



Minutes for Cancer Research KI's Executive Board meeting

Wednesday February 11th, 2026, 15.00-17.00 Nils Ringert, Biomedicum (Campus Solna)

(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 Co-Director Anna Nilsson, Department of Women's and Children's Health Päivi Östling, Department of Oncology-Pathology, SciLifeLab Andri Papakonstantinou, Department of Oncology-Pathology Renske Altena, Department of Oncology-Pathology Ninib Baryawno, Department of Women's and Children's Health Dhifaf Serhan, Department of Laboratory medicine Lise-lott Eriksson, Chair of the Blood Cancer Forum, Patient Group João Pedro Alves-Lopes, Department of Women's and Children's Health, Junior faculty representative 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</p>
Invited Guests	
Not present	<p>Co-Director Marco Gerling, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology – CLINTEC Simon Ekman, Department of Oncology-Pathology Margareta Wilhelm, Department of Microbiology, Tumor and Cell Biology Matthias Löhr, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology Keith Humphreys, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics Theodoros Foukakis, Department of Oncology-Pathology Magnus Nilsson, Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology Eva Jolly, Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Centre coordinator Patrik Rossi, Managing Director, Cancer Theme Karolinska University. Joakim Dillner Department of Clinical Science, Intervention and Technology, Cancer Prevention Europe. Lena Sharp, RCC Stockholm-Gotland</p>

- 1) Welcome to the EB meeting and approval of minutes from the previous CRKI Executive Board meeting 2025-12-17(A) (E. Arnér, 2 min) DP

Elias Arnér opened the meeting and briefly reviewed key points from the previous session, including the Committee for Research's request for broader senior representation and diversified expertise within the EB; the BlueSky round in which only male applicants were funded, a matter to be revisited; and the ongoing but not yet completed preparation of a new collaboration basis with NIO, which will return to the agenda once finalized.

The minutes from the 17 December 2025 meeting were **approved**.



- 2) Committee for research has accepted the new CRKI Executive board. Introduction to new members and round the table presentation (everyone, 5 minutes) IP

The Committee for Research has formally approved the composition of the new CRKI Executive Board. A brief round-table introduction followed, during which the new members were welcomed.

- 3) NatiOn asks for 1.873.000 SEK for 2026 (E. Arnér, 4 min) DP

A new application for support from NatiOn was received, requesting 1,872,901 SEK for 2026. NatiOn representatives had been invited to the meeting but were unable to attend due to a retreat. The Board discussed whether to approve the request as presented or request further information.

Several members raised the need for a clearer assessment of outcomes from previous funding. Suggestions included requesting an analysis of the program's results, including improvements within the target group, student progression, and the overall impact of NatiOn. It was proposed that NatiOn be invited to present a report on the effects of the initiative and how funds are being used.

Questions were raised regarding possible co-funding from Region Stockholm, noting that clinically active students experience reduced salaries during course weeks and may be eligible for regional support. NatiOn has previously indicated that students come from several regions across Sweden. The Board discussed salary compensation mechanisms, including whether reimbursements should reflect the salary of a clinical PhD student rather than full clinician salaries, given significant variations between individuals. Concerns were expressed regarding the high per-week cost (approximately 10,000 SEK per student), with course participation amounting to about 30,000 SEK.

It was noted that NatiOn does not receive central KI program funding comparable to FoTO. The requested amount is within budget, but several members highlighted the importance of ensuring alignment with regional funding structures and exploring whether external sources (e.g., Radiumhemmet) could contribute. Suggestions were made to involve Olof Akre in broader reflections on supporting clinical PhD students, and to consider joint activities with the hospital's FoU organization. Interest was also expressed in understanding NatiOn's approach to patient involvement in education.

Decision: The Board agreed to approve the funding request and to invite NatiOn to a future meeting to present a more detailed account of how the program operates and how funds are used.

- 4) Suggestions for the strategy meeting 14 April. What is our way forward? (E. Arnér, 5 min) D



The Board discussed potential priorities and themes for the upcoming strategy meeting on 14 April, considering how CRKI should allocate resources, assess ongoing activities, and identify areas to strengthen, discontinue, or initiate. Reference was made to the list of suggested topics circulated in advance.

