

Meeting minutes

NordForsk 74th Board Meeting
24 October 2023, 08:30-11:30
Stockholm

Present:

Board Members

Björck, Jonas	The Swedish Research Council Forte (Chair)
Risom, Jesper	Independent Research Fund Denmark (Vice Chair)
Vauhkonen, Jussi	Research Council of Finland (online)
Jónsdóttir, Guðbjörg Andrea	Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation, Iceland
Vistad, Rune	The Research Council of Norway
Hagfeldt, Anders	Nordic University Cooperation (NUS)
Sølvará, Annika	The Faroese Research Council
Mattila, Johanna	Åland University of applied sciences (observer)
Halgrimsen, Håkon	Nordic Council of Ministers (observer)

NordForsk Administration

Flåøyen, Arne	
Komissar, Bjørnar Solhaug	Staff representative
Aanes, Guttorm	
Heimonen, Mikael	
Bjarnar, Siri (minutes)	

Opening of the meeting

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the new board members, Anders Hagfeldt and Guðbjörg Andrea Jónsdóttir.

01 BM 23/1184 Approval of the agenda. Any conflict of interest to be announced

The Board members had prior to the meeting checked for conflict of interest in relation to the funding decision for university cooperation (items 4). Anders Hagfeldt had informed of conflict of interest on the applications with partners from Uppsala University. No further conflicts were noted.

Action: The agenda was approved.

02 BM 23/1185 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 23/1186 Approval of the minutes from the Board meeting on 24 May 2023

The Board had received written draft minutes with the possibility to suggest revisions prior to the meeting. No revisions were suggested.

Action: The Board approved the minutes.

04 BM 23/1187 Funding Decision: University Cooperation

Anders Hagfeldt left the room prior to this item due to conflict of interest.

The Board was reminded of the background of the initiative and informed about the call process and results. The applications rated 7 (outstanding) and 6 (excellent) by an international peer review panel had been discussed by the call committee, who made their assessment of the proposals' contribution to call aims and Nordic added value. The call committee has recommended the Board to fund 6 applications, which the committee found to demonstrate solid and promising research collaboration, with convincing plans for capacity building and research training, between excellent research environments across the Nordic region.

Action: The Board decided to fund 6 university cooperations:

- 164079 Nordic Borealization Network with up to 15,126,673 NOK.
- 167318 Nordic Centre for Comparative and International Family Law with up to 4,770,682 NOK.
- 168043 Nordic University Cooperation on Edge Intelligence with up to 17,270,678 NOK.
- 163738 NORPOD – A collaborative postdoc program of the Nordic EMBL Partnership for Molecular Medicine with up to 20,000,000 NOK.
- 167298 Nordic Pharmaceutical Translation and Innovation with up to 20,000,000 NOK.
- 164218 Leveraging Nordic Opportunities to Transform Mental Health Care through Precision Medicine with up to 15,678,001 NOK.

05 BM 23/1188 Expression of Interest: Migration and Integration

NordForsk received an Expression of Interest (EoI) for a call on migration and integration research submitted by Forte with support from the Swedish Research Council, the Research Council of Norway, the Research Council of Lithuania, and the Estonian research council. The total commitment from the Nordic funding partners is approximately NOK 39 million. In addition, Estonia and Lithuania contribute with an approximate total of EUR 500 000. Spending is expected to start in 2024.

The funding mechanism for the planned call is suggested as a hybrid solution with a real common pot for the Nordic countries and a virtual common pot for Baltic partners.

Action: The Board decided to support the Nordic-Baltic initiative for migration and integration research with up to NOK 19.5 million and a maximum of 1/3 of the total Nordic call budget.

The Board delegates to the Director to appoint the Call Committee members based on nominations from the participating funding organisations. The Board delegates to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board to appoint the Call Committee chair. The funding partners, the Board and the NordForsk administration may all suggest candidates.

06 BM 23/1189 Expression of Interest: Food from the Ocean as part of the Green Transition

NordForsk received an Expression of Interest (EoI) on 6 October 2023 for a call on Food from the ocean as part of the green transition. The EoI is submitted by the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat with support from the Innovation Fund Denmark, the Research Council of Norway, and the Research Council Faroe Islands. Iceland has informed that they intend to co-fund the call. The amount is however yet to be decided. The total commitment from the national funding partners adds up to approximately NOK 16 million. In addition, the Nordic fisheries and aquaculture committee of the Nordic Council of Ministers has decided to allocate DKK 1.5

million to the initiative. The funding mechanism for the planned call is suggested as a virtual common pot. Spending is expected to start in 2024.

Action: The Board decided to support the call on Food from the Ocean as part of the green transition with NOK 8 million, and a maximum of 1/3 of the total Nordic call budget. The Board delegates to the NordForsk director to decide on additional funding within the 1/3 limitation in case of increased national co-funding.

