



Minutes for Cancer Research KI's Executive Board meeting

Monday June 2nd, 2025, 15:00-17:00 online <https://ki-se.zoom.us/j/66964156174>

(IP= information point, D=discussion point, DP=Decision point, A=Attached document)

Board members	<p>Chair and Director Elias Arnér, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p>Co-Director Marco Gerling, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology – CLINTEC</p> <p>Co-Director Linda Lindström, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p>Simon Ekman, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p>Margareta Wilhelm, Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology</p> <p>Renske Altena, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p>Päivi Östling, Department of Oncology-Pathology, SciLifeLab</p> <p>Keith Humphreys, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics</p> <p>Ninib Baryawno, Department of Women's and Children's Health</p> <p>Lise-lott Eriksson, Chair of the Blood Cancer Forum, Patient Group</p> <p>Carlos Rodrigues, Department of Women's and Children's Health, Junior faculty representative</p> <p>Sara Abu Ajamieh, PhD student representative, Department of Women's and Children's Health</p> <p>Dina Dabaghie, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p>Liselotte Bäckdahl, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p>Stefina Milanova, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p> <p>Pablo Martí Andrés, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p>
Invited Guests	<p>Dhifaf Serhan, Department of Laboratory medicine</p> <p>Theodoros Foukakis, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p>
Not present	<p>Matthias Löhr, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology</p> <p>Eva Jolly, Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre coordinator</p> <p>Patrik Rossi, Managing Director, Cancer Theme Karolinska University</p> <p>Joakim Dillner Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology, Cancer Prevention Europe</p> <p>Lena Sharp, RCC Stockholm-Gotland</p> <p>Theodoros Foukakis, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p>

- 1) Welcome to the EB meeting and approval of minutes from the previous CRKI Executive Board meeting 2025-04-22(A) (E. Arnér, 2 min) DP

The minutes were approved.

- 2) The result of the Reference Group Election for the Chair and Co-Chair of the Reference group, and discussion the on way forward for the reference group. (E. Arnér, 10 min) DP.

Elias Arnér presented the outcome of the recent Reference Group (RG) election process. Following the previous in-person meeting, Dhifaf Sarhan was proposed as Chair of the RG. Subsequently, several candidates were suggested for the Co-Chair position, and an online election was conducted among RG members.



The election results confirmed Dhifaf Sarhan as Chair and Theodoros Foukakis as Co-Chair of the Reference Group. Both were unanimously supported by the RG members. They will be invited to participate in Executive Board (EB) meetings and will play a key role in facilitating communication between CRKI and the KI departments.

Elias Arnér officially welcomed Dhifaf Sarhan to her new role and expressed enthusiasm about working with the new leadership. Dhifaf shared her vision for revitalizing the RG, emphasizing the importance of making it a more active and strategic resource for CRKI. She proposed initiating a dialogue with department heads to assess the engagement of current RG representatives and, if needed, identify new motivated individuals to ensure effective representation.

The EB expressed strong support for the new RG leadership and endorsed the proposed direction for increased activity and departmental collaboration.

Decision: The Executive Board is positive about the appointment of Dhifaf Sarhan as Chair and Theodoros Foukakis as Co-Chair of the Reference Group.

- 3) New WG1 research lead after summer. Suggestion is Dhifaf Serhan takes over as lead after of Linda Lindström. There is a lot of activities in WG1. Should we also have a co-chair? (E. Arnér, and L. Lindström 5 min) DP.

Linda Lindström introduced the proposal for a leadership transition in WG1-Research. Given Dhifaf Sarhan's active involvement in recent initiatives, including the planning of the PI retreat, Linda suggested Dhifaf as her successor. Dhifaf expressed initial hesitation about holding both the Reference Group Chair and WG1 lead roles simultaneously, but later acknowledged the strategic value of the WG1 position in activating the Reference Group and promoting collaboration.

The possibility of appointing a co-chair to support the WG1 lead was discussed. Dhifaf proposed Ninib Baryawno as a strong candidate for co-chair, given his experience and engagement. Ninib expressed his willingness to support Dhifaf and emphasized his readiness to step in as chair if needed. Linda endorsed both candidates and confirmed her intention to remain active in WG1 while stepping down from the lead role.

Elias Arnér concluded the discussion by confirming the new leadership structure:

- Dhifaf Sarhan will take over as Chair of WG1-Research.
- Ninib will serve as Co-Chair, with the flexibility to assume the lead role if necessary.
- Linda Lindström will remain involved in WG1 activities but step down from her leadership position.

Decision: The Executive Board approved the proposed leadership transition and expressed confidence in the new team's ability to continue driving WG1's activities forward.