Members emphasized the importance of evaluating the performance and impact of task forces, noting that such evaluation is central to any funding or grant-related decisions. It was observed that the Committee for Research has already allocated substantial resources to conferences and workshops, highlighting the need for clear prioritization.

The discussion underscored CRKI's role in accelerating cancer research and ensuring continued relevance. Key themes proposed for strategic consideration included health data, AI, and data infrastructure, as well as CRKI's role in shaping future organizational structures and influencing the development of research infrastructure in a context where SFO funding is limited.

Additional points raised included the growing number of KI groups applying for excellence grants and initiatives aimed at recruiting top researchers without central coordination. The Board noted the potential value of fostering research clusters with long-term strategic benefit. Upcoming Mayo Clinic-related activities were mentioned, including a synergy grant with AI as a major focus.

Further ideas included developing flagship projects involving multiple research groups and external actors such as Cancerfonden, Barncancerfonden, and Radiumhemmet; increasing CRKI's engagement with European Cancer Mission calls; and organizing a Reference Group meeting ahead of the EB meeting to gather input for the strategy session.

It was also suggested that, given the upcoming election year in Sweden, CRKI could conduct stakeholder consultations involving patient organizations and policymakers to highlight CRKI's contributions and integrate the patient voice more effectively.

5) Mayo update (E. Arnér, 4 min) D

Elias Arnér provided an update on the planned KI-Mayo collaborative grants. CRKI has budgeted for both a standard PI-PI collaborative grant and a larger synergy grant, amounting to 2 million SEK. Progress had been delayed due to the political situation in the United States, but NIH funding is now confirmed, and both institutions are preparing to launch the calls. The announcement is expected shortly, with an anticipated two-month application window.

A unique aspect of the collaboration is the provision of supercomputing resources from Mayo, intended to support joint research efforts. Due to restrictions on transatlantic transfer of patient data, the collaboration will rely on sharing algorithms rather than raw data.

Board members noted several considerations. With only two months for applications, early identification of suitable research groups and potential constellations will be important. Questions were raised about the evaluation process for the call. Elias explained that the



applications will involve teams of approximately 20 researchers from KI and 20 from Mayo, and that a jointly agreed call text is already finalized, leaving little room for modification. He emphasized that efforts have been made to ensure the call is as broad and inclusive as possible.

- 6) The 2026 CCE yearly meeting in Stockholm, joint meeting with Karolinska CCC day, 23-24 March 2026 (E. Arnér, 3 min) IP

The members of the Board were encouraged to register for the CCE yearly meeting, which will be held in Stockholm on 23-24 March 2026, jointly organized with the Karolinska CCC Day.

- 7) The [new national Cancerstrategy](#) (E. Arnér, 3 min) IP

Elias Arnér briefed the Board on the recently updated national cancer strategy and emphasized its relevance for CRKI's forthcoming strategic discussions. Two areas highlighted in the strategy require strengthened focus: cancer prevention and early diagnosis, and enhanced collaboration among key actors in the cancer ecosystem, including RCCs, hospitals, and other regional partners. It was noted that Comprehensive Cancer Centres (CCCs) are expected to serve as central hubs facilitating this collaboration.

- 8) Towards establishing a Stockholm-Gotland Regional CC Network (E. Arnér, 3 min) IP

Elias Arnér presented an update from Patrik Rossi and Eva Jolly regarding the development of a more formalized cancer care and research network across the Stockholm-Gotland region. Three meetings have been held with the cancer leads from the various hospitals and centres, focusing on strengthening coordination and aligning activities across institutions. The long-term aim is to create a cohesive structure that facilitates joint initiatives, with the possibility of implementing shared activities as early as next year.

The initiative is also linked to ambitions to form an OECD-certified Comprehensive Cancer Network, reinforcing regional collaboration and strategic alignment.

- 9) Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center update (E. Jolly, 10 min) IP

As Eva Jolly was not present, Elias Arnér provided a brief update on behalf of the Karolinska Comprehensive Cancer Center. He noted that the Senior Advisory Board visit report is still pending and will be circulated to the Executive Board as soon as it becomes available. He highlighted the continued high level of activity in precision cancer medicine, which remains a strategic focus area.

Ann-Britt Johansson has invited all members to attend the Leadership Meeting on 10-11 March, emphasizing the importance of strong participation from both KI and the hospital side to further strengthen collaboration and integration across the two organizations.



