



Minutes for Cancer Research KI's Executive Board meeting

Monday August 25, 2025, 13:30-15:00 [link to meeting](#)

(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>Päivi Östling, Department of Oncology-Pathology, SciLifeLab</p> <p>Margareta Wilhelm, Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology</p> <p>Renske Altena, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p>Keith Humphreys, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics</p> <p>Ninib Baryawno, Department of Women's and Children's Health</p> <p>Dhifaf Serhan, Department of Laboratory medicine</p> <p>Theodoros Foukakis, Department of Oncology-Pathology</p> <p>Eva Jolly, Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre coordinator</p> <p>Lise-lott Eriksson, Chair of the Blood Cancer Forum, Patient Group</p> <p>Joakim Dillner, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology, Cancer Prevention Europe.</p> <p>Sara Abu Ajamieh, PhD student representative, Department of Women's and Children's Health</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>
Not present	<p>Matthias Löhr, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology</p> <p>Patrik Rossi, Managing Director, Cancer Theme Karolinska University.</p> <p>Carlos Rodrigues, Department of Women's and Children's Health, Junior faculty representative</p> <p>Lena Sharp, RCC Stockholm-Gotland</p> <p>Dina Dabaghie, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics</p>

- 1) Welcome to the EB meeting and approval of minutes from the previous CRKI Executive Board meeting 2025-06-02(A) (E. Arnér, 2 min) DP

The minutes were approved.

- 2) CRKI support for CKC nurse. Discussion on how CRKI could support CKC in another form (A). (P, Östling 10 min) D

The board discussed the current model of CRKI's financial support to CKC for research nurse activities, which has amounted to 600,000 SEK annually since 2011. Elias Arnér emphasized the need for a revised and more transparent model for supporting these activities. A proposal is currently under development.



Päivi Östling noted that the matter is not yet ready for decision. A preparatory meeting between Working Groups 1 and 4 was held earlier the same day. The main concern raised was the lack of clarity regarding how the funding is utilized and the absence of structured reporting. Johanna Wennerson had presented an overview of the activities and projects that received funding, but it remains unclear whether the principal investigators are aware of the support and whether they acknowledge it.

The board agreed that increased transparency and reporting are necessary, though CKC has expressed concerns about adding administrative burden. It was concluded that an open call for funding would not be appropriate. Instead, the board suggested outlining clear criteria for future funding and engaging in dialogue with CKC.

Päivi will begin drafting a proposed process in collaboration with WG1 and WG4, to be discussed with CKC and presented at the October meeting for decision.

Elias reiterated the importance of understanding which academic clinical trials receive support and on what basis. The current lack of insight into the selection process for supported trials is a key issue to be solved. Contributions to the development of a new model are welcome from all board members.

- 3) Discussion on updating the Reference group representations from all departments and theme cancer units. (E. Arnér, 5 min) D

Elias Arnér welcomed Dhifaf Sarhan and Theodoros Foukakis as the new leaders of the Reference Group and expressed optimism that their leadership will revitalize the group's activities. The aim remains to have two representatives from each KI department, although this has not yet been fully achieved.

Dhifaf agreed that the composition of the group needs revision and shared that a dedicated meeting is planned to shape its future direction. A suggestion has already been sent to all department heads, inviting them to renew or confirm their representatives and to ensure active participation.

Elias emphasized the importance of having engaged and committed members in the Reference Group and noted that both Dhifaf and Theo will bring new ideas and energy to the group.

- 4) Karolinska Institutet will host the CCE yearly meeting in Stockholm 23-24 March 2026, a two-day event (E. Arnér, 2 min) IP

Karolinska Institutet will host the Cancer Core Europe (CCE) annual meeting in Stockholm on 23-24 March 2026. Last year's meeting in Amsterdam gathered approximately 150 participants and focused on various ongoing CCE activities. This year's event presents an excellent opportunity for networking and visibility, and Elias encouraged full participation from the Executive Board.



Liselotte Bäckdahl shared that planning is underway for the two-day event, with efforts to secure a venue at KI. However, booking is challenging due to educational activities having priority. For the gala dinner, the Vasa Museum is being considered as a potential location.