- 4) Decision on CRKI support for CKC nurse. Discussion on how CRKI could support CKC in another form (A). (E. Arnér, 10 min) DP

Elias Arnér opened the discussion regarding the annual budget allocation of 600,000 SEK for CKC nurse support, which has been a recurring item in the CRKI budget. Despite multiple attempts to meet with CKC leadership to clarify the use of these funds, no meeting took place. It was noted that the funds were used to cover partial salaries of staff involved in various trials, but the allocation process and decision-making lacked transparency.

To improve the situation, Elias proposed discontinuing the fixed budget allocation and instead initiating a structured evaluation of how CRKI can support clinical trials more effectively. The suggestion was to involve WG1, in collaboration with WG4, to develop a transparent and quality-assured model for supporting academic clinical trials.

Päivi Östling expressed interest in engaging WG4 in the evaluation process, and Renske Altena offered her support based on her experience in clinical research.

Decision:

- The fixed budget allocation for CKC nurse support will be discontinued.
 - WG1, in collaboration with WG4 and other relevant parties, is tasked with conducting an analysis and presenting a proposal to the EB on how CRKI can support academic clinical trials in a clear, efficient, and quality-assured manner.
 - The Executive Board will be responsible to approve the presented proposal.
- 5) News about Karolinska CCCs reaccreditation and follow up on the implementation plan (A). (E. Arnér, 5 min) D.

The Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center (KCCC) has been formally reaccredited for the next five-year period. The accreditation committee was highly impressed with the center's performance, awarding top grades across nearly all areas. Particular praise was given to the strength and excellence of the research conducted at KI.

One area identified for improvement was Item 10: Research, specifically the lack of numerical follow-up and strategic metrics related to grant application success rates. The committee noted that many CCCs operate with significantly larger budgets and centralized systems, unlike KI's PI-initiated model.

To address this, CRKI proposed a data-driven approach to track the frequency of approved grant applications by CRKI-affiliated PIs, comparing these rates with other institutions nationally and potentially internationally. This would involve collecting historical and ongoing data from official registries such as Cancerfonden, the Swedish Research Council, and other relevant funding bodies.



While some of this data is already collected annually for reporting purposes, it was also suggested to include additional funding sources such as the Sjöberg Foundation, Radiumhemmet, and Vinnova, especially for clinical and infrastructure-related research.

Summary of the discussion:

- Begin continuous collection and analysis of grant approval data for CRKI-affiliated PIs.
- Include national and international funding sources and CRKI PIs fraction of such funding in Sweden.
- Display relevant statistics on the CRKI website to promote transparency and engagement.
- First analysis to be presented to the EB in early autumn.

6) Patient representation to all CRKI Work Groups and the payment model. (L. Bäckdahl, 3 min) IP.

Liselotte Bäckdahl presented an update on the ongoing efforts to integrate patient representation into all CRKI Work Groups, in line with CRKI's strategic goals. Collaboration is underway with the patient representative network of Karolinska CCC, although language barriers remain a challenge, as not all representatives are comfortable with English.

The aim is to have at least one patient representative per WG by autumn. WG4 already has a representative, and recruitment for the remaining groups is ongoing. The first interviews have begun, and a clear reimbursement model for patient representatives' time has now been established.

Simon Ekman mentioned ongoing discussions with a potential representative for WG5, noting concerns about the frequency of meetings. The possibility of patient representatives attending every second meeting to reduce the time commitment, which was considered a reasonable solution was discussed.

Elias Arnér encouraged referring interested patient representatives to Liselotte Bäckdahl and Lise-lott Eriksson for further information and support.

7) Mayo Clinic update: on the symposia, collaboration grant, synergy grant (E. Arnér, 5 min) IP

Elias Arnér provided an update on the ongoing collaboration with Mayo Clinic, including upcoming activities and recent developments.

An online symposium is scheduled, featuring two invited speakers and presentations from currently funded PI-to-PI collaborative projects. New collaborative initiatives will also be announced during the event.

Regarding the Synergy Grant, which was initiated following the Santa Fe meeting, Elias reported that the process has been put on hold. This pause is due to recent policy changes in



the United States, including NIH restrictions that prevent foreign PIs from participating in certain funding schemes. As a result, Mayo Clinic is currently reviewing its internal research policies and funding strategies and will hold internal discussions to determine how to proceed with the collaboration.

The Executive Board acknowledged the update and will await further information from Mayo Clinic leadership.

- 8) News from SCRM 2025 meeting in Malmö, next SCRM 2027 will be in Uppsala (E. Arnér, 3 min) IP.

