

Minutes from NordForsk 71st Board meeting

5 December 2022

Virtual Teams meeting

Present:

Board Members:

Björck, Jonas	The Swedish Research Council Forte (Chair)
Ögmundsdóttir, Margrét Helga	University of Iceland
Risom, Jesper	Independent Research Fund Denmark
Vauhkonen, Jussi	Academy of Finland
Vistad, Rune	The Research Council of Norway
Walls, Mari	Nordic University Cooperation (NUS)

Observers and guests:

Sølvará, Annika	The Faroese Research Council
Glen Petersen, Helle	Nordic Council of Ministers (Item 1-3)
Solhaug Komissar, Bjørnar	NordForsk Administration (staff representative)

NordForsk Administration:

Flåøyen, Arne
Heimonen, Mikael
Aanes, Guttorm
Bjarnar, Siri (Minutes)

Not present:

Mattila, Johanna Åland University of applied sciences

Opening of the meeting

01 BM 22/1136 Approval of the agenda. Any conflict of interest to be announced

The Chair opened the meeting. No conflicts of interest were noted.

Action: The agenda was approved.

02 BM 22/1137 Quorum

The Board has quorum when at least 50% of the board members, i.e. minimum three members, are present.

Action: The Board noted quorum with all members present.

03 BM 22/1138 Approval of the minutes from the Board meeting on 12 October 2022

The Board had the chance to make corrections and changes to the minutes prior to the meeting. No modifications were suggested, but it was noted that for item 11/1146 Nordic e-Infrastructure Collaboration (NeIC) it would have been helpful for the Board with some further elaborations on the next steps in the process and what is expected of the Board.

Action: The minutes were approved.

04 BM 22/1139 NordForsk Strategy 2023-2026

Arne Flåøyen presented the case. He clarified that the document on implementation of the strategy is not part of the formal strategy, but that it has been a useful document for the administration when developing annual action plans. However, after the procedure changed in 2019 from the Board being notified of annual action plans to adopting them, the description of implementation of the strategy is redundant.

The Board was pleased to have a one-page strategy. It was pointed out that the goals are formulated more as actions or processes, than goals to be achieved. The board suggested that the proposed primary goal should be reformulated.

Action: The Board asks the administration to revise the strategy in line with the discussions and propose a new version to be decided on by the Board by written procedure.

05 BM 22/1140 Accounts per October 2022

Mikael Heimonen presented the case and informed that most activities are carried out according to plan.

The accounts do not include the expenditure for research projects under the call on Societal security beyond COVID-19, for which the funding decision was taken per capsulam by the Board in November (per capsulam decision No 3-2022). The Board decided to contribute with up to a total of 14 MNOK to this call.

Funding decisions for the calls on Welfare among Children and Young People in the Post-Pandemic Nordics and NOS-HS project grants will be made May or June 2023, leaving unspent means for 2022. The administration will seek to limit the transfer of equity to the next fiscal year and look into which transfers could be made by the end of the year.

Action: The Board was informed.

06 BM 22/1141 Budget 2023 and Action plan 2023

Mikael Heimonen informed about the budget for 2023. MNOK 52 are available for new calls and initiatives, which is more than NordForsk can be expected to spend since the potential new Expressions of Interests (see item 12 Status for Open Invitation) decided upon at the meeting 29 March 2023 will not reach funding decision before 2024. Thus, a transfer of equity can be expected also from 2023 to 2024.

Director Arne Flåøyen informed about additional activities directly funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) due to returned funds for cooperation with Russia:

- Nordic-Baltic research on antimicrobial resistance (5,43 MDKK)
- Internal call within the migration and integration programme for research activities supporting the development of new knowledge related to receiving and integrating refugees from Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia (3,5 MDKK)
- Nordic-Baltic research network activities for Ukraine experts (1,5 MDKK)

Flåøyen informed about the action plan, which has a structure reflecting the strategy. The Board discussed that the action plan could be more precise, focusing on the actions specific for 2023. Some of the actions stated in the current version are very general and more descriptions of NordForsk standard processes rather than targeted actions to reach the goals.

The Board discussed that one of the main challenges for NordForsk is the lack of predictability and lack of new initiatives in pipeline, as no new Expressions of Interest were submitted by the September deadline. The action plan for 2023 should reflect this, and a main action should be to address this problem in all ways possible. This challenge also relates to goals on strategic communication and communicating the Nordic added value of joint Nordic initiatives to the funders. It was mentioned that the Board members should take an active role in raising awareness with their respective organisations of the benefits of channelling funding through NordForsk. Continued dialog with NORDHORCS was also raised as an important activity.

Action: The Board approved the budget. The Board was not ready to take a decision on the action plan and asks the administration to provide a new and more focused version to be sent to the Board for decision by written procedure.

07 BM 22/1142 Funding Decision: Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change

Director Arne Flåøyen presented the case and reminded the Board of the background for the call.

