

---

## MINUTES OF DIGNITY BOARD MEETING DEC 2, 2021

AT BRYGGERVANGEN – 3.00 to 7.00 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS: Louise Holck, Dea Seidenfaden, Karin Hansen, Lotte Leicht, Emil Kiørboe, Manfred Nowak, Tomas Martin,

FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD: Rasmus Grue Christensen (RGC), Dorrit Rée Akselbo (DRA)

GUESTS: Marie Høgh Thøgersen (MHT) at point 2

ABSENT: Nomfundo Mogapi, Marie Louise Nørredam, Camilla Rathcke, Christian Balslev-Olesen

REFEREE: Mette Grimstrup

---

### **1. Approval of agenda of Board meeting Dec 2, 2021**

Agenda approved.

### **2. Presentation of the Rehabilitation Clinic**

Presentation of the Rehabilitation Clinic by Marie Høgh Thøgersen (MHT). (See annex 1 for more details.)

The discussions touched upon a number of subjects:

Different trauma histories across nations - Syrians are e.g. still retraumatized as things are still deteriorating in Syria. Data shows that when conflicts rise in refugees' home countries, the use of medicine rises.

The clinic's work with the rest of the health system. A central task for DIGNITY is to help the patients translate their needs into the broader welfare system, so that they get the right treatment when they are "let out" into the rest of society.

The cooperation with the rest of the organization. What does it mean for the clinic to be part of DIGNITY? MHT said that people are proud to be part of a bigger house and to see DIGNITY's public communication and advocacy, which really helps the patients. And it is very useful to be able to ask your colleagues when you need to know what is happening in the refugees' home countries. But it also makes operations slightly more complex and complicated, compared to other similar clinics.

The deteriorating conditions for refugees. Refugees have a lack of safe and legal ways to seek refuge. The board asked if it will be possible to see in the accumulated data from the clinic how these policies affect the refugees? MHT confirmed that we will get more data about traumatic experiences during flight in the next five years.

The board thanked for the presentation and is looking forward to getting to know more about the database cooperation with other clinics and the possibilities for research that it gives in the coming year.

### **3. Orientation from the Chairperson**

Christian Balslev-Olesen was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting but sent his regards. Deputy Chairperson Dea Seidenfaden related that the executive committee had mostly spent time preparing for the board meeting and arranging the presentation of the clinic.

#### **4. Orientation from the CEO**

Orientation by Rasmus Grue Christensen (RGC):

2021 has been quite intense. A lot of plans to begin with, and extra endeavors on top of that, so everybody now deserves a nice Christmas Holiday!

Meeting tomorrow with the Capital Region in order to negotiate the operating agreement. We are now a VISO supplier, which means that we support the municipality system in treating adults and children with trauma. This will probably become an important second source of income.

We have had our annual consultation with the Danish Foreign Ministry, a very positive meeting with recognition of DIGNITY's capability and expertise, and also acknowledgement of DIGNITY's reaction to the localization agenda.

The DAPP – the Danish-Arab Partnership Programme – is up for tender in early 2022, and hopefully DIGNITY will win a new phase together with good partners. If so, the implementation begins mid-2022. Also in DAPP, localization is an important agenda.

The Belarus platform is on track and working quite well. There are two questions that we are working on: Clarification as to whether the platform should continue after the initial period that ends in June 2022. And then if it is possible to fund a permanent platform, functioning as a “fire station” able to react even faster to human rights emergencies, when needed.

#### **5. Localization – follow-up**

The main follow up on the discussions on the board seminar in September will of course be the approval and implementation of the Partnership Policy and annexes. But, furthermore, the board was briefed about a number of initiatives to follow up on the localization debate on the board seminar in Sep., i.a. a suggestion to include a member with a refugee background, for example a former patient in DIGNITY, in the board. This was discussed under item 9.

The board asked about the partnership workshop. Tomas Martin related that the partnership workshop went very well and had many relevant comments to the partnership policy draft. Core recommendations from the partners were:

- Communication – not just in setting up the plan, but throughout the project – and consistency and flexibility in the project implementation.
- Integration – implement the policy in praxis, in structures and procedures.
- Mutuality and respect, summarized in the policy in the acronym MEAP (Mutuality and respect, Equality and non-discrimination, Accountability and transparency, Participation and empowerment)

These considerations were also reflected in the following internal discussions in DIGNITY – among the employees there was a need to know more concretely how this policy would be implemented and mean a difference in the daily work.

As a result of some of the discussions, an implementation working group had been added to the paper.

The board shortly discussed the importance and relevance of internal awareness raising, vs. the need for more structural changes.

The board meeting in April will dive deeper into this subject and discuss both bias awareness and decentralization.

## **6. Strategic priorities 2021 and 2022**

### *Strategic priorities 2021*

Praise from the board for all the accomplishments. And compliments to the strategy format with extensive explanatory footnotes.

