



Minutes for Cancer Research KI's Executive Board meeting

Wednesday October 1, 2025, 13:30-15:00 Room: Peter Reichard, Biomedicum

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

Board members	Chair and Director Elias Arnér, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics Co-Director Marco Gerling, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology – CLINTEC Co-Director Linda Lindström, Department of Oncology-Pathology Simon Ekman, Department of Oncology-Pathology Päivi Östling, Department of Oncology-Pathology, SciLifeLab Margareta Wilhelm, Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology Renske Altena, Department of Oncology-Pathology Matthias Löhr, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology Keith Humphreys, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics Ninib Baryawno, Department of Women's and Children's Health Dhifaf Sarhan, Department of Laboratory medicine Theodoros Foukakis, Department of Oncology-Pathology Eva Jolly, Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre coordinator Patrik Rossi, Managing Director, Cancer Theme Karolinska University. Lise-lott Eriksson, Chair of the Blood Cancer Forum, Patient Group Sara Abu Ajamieh, PhD student representative, Department of Women's and Children's Health Liselotte Bäckdahl, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics Stefina Milanova, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics Pablo Martí Andrés, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics
Invited Guests	The Reference Group (present at the meeting): Therese Andersson Claudia Kutter Laura Baranello Vanessa Lundin (online) Lars E. Eriksson (online) Rainer Heuchel (online) Helena Rundqvist (online) Nitya Jayaram-Lindström (online)
Not present	Joakim Dillner Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology, Cancer Prevention Europe. Carlos Rodrigues, Department of Women's and Children's Health, Junior faculty representative Lena Sharp, RCC Stockholm-Gotland Dina Dabaghie, Department of Medical Biochemistry and Biophysics

First part: The Reference Group meeting with CRKI Executive Board: 13.30 – 14.00

- 1) The Reference Group survey discussion (A) (D. Serhan, 15 min)



- The tasks and role of the Reference Group (RG) are due for an update to better align with the needs of Cancer Research KI (CRKI) and its working groups. The aim is to enhance collaboration and ensure active participation across departments.
- Heads of departments were asked to confirm whether their current RG representatives wished to remain active. If not, they were requested to nominate two new representatives per department. Responses were received from most departments, with three still pending.
- Due to delayed responses from department heads, the meeting invitation was sent late, which may explain the absence of some representatives.
- A survey was prepared to gather input from RG members regarding their contributions to CRKI. The questions were shared prior to the meeting and will be sent via email post-meeting for further input.
- Päivi Östling emphasized the importance of broad representation to ensure all working groups benefit from RG input. She noted the lack of representation from PCM and highlighted that RG members are the pool from which Executive Board (EB) members are selected.
- Elias Arnér reiterated the significance of CRKI within KI, noting that it encompasses over 400 research groups and represents a substantial portion of KI's annual budget. He stressed that the EB cannot reach all cancer researchers directly, and the RG serves as a vital conduit for communication and engagement across departments.
- Theodoros Foukakis confirmed that department heads were contacted to help reactivate the RG.
- Dhifaf Sarhan noted that the current representatives are proactive and engaged. Specific names were suggested for departments that had not responded.

2) Discussion on the role of the Reference Group and its members (A) (D.Serhan, 15 min)

- The discussion highlighted the need for a bidirectional dialogue between CRKI and the RG. Concerns were raised about low participation from Flemingsberg, both at the Annual Retreat and within the RG. Dhifaf Sarhan shared that she disseminates CRKI information within her division and through the department communicator, but many early-career researchers remain unaware of available opportunities and support from CRKI.
- Elias proposed a new task for the RG: to verify that all group leaders within their departments are included in the CRKI database and receive newsletters and updates. CRKI administration will provide a list of PIs per department to facilitate this.
- Dhifaf Sarhan and Theodoros Foukakis will meet with the RG and return with suggestions on how to update the RG steering document to reflect CRKI's current needs.
- It was agreed that the RG will meet each semester and provide recommendations to CRKI ahead of the next EB meeting.
- Any member of the RG can contact Dhifaf Sarhan and Theodoros Foukakis if they have any questions.

Second part: The Executive board meeting:



- 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 15 min)

A proposal is being developed to formalize and structure CRKI's support for the CKC research nurse, based on a request from Kristina Sonnevli. The proposal was drafted collaboratively by Päivi Östling, Dhifaf Sarhan, Ninib Baryawno, Renske Altena, and Marco Gerling.

The new model aims to broaden the scope beyond specific types of clinical trials, including observational studies. The decision-making process will now be handled by the CRKI Executive Board, rather than CKC, which previously received funding and made decisions independently.

Päivi Östling explained that CKC will be invited to present studies that could benefit from this support. These presentations will include:

- A short oral presentation (10–15 minutes) during a CRKI EB meeting.
- A written summary (approx. 2 pages).
- A follow-up report after 12–24 months.

This process will allow CRKI to better understand clinical needs and promote supported studies on its website.