Action: The Board decided to fund seven research projects under the Call for proposals in the programme Sustainable Agriculture and Climate Change:

- 132066, Mushroom-based processes for increased local production of non-meat protein and enhanced agriculture sustainability, with up to 7.47 MNOK.
- 137027, Validating the Introduction of Kernza in the Nordic region with up to 9,87 MNOK.
- 138366, Future Food Security in the Nordic-Baltic Region: Merging Past, Present, and Future with up to 9,97 MNOK.
- 137406, Innovative sustainable Nordic-Baltic horticulture with up to 7,49 MNOK.
- 137268, Climate-ready faba beans for the Nordic and Baltic Region with up to 9,81 MNOK.
- 136208, Climate-smart resilience through diversified cropping systems – Identifying springboards in Nordic and Baltic agriculture with up to 10,0 MNOK.
- 136986, Upscaling crop performance monitoring by linking satellite and field biosignatures with up to 10,0 MNOK.

The call is funded by a virtual common pot, and the Board's decision is dependent on the funding decisions by the national research councils co-funding the call.

08 BM 22/1143 Funding Decision: Future Working Life

Director Arne Flåøyen presented the case and reminded the Board of the background for the call.

Action: The Board decided to fund 5 research projects under the Future Working Life call:

- 137287, Understanding and Intervening against Sexual Harassment at work, with up to 8957892 NOK.
- 138986, Remote and flexible work arrangements: A cross-national study focused on implications for leaders and employees, with up to 8789835 NOK
- 139986, Sustainable working-life for ageing populations in the Nordic-Baltic region, with up to 8967 639 NOK
- 141228, Sustainable and inclusive hybrid workplaces - anywhere and anytime?, with up to 9000000 NOK
- 143807, Sustainable Remote Nordic Labour Markets, with up to 8998413 NOK

The call is funded by a virtual common pot, and the Board's decision is dependent on the funding decisions by the national research councils co-funding the call.

09 BM 22/1144 Funding Decision: Research School within the Nordic Neutron Science Programme

Director Arne Flåøyen presented the case.

Action: The Board decided to fund the extension of the researcher school under the call Research School within the Nordic Neutron Science Programme (invited applicant only):

- 145666, NNSP PhD School in Neutron Scattering, with up to 4 MNOK.

10 BM 22/1145 Appointment of new Chair of the Research and Innovation Programme on Digitalisation of the Public Sector

Arne Flåøyen presented the case. Torbjørn Larsen, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), resigned as Chair of the Research and Innovation Programme on Digitalisation of the Public Sector on 3 October 2022. The administration nominated Ulla Wallin, Senior Research Officer at Forte, as new Chair. Wallin has a solid background for the position as Chair with years of experience and a comprehensive understanding of research funding management. She is currently a member of the Programme Committee, and already familiar with the programme and its six projects.

Action: The Board appointed Ulla Wallin as Chair of the Programme Committee for the Research and Innovation Programme on Digitalisation of the Public Sector.

11 BM 22/1146 Nordic e-Infrastructure Collaboration (NeIC)

Arne Flåøyen informed the Board of NeIC's history and current status. NeIC was transferred to NordForsk in 2012, with the main responsibility to coordinate Nordic activities in CERN/Tier-1. At that time, the national funders were on the Board of NeIC. The NeIC board signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for 10 years and was authorized to take funding decisions. However, in 2015, the funders withdrew from the NeIC Board and the e-infrastructure providers replaced them as board members.

Since NeIC was established, NordForsk has provided additional funding to NeIC. NordForsk has in the recent years allocated 20 MNOK annually as basic funding. The funding has been used to other activities than Tier-1, which has been funded through national funding. Sweden, Finland, and Norway have committed to providing the same funding for Tier-1 for 2023, but confirmations are still needed from all partners for 2024 and coming years. The MoU signed in 2012 ends in 2022, but NeIC has received one year extension and will receive funding from NordForsk also for 2023 whilst NordForsk and NeIC, in close dialogue with NRICC, try to find a good way forward.

The process forward will be twofold.

- Firstly, the management structure of NeIC must be adjusted to comply with the NordForsk structure. The NordForsk director will meet NeIC again on 16 December and discuss the possibility of one of the partners taking the role as project owner for NeIC activities, as this would provide a necessary distance between NordForsk as a funding body and NeIC as a performing body.
- Secondly, the Board must decide on the long-term funding of NeIC and whether the annual funding of MNOK 20 should be set out in a competitive funding process from 2024 or not. Prior to making this decision, there should be clarity concerning the national funding contributions to Tier-1. A close dialogue with NRICC will be

important, and NordForsk will follow their recommendation and ask NeIC to submit different funding scenarios. All scenarios should include funding to Tier-1.

Action: The Board was informed and discussed the situation. The Board welcomes a plan with different funding scenarios for NeIC. The Board asks to be kept informed following meetings with NeIC, as the national funders needs to be updated.

12 BM 22/1147 Status Open Invitation

Green Transition

Arne Flåøyen informed about the workshop on Green Transition 2 December, with representation from all the Nordic Countries, Greenland, the Faroe Islands, as well as the three Baltic states. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the three proposed thematic areas:

- A green transition for resilient and energy efficient agriculture in the Nordics [proposed by the NCM secretariat]
- Climate and gender perspectives [proposed by the NCM secretariat]
- Democratic engagement and citizen-involvement in Green Transition [proposed by Innovation Fund Denmark]

NordForsk hopes to get support for one call with three sub-areas. The NCM has committed 12 MDKK to the call, and NordForsk can provide up to 1/3 of the total Nordic budget. NordForsk will follow up with separate workshops for the three themes late January 2023.

