

Board, Centre for Molecular Medicine Norway (NCMM)

Oslo, 28 October 2020

Minutes from Board Meeting 27 October 2020

Time: Tuesday 27 October, 12:00-14:30
 Place: Room Aqua, Oslo Science Park (or zoom)

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 38-200 Presentations by NCMM group leaders

In the fall 2019, the Board decided to invite group leaders to present regularly at Board meetings where they will be given the opportunity to present e.g. key points regarding group leader issues.

Judith Staerk attended the beginning of the meeting and topics such as rotation out of NCMM, mentoring and the need for more stability and senior presence at NCMM as well as (lack of) teaching possibilities for NCMM group leaders were discussed.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 39-20B Approval of minutes from last Board meeting

Draft minutes from the Board meeting on September 18 were available.

Decision: The minutes are approved.

Case 40-20B 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 March, 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, in a TC on October 7 the ranking of the candidates in both the senior and early-career bracket were discussed. A recommendation was presented to the Board.

In the meeting, the NCMM Director described the evaluation process and criteria used by the committee and gave a short update from the discussions during the TC where ranking was discussed. The committee was unanimous and considered scientific excellence and potential new collaboration opportunities/added value for NCMM more important than e.g. affiliations/national representation. Although some clinicians were ranked high, not all were considered appointable although clinicians were especially encouraged to apply.

The Board would have liked some more information about the ranking and the justification of the presented list and did therefore not feel ready to make a decision on how many candidates to appoint. This case has therefore been postponed to the December meeting, and NCMM will include more information from the ranking process for the next Board meeting.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing and will appoint new NCMM Associate Investigators in their next meeting when more information has been provided.

Case 41-20B Group leader evaluations - update

Three group leaders are in their final year of their first 5-year period at NCMM. Criteria for the assessment for renewal in function as group leader at NCMM have previously been prepared as well as a procedure for the renewal process that was last dealt with by the Board in June 2019 (Case 23-19B). The procedure includes individual external evaluation by 4-6 experts in the field, followed by an assessment of the evaluations and the group's progress by the SAB. The NCMM Director will after this process promote a recommendation to the Board.

In June, the three group leaders were invited to apply for renewal of their function as group leaders by 1 December 2020. They have also been given the opportunity to suggest scientific experts for the evaluation process as well as list experts they would prefer excluded from an expert list. A justification for the latter must be included.

NCMM has also asked both the Board and the SAB for international suggestions for scientific experts that NCMM can ask to contribute in the evaluation process.

In the meeting, the suggestions were discussed and altogether three candidates were removed either due to current collaborations with a group leader/joint publications or due to an already reported CoI by a group leader.

Decision: The Board approves the three lists of scientific experts according to discussions in the meeting.

Case 42-200 Building plans in the Oslo Science Park - update

The Oslo Science Park is planning to both renovate and build some additional floors to building D. This will affect 50% of NCMM's rented space in the Oslo Science Park. NCMM was in the spring notified that the building process would start in February 2021 and is currently planning the move out of house D within the end of January 2021.

The Haapaniemi group will be the first group to move out of the D building and will according to plan move over to house E already in November. The Staerk group will take over the lab's currently used by AI Lorena Arranz, who will move to IMB until she can transfer her mice back to Tromsø. The Luecke group will relocate to IBV and the renovation process is progressing there.

End of September Oslo Science Park notified all tenants that they would start preliminary construction work outside building F in the beginning of October. No warning against vibrations was given, but they informed that there could be periods with noise. Still, NCMM staff in house D experienced several periods with vibrations in the following weeks. NCMM has previously notified the Science Park about the expensive and very sensitive instrumentation placed in house D and find the non-existing communication with the Science Park unacceptable. The Centre has asked the Property Department to communicate clearly with the Science Park and repeat that these vibrations could be harmful to our instrumentation.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 43-20B Life Science Building – update

End of August, the UiO rector informed all UiO staff about the challenges related to ground conditions and Statsbygg's planning work in connection with the Life Science Building project. The government has informed Statsbygg/UiO that the project must take significant cuts in order to stay within its economic frames.