Dhifaf Sarhan noted similar challenges in booking larger venues and mentioned that a special decision from KI leadership may be required to secure space. She suggested contacting KI leaders to facilitate this. She also inquired whether any working groups should be activated for specific planning tasks.

Liselotte will follow up on planning and coordination matters.

5) Planning for continued PCM activities from 2026 (E. Arnér, 2 min) IP

Several activities related to Precision Cancer Medicine (PCM)—coordinated by CRKI but not directly funded—have been supported over the years by Radiumhemmets Forskningsfonder. However, this funding will be discontinued as of January 1, 2026. This change prompts a need to evaluate which activities could be integrated into CRKI's operations and budget moving forward.

The goal is not only to assess the financial implications but also to ensure that the organization and quality of these activities are maintained. Elias Arnér noted that discussions will be initiated with key individuals including Ingemar Ernberg, Päivi Östling, Janne Lehtiö, and others, and that more detailed background information will be presented in future Executive Board meetings. A decision on potential CRKI funding and organizational structure is expected later in the fall.

Päivi Östling clarified that although Radiumhemmets Forskningsfonder will no longer fund PCM centrally, the program itself will continue. Researchers are now encouraged to apply directly to the foundation for support. She emphasized that the issue is more closely tied to Cancer Core Europe than to the PCM program itself. Päivi also noted that infrastructure-related applications—such as her own—can still be supported directly by the foundation.

Elias acknowledged the complexity of the situation and reiterated the importance of finding a sustainable model for CRKI to support PCM-related activities going forward.

6) Suggestion to have reoccurring patient advocate workshops for basic research scientists (L. Bäckdahl, 5 min) D

Liselotte Bäckdahl introduced a proposal to organize recurring workshops aimed at connecting basic cancer researchers with patient advocates and representatives. The initiative seeks to foster meaningful collaboration, increase patient involvement in research, and create a platform for mutual exchange across all areas of cancer research.



Lise-lott Eriksson presented further background, developed in collaboration with Linda Lindström and Anita Wangren, chair of the patient representatives network at Karolinska. Their discussions have led to the creation of a poster for the Djurönäset meeting, outlining the rationale and potential formats for patient-researcher collaboration.

Motivations and Benefits of Patient Involvement

- Identifying unmet needs from the patient perspective.
- Enhancing research relevance, quality, and ethical visibility.
- Improving innovation, outcomes, and policy/system impact.
- Aligning with international models such as EUPATI, which emphasize patient roles in defining research priorities, co-designing studies, reviewing grants, and contributing to dissemination and implementation.

Proposed Formats and Structures

- Workshops, after-work events, and pitch meetings to facilitate interaction.
- Standardized reimbursement for patient representatives, with budgeting included in project planning.
- Recruitment of a broad and committed network of patient representatives, with initial outreach to the KCCC network, which already meets regularly after work hours.
- Joint planning with CRKI and hospital initiatives to avoid duplication and ensure alignment.

Eva Jolly clarified that the KCCC patient network is part of the broader Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre and thus relevant for CRKI collaboration. She suggested that an initial meeting could be held during one of the network's regular gatherings in the fall.

Simon Ekman proposed the development of an online contact platform to facilitate patient-researcher matching, referencing a successful example from his medical unit. Linda Lindström expressed strong interest in learning more and potentially replicating the model.

Linda also emphasized the importance of patient engagement for basic researchers, many of whom lack direct contact with patients and are unsure how to initiate collaboration. She suggested that workshops could include project pitches to help match patients with research areas of interest.

Lise-lott Eriksson concluded by stressing the importance of joining forces to avoid parallel efforts and to ensure coordination between Karolinska and KI. She reiterated that one of the biggest challenges is matching researchers with suitable patient representatives, and proposed the creation of a platform to facilitate these connections.

Elias Arnér confirmed that the Executive Board is highly supportive of the initiative and emphasized the need for coordination with similar activities at the hospital and within CRKI.



