

Meeting Minutes

NordForsk 76th Board Meeting
19 March 2024, 08:30-12:30
Torshavn, Faroe Islands

Present:

Board Members

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

NordForsk Administration

Arne Flåøyen, Mikael Heimonen, Guttorm Aanes, Bodil Aurstad, Simon Jernroth, Siri Bjarnar (minutes)

Opening of the meeting

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the participants.

01 BM 24/1216 Approval of the agenda. Any conflict of interest to be announced

No conflicts of interest were noted.

Action: The agenda was approved.

02 BM 24/1217 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 24/1218 Approval of the minutes from the Board meetings 12 December 2023 and 28 February 2024

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 24/1219 NordForsk Annual Report and Annual Accounts 2023

The board was reminded of the main parts of the annual report and how the administration has worked to deliver on the main goals in the grant letter and action plan.

The board was informed of the accounts for 2023. The interest income of NOK 17 million was significantly larger than the 5 million budgeted for. In addition, some grants have been returned.

The Board approved the report. The report will be sent to the board members for electronic signatures after the audit is complete, tentatively late April.

Action: The Board approved the annual report and the annual accounts.

05 BM 24/1220 Expression of Interest: Developing and strengthening the Nordic model for sustainable health and care systems for the elderly

The Swedish Research Council for health working life and welfare, FORTE, has developed an Expression of Interest (Eol) for a joint Nordic call for Sustainable Health and Care systems with a focus on the growing population of elderly in the Nordic countries. The initiative is supported by the Research Council of Norway and the Estonian research council. Furthermore, research councils in Iceland, the Faroe Islands and Lithuania have indicated interest in joining the call.

The Board was informed of the main points in the Eol. Åland indicated interest and asks to be kept informed.

Action: The Board decided to support a research call for developing and strengthening the Nordic model for sustainable health and care systems for the elderly. The funding of up to NOK 20 million, and a maximum of 1/3 of the total Nordic call budget, will be allocated through a real common pot model for the Nordic partners. The Board delegates to the director to decide on additional funding within the 1/3 limitation should the initiative raise more support from national research councils in the Nordic region. Baltic countries will participate via the virtual common pot model in accordance with the action plan for collaboration with countries outside of the Nordic region.

06 BM 24/1221 Call for Nordic research networks for preparedness and resilience research

The director presented the proposal for a call for Nordic research networks on preparedness and resilience. The initiative was well received by the Board as it is a highly timely and relevant topic, and there is a need for capacity building and developing a knowledge and competence base across the Nordic countries. In the area of preparedness and resilience, bridging academia with other actors is crucial. The board underlines that the call should encourage co-design as well as co-creation, early and continuous collaboration with policy makers and other key actors so that the networks can provide a broad knowledgebase for management of responses to future crisis.

The call will not be co-funded by the national research councils. NordForsk will cover up to 1/3 of the total call budget, and the remaining 2/3 will be co-funding from the research consortia, mainly via in kind contributions.

Each network must consist of minimum 3 research partners from 3 different Nordic countries. The Board was positive to expanding the requirement to 4 countries, which could also make it more likely that the networks include partners from the smaller countries or autonomous regions.

The Board underlined that the call committee should comprise of members with different competences, both from research, policy and public management.

Action: The Board decided to allocate NOK 21 million to support up to 7 research networks on preparedness and resilience research with maximum of NOK 3 million per network. The funding follows the principle of NordForsk funding up to 1/3 of the total budget while the members of the research consortium contribute with at least 2/3.

07 BM 24/1222 Revised budget 2024 and financial prognosis 2025-2028

The board was informed that the budget has been revised due to a larger interest income than expected in 2023, and as the funding decisions for projects in the call on Sustainable Development of the Arctic will be made in 2025. The board was presented with an updated long-term prognosis, which is estimated based the revised budget for 2024 and adjusted continuously in response to new financial agreements on co-funding of new calls and plans for spending. The prognosis includes funding to the call on developing and strengthening the Nordic model for sustainable health and care systems for the elderly (item 05 BM 24/1220). Funding of a possible research initiative on AI will likely start in 2026.

Action: The Board approved the revised budget for 2024 and noted the financial prognosis 2025-2028.

08 BM 24/1223 Report on Nordic research infrastructure collaboration

Professor Sven Stafström's report on research infrastructure (RI) collaboration in the Nordic region presents an overview of the national systems and roadmaps for research infrastructure and the involvement of the Nordic countries in the European RI collaboration. It discusses the Nordic added value in RI collaboration and which measures can be taken to strengthen RI cooperation at the Nordic level. The report includes recommendations to NordForsk and NORDHORCS.

At their meeting on 12 December 2023, the NordForsk board asked the administration to send the report to the Nordic Research Infrastructure Co-operation Committee (NRICC) and to the Nordic University Cooperation (NUS) and ask for their suggestions on how NordForsk should follow up the recommendations in the report. NordForsk awaits feedback from NRICC and NUS in Mid-May.

Action: The Board agreed to discuss the recommendations and how to follow them up at the in-person board meeting in Helsinki on October 24th.

09 BM 24/1224 Information from the Nordic Council of Ministers

Petar Cavala and Håkon Halgrimsen, secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), updated the Board on recent developments. In the NCM there is currently a large focus on establishing cross sectoral collaboration. Resilience is a prioritised theme, including areas such as food security, health, democracy, children and youth, AI and digitalisation.

The secretariat also informed the board on on-going discussions regarding the strategic mandate of NCM institutions.

Action: The Board was informed.

10 BM 24/1225 Information from the administration

The director gave a brief reminder of the information which was presented in writing in the documentation to the Board meeting.

Action: The Board was informed.

11 BM 24/1226 Information about per capsulam decisions

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

Action: The Board was notified.

12 BM 24/1227 Information about Director's decisions

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

Action: The Board was notified.

13 BM 24/1228 Information from Board members and observers

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

Action: The Board was informed.

14 BM 25/1229 Any other business

The next board meeting will be Mid-June and a main item will be the funding decision on projects in the Green Transition call. The NordForsk administration will contact the board members with a doodle to set the date.