### *Strategic priorities 2022*

Praise from the board for the continued very visible public communication. There were questions as to whether DIGNITY had got plans to strengthen the communication staff in order to be able to play a role in the international arena. The board got the answer that DIGNITY certainly wants to. But donor requirements have become tougher than earlier which means that it has become more difficult to fund communications and advocacy.

The board also praised the focus on stress prevention after the APV, which was a positive and strong APV, but where signs of stress were also present. It was mentioned that stress prevention is not done with a policy, it has also got to do with increased ambitions and work requirements, which must be managed well.

It was suggested to conduct a small survey at the end of the year to follow up on the stress prevention etc.

## **7. Forecast 2021**

Presentation by Dorrit Rée Akselbo (DRA):

We still expect to reach approximately the same result as we predicted in the beginning of the year, even though we will have a smaller income in the clinic than predicted. But savings in administration among other things have meant that we still reach the budgeted result.

There are fewer people at the offices, which makes it possible to spend less money on office space. But we are still working with the challenges of a more flexible workplace.

The board praised the fact that DIGNITY is expected to create a satisfying result, even though there have been so many changes during the year.

There was a question as to the procedure for deciding what to do with surplus: DIGNITY has an equity target of 9 mio. DK, which we expect to reach ahead of schedule, but we are still not there yet. When the target is reached, the board can discuss what to do with a possible future surplus.

## **8. Approval of budget 2022**

Presentation by Dorrit Rée Akselbo (DRA):

It is a conservative budget; we expect an end result of 0.

We have underspent on the DED in 2021, but also in previous years, partly due to the pandemic. Underspent funds will be transferred to 2022 and therefore we have raised the DED budget by DKK 2.5 mio. In 2022. We have set the bar higher in 2022, hoping that it becomes possible to spend the funds in 2022. . However, ff Covid-19 is still affecting the situation as much as it did in 2021, it will be difficult to reach the goal for 2022.

Prerequisites for the budget are among others that we get the DAPP tender, that the negotiations with the Capital region will end up with at least the same economic framework as today. And that we increase our member base a little bit more.

We will monitor the clinic closely from the beginning of 2022, to make sure that we have a stabile income and that we see the allotted number of patients.

We expect less travel costs in the future, also after the pandemic.

There was a short question about environmental policies. It is not yet a direct donor requirement, but we expect it to be in the future, so we are working on an environmental policy for DIGNITY.

The board also questioned the increased DAPP budget – only part of it is DIGNITY's own funds, so the numbers might be a bit misleading. DRA promised to send out a revised budget with a separate line for the DAPP funds.

The board approved of the budget with the above-mentioned comments.

## **9. Board future composition**

Christian Balslev-Olesen has announced that he will retire from the board from Sep. 2022. So, the board was asked to discuss the future board composition, also due to the suggestion from item 5 to include a member with refugee background in the board.

There was a first and open discussion.

The board first considered the suggestion to include a member with a refugee background.

It was discussed whether it should be a former patient, or if having a refugee background and an interest in the anti-torture work would qualify, as many former patients are often quite vulnerable. It was considered whether it could be a relative to a patient, or perhaps an interpreter. And it was suggested to broaden the scope to the other torture rehabilitation clinics.

The board then discussed the possible procedure – a way to go forward could also be to ask the Danish Refugee Council to appoint a member. Or perhaps let a panel from the clinic decide. Since there are no patient associations in Denmark on this subject, there is no obvious organization to go to.

It was also discussed whether this should be an additional member. Not so long ago a big effort was made to slim the board – so it is important to clarify the background for the decisions then, and the reasons for this expansion if it is decided. When the board was slimmed it was mainly due to the recommendations from the MFA who found the board too Danish and too big.

Then the board discussed the replacement of Christian Balslev-Olesen. It was clarified that the replacement will not necessarily also be the coming chairperson.

Different perspectives were considered: Do we want to increase the diversity in the board? Or do we want to increase the internationalization of the board? A way of solving the problem with expanding could of course also be to appoint a new member with relation to torture and trauma.

It was agreed that diversity is important. But that deep knowledge of development assistance and the workings of the Danish Foreign Ministry is also of outmost importance. And the signal value of adding a member with refugee background in the articles of association would also be important which could speak for an expansion.

The discussion will be continued at the next board meeting. The executive committee was asked to suggest a procedure for reaching a decision.

#### **10. Evaluation of the board**

A questionnaire will be sent out, and the results will be discussed at the board meeting in January.

#### **11. AOB**

| Meeting      | Item | Subject                     | Decision                                   | Responsible | Status |
|--------------|------|-----------------------------|--|-------------|--------|
| 2021<br>BM 5 | 8    | Approval of budget for 2022 | The Board approved of the budget for 2022. | Management  |        |