7) How can CRKI reach out with our events and online multimedia resources? (L. Bäckdahl, 5 min)
D

Liselotte Bäckdahl raised the topic of increasing visibility and reach for CRKI's growing collection of online multimedia resources, including interviews, seminar recordings, lab tours, and other video content. While these materials are regularly published on CRKI's website and LinkedIn, the team expressed concern that they are not reaching a broad enough audience.

Pablo Martí Andrés emphasized the importance of targeted dissemination, noting that while some content is archival (e.g., seminar recordings), other materials—such as the new interview series with researchers—have required significant effort and should be made accessible to a wider audience, including those outside CRKI and KI.

Elias Arnér suggested cross-linking content from multiple platforms such as LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), and the CRKI website to maximize exposure.

Dhifaf Sarhan proposed leveraging the KI communications network, which includes communication coordinators from all departments. She offered to help distribute CRKI materials through this network by forwarding them to the LabMed coordinator, thereby reaching a broader internal audience.

Elias encouraged board members to explore the resources when time allows and reiterated the importance of broad dissemination to ensure the materials serve their intended purpose.

8) Budget update (L. Bäckdahl, 3 min) IP

Liselotte Bäckdahl provided an overview of the current budget status and projections for 2026. Key updates included:

- **Blue Sky Grants:** Six grants are planned for this year, with awards scheduled for December.
- **Translational Seed Grants:** The number of grants will remain four in 2026.
- **Mayo Collaboration Grant:** The budget remains largely unchanged, though the number of awards may be reduced.
- **Synergy Grant:** The previously budgeted 2 million SEK per year is currently on hold due to administrative issues in the U.S. While not removed from the overall budget, it is paused and may result in a temporary surplus.
- **Cancer Core Europe:** There is flexibility to increase this allocation if needed.
- **PI Retreat:** Budget remains unchanged at approximately 300,000 SEK.
- **Cancer Retreat:** Maintained at 700,000 SEK.
- **En dag för cancerforskning:** Budgeted at 200,000 SEK, though actual costs are expected to be lower.
- **Karolinska CCC Day:** Slight increase to 150,000 SEK.



The current balance stands at approximately 4 million SEK, with a projected balance of 3 million SEK for 2026. Elias Arnér noted that this corresponds to roughly 20% of the budget remaining for 2025 and 15% for 2026, emphasizing the importance of responsible budget utilization without entering a deficit.

The finalized budget for 2026 will be presented for decision at the October Executive Board meeting.

9) Dina Dabaghie will move her position to KCCC. (L. Bäckdahl, 3 min) IP

Liselotte Bäckdahl informed the board that Dina Dabaghie, currently part of the CRKI administrative team, will be transitioning to a full-time position at Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre (KCCC). Dina previously split her time between CRKI and KCCC (50/50), but will now be based entirely at KCCC.

Elias Arnér acknowledged Dina's valuable contributions to CRKI, particularly her work on the ECHoS project, which she will continue to support until its completion, despite her move.

Linda Lindström expressed appreciation for Dina's work and noted that she will be greatly missed by the team.

Dina, who is currently on holiday but will be informed of the board's gratitude and well wishes.

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

Elias Arnér provided an update on the collaboration with Mayo Clinic, specifically regarding the planned synergy grants for ambitious joint research projects. These grants were developed following the Santa Fe retreat and supported by task force efforts, forming a strong foundation for deeper collaboration.

However, Elias reported that Mayo Clinic leadership—particularly Cheryl L. Willman, head of the cancer division—requested a temporary pause on the initiative due to concerns about potential changes in U.S. federal funding policies under the new Trump administration. Specifically, uncertainties around NIH guidelines and foreign collaborations led to hesitation on Mayo's side.

Despite this, Mayo remains committed to continuing the collaboration and launching the synergy grants once the situation stabilizes. Recent updates suggest that feared structural changes are unlikely to occur, and major funding cuts may not materialize.

Mayo Clinic is expected to provide a clearer position by early September, and CRKI hopes to reinstate planning shortly thereafter. Elias emphasized that the delay is not due to CRKI, but rather external factors in the U.S.