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)

Dhifaf Sarhan expressed appreciation for the productive discussions held with the Reference Group regarding improved collaboration across both KI campuses. As part of this effort, an open office day in Flemingsberg is being planned to allow researchers to drop in, exchange ideas, and discuss ongoing initiatives. To strengthen CRKI's visibility at Flemingsberg, Helene Rundqvist and Oscar Wiklander will present CRKI at an upcoming LABMED department meeting.

It was suggested that task force evaluations could be coordinated by the Reference Group and subsequently forwarded to the Executive Board for consideration.

WG1 reported on several upcoming activities:

- (a) The PI Retreat next week will include focused sessions on high-priority topics relevant to CRKI researchers.
- (b) Preparations for the Annual Meeting are progressing well, with nearly all keynote speakers confirmed.

Regarding funding initiatives, WG1 received 24 applications for the Translational Seed Grant, with nearly 30% female applicants, and Päivi Östling offered to help promote future calls within WG4 to encourage broader participation.

Interest in joining WG1 continues to increase. While the group is currently at capacity, members noted the potential value of periodic refreshment to maintain effectiveness, while ensuring terms are long enough to allow meaningful contributions.

- WG2 Education (M. Wilhelm)

Margareta Wilhelm was not present for the meeting. Elias Arnér noted that WG2 will require a new lead since Margareta is completing her mandate at CRKI this year. The Board will return to this matter to identify suitable candidates.

- WG3 Outreach (A. Papakonstantinou)

Andri Papakonstantinou reported progress on several upcoming outreach activities. The planned patient workshop on quality of life when living with cancer is moving forward, with Marco Gerling and Helene Rundqvist confirmed as speakers. Preparations have also begun for "En dag för cancerforskning", focusing on the patient journey; WG3 will contact a suitable moderator/host and initiate detailed planning regarding the program and speakers.



Dhifaf Sarhan suggested exploring collaboration with Cancerfonden, which produces videos illustrating different cancer treatments. Such materials could be valuable for the public and might be linked from the CRKI website if feasible.

Regarding the planned series of video interviews, KI has given the go-ahead, although some adjustments to the format will be needed before publishing. The dissemination strategy will be discussed once the videos are published on CRKI's website and KI Play.

- WG4 Precision Cancer Medicine (P. Östling)
WG4 held its first open Precision Cancer Medicine (PCM) program meeting, featuring presentations by Luigi de Petris and Hannes Olausson on the FOCUS SE trial. Suggestions for future meeting themes are welcome, with ongoing discussions expected to include Explore, MTB meetings, and Stockholm-based infrastructural coordination.

In connection with the national cancer strategy, Päivi Östling highlighted the relevance of SweCan – the Swedish Cancer Mission Hub (ECHO S project).

Opportunities were also noted for identifying collaborators at Mayo who could support the testing of algorithms within joint research efforts, including activities linked to JA PCM.

The group discussed the importance of integrating datasets without the physical movement of data, aligning with secure and federated data-sharing approaches common in precision medicine.

WG4 is currently considering the recruitment of new members. Selection will depend partly on participation and interest demonstrated at the open meetings, which may help identify suitable candidates.

- WG5 Industrial Collaboration (S. Ekman)
Simon Ekman was not present at the meeting. Elias Arnér noted that the internship initiative previously discussed within WG5 will be brought forward for further consideration during the upcoming strategy day.
- CPE Cancer Prevention Europe (J. Dillner)
Joakim Dillner was not present, and no update was provided at this meeting.

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

- a. CRKI PI retreat Sångå Säby 16-17 February



**Karolinska
Institutet**



- b. Karolinska CCC leadership meeting 10-11 march, Samuelssonsalen & Scheelesalen
- c. Joint Scientific meeting CCE annual meeting and Karolinska CCC day 2026 in Stockholm, 23-24 March 2026
- d. Patient workshop "Livskvallitet när man lever med cancer" 23 April
- e. CRKI-Mayo CCC online Symposium 17 june
- f. Djurönäset annual retreat, 28-29 September
- g. Webinar: En dag för Cancerforskningen, 19th November

12) Any other issue?

The Board briefly discussed potential activities for Almedalen. It was suggested that the Cancer Mission Day could be a relevant theme to highlight, and that this should be further explored in dialogue with Eva Jolly.

13) End of meeting

The meeting concluded at 16:51.