

Meeting Minutes

NordForsk 78th Board Meeting
23-24 October 2024
Helsinki, Finland

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), participated online
Sølvará, Annika	Faroese Research Council
Halgrimsen, Håkon	Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat (observer)

NordForsk Administration

Arne Flåøyen, Bjørnar Komissar, Mikael Heimonen, Guttorm Aanes, Bodil Aurstad, Siri Bjarnar (minutes)

Agenda items 1, 2 and 14 were handled in the afternoon of October 23rd, following the joint meeting with NORDHORCS and without the NordForsk administration present.

01 BM 24/1238

Evaluation of NordForsk Administration and Director

Action: The Board evaluated the performance of the NordForsk Director and administration.

02 BM 24/1239

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of the NordForsk Board

Action: The Board elected Jesper Risom (DK) as chairperson and Annika Sølvará (FO) as vice-chair of the NordForsk Board.

03 BM 24/1240

Approval of the agenda. Any conflict of interest to be announced

The meeting was reminded that in addition to agenda item 1 and 2, item 14 concerning the recruitment process of a new director of NordForsk was discussed on the 23rd.

Action: The agenda was approved.

04 BM 24/1241

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.

05 BM 24/1242

Approval of the minutes from the Board meeting 10 June 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.

o6 BM 24/1243

Funding models: Follow up from joint meeting with NORDHORCS

The Board followed up the discussions from the joint meeting the day before. There is broad agreement in NORDHORCS that real common pot is the preferred model for funding Nordic research collaboration under NordForsk. Due to current legal restrictions, however, neither the Swedish Research Council (VR) nor Formas can participate in a real common pot where funding is transferred to NordForsk and where the NordForsk board makes the final funding decision. For calls co-funded by VR and/or Formas, the Board supports the administration in using an adjusted or provisional common pot, where VR and/or Formas enter contract with and funds a complete project with Swedish project owner (including Nordic top-up funding transferred from NordForsk) and/or Swedish partners in funded research consortia with project owners outside of Sweden. Funding participants from outside of the Nordic region will continue to participate via the virtual common pot model.

Action: The Board followed up the discussions from the joint meeting with NORDHORCS on October 23rd and agreed that real common pot is the preferred model for funding Nordic research collaboration under NordForsk.

o7 BM 24/1244

Expression of Interest: Nordic-Baltic initiative on responsible use of Artificial Intelligence

The Board had received the Expression of Interest on October 9th and was reminded of the background and focus.

Action: The Board decided to support the call with up to NOK 53 million and a maximum of 1/3 of the total Nordic call budget. The Board delegated to the NordForsk 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. The Board delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair to formally appoint the Call Committee chairperson.

o8 BM 24/1245

Expression of Interest: Antagonistic threats challenging Nordic societal security

The Board had received the Expression of Interest on October 9th and was reminded of the background and focus. The Board was informed that Iceland supports the call and commits NOK 3 million.

Action: The Board decided to support the call with up to NOK 21.5 million and a maximum of 1/3 of the total Nordic call budget. The Board delegated to the NordForsk director to decide on additional funding within the 1/3 limitation should the initiative raise more support from national research funders in the Nordic region. The Board delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair to formally appoint the Call Committee chairperson.

09 BM 24/1246

Expression of Interest: Sustainable Futures of Forests

The Board had received the Expression of Interest on October 17th and was reminded of the background and focus.

Action: The Board decided to support the call with up to NOK 22 million and a maximum of 1/3 of the total Nordic call budget. The Board delegated to the NordForsk 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. The Board delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair to formally appoint the Call Committee chairperson.

10 BM 24/1247

Status Open Invitation and financial prognosis

The Board was informed of the financial prognosis, which will be updated according to the EOI decisions taken under item 8 and 9. The Board was informed of ongoing discussions on new initiatives.

Action: The Board was informed.

11 BM 24/1248

Report to the NCM first half year 2024

According to instructions from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) NordForsk shall submit a half year report. The report consists of two parts: accounts and comments to deviations from the plan.

The report was sent to the NCM August 19th, 2024, and discussed at a dialogue meeting with the NCM on October 24th, 2024.

Action: The Board was informed.

12 BM 24/1249

Nordic Research Infrastructure Collaboration

NeIC and Tier-1

The Board was informed of status for the Nordic Tier-1 collaboration and the meeting between NordForsk and the national funders in August 2024, where the national funders declared their willingness to fund Tier-1 in 2025 as in 2024. The board decided per capsulam on August 23rd (decision 4-2024) to guarantee funding for the coordination and financing of the Nordic Tier-1 for 2025, dependant on national funding.

