

Board, Centre for Molecular Medicine Norway (NCMM)

Oslo, 14 December 2021

Minutes from Board Meeting 13 December 2021

Time: Monday 13 December 2021, 12:00-14:00

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 41-21B Approval of minutes from last Board meeting

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

Decision: The minutes are approved.**Case 42-21B Hiring of NCMM group leaders - Personnel case****Exempt information cf. §13 Offentlighetsloven**

NCMM is in the process of recruiting new group leaders within the field of precision medicine. The call was published in June, and when the call closed September 15, 59 applications had been received. The Evaluation Committee reviewed all of the candidates individually. In a meeting on October 26, the Committee discussed and ranked the candidates and decided to invite 10 candidates for interviews on November 22-23. In addition to the appointed international Selection Committee, a local interview panel consisting Prof. Vessela Kristensen, Prof. Finn-Eirik Johansen, Dr. Judith Staerk and NCMM Director Janna Saarela were also present during the interviews. The statement from the international Selection Committee was sent to all the applicants on November 25 with a two-week deadline to comment. No comments were received.

All of the candidates had an excellent scientific record of accomplishment.

The final assessment from the local interview panel was based on the evaluation statement from the Selection Committee, own observations and reviews of the candidates as well as the panel's conclusions based on feedback from the research environments, regarding how well the candidates would add value to NCMM, UiO and OUH research environments. In their assessment, the local interview panel ranked four of the candidates: 1) ***, 2) ***, 3) *** and 4) ***.

In the meeting, the Board supported the ranking suggested by the local interview panel and decided that the two open positions are to be offered to the top four candidates in the ranked order. In the event that all the ranked candidates decline the positions, a new proposal for a decision on recruitment to this position will be presented to the Board.

The top-ranked candidates will be invited back for a second visit in January.

Decision: Drs *** and *** are offered the positions as research scientists in precision medicine with function as Group Leader (position code SKO 1109) on a five-year renewable contract, according to the call text. If Dr *** or Dr *** decline the offer, the position will be offered to Dr *** and Dr *** in ranked order.

Case 43-21B NCMM recruitment strategy – new call for group leaders

NCMM in June opened a call for 2-3 new group leaders with start-up packages in precision medicine. In particular, NCMM is 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 the AI/machine learning position was not good enough, and NCMM will therefore open a new call early 2022, to recruit 1-2 group leaders with AI/machine learning expertise.

The Board supports the suggestion to open a more targeted call as it is challenging to recruit AI / machine learning expertise due to the huge global demand for this type of expertise. Furthermore, it was suggested to discuss the upcoming call text with Morten Dæhlen, Centre Leader of dScience (Centre for Computational and Data Science) as well as the Dept. of Informatics to identify assets to include in the call.

Decision: NCMM is given the mandate to open a targeted call to recruit 1-2 group leaders within the field of AI/machine learning in line with discussions in the meeting.

Case 44-21B NCMM Budget 2022

The NCMM 2022 budget has been prepared in accordance with funding agreements with the RCN, UiO and HSØ, and the proposal provides the research groups with the agreed annual allocation for salary and operations. Looking forward, the largest financial uncertainty for the Centre is the announced termination in funding from the RCN after 2024. The NCMM Director and CAO presented the budget in the meeting.

Decision: The 2022 budget is approved.

Case 45-210 Group Leader evaluation 2022

Personnel case - Exempt information cf. §13 Offentlighetsloven.

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. The procedure includes individual external evaluation of 4-6 experts in the field that are chosen from a list of approx. 10-12 experts, 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.

The next SAB visit was planned for end of September 2022. Group leaders *** and *** joined NCMM in October 2018 and April 2019, respectively. *** has since joining NCMM, been on parental leave for 6 months. If evaluated in the fall 2022, *** would be evaluated earlier than other NCMM group leaders. The Director has discussed the matter with the Chair of the NCMM SAB.

NCMM is externally evaluated every 5 years, and the Centre is expecting an evaluation from either the RCN or UiO in 2023. NCMM and the SAB therefore suggest to postpone the September 2022 visit to February 2023 so the SAB can combine both the evaluation of *** and give the Centre necessary feedback before the external Centre evaluation. Due to parental leave, the evaluation of *** is postponed until 2024 when also *** will be evaluated.

The Board supported this suggestion in the meeting.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 46-210 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 collaborative effort, and UiT opened the call in October. When the deadline closed 26 November, five applications had been received, and these are now being evaluated. The process has been organized by UiT. 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.

2. ESFRI-memberships EU-OPENSCREEN and EATRIS

NCMM is coordinating Norwegian participation in two ESFRI-RIs: EATRIS and EU-OPENSCREEN. 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. Due to a 12-month resignation period, Norway will have to notify EATRIS by the end of 2021 to leave EATRIS before 2023. The Medical Faculty cannot alone cover the fee for a national membership. On December 10, a meeting between UiO and the RCN was held to discuss the membership. The RCN does not have a mandate to fund the membership fees to ESFRI-RIs after the first 5-year period, but clearly see the value of this infrastructure. Furthermore, they highlighted the need to include ESFRI-RIs in upcoming EU-applications to get funding.

In the meeting, the Board acknowledged the increased EATRIS interest and activities in Norway the last 1.5 years. It was suggested to inform HOD about both the increased activities and the need to include ESFRI-RIs in upcoming EU calls to see if either HOD or the Regional Health Authorities will reconsider their decision not to fund the EATRIS membership anymore.

NOR-OPENSSCREEN is the Norwegian participant in EU-OPENSSCREEN and the membership fee for the first five years (2018-2022) has been covered through an RCN infrastructure grant. 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-OPENSSCREEN. Since the Board meeting, EU-OPENSSCREEN has informed NCMM that a decision for continuation of the membership needs to be done before the end of Q1 2022.

Decision: The Board takes note of the briefing.

Case 47 Miscellaneous

Sincerely,

Jens Petter Berg
Chair NCMM Board

Janna Saarela
NCMM Director