KI leadership has been informed of the situation. Elias also reminded the board of the binational agreement signed prior to the Trump presidency, which supports continued cancer research collaboration between Sweden and the U.S.

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

Eva Jolly provided an update on key developments at the Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center (KCCC), highlighting three major areas of focus:

OECI Re-accreditation and Improvement Plan

Following successful re-accreditation by the Organisation of European Cancer Institutes (OECI), KCCC has launched a five-year improvement plan aimed at advancing excellence across the center. As part of this effort, leadership workshops will be held once or twice annually, involving the Executive Board, hospital site leadership teams, and SciLifeLab. The next workshop is scheduled for 9 September, and all board members should have received invitations.

Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)

A new Scientific Advisory Board has been established, with Kjetil Tasken appointed as chair. Elias Arnér, Patrick Rossi, and Eva Jolly will meet informally with Kjetil to align expectations. The first formal SAB meeting is planned for January 2026.

National Cancer Strategy and Integration Efforts

Eva reported on ongoing discussions surrounding the proposed national cancer strategy, which, although not yet finalized at the governmental level, suggests integration between regional cancer centers and CCCs. The national cancer coordinator has been facilitating regular meetings since January with leaders from CCC sites and regional centers. A workshop is scheduled this week to assess progress and future direction. Eva emphasized the importance of this national movement toward closer collaboration across regional and national levels.

Eva concluded by noting that further updates will be available following the Board of Directors meeting scheduled for the day after the Executive Board meeting.

12) Cancer Research KI organization: IP

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

- WG1 Research (D. Sarhan or N. Baryawno)

Despite the summer period, preparations for the CRKI Annual Meeting in September have continued actively. All speakers have been confirmed, and the breakout sessions



program is being finalized. The full program will soon be available on the CRKI website, along with an option for participants to select breakout sessions.

In addition, Dhifaf Sarhan and Ninib Baryawno expressed their willingness to support ongoing discussions related to the CKC funding model, as referenced earlier in the meeting.

WG1 is planning to establish periodic meetings to better manage regular tasks and explore opportunities to integrate additional responsibilities into the group's scope.

- WG2 Education (M. Wilhelm)

Seven courses are scheduled for the autumn semester, consistent with previous planning. These are regular offerings, with no new courses introduced this term.

Planning for the spring semester is underway, with another seven courses expected. The syllabi submission deadline is mid-September, and efforts are ongoing to identify and confirm course organizers.

Margareta also mentioned outreach to Heidelberg, who had previously expressed interest in collaboration. She contacted them to disseminate information about the 20 assistant professor positions recently announced at KI. No response has been received yet.

- WG3 Outreach (R. Altena)

Renske Altena reported on upcoming outreach activities coordinated by WG3:

- A webinar with patient organizations is scheduled for 21–23 October, focusing on male cancers, following the successful session on female cancers held last spring.
- Preparations are underway for “Kanslaforskning”, which will now become an annual event. Planning is progressing well.

Renske also acknowledged the impressive work by CRKI team in producing video content and multimedia resources for the CRKI website. She suggested that WG3 will further brainstorm strategies to effectively reach the general public, recognizing that meaningful outreach requires significant effort and planning.

Pablo Martí Andrés noted that some videos, including interviews with Elias Arnér and Marco Gerling, are pending approval from KI's communication office and will be published once clearance is received.



The group agreed that the quality of the materials warrants wide dissemination and will revisit outreach strategies in future meetings.