The board will receive a written memo concerning the status of NeIC and Tier-1 after the board meeting.

Proposal for new research infrastructure call

The Board was reminded of the main conclusions and recommendations in the report [Nordic research infrastructure collaboration – Recommendations for common Nordic activities](#) and informed of the response from NRICC and NUS. The Board discussed the recommendations given and the NordForsk proposal for a new research infrastructure call.

The Board agreed to revisit discussions concerning NRICC as a call committee for the call. The administration will look into the mandate of NRICC which it may be necessary to revise.

Action: The Board supports the initiative for a new call on Nordic Research Infrastructure Hubs with NOK 20 million from the budgets for 2025, 2026 and 2027 amounting to a total of NOK 60 million.

13 BM 25/1250

Nordic Added Value

The Board was informed of the work the administration has done on following up the reports on Nordic Added Value, and of the revised description to be used in external communication.

The Board appreciated the work the administration has done on revising the description of Nordic added value and ensuring transparency of a central assessment criterion. The administration noted that the following could be considered for clarification:

- The term *indicator* could be misinterpreted as the given indicators are quite qualitative and not necessarily measurable.
- This sentence could be made easier to read: *"Nordic added value is in the outcomes of what could otherwise be undertaken at the national level, but where concretely positive effects are generated through common Nordic solutions; activities that manifest and develop a sense of Nordic community; activities that increase Nordic competence and competitiveness; activities that strengthen the Nordic international influence; and activities that foster equal and balanced social, economic, and environmental interaction in the Nordic region."*
- The aspect of strengthening Nordic competitiveness in EU could be further explained.

The Board agreed to revisit the discussion on Nordic added value now and again, as it is a fundamental principle of Nordic collaboration.

Action: The board was informed and gave their comments.

14 BM 25/1251

Recruitment process new Director of NordForsk

The tenure of the current NordForsk director, Arne Flåøyen, expires end of 2025. According to the institutional handbook for the Nordic Council of Ministers, the NordForsk board has the main responsibility for the process of recruiting a new director, however the final decision on appointment is to be made by the Committee of Senior Officials for Education and Research (EK-U) in the Nordic Council of ministers, upon the Secretary General's recommendation.

Senior Advisor Håkon Halgrimsen from Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat informed the board on the proposed process and presented a draft advertisement for comments from the board.

Action: The Board discussed the proposed framework from the secretariat and the suggested draft advertisement. The Board established a selection committee comprising of newly elected chairperson Jesper Risom (DK), vice-chair Annika Sølvará (FO), Jussi

Vauhkonen (FI), Håkon Halgrimsen (NCMS), and Bjørnar Komissar (NordForsk staff representative) and a representative from the HR department in the Nordic Council of Minister's secretariat. The board also agreed to involve the HR department of the secretariat in the work, including to use the recruitment agency contracted to the secretariat. The selection committee will present an advertisement for the Board on their meeting December 9th.

15 BM 25/1252

Information from the Nordic Council of Ministers

Håkon Halgrimsen, secretariat of the Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), updated the Board on recent developments and on-going processes.

The NCMS is currently mapping cross-sectorial initiatives in different areas, on initiative from MR-SAM, to highlight large efforts, important initiatives with potential large impact. 5 cross-cutting areas have so far been identified:

- Preparedness and resilience
- Democracy and digitisation
- Competences for the future
- Circular economy
- Sustainable seas and oceans

Furthermore, the secretariat is developing sectorial action plans or working plans, translating the political ambitions in the cooperation programmes into practice.

The secretariat is introducing result-based management, reducing the number of projects under the secretariat and introducing a new system for reporting, gathering all information in order to facilitate follow-up and monitoring, and making it possible to aggregate data and statistics for analysis. The system will be implemented during winter 2024/25.

Action: The board was informed.

16 BM 25/1253

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.

17 BM 25/1254

Information about per capsulam decisions

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

Action: The board was notified.

18 BM 25/1255

Information about Director's decisions

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

Action: The board was notified.

19 BM 25/1256

Information from board members and observers

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

Action: The board was informed.

20 BM 25/1257

Any other business

NordForsk director Arne Flåøyen welcomed Jesper Risom and Annika Sølvará as new chair and vice-chair of the Board, and thanked Jonas Björck for his work and for the fruitful collaboration.