

Report from the Association of doctoral organizations in Norway, SiN

EURODOC QUESTIONNAIRE 2005

General question and Discussion

1. Are there significant changes in the situation of PhD candidates in your country as compared to last year? And in the situation of junior researchers? Please specify if your association considers those changes an improvement or a deterioration.

SiN: Accomplishing the doctoral period within allotted time. The government has decided that all PhD-candidates should be appointed for 4 years, where 1 year should consist of “duty”-work such as lecturing. We consider this a very important step towards educating good researchers and ensuring high degree of accomplishment for PhD. The drawback is that the regulations still opens for 3 years appointments, but after all, the signal effect is large. Working conditions the same. Economic condition is about the same. Wages have not increased at the same rate as other academic groups.

2. What main improvement would your association like to see in the situation of PhD candidates? And in the situation of post-docs and other junior researchers?

SiN: To get more influence in university boards and in government decisions. More academic post PhD positions and improve supervision so more candidates finish within the allotted period.

3. In general, what are the hottest topics (in Higher Education and Research & Development) under discussion in your country, in particular affecting young researchers? Specify at least two of these.

SiN: The hottest issues have been the new university law: if the head of the universities should be elected among the employees or appointed by the board. It will be up to the institution itself to decide.

New Masters and PhD regulations. How to get 4 years positions out of a 3 years PhD. The Norwegian department of education now recommend that PhD candidates should be given 4 years employee contracts.

Research strategies and priorities will be more influenced by international events and international research. Increased focus on positioning Norway in an international context and make Norwegian scientists interesting cooperative partners. Further improvements of researcher exchange. (Source: last issue of [Forskning, nr 1/05 volume 13](#) p.26-29.)

4. Which actions or activities has your national association been involved in this year? What are your association’s future planned activities?

SiN: SiN has worked with increasing its influence on decisions affecting PhD candidates. E.g. SiN has commented on a new law in Norway regarding the Universities and Colleges.

SiN works as an information channel, helping PhD candidates to know their rights. A booklet is being made meant to be handed out to all new PhD candidates. This will help the organization to come in contact with new PhD candidates.

SiN has the last year worked together with the Norwegian institute for studies in research and higher education with starting an examination of the conditions of Norwegian PhD candidates, which unfortunately did not receive support by the government.

The work as an informational channel among the local organizations will continue and be extended. The main focus of SiN this year will be, working with solutions to the problem that a high percentage of the PhD candidates use more time than expected. Several arrangements have been suggested to reduce the time the PhD candidates use on their thesis.

SiN will also continue its work with increasing its influence on decision making in cases regarding PhD candidates.

5