Elias Arnér appreciated the structure, noting it provides automatic feedback to the EB. He suggested a yearly analysis of needs and emphasized that CKC should present before the CRKI budget is finalized. Liselotte Bäckdahl proposed August as the appropriate time for budget planning.

Marco Gerling raised the issue of proportional funding for the Huddinge campus.

Keith Humphreys asked whether CKC would propose specific budget amounts or if CRKI would determine them. Päivi clarified that CKC will provide budget suggestions.

Elias Arnér questioned whether the new model should be implemented in 2026 or postponed. He proposed approving the routine now and sending the updated document to CKC, asking them to begin reporting accordingly.

Päivi will revise and translate the proposal into English. If approved, this model will become the standard procedure for future CKC support.



- 3) 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) yearly meeting on 23–24 March 2026. The event will span two full days and will be held at Aula Medica. Planning is underway regarding both the venue and the program. Elias Arnér will meet with the CCE Board next week to further develop the program and ensure the event is engaging and impactful. The previous meeting in Amsterdam gathered approximately 150 participants; the goal for Stockholm is to attract at least 200 participants. Suggestions for Keynote Speakers are welcomed and encouraged.

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

The Mayo Clinic has temporarily paused funding for the collaboration due to restrictions related to current U.S. administration guidelines on foreign participation.

As of two days ago, Mayo researchers began inquiring about the status of their projects. The Mayo team responded that they have received updated information and expect to make a decision soon.

Elias Arnér emphasized that CRKI will do everything possible to support the continuation of the collaboration, but a formal decision from Mayo is required. Furthermore, Elias Arnér mentioned CRKI is actively exploring new funding opportunities, and encouraged all members to consider ways CRKI could be used to raise funds for cancer research.

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

A significant number of Personalized Cancer Medicine (PCM) initiatives are currently underway across Karolinska Institutet. Discussions have begun on how best to coordinate and integrate these activities within the framework of Cancer Research KI. The goal is to ensure that CRKI can contribute meaningfully to the development and sustainability of PCM efforts from 2026 onwards, aligning resources and strategic planning.

- 6) Svetlana Lagercrantz new KI representative for CPE (E. Arnér, 2 min) IP

Yvonne Wengström is stepping down from her role as Karolinska Institutet's representative in Cancer Prevention Europe (CPE) to return to full-time research. Following a proposal by Joakim Dillner, Svetlana Lagercrantz has been appointed as the new KI representative for CPE, taking over Yvonne's responsibilities.

- 7) The Leadership for the outreach work group is vacant (E. Arnér, 2 min) IP



Renske Altena has been an active contributor to the Outreach Work Group. However, due to her new position at Docrates Cancercancer, which is not affiliated with Region Stockholm, she will step down from her role as chair of the group.

Despite stepping down as chair, Renske will continue to participate in the group's activities.

Theodoros Foukakis emphasized the importance of transparency, noting that while Renske's new affiliation may present a conflict of interest in terms of CRKI and Region Stockholm priorities, her continued involvement should be clearly communicated to maintain trust and reliability. Elias Arnér confirmed that this arrangement was discussed with KI leadership, who agreed that Renske could remain in the group but should not serve as chair.

The chair position is now vacant, and nominations are welcome for a new leader of the Outreach Group.

8) Budget 2026 Decision (L. Bäckdahl, 10 min) D

- The SFO grant for CRKI in 2025 amounts to 19,419,000 SEK after KI overhead. A similar amount is expected for 2026, with final figures to be announced by KI in December 2025.
- CRKI's myndighetskapital at the end of 2025 is projected to be 3,954,000 SEK, with an estimated surplus of 2,340,000 SEK.
- Elias Arnér noted that a surplus of around 10% is acceptable and should not be exceeded.
- The Mayo synergy grant remains on hold due to pending decisions from Mayo Clinic. The proposed project involves 2 million SEK over two years.
- Theodoros Foukakis suggested reallocating the Mayo funds to other grants to support additional projects. Elias Arnér responded that a decision from Mayo is needed before any reallocation can be considered. He also highlighted Mayo's enthusiasm for continued collaboration, as expressed during a recent townhall event.
- Funding for the 13 task forces ends this year, with new announcements expected later in the year.
- Operational costs include travel, announcements, and minor administrative fees.

Discussions included ongoing support for infrastructure, events, and education, as well as a special transcriptomics project.

- Ninib Baryawno requested an update on the usage of the transcriptomics infrastructure.
- Päivi Östling emphasized the importance of understanding its impact from a SciLifeLab perspective and suggested inviting users to present the method.
- Elias Arnér proposed retrieving information on the original decision and current usage, followed by a report on how many cancer researchers have benefited from the project.



Elias proposed approving the budget with the possibility of revision once Mayo's decision is known.

Decision: The 2026 budget was approved by the Executive Board, with the understanding that adjustments may be made pending further developments with the Mayo collaboration.

