

Board, Centre for Molecular Medicine Norway (NCMM)

Oslo, 4 February 2022

Minutes from Board Meeting 4 February 2022

Time: Monday 4 February 2022, 12:00-14:30

Place: Zoom

Executive officer: Elisa Bjørge

	Present	Absent
Professor Jens Petter Berg (UiO/OUS), Chair	X	
Professor Arne Klungland (UiO), member	X	
Professor Hilde Nilsen (UiO), member	X	
Professor Bente Halvorsen (HSØ), member	X	
Director Research & Innovation Øystein Krüger (HSØ), member	X	
Professor Ola Myklebost (UiB), national member	X	
Professor Magne Børset (NTNU), national deputy member		X
Dr. Torunn Berge (HSØ), deputy member		X
Professor Arnaldo Frigessi, deputy member		X
Professor Janna Saarela (NCMM), Director	X	

CAO Ingrid Kjelsvik was also present.

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

Case 1-22B Approval of minutes from last Board meeting

Draft minutes from the Board meeting on December 13 were available.

Decision: The minutes were approved.

Case 2-22O Hiring of NCMM group leaders - Update**Exempt information cf. §13 Offentlighetsloven**

NCMM is in the process of recruiting two new group leaders within the field of precision medicine. Interviews were held in November 2021, and in the assessment from the local interview panel, four candidates were ranked for the position. The Board in their December meeting 2021 supported the recommendation from the committee and decided that the two highest-ranked candidates, *** and ***, should be offered the positions as research scientists in precision medicine with function as Group Leader on a five-year renewable contract, according to the call text.

The Director has had initial discussions with both candidates, and they both seem very positive to join NCMM. Both candidates will receive formal offers within the first half of February. Dr *** will come to Oslo for a second visit on February 7-8 and will have several meetings at NCMM as well as with potential collaboration partners in the Oslo region. Dr. *** has visited NCMM a second time already, and meetings with potential

collaboration partners have been organized also for her. She will need a rodent facility for her research and is currently using the animal facility at the IMB. NCMM is in discussion with IMB to continue this arrangement.

Decision: The Board took note of the meeting.

Case 3 – 220 New call for group leaders

NCMM in June 2021 opened a call for 2-3 new group leaders with start-up packages in precision medicine. In particular, NCMM was looking for candidates within AI/machine learning as well as within cell-based approaches. After the evaluation of all the applicants, the Evaluation Committee concluded that the quality of the applications for AI/machine learning position was not good enough, and NCMM is therefore now in the process of re-opening a call to recruit 1-2 group leaders with AI/machine learning expertise. The Board in the December meeting supported the suggestion to open a more targeted call.

The NCMM Director is in the process of discussing the call with computational experts at UiO and the Oslo region to get a better picture of the local AI /ML field. Data access is also important to be able to recruit good candidates. There is potential for unique data opportunities, depending on disease areas of interest and collaboration partners. The Board suggested contacting Michael Riegler from Simula and Eivind Hovig to get an overview of data sources available and establishing contact with AI/ML networks.

The Chair of the Board will send NCMM suggestions of scientific experts that could be asked to function as members of the Selection Committee. Suggestions from the Board are also welcomed.

Decision: The Board took note of the briefing.

Case 4 -220 Strategy discussion on continuation of NCMM beyond 2024

NCMM currently is in its third 5-year funding period and receives core funding annually from UiO, RCN and HSØ until the end of 2024. The RCN already during the 2018 evaluation communicated that they would not be able to continue funding NCMM beyond the third five-year period through the current mechanism, and this was also repeated in a dialogue meeting in June 2021. The RCN would have to establish a new funding mechanism to be able to fund Norwegian EMBL Partnerships going forward. Before starting discussions with other funders, it will be important to obtain a clear funding commitment from UiO for the period starting 2025. NCMM will initiate discussions with MED and the rectorate about future funding this spring.

The EMBL partnership agreement is up for renewal in 2022, and EMBL will contact all host institutions regarding the extension of the Nordic EMBL Partnership for another ten years. It is therefore important to secure funding of the Centre from the host institution before the new agreement is signed. Furthermore, commitment from the host institution is crucial before starting negotiations with the other core funders

of NCMM. NCMM is in contact with the EMBL General Director to discuss future funding of the Centre and how to secure funding from the RCN also beyond 2024.

Decision: The Board took note of the briefing.

Case 5-220 National role of NCMM - update

1. Seed-funding call UiT

In June NCMM and UiT agreed to open a joint call for seed- funding of collaborative projects between NCMM group leaders and young researchers at Helsefak, UiT. Altogether, 1.2 MNOK has been allocated for this collaboration. In December, four new collaborative projects were awarded seed-funding and the projects will run in 2022. This is a pilot project co-funded by NCMM and UiT, and the Centre would be happy to discuss similar opportunities with UiB and NTNU.

In the meeting, the national Board member informed that the Research Dean at UiB would be interested in looking into a similar collaboration. The Chair will introduce the idea to the other Research Deans in a national meeting end of March.

2. ESFRI-memberships EATRIS and EU-OPENSREEN

NCMM is coordinating the Norwegian participation in two ESFRI-RIs: EATRIS and EU-OPENSREEN. The EATRIS membership fee has in the period 2016-2021 been covered by UiO, UiB, NTNU, UiT and the four Regional Health Authorities. However, end of 2020 the Regional Health Authorities and UiT and NTNU decided not to continue their contribution to EATRIS. UiO and UiB have guaranteed to cover the 85 000 Euro membership fee for 2022, but UiB has communicated that they will not be able to contribute to the 2023 fee. In December it was decided and NCMM and MED together will guarantee for the 2023 EATRIS membership fee. Norway, however, depends on a broader commitment to be able to stay a member state beyond 2023.

NOR-OPENSREEN is the Norwegian participant in EU-OPENSREEN, and the membership fee for the first five years (2018-2022) has been covered by the RCN. How to cover the membership fee from 2023 is now up for discussion. If the four Norwegian nodes together cannot find funding for the membership fee, Norway will have to send in a resignation letter to EU-OPENSREEN within the end of March this year.

The Chair of the Board has suggested that membership fees of ESFRI research infrastructures will be discussed at the national Research Dean meeting end of March. He has also suggested that representatives from the RCN are invited to this discussion. The NCMM Director will be happy to present EATRIS/EU-OPENSREEN or take part in discussions if invited to meetings.

Decision: The Board took note of the briefing.

Case 6-22 Miscellaneous

Group leader Emma Haapaniemi recently has been awarded 19.9 MNOK from the RCN program for innovative technology projects. Together with her partners Eivind Valen (UiB), Johanna Olweus (OUH/UiO) and Hans Christian Erichsen (OUH/UiO), the Haapaniemi group plans to develop a personalized, CRISPR-Cas based, autologous T cell editing platform for primary immunodeficiency disease therapy. Group leader Irep Gözen was recently awarded 25 MNOK from the Fellesløftet IV call for large, interdisciplinary research projects. Together with her collaboration partners Harald Stenmark (OUH/UiO) and Andreas Carlsson (UiO) she aims to understand how cellular double lipid bilayer vesicles are formed and developed in response to interfacial contacts during autophagy.

The Board congratulated Emma and Irep with their successful funding applications.

Sincerely,

Jens Petter Berg
Chair NCMM Board

Janna Saarela
NCMM Director