The SCRM 2025 meeting held in Malmö, which was organized by the Swedish Comprehensive Cancer Centers (CCC and CC). The event was a major success, attracting over 600 participants and featuring more than 200 posters, along with a strong lineup of keynote speakers and a well-received scientific program.

The SCRM meetings rotate locations across Sweden, and the next meeting is scheduled to take place in Uppsala in Spring 2027.

- 9) New scientific officer CCE summer school after Nick Tobin: Bruno Köhler. (E. Arnér, 2 min) IP

Bruno Köhler has been appointed as the new Scientific Officer for the CCE Summer School, succeeding Nick Tobin, who has led the initiative for many years with great dedication and success. Bruno Köhler brings a strong profile as both a clinician and basic scientist, making him well-suited for the role.

Nick Tobin will continue to contribute as a member of the steering group, ensuring continuity and support during the transition.

- 10) Next semester's schedule for our EB Meetings. (E. Arnér, Stefina Milanova, 5 min) DP

The suggested dates are as follows:

- 25 August, 13:30–15:30
- 1 October, 13:30–15:30
- 11 November, 13:30–15:30
- 17 December, 13:30–15:30

A joint meeting with the Reference Group is also planned and will be held in a hybrid format to accommodate broader participation.

The administrative team will determine which meetings will be held in person and which will be conducted online, based on availability and logistical considerations.



Decision: The proposal was approved by the Executive Board.

11) The new scientific advisory board. (L.Bäckdahl, 2 min) IP

Liselotte Bäckdahl presented an update on the formation of the new Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) for Karolinska CCC. The nomination process yielded approximately 70 nominations across 19 different categories, submitted by members of the Executive Board, Board of Directors, and the Academy of Sciences.

The proposed leadership of the SAB includes:

- Chair: Kjetil Taskén
- Vice-Chair: Ålaug Helland

Both have accepted their roles. Elias Arnér expressed appreciation for the quality and competence of the newly formed board and thanked Liselotte for her efforts in coordinating the process.

A meeting with the SAB is currently being organized by Eva Jolly and is expected to take place in early 2026.

12) Report on ECHoS cancer mission fair in Warsaw. (Dina Dabahie, and Pablo Martí Andrés, 5 min) IP

The First Cancer Mission Fair held in Warsaw, under the Polish European Presidency, was organized as part of the ECHoS project, with support from the EU Missions and the EU Cancer Mission,. Karolinska CCC is leading Work Package 6 within the project.

The fair spanned three days:

- Day 1: Launch of the Polish Hub
- Day 2: Engage – Focused on patient and citizen engagement, with representation from nearly all EU member states.
- Day 3: Synergize – Highlighted collaboration and resource sharing.

CRKI is also involved in the development of ECHoS 2, with the aim of securing a continued role. Feedback from the organizers has been positive regarding KI and KCCC's contributions.

The importance of CRKI's active participation in such high-level European initiatives was emphasized, and the Board encouraged continued involvement. A second Cancer Mission Fair is planned, along with a townhall event marking the conclusion of the ECHoS project.



Regarding the national Cancer Mission Hub, it was noted that Socialstyrelsen will need to collaborate closely with KCCC and KI.

Dina Dabaghie also presented resources from the CCI4EU initiative which are available online. CRKI will work to make these resources more visible on its own website.

13) Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center Update (Eva Jolly, 10 min) IP

Eva Jolly was not present at the meeting. The update from Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center (KCCC) will be postponed and presented at a future Executive Board meeting.

14) Cancer Research KI organization: IP

All WG leaders, update on working group progress (3 min each, 18 min total) IP

- WG1 Research (L. Lindström)

Annual Retreat:

Keynote speakers and nearly all local KI speakers have been confirmed. Planning is underway for the patient perspective sessions, which may include a childhood cancer survivor. Contacts have been made with Nikolas Herold and Per Kogner, who responded positively and are expected to confirm participation.

The retreat will also feature junior co-chairs, including students and postdocs, to support session moderation.

BlueSky Grant:

The BlueSky grant call is currently open and will remain so until the end of August. Efforts have been made to enhance visibility of the BlueSky component, including updates to the call text and reviewer instructions.

Mayo Collaboration:

Discussions with Mayo Clinic regarding collaborative grants are ongoing, as previously mentioned in the EB meeting.

- WG2 Education (M. Wilhelm)

One final WG meeting is planned before the summer break to prepare for the Spring 2026 semester. All activities for the autumn semester are progressing as planned.

During a recent meeting with DKFZ it was discussed the possibility of increasing the number of European postdocs at DKFZ and enhancing collaboration between European Cancer Centers. The goal is to develop a strategy to promote mobility and visibility of postdoctoral opportunities across institutions. The importance of strengthening inter-center interactions and suggested a preliminary selection process to identify top candidates for such opportunities was also highlighted.



