceptions of the Centre and opportunities to strengthen its visibility and connections.

The Board was informed that three members of the group also participated in the NCMBM Annual Retreat, where they joined a discussion session with all NCMBM Group Leaders. Both immediate and longer-term opportunities were considered, including activities linked to the transition to the Life Science Building.

The next meeting of the Senior Presence working group is scheduled for 20 August 2026. The Board noted that strengthening senior engagement remains an important strategic initiative and acknowledged that developing effective ways of working for the group will be an ongoing process.

Decision:

The Board noted the updates.

Case 23 – 26B

Recruitment of new NCMBM Group Leader

Following the previous Board meeting, NCMBM received feedback on the draft call text from MN/IBV (Appendix 2). Based on this input, NCMBM revised the proposed call text for two Group Leader positions (Appendix 3), incorporating most of the suggested amendments.

The Director presented the rationale for the revisions, noting that the wet-lab position had been aligned closely with MN's input, while the computational position was broadened beyond a narrower focus on treatment and disease to encompass a wider remit within health and disease research. This adjustment was made to ensure broader appeal while maintaining a clear scientific focus.

The Board supported the revised call texts. The Board discussed the proposed inclusion of an up to 20% adjunct affiliation with the Department of Biosciences (IBV), pertinent to the wet-lab focussed post. It was noted that this element had been introduced following both prior recruitment experience and feedback from previous candidates and was considered a potentially important factor in increasing the attractiveness of the position. Members also discussed the opportunity for a future tenured position at IBV, subject to alignment between the candidate's research focus and the department's strategic priorities and needs. It was emphasised that this should be clearly formulated in the call text to reflect that any such pathway would be conditional on strategic alignment.

It was noted that the potential for a 20% affiliation with the faculties/hospital and the potential for a tenured position at IBV will strengthen the attractiveness of the posts and should be emphasised in conversation with relevant candidates.

The Board requested adjustments to the text to:

- Clarify that the opening of a tenured position at IBV in the candidate's research area will depend on alignment with IBV's strategic priorities.
- Clarify wording relating to ties to Oslo Science City.

Decision:

The Board approved the recruitment of two Group Leaders using the revised call text, with the requested amendments listed above. Recruitment is scheduled to commence at the end of June 2026 and a deadline in early September 2026. The Board encouraged broad dissemination of the call across relevant academic environments.

Case 24 – 26O

Recruitment of new NCMBM Group Leader – Recruitment Committee

The Director presented the proposed principles for establishing the Recruitment Committees for the upcoming Group Leader recruitment process.

It was noted that, in line with the EMBL model previously used at NCMBM, two separate committees will be established: an international Recruitment Committee

and a local Recruitment Committee. The international committee will consist of external experts covering the relevant scientific areas, with attention to gender balance and inclusion of an EMBL-affiliated representative, who will typically serve as Chair, and a representative from the Nordic EMBL Partnership for Molecular Medicine. The local committee will include representatives from MED, MN, and NCMBM, with membership reflecting relevant expertise and balanced institutional representation.

The Director explained that suggestions for potential international experts will be sought from the Board, the Scientific Advisory Board, and NCMBM staff, with the final composition of both committees appointed by the Director.

During the discussion, it was clarified that the international committee will carry out the scientific evaluation and ranking of candidates, while the local committee will participate in interviews and review the outcome in relation to local fit and reference checks. It was noted that while the international ranking forms the primary basis for evaluation, the local committee may raise concerns in cases where there is a clear scientific or strategic justification.

The Board discussed the practical challenges of identifying suitable committee members, noting that assembling appropriately balanced and available experts can be complex and requires early planning. Members were encouraged to provide suggestions for potential committee members as soon as possible, and no later than Wednesday 24th June 2026.

Decision:

The Board noted the update and supported the proposed approach to the composition of the Recruitment Committees.

Case 25 – 260

Review of the NCMBM financial report

The Director and the Head of Office presented an update on the Centre's financial position following the first four-month period of 2026 (Appendix 4).

The Head of Office reported that the financial situation is largely in line with budgeted expectations for the period. A slightly higher level of running costs was noted, which was attributed to anticipated preparatory activities and downtime related to the upcoming relocation to the Life Science Building. It was further noted that the main financial impact during the year will relate to the delayed recruitment process, which is expected to affect expenditure patterns towards the end of the year. It was also noted that ERC Starting Grant applications did not progress to the second round, although Centre efforts continue through other funding avenues, including SFF applications, where outcomes are still pending.

The Board congratulated the Centre on having two applications selected to proceed to the second stage of the SFF (Centres of Excellence) funding round.

The Director added that recruitment delays will shift associated financial activity into 2027. It was also noted that the current group leader portfolio is relatively limited, with some Group Leaders approaching transition points, which has resulted in a temporary reduction in application activity for certain funding schemes. This trend is expected to change following the recruitment of new Group Leaders and the strengthening of the Centre's scientific base.

Decision:

The Board noted the discussion.

Case 26 – 26O

NCMBM in the Life Science Building

The Director provided an update on NCMBM's continued involvement in preparations for relocation to the Life Science Building, scheduled for mid-2026.

The Director reported that the Centre is currently progressing through final preparations for the move, including staff testing of the new facilities through a trial "working day" on site. The packing process has commenced, and "moving champions" have been appointed to support coordination, alongside weekly updates to staff. The Centre expects further operational details to be confirmed following the ongoing testing phase. The Centre also noted instances where recently delivered equipment, including fridges and freezers, appears not to be fully fit for purpose. It was noted that this is a building-wide issue, and relevant correspondence has been forwarded to Øystein Prytz.

It was noted that the fish facility has submitted its relevant applications, with a best-case scenario move date in November. While this is anticipated to proceed, contingency planning is in place should delays occur.

The Board also discussed potential space implications linked to successful SFF applications. It was noted that one proposed SFF centres on the non-coding genome in disease, primarily involving NCMBM-based PIs alongside collaborators from IBV and the hospital. Given that most participants are already located within the building, space planning would focus primarily on internal redistribution rather than significant expansion. It was further noted that two Group Leaders will rotate out of NCMBM during the SFF period, but will remain affiliated to the SFF, and that this would need to be considered in relation to future space allocation and timing.

A second proposed SFF, focused on sleep and characterised as highly interdisciplinary, was also discussed. The Director is in ongoing discussions with relevant stakeholders to further clarify the envisaged structure and participation across faculties.

The Board noted the update and emphasised the importance of continued coordination with relevant deans and stakeholders as planning progresses.

Decision:

The Board noted the discussion.

Case 27 – 26O

Any other business

The Director provided an update on changes to the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), noting that two members have rotated out. It was further informed that Ewan Birney will join the SAB. In addition, Edith Heard will also become a member of the SAB, although she will not be able to join the November 2026 visit and will instead participate from a subsequent meeting onwards.

The Board was also informed that leadership of the ELIXIR Oslo Node will be taken over by Anthony Mathelier and Eivind Valen. The Board congratulated Anthony Mathelier on his new role.

Administrative updates were also provided regarding Board documentation. It was noted that previous Board papers (from 2025 onwards) will be made available in a dedicated Teams area, and that Board members will be added to this workspace accordingly.

The next NCMBM Board meeting will take place on 26 August 2026.

Sincerely,

Jan Bjålie
Chair NCMBM Board

Janna Saarela
NCMBM Director