- WG4 Precision Cancer Medicine (P. Östling)
Päivi Östling provided an update on WG4 and the PCM program, noting several key developments:
 - The first PCM program meeting of the semester is scheduled for the following day. The meeting coincides with the visit of Kjetil Tasken, who is also serving as the opponent for Michele Masucci's thesis defense—the first thesis to emerge from the PCM program. The thesis focuses on implementation science, exploring challenges in translating research findings into clinical practice. Kjetil Tasken will also deliver two presentations:
 - Today at 15:00 on his own research in functional precision medicine (drug testing).
 - Tomorrow at 09:30 on Norway's national PCM implementation, including genomic diagnostics and a drug rediscovery trial with over 240 baskets for compassionate care.
 - The PCM program typically meets monthly, and this autumn's focus will be on strategic planning for the future. Input from Executive Board members is welcome regarding desired activities and the program's positioning moving forward.
 - A white paper is being planned to summarize learnings from infrastructure projects and experiences supported by Radiumhemmets Forskningsfonder, including insights from Michele's thesis.
- Elias Arnér emphasized the importance of strengthening efforts in precision medicine, especially in light of ongoing organizational changes, and expressed strong support for the group's initiatives.
- WG5 Industrial Collaboration (S. Ekman)
 - A seminar in collaboration with KI Science Park is scheduled for Wednesday, 3 October, focusing on start-up companies such as True Dose and Curacell. The event will begin at 15:30 at Innomedicum, followed by a networking session.



- A second seminar is planned for 22 October, targeting large pharmaceutical companies. The program is still under development.
 - An Intellectual Property (IP) seminar is scheduled for January 2026, as a follow-up to previous discussions. Additional matchmaking events between KI researchers and industry partners are also being considered, though no concrete dates have been set.
 - A meeting with Cancer Research Horizons (UK) is planned for 16–17 October, with further details to be shared soon. This collaboration may offer funding opportunities, but also presents challenges due to differing contractual frameworks, such as the professor's privilege in Sweden. Marco Gerling raised this issue, and Simon confirmed it will be addressed in future discussions.
 - WG5 has welcomed a new patient representative, as previously mentioned by Liselotte Bäckdahl.
- CPE Cancer Prevention Europe (J. Dillner)
- Joakim Dillner provided an overview of current activities within Cancer Prevention Europe (CPE), a network of 14 excellence centers across Europe focused on cancer prevention. CPE operates as a parallel organization to Cancer Core Europe, with a structure based on biannual steering group meetings and several working groups:
- Primary Prevention Working Group: Focused on creating a risk factor map of Europe, compiling country-specific data on cancer risk factors. KI is not currently represented in this group.
 - Secondary Prevention Working Group: Chaired by Miriam Elfström, also chair of the International Cancer Screening Network. The group's main goal is to publish a joint roadmap for cancer screening in Europe. KI is actively involved in this group.
 - Tertiary Prevention Working Group: Previously represented by Yvonne Wengström, who has stepped down. The group is conducting systematic reviews on the effects of prevention strategies targeted at cancer patients.
 - New Working Group Proposal: Initiated by CCK, a new group has been proposed focusing on infrastructure for cancer prevention research. The concept involves establishing cohorts of healthy individuals at high risk of



developing cancer, based on genetic profiling and risk factor mapping. This aligns with ongoing work at KI led by Svetlana Bajalica Lagercrantz, who has been proposed as the new KI representative and potential chair of this working group.

- Early Career Researchers Network: Now responsible for organizing the CPE webinar series, shifting the focus from senior-led sessions to those led by early career researchers, in response to feedback requesting more innovative and contemporary perspectives.

In response to a question from Dhifaf Sarhan, Joakim noted that CPE has not held a full network-wide meeting since its inception. He agreed that organizing such a meeting could facilitate collaboration and promote prevention research, and committed to suggesting it at the next steering group meeting.

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

Liselotte Bäckdahl highlighted the ongoing Blue Sky Grant call, which has received numerous applications over the summer. The submission deadline is Friday, and preparations are underway to compile a long list of reviewers.

Linda Lindström provided a brief update on the CRKI Annual Retreat, scheduled for 22-23 September. Planning is progressing well, and the program is nearly finalized. A patient perspective session will be included in the breakout sessions. Pablo Martí Andrés added that the retreat program will be published soon, and the organizing team will meet on Friday to finalize key details, including the selection of chairs, co-chairs, and members of the poster committee responsible for awarding prizes. Registration for breakout sessions will open in early September.

Liselotte reminded the board to keep an eye on the agenda item 14, which includes all upcoming CRKI events, and encouraged everyone to mark them in their calendars.

14) 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



h. CCE yearly meeting in Stockholm, 23-24 March 2026

15) Any other issue?

No other issues were mentioned.

16) End of meeting

15:00