The Board delegates to the Director to appoint the Call Committee members based on nominations from the participating funding organisations. The Board delegates to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board to appoint the Call Committee chair. The funding partners, the Board and the NordForsk administration may all suggest candidates.

07 BM 23/1190 Sustainable Development of the Arctic: Additional funding

The Board decided on 5 September 2023 to support the call Sustainable development of the Arctic with NOK 53 million (Per Capsulam Decision 2-2023). Since the decision, NordForsk has received confirmations that Sweden (VR and Formas)¹ will co-fund the call with SEK 15 million in total and the Faroe Islands will contribute with DKK 900 000. Greenland informed NordForsk prior to the meeting that they will also co-fund the call. Iceland has expressed clear interest.

The administration proposes that the Board allocates additional NOK 8 million to the call and that the Board delegates to the NordForsk director to decide on additional funding within the 1/3 limitation in case of increased national co-funding.

NordForsk is exploring the possibilities for two separate calls under the Arctic theme – one for bottom-up interdisciplinary research projects in accordance with the Expression of Interest, and a smaller call for capacity building networks for young researchers doing research with indigenous perspectives. The administration will revert to the Board with a description of the call for capacity building networks including a proposal for allocation of funding.

The Board asks the administration to look into the possibilities to have the funding decision on the Arctic initiative ready by end of 2024 and to open the call as soon as possible, but without jeopardizing the quality of the assessment process.

Action: The Board decided to allocate additional NOK 8 million to the call on Sustainable Development of the Arctic. The Board delegates to the NordForsk director to decide on additional funding within the 1/3 limitation in case of increased national co-funding.

08 BM 23/1191 Nordic e-Infrastructure Collaboration (NeIC) for 2024

The Board was informed of the discussions that have taken place between the NeIC board and the NordForsk director since the last board meeting. The Board discussed the proposed action to grant NeIC funding to conclude their activities under 2024.

The Board underlines that achieving a new MoU between the national funders and NordForsk on coordination and funding of Nordic Tier-1 should be prioritized. The meeting was informed of the challenges with complex national processes.

Action: NeIC is granted NOK 17 million for 2024.

¹ Not Forte, as was informed in the documentations distributed to the Board prior to the meeting.

09 BM 23/1192 Status Open Invitation and financial prognosis

The Board was informed about the financial prognosis. NordForsk has committed all funding for 2024. The meeting was informed of initiatives currently under discussion, of which the initiative from Forte on *Developing and strengthening the Nordic model for sustainable health and care systems for the elderly* which is the most developed and currently being circulated to the national research councils.

The Board had a discussion concerning at which stage in the process they should be informed of new initiatives under discussion. There was broad agreement of the positive effects of an early dialogue with NORDHORCS when it comes to large investments.

Action: The Board was informed.

10 BM 23/1193 NordForsk Gender Equality Policy

The Board was reminded of the discussion at the previous meeting and informed of the revisions made based on their input.

Action: The Board decided to adopt the NordForsk Gender Equality Policy

11 BM 23/1194 Report to the NCM for the first half of the year incl. accounts per June 2023

The Board was informed of the main points in the report. Most activities are running according to plan. The Nordic Commons project will be closed due to competing activities at EU level and thus reduced capacity for working with the Nordic Commons project in some countries. Nordic cooperation on secondary use of health data will be continued in another constellation without the participation of NordForsk.

Action: The Board was informed.

12 BM 23/1195 Report on Nordic Added value in Nordic Research collaboration

The Board was reminded of the main conclusions and recommendations in the report "Nordic added value in Nordic research co-operation", written by Tuire Liimatainen. The NordForsk administration has initiated a project to follow up on the suggestions.

Action: The Board welcomes the initiative and asks to be kept informed as appropriate. The Board ask the administration to present the results of the project at the March meeting for the Board's discussion.

13 BM 23/1196 Information from the Nordic Council of Ministers

Håkon Halgrimsen gave the following updates from the Nordic Council of Ministers:

- The statement on Nordic research policy and research collaboration (forskningspolitisk redegjørelse) will be presented at the Nordic Council's session in Oslo on November 2nd. The report covers Nordic research collaboration in general, the role and work of NordForsk in particular, as well as the ministers' viewpoints on the Nordic research collaboration.
- New cooperation programmes and action plans are currently being developed.
- An ad-hoc group under the Nordic committee of senior officials (EK-U) has been established with the mandate to consider the recommendations given in the evaluation of NordForsk from 2022. The ad-hoc group has delivered a report to the

secretariat who will bring it forward to NordForsk for discussions on how to follow up on the recommendations given.

Action: The Board was informed.

14 BM 23/1197 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 23/1198 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 23/1199 Updates from the Administration

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

Action: The Board was notified.

17 BM 23/1200 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 23/1201 Any other business

N/A

19 BM 23/1202 Evaluation of the performance of NordForsk and the Director

The Board discussed the matter without the NordForsk administration present.