

Board, Centre for Molecular Medicine Norway (NCMM)

Oslo, 3 December 2020

Minutes from Board Meeting 2 December 2020

Time: Wednesday 2 December, 12:00-14:30

Place: Zoom meeting

Executive officer: Elisa Bjørge

	Present	Absent
Professor Jens Petter Berg (UiO/OUS), Chair	X	
Professor Finn-Eirik Johansen (UiO), member	X	
Professor Hilde Nilsen (UiO), member	X	
Professor Bente Halvorsen (HSØ), member		X
Director Research & Innovation Øystein Krüger (HSØ), member	X	
Førsteamanuensis Maria Perander (UiT, national representative), member	X	
Professor Ola Myklebost (UiB), national deputy member		X
Dr. Torunn Berge (HSØ), deputy member		X
Professor Arnaldo Frigessi, deputy member		X
Professor Janna Saarela (NCMM), Director	X	
Professor Hartmut Luecke (NCMM), Assistant Director	X	

CAO Ingrid Kjelsvik was also present.

Agenda (O = information item, D = discussion item B = decision item)**Case 46-20B Approval of minutes from last Board meeting**

Draft minutes from the Board meeting on October 27 were available.

Decision: The minutes are approved.**Case 47-20B NCMM Budget 2021**

The 2021 budget has been prepared in accordance with funding agreements with the RCN, UiO and HSØ. The proposal provides the research groups with the agreed annual allocation for salary and operations. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic as well as the unforeseen move of all labs and offices from house D in the Science Park, has resulted in less investments as well as travel and running costs in 2020 than originally planned. The Covid-situation and the move have also forced NCMM to delay the recruitment of two new group leaders from fall 2020 until summer 2021. The reduction in available space from 2021 and expected delays for when NCMM can move into the new life science building can also influence the recruitment of future new research groups to replace the groups rotating out.

Regarding the 2021 budget, NCMM is funding the renovation of lab and office space at IBV that one NCMM research group will relocate to in January. NCMM will also give the three moving groups some additional funding as a compensation for delays due to the move.

Looking forward, the largest financial uncertainty for the Centre is the announced termination in funding from the RCN after 2024. The Board in the meeting suggested that NCMM in their long-term budget remove the amount currently allocated by the RCN from 2025 to highlight that this will be lacking and has to be replaced by a yet unidentified source. NCMM will initiate discussions with both the RCN and the UiO management about funding from 2025 during the spring of 2021.

Decision: The Board approves the 2021 budget and takes note of the long-term budget as discussed in the meeting.

Case 48-20B Appointment of new Associate Investigators

The network of NCMM Associate Investigators (AIs) was established in 2011 and there have been altogether four open calls for new Associate and Young Associate Investigators. NCMM is now in its third 5-year period and in the spring 21 AIs were reappointed after an application process.

NCMM in June opened a fifth call for both senior and more early-career Associate Investigators with an application deadline end of August. Clinicians were especially encouraged to apply. When the deadline closed, NCMM had received altogether 42 applications.

The Board in May gave NCMM the mandate to contact the different regions to put together an evaluation committee, and in addition to the NCMM Director, the research deans Marit Bakke (UiB), Pål Romundstad (NTNU) and Johanna Sollid (UiT) as well as Hilde Nebb, vice-dean for internationalization and innovation at UiO have been part of the evaluation committee. The committee first evaluated the applications individually. Furthermore, on October 7 the ranking of the candidates in both the senior and early-career bracket were discussed in a digital meeting. A recommendation from the committee was presented to the Board.

The Board in the meeting decided to appoint all the recommended candidates presented by the committee. Furthermore, the Board made a strategic decision to include some additional candidates to strengthen the national aspect as well as include more clinicians in the network.

Decision: The Board appoints 15 senior and 11 early-career Associate Investigators in line with the recommendations from the evaluation committee and in line with discussions in the meeting.

Case 49-20B Personnel case - Exempt information cf. §13 Offentlighetsloven.

Case 50-20B Personnel case - Exempt information cf. §13 Offentlighetsloven.

Case 51-200 Group leader evaluations - update

Three group leaders are in their final year of their first 5-year period at NCMM. In June, they were invited to apply for renewal of their function as group leaders and to

submit their dossiers by 1 December 2020, and NCMM has now received their dossiers.

In the previous Board meeting, three lists of scientific experts were approved. The NCMM Director has contacted candidates on the approved list. NCMM will prepare and send the evaluation material to the scientific experts within mid-December, and the experts are asked to return their review statements within 1 February 2021.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 52-200 Building plans in the Oslo Science Park - update

NCMM is in the process of moving out of 50% of the Centre's rented space in the Oslo Science Park. NCMM was in the spring notified that a building process would start in February 2021 and that an evacuation would be necessary. This move is affecting NCMM much more than the ongoing pandemic and has severe effects on both ongoing operations and future plans of the Centre.