- WG3 Outreach (R. Altena)

Activities planned for the autumn semester:

- En Dag för Cancerforskning will be held on 12 November, with the theme “Innovation and Future Expectations in Oncology.” Most speakers and the venue have already been confirmed. The event will incorporate feedback from previous years to enhance engagement and relevance.
- A new interview series featuring researchers from the CRKI PI list is being launched. These short video interviews, based on a predefined set of questions, will be published on the CRKI website. There is also potential to include Executive Board members in the series.
- A patient organization workshop focused on male cancers is scheduled for late October. Speakers for the seminar have been confirmed.

- WG4 Precision Cancer Medicine (P. Östling)

N-of-One Pilot Study:

A meeting was held with the Swedish Medical Products Agency (Läkemedelsverket) regarding a Phase I pilot study using tumor biology to guide treatment decisions for patients with advanced malignancies. The agency responded positively, and planning for the protocol will continue. The study may use SciLifeLab as infrastructure, despite it not being IVDR-certified.

Regulatory Workshop Proposal:

The importance of addressing regulatory aspects in translational research was emphasized. A workshop on this topic is being considered for the autumn semester, aimed at researchers and healthcare professionals.

Joint Action for Precision Cancer Medicine (JAPCM):

A new Joint Action will begin in November, with Socialstyrelsen appointed as the competent authority. They will be responsible for distributing funding across universities and hospitals. Päivi Östling is advocating for Karolinska’s participation in liquid biopsy and molecular tumor board (MTB) initiatives.

European Health Data Space:



Socialstyrelsen is also involved in shaping Sweden's role in the European Health Data Space, including the creation of a national health data body. KI will need to adhere to new regulations regarding data access and secondary use for research.

- WG5 Industrial Collaboration (S. Ekman)

Intellectual Property Seminar:

A well-attended seminar on intellectual property was held, primarily targeting junior investigators (PhD students and postdocs). The feedback was very positive, and a new edition is planned for January.

Upcoming Seminars:

Planning is underway for autumn seminars, including one in collaboration with KI Science Park focused on startups, and another with LIF involving industry representatives. A matchmaking event between companies and KI researchers is also being considered.

Strategic Discussions:

WG5 has fulfilled several strategic goals, but high-level strategic questions remain and will be discussed further with Elias Arnér and the Executive Board.

Career Seminar:

A seminar on career pathways into industry is being planned in collaboration with Richard Cowburn from the External Engagement Office (EEO).

CRH Collaboration:

Discussions with Cancer Research Horizons are ongoing, with efforts to identify specific areas of interest, including pediatric cancers. Challenges remain in aligning collaboration terms, particularly around intellectual property. It was noted that while CRH offers valuable resources, IP management must be clarified from the outset, especially if KI Innovations is not involved. CRH is open to collaboration but needs better understanding of KI's structure and expectations.

Patient Representation:

Efforts are underway to recruit a patient representative for WG5.

- CPE Cancer Prevention Europe (J. Dillner)

Joakim Dillner was not present at the meeting. Elias Arnér informed the Executive Board that Svetlana Bajalica Lagercrantz will replace Yvonne in the CPE-related activities.



15) Cancer Research KI administration update (L. Bäckdahl, S. Milanova, P. Martí Andrés and D. Dabaghie, 5 min)

- **Djurönäset Retreat:** Abstracts are currently being processed for the upcoming retreat.
- **Scientific Advisory Board:** Work is ongoing to process honoraria for the newly appointed SAB members.
- **EUNetCCC Project:** CRKI is actively engaged in four different tasks within the EUNetCCC project. A site visit to Vall d'Hebron is scheduled for 16 June as part of the collaboration.

16) Seminar and workshops by CRKI and relevant organisations:

- a. Q and A drop in session Cancer Research Horizon 2 September 2025
- b. Industry collaboration seminar 4 September 2025
- c. Djurönäset Cancer Retreat 22-23 September 2025
- d. CCE summer school 5-10 October 2025
- e. Industry collaboration seminar 22 October 2025
- f. RCC patient workshop - Cancers common in Men 23 October 2025
- g. En dag för Cancerforskningen 12 November 2025

17) Any other issue?

Elias Arnér informed the Executive Board that Cancer Core Europe has proposed to hold its next annual meeting in Stockholm. Karolinska CCC will host and organize the event, which is expected to gather approximately 100 participants. The exact dates are yet to be confirmed, but the meeting is planned for spring next year.

18) End of meeting

16:54