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

- Under the leadership of Kjell Ivarsson, a new national cancer strategy is being developed that encourages integration and collaboration between KCCC and Regional Cancer Centers (RCC). The initiative includes input from patient representatives and KCCC. Eva Jolly and Patrik Rossi will report back to the CRKI Executive Board on progress.
- Socialstyrelsen is leading the Swedish implementation of the EU Beating Cancer Plan. A decision made in June 2025 will result in the establishment of a Swedish National Cancer Mission Hub, with KCCC actively contributing to its setup. The EUnetCCC project is also supporting the creation of connections between European Comprehensive Cancer Centers.
- A Regional CCC Network has been initiated in the Stockholm/Gotland region, involving hospitals that provide cancer care, including those with smaller patient volumes. The group has met twice and is exploring OEI accreditation as a CCC network. Initial feedback has been positive.
- A National CCC Network Meeting was held in Stockholm on 14 October, serving as an information-sharing and coordination platform for other CCCs in Sweden.
- The EUnetCCC Annual Meeting will take place in Paris on 5–6 November, with the goal of gathering 1,000 participants from CCCs across Europe (currently at 500).
- The Nordic-Baltic CCC Network Meeting will be held in Vilnius on 4–5 December. This will be the 8th meeting in the series, held twice annually. The agenda includes topics such as secondary use of clinical data, patient involvement, and other strategic areas.
- Work has begun on the Annual KCCC Report for 2025.

10) 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)

A planning meeting is scheduled for Friday to outline upcoming activities for the Research Working Group (WG1).

Key upcoming events include:

(a) The Annual Retreat, planned for 21–22 September 2026.

(b) The PI Retreat, scheduled for 16–17 February 2026, which will now be held annually.



The PI list needs to be updated; this task will be addressed at the next Reference Group meeting.

WG1 is involved in updating the call text for the next round of Task Force seed funding. A new patient representative has joined the group, contributing to its ongoing efforts to integrate patient perspectives into research planning.

Feedback from the retreat will be presented at the next Executive Board meeting.

- WG2 Education (M. Wilhelm)

Eight PhD courses are scheduled for Spring 2026, including a revived course on cell therapy, which is considered semi-new.

Discussions are ongoing with DKFZ and Heidelberg to continue the joint research initiative focused on innate immune checkpoints in cancer and tissue damage. An application for funding will be submitted in Germany for the period 27–31.

No new updates were shared regarding potential doctoral student collaborations with Heidelberg.

Dhifaf Sarhan inquired about the possibility of non-European PhD students participating in CRKI courses.

(a) Margareta Wilhelm confirmed that international students may join if places are available. They must cover their own travel and accommodation expenses, but the courses themselves are free of charge. Final acceptance is at the discretion of the course organizer.

(b) Elias Arnér added that after the application period ends, courses with remaining availability are listed on the KI website, allowing interested students to contact course coordinators directly.

- WG3 Outreach (*Vacant*)

No updates were presentend.

- WG4 Precision Cancer Medicine (P. Östling)

The FOCU·SE drug repurposing study has officially received government funding and will begin with four cancer types. Päivi Östling and Janne Lehtiö are actively involved in enabling sample collection across various tissue types and formats, supporting broad applicability of the study.

Patrik Rossi noted that this initiative is part of a broader ambition to consolidate the CCC network. While the main work will be conducted at SciLifeLab, patient registration will take place in Gothenburg.

A formal contact person for research collaboration has not yet been established.

Päivi Östling mentioned ongoing joint actions for PCM and highlighted related activities at ESMO, which she will attend.



- WG5 Industrial Collaboration (S. Ekman)

A successful seminar was held in collaboration with KI Science Park, focusing on startups, with 70 participants in attendance.

Planning is underway for several upcoming activities:

- (a) A seminar with LIF and major pharmaceutical companies, including participation in the Eva and Georg Klein meeting.
- (b) An Intellectual Property (IP) seminar scheduled for January 2026.
- (c) A matchmaking event in Spring 2026 to connect companies with researchers.

The strategy for industrial collaboration is being updated, with upcoming discussions planned with Elias Arnér.

A meeting with Cancer Research Horizons (CRH) is scheduled for October (online). 12 proposals from KI have been submitted to CRH.

The PI database is proving useful for companies seeking research partners.

- CPE Cancer Prevention Europe (J. Dillner)

Joakim Dillner was not present. No updates were presented.

11) Cancer Research KI administration update (L. Bäckdahl, S. Milanova, P. Martí Andrés, 5 min)

No updates were presented

12) Seminar and workshops by CRKI and relevant organizations:

- a. CCE summer school: 5-10 October 2025
- b. Industry collaboration seminar: 22 October 2025
- c. RCC patient workshop - Cancers common in Men: 23 October 2025
- d. En dag för Cancerforskningen: 12 November 2025
- e. CCE yearly meeting in Stockholm: 23-24 March 2026

13) Any other issue?

No other issues were raised.

14) End of meeting

15:39