

Meeting Minutes

NordForsk 81st Board Meeting
March 19th, 2025, Formas, Stockholm

Board Members

Risom, Jesper	Independent Research Fund Denmark (Chair)
Vauhkonen, Jussi	Research Council of Finland
Jónsdóttir, Guðbjörg Andrea	Ministry of Culture, Science and Higher Education, Iceland
Sølvará, Annika	Faroese Research Council (Vice Chair)
Hagfeldt, Anders	Nordic University Cooperation (NUS)
Vistad, Rune	Research Council of Norway
Nygård, Bo	Local Government of Åland Islands (observer)
Cavala, Petar	Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat (observer)
Halgrimsen, Håkon	Nordic Council of Ministers' secretariat (observer)
Lindell, Johan	Swedish Research Council (guest)

NordForsk Administration: Arne Flåøyen, Bjørnar Komissar (staff representative), Mikael Heimonen, Guttorm Aanes, Bodil Aurstad, Siri Bjarnar (minutes)

01 BM 25/1277

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

The chair opened the meeting and asked if there were any suggested changes in the agenda or conflicts of interest that had not been reported prior to the meeting. The board agreed to add a follow-up discussion on research on quantum technology from the joint meeting with NORDHORCS 18th of March to the agenda under "any other business".

Action: The agenda was approved, and the meeting confirmed no conflicts of interest.

02 BM 25/1278

Quorum

The Board has quorum when at least 50% of the board members are present. The Board noted quorum with all members present at the meeting.

Action: Quorum was confirmed.

03 BM 25/1279

Approval of the minutes from the Board meetings 9th of December 2024 and 6th of March 2025

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 25/1280

NordForsk Annual Report and Annual Accounts 2024

The Board was reminded of the structure of the annual report concerning the basic funding and the commissions (särskilda innsatser) from the Nordic Council of Ministers (NMR).

The Board was informed of the accounts for 2024. The figure for interest income is about NOK 15 million, which is significantly higher than budgeted. Further, the salary costs have increased following national negotiations.

The meeting raised the question whether NordForsk should raise the level of ambition, since nearly all goals are marked as green (successfully completed). Further, it was noted that the annual report is extensive and detailed, and it was suggested that the level of detail could be reduced, especially regarding the special commissions (særskilda innsatser), which for example could be presented in an Annex to the main report.

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

05 BM 25/1281

Expression of Interest NOS-N

The Board received the Expression of Interest on 12th of March 2025, and was reminded of the background and focus for the proposed call for NOS-N research networks focusing on early-career researchers.

Action: The Board decided to support a call for research networks in natural sciences and engineering with up to NOK 10 million.

06 BM 25/1282

Expression of Interest NOS-HS

The Board received the Expression of Interest on 7th of March 2025, and was reminded of the background and focus for the proposed call for NOS-HS exploratory networks focusing on early-career researchers.

Action: The Board decided to support a call for research networks in humanities and social sciences with up to NOK 11 million.

07 BM 25/1283

Budget 2025, financial prognosis 2026-2029, and new topics under discussion

The Board was informed of new topics or initiatives under discussion, as listed in the meeting documents, and how the NordForsk administration works to facilitate. The Board raised that it could be valuable with a strategic discussion on how to balance or prioritise between several smaller initiatives and fewer, larger efforts.

The Board was presented with an updated long-term prognosis, which is estimated based the revised budget for 2025 and adjusted continuously in response to new financial agreements on co-funding of new calls and plans for spending. The basic funding for 2026 is close to spent, approx. NOK 6 million are left for new initiatives. This was noted as positive, as the Open Invitation process for establishing new initiatives takes time. The prognosis includes funding to the NOS-N and NOS-HS calls for networks (see item 5 and 6 above). Funding for the research school in innovation and

entrepreneurship is included in the prognosis and spendings are expected to start in 2026.

Action: The Board approved the revised budget for 2025 and noted the financial prognosis 2026-2029.

08 BM 25/1284

A Nordic Mechanism for Rapid Calls

To allow NordForsk to act quickly and initiate important research immediately following a critical situation or societal crisis, the Director had prior to the meeting (annex 1 in the meeting documentation) proposed that NordForsk establishes a Nordic mechanism for rapid calls for research proposals.

Action: The Board discussed the proposal and supports the concept of a rapid mechanism. The Board asks the NordForsk administration to develop the proposal further including suggesting a suitable financial mechanism to be presented to the Board at the October meeting 2025.

09 BM 25/1285

Guidelines for responsible internationalisation and research security

The Board followed up the discussions from earlier meetings and in NORDHORCS concerning responsible internationalisation and how to adjust the call and review process to new (national) demands.

The Board discussed that it will not be feasible to have joint Nordic guidelines, as the national regulations differ and are under constant development, but very much support sharing experience in a Nordic forum, within NORDHORCS but also between the staff in the national research council working more hands on with these issues. The Board agreed that NordForsk could preferably have a role in facilitating a forum for dialogue between the national research funders. NordForsk could also map practices, existing questionnaires or checklists used by the national funders for identifying potential high-risk projects.

The meeting discussed that NordForsk should have a process for ensuring responsible internationalisation within NordForsk research funding practises and supported research projects. The Board supports the reference to existing national regulations added to call texts and contracts.

Action: The Board discussed the matter and asks the NordForsk administration to follow up the discussions as appropriate

10 BM 25/1286

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 25/1287

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.

Petar Cavala notified the board that the secretariat is starting a process on oversight of the 12 Nordic institutions. The aim is to identify potential for streamlining and simplification. This process will also include a review of the institutional handbook from 2014.

There is in general a large focus on societal security, preparedness and resilience in the NCM. Currently, the secretariat is mapping these issues across the sectorial cooperation programmes as well as across the institutions under the NCM. Societal security, preparedness and resilience is also a topic on the upcoming session of the Nordic Council on the 31st of March to the 1st of April.

Finally, the NCM has launched new strategic work plans for the period 2025-2027. The plans identify strategic focus areas. With regards to research, some examples are research of high quality in specific areas, ensuring a good and fruitful dialogue and funding system together with the national funders, career paths for young researchers, attracting talents, responsible research and internationalisation, and quantum technology.

Action: The Board was informed.

12 BM 25/1288

Information about per capsulam decisions

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

Action: The Board was notified.

13 BM 25/1289

Information about Director's decisions

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

Action: The Board was notified.

14 BM 25/1290

Information from Board members and observers

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

Action: The Board was informed.

15 BM 25/1291

Any other business

Coming meetings

The administration will doodle dates for the digital board meetings in late May or early June, and December.

Nordic initiative on quantum technology

The Board followed up the discussions from the joint meeting with NORDHORCS on the 18th of March. The Board asks the NordForsk administration to present the following at the joint meeting between NORDHORCS and the NordForsk board on October 14th, 2025:

- The Study on Opportunities for Nordic Research and Innovation Cooperation on Quantum Technology, by Gudmund Høst
- A draft proposal for a 10-year strategy for Nordic collaboration within research and innovation on quantum technology involving the national funders of research and innovation, Nordic Innovation, and the Nordic Council of Ministers' Secretariat.

Action: The Board asks NordForsk to doodle dates late May or early June and late November or early December for digital board meetings. The Board agreed on how to follow up on the initiative for a joint Nordic effort on research and innovation on quantum technology.

16 BM 25/1292

Status recruitment of new Director of NordForsk

The board members and observers were informed. The NordForsk staff left the meeting prior to this agenda item.

Action: The Board was informed.