Arctic

Arne Flåøyen reminded the Board about the funders meeting held in Tromsø in March 2022, which despite broad initial interest unfortunately did not lead to a new call on Arctic research. There has, however, been renewed interest during the Autumn. The timing for a new research initiative is good, as the Arctic Council will be under Nordic lead the coming years. The Research Council of Norway has developed a text which is being circulated amongst interested funders, and NordForsk expects an Expression of Interest to be submitted to the Board prior to the March meeting 2023.

Furthermore, NordForsk will, together with the Canadian Embassy to Norway and the Norwegian Research Council, organise a side-event to Arctic Frontiers in Tromsø 1 February 2023. The panel discussion will be on "Accountability, Communication and Respect: Establishing an ethical framework for involving Indigenous Peoples in Arctic Research".

Ongoing discussions with UKRI

Arne Flåøyen informed the Board of ongoing discussions with UKRI, who are interested in research collaboration on societal security and health (aging and medicine in particular).

Action: The Board was informed.

13 BM 22/1148 Information from the Nordic Council of Ministers

Helle Glen Petersen from the Secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCMS) was prevented from attending the meeting. She had sent information in writing prior to the meeting, which Arne Flåøyen presented to the board.

New secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers

Karen Ellemann will be the [new secretary general of the Nordic Council of Ministers](#) from 1 January 2023. Ellemann has been a member of the Danish parliament (Folketinget) since 2007 and has held several ministerial posts in the Danish government.

Final budget of the Nordic Council of Ministers for 2023

The final budget for 2023 was adopted by the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation (MR-SAM) on 1 November 2022 and is subject to the approval of national parliaments. Total expenditure for the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2023 is 1.037.564.000 DKK (current level). NordForsk's budget in 2023 is 112.732.000 DKK which in turn will be approx. 154.428.000 NOK depending on the currency.

Political negotiations on the budget between the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers

The negotiations on the budget between the Nordic Council and Nordic Council of Ministers have resulted in several changes/clarifications to the budget 2023. Some will affect NordForsk, such as the Nordic Council of Ministers for Education and Research (MR-U) decision to add 3.000.000 DKK to the programme on post-Covid. This, however, awaits the formal approval of the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation which is in process.

Follow up on the Nordic Council's 74th Session 2022 in Helsinki

The Nordic Council adopted a recommendation addressed to the Nordic Council of Ministers regarding a Nordic Research Policy Report. For further information, see Rek 13/2022 Forskningspolitisk redogørelse, <https://www.norden.org/da/case/utskottsforslag-om-forskningspolitisk-redogorelse-o>

The Council of Ministers shall report to the Nordic Council during the Nordic Council's 75th Session in the Autumn 2023. NordForsk will play a vital role in preparing this report during Spring 2023.

Our Vision 2030 and action plan 2021-2024

In August 2019, the Nordic prime ministers declared that the Nordic Region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world. To realize this vision, three strategic areas were given priority in the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers: a green Nordic Region, a competitive Nordic Region, and a socially sustainable Nordic Region. In order to achieve these goals, the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation (MR-SAM) adopted an action plan for the work of the Nordic Council of Ministers over a four-year period 2021-2024 based on 12 objectives linked to the strategic priority areas.

The Nordic Council of Ministers has now conducted a [midterm evaluation](#) of efforts relating to our vision and the Nordic prime ministers have been presented with the first status report in November 2022.

For the remaining period 2023-2024 the Ministers for Nordic Cooperation (MR-SAM) have decided to prioritise policy initiatives that are current and relevant and continue to step up efforts relating to the green transition throughout the organisation.

Our Vision from 2025

The Ministers for Nordic Cooperation (MR-SAM) have decided to keep the three strategic priorities for the period 2025-2030. A new action plan – or rather two separate plans for 2025-2027 and 2028-2030 – will be designed on the basis of input from all the sectors, institutions and other relevant stakeholders.

New colleague at the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat (NCMS)

Jonas Waller no longer works at NCMS. His replacement has been appointed. Håkon Halgrimsen, who currently works as project manager for the Norwegian presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers at the Norwegian Ministry of Research and Education, will start at NCMS on 1 January 2023.

Action: The Board was informed.

14 BM 22/1149 Information about per capsulam decisions

The information was presented in writing in the documentation to the Board meeting.

Action: The Board was notified.

15 BM 22/1150 Information about Director's decisions

The information was presented in writing in the documentation to the Board meeting.

Action: The Board was notified.

16 BM 22/1151 Information from the Administration

The information was presented in writing in the documentation to the Board meeting.

Action: The Board was notified.

17 BM 22/1152 Information from Board members and observers

The Board members gave a short update from their respective country/organisation.

Action: The Board was informed.

18 BM 22/1153 Any other business

N/A