In addition to one group moving to IBV and two research groups relocating to house E in the Science Park, NCMM will get some additional office space in building C. One group will move in December whereas the other two groups will move in January. Due to the ongoing pandemic, NCMM is now facing some additional challenges as the Centre depends on several engineers located abroad to fly in to assist in the move of specialized equipment.

Research groups that have been forced to move will get 1-1.5 month financial compensation.

Proposed

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 53-20B Life Science Building – update

In August, UiO was informed that the government would not compensate Statsbygg's cost overruns in connection with the Life Science Building. During this fall different scenarios have therefore been discussed to be able to continue the project. Recently, the government decided to proceed with the partnership alternative, which means that parts of OUH's research activities are now planned in the Life Science Building. Details are not in place yet but it already has been decided that OUH will move into the western part of the building and also into the areas originally planned for NCMM.

NCMM welcomes OUH into the building and already sees potential for synergies. The Centre has, however, also some concerns. To be able to share instrumentation with the incoming hospital environments efficiently, it will be important to be located physically in the same area. It is also very important for NCMM that all research groups will be located together within a dedicated space for the Centre and that our young group leaders are not spread around in the building. NCMM will ask the Faculty for support in the coming negotiations.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 54-200 National role of NCMM - update

As a national Centre, NCMM aims to include the other Health Regions and universities with medical schools as owners of the Centre. A position paper, addressing a strategic partnership with NCMM has been sent to the health regions as well as to UiB, UiT and NTNU. The NCMM Director has had some initial discussions with UiT and UiB but has not heard back from any of the health regions.

In the meeting, Øystein Krüger informed that there has not been any formal discussions between the health regions regarding NCMM yet although HSØ has been in contact with them. Krüger suggested that the case is brought up in the health region's strategic forum for research. He also suggested that NCMM should consider contacting the university hospitals directly about entering a strategic partnership with the Centre.

One of the national functions of NCMM is to coordinate the Norwegian EATRIS (European Research Infrastructure for Translational Research) network. Norway became a full member of EATRIS in 2016 for a period of 5 years (2016 – 2020) and the annual membership fee has been funded by the eight partner institutions UiO, UiB, NTNU, UiT and the four health regions. An annual EATRIS report was sent to HOD end of October, also addressing the need to conclude on the Norwegian membership in EATRIS going forward. The health regions have earlier this fall communicated that they do not want to continue funding the membership. However, since no resignation was given by the end of 2019, the membership fee will be paid as in previous years for 2021. HOD has also contacted the university partners and asked them to confirm within December 1 whether they want to continue the membership or not. After some discussions between UiO and UiB, it has been decided that the two universities will guarantee for the membership fee in 2022. Other institutions can also join, and this will be discussed at the next deans meeting. A new decision regarding the EATRIS membership from 2023 will have to be made by the end of 2021.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 55-200 Health, Safety and Environment – regular updates

The Faculty of Medicine has requested that HSE matters should be included regularly at Board meetings. CAO Ingrid Kjelsvik in the meeting gave an update about the annual safety round that in 2020 was done digitally. Furthermore, she presented the results from a questionnaire sent to all members of staff and students in November regarding the handling of the Covid-19 situation at NCMM. The survey was anonymous, and the purpose was to evaluate how the Centre has handled this challenging situation and how NCMM can improve. The response rate of the survey was almost 70%, and the overall conclusion from the survey is that the majority of NCMM staff feels that NCMM has handled the pandemic in a good way and although

there are some delays, it is not as critical as one first feared when UiO closed down in March.

Based on the results from the questionnaire, the Board is very satisfied with how NCMM has handled the Covid-19 situation.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 56-200 Appointment of NCMM Board from 2021

The current NCMM Board is appointed until the end of 2020. The Chair of the Board has contacted all Board members to find out who would be willing to stay on as a Board member and who would like to rotate out. HSØ will appoint their two Board members, the medical deans appoint the national representative and the national deputy member whereas the Faculty Board at MED appoints the Chair of the Board as well as the two UiO Board members.

Maria Perander will rotate out as the national representative after 5 years in the NCMM Board and was thanked for her contributions in the meeting. The medical deans will appoint a new member in their December meeting. The other members are willing to continue, and NCMM is now awaiting input from the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences as well as a decision in the MED Faculty Board in December.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

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Miscellaneous

1. *NCMM recruitment strategy*

The challenges NCMM is experiencing with the ongoing move and a reduction in available space as well as the uncertainties with the building process of the new life science building and expected delays there, has already affected the planned recruitments of two new group leaders in the fall 2020 that is now delayed at least 1 year. A new recruitment strategy for NCMM should therefore be discussed in the next Board meeting.

Sincerely,

Jens Petter Berg
Chair NCMM Board

Janna Saarela
NCMM Director