The Ministry of Education and Research end of August commissioned Statsbygg and UiO to review the project as well as highlight consequences of cuts, and a report addressing different cut alternatives, was delivered by 30 September.

One of the suggested alternatives also supported by the UiO Board, is a partnership with OUH to find additional funding and to be able to finalize the building as originally planned. The Ministries of Education and Research as well as Health and Care Services have therefore asked UiO and HSØ, respectively, to prepare additional reports, highlighting the synergy potential of sharing infrastructures, being co-localized and for realizing the societal goals set for the building. The deadline to report on this was set to October 19.

A UiO working group where NCMM has also been represented, has discussed different alternatives and also some of the consequences for UiO activities if giving up space for OUH. No details have been discussed or decided upon, but it is clear that some of the suggested alternatives will result in NCMM not being able to stay in the already planned area.

NCMM is very positive to strengthen its interactions with research environments at the hospital side. In the process of preparing a report to the Ministry about potential synergies between UiO and OUH in the LSB, the UiO vice-rector asked NCMM to shortly describe the future plans for the Centre (e.g. focus areas, future group leader recruitments) as well as highlight potential synergies between NCMM and OUH. The prepared response was meant for internal use only.

The director informed the Board of a comment received from Board member Hilde Nilsen prior to the Board meeting. In the comment, which refers to bullet point 3 in attachment 6, Hilde Nilsen, who was unable to attend the meeting, reminded NCMM that the conditions for funding from HSØ included enforcing the collaborations with Ahus. It is expected from HSØ that NCMM should find projects/focus areas that can synergize also with Ahus.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 44-200 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. The deans and vice-deans at UiT, NTNU and UiB have received a position paper, addressing a strategic partnership with NCMM and agreed to discuss this at the research deans meeting in Bergen October 23. NCMM has also suggested to discuss separately with each institution early November, and Tromsø and Bergen have already confirmed their interest.

A position paper has recently also been sent to the other health regions. In the meeting it was agreed, that Øystein Krüger will try to assist NCMM by explaining the concept and NCMM's proposal in his interactions with the other health regions. In the meeting it was also mentioned that NCMM needs to find a balance between serving local needs and fulfilling the current national role. Approx. 70% of the current funding to NCMM comes from UiO.

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. Continuation of the EATRIS membership is currently up for discussion. The current partners are reluctant to continue funding the membership. NCMM is in dialogue with the RCN about the future of the Norwegian EATRIS membership and is currently also preparing a report to the Ministry of Health and Care Services, addressing both current activities as well as consequences of ending the membership.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 45

Miscellaneous

1. *Upcoming SAB visit*

The next SAB visit is scheduled for March 2021 and three group leaders are up for evaluation during this visit. Due to the current Covid-19 situation, it is unlikely that a physical meeting can take place in the spring. The NCMM Director therefore contacted the chair of the SAB to discuss alternative options - postponing the visit or having a digital meeting. The SAB prefers to have a digital meeting as plan B and the Board strongly supports this. NCMM will now prepare a draft program and discuss this further with the SAB.

2. NCMM Board from 2021

The current Board members are appointed until the end of 2020. According to the mandate of the Board, the chair should have a dual affiliation at both UiO and OUH. Furthermore, one UiO Board member should represent the Faculty of medicine and the other UiO Board member should represent the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The Faculty Board at MED appoints the UiO Board members whereas the medical deans in Norway appoint the national representative. HSØ decides on their two members.

Current chair of the Board will discuss with current Board members to find out who would be interested in continuing and who would prefer to rotate out. He will also talk to the Deans at MED and MN. Suggestion for Board members from 2021 will be presented to the Faculty Board at MED in the December meeting. The deadline for submitting the paper work is November 23.

Sincerely,

Jens Petter Berg
Chair NCMM Board

Janna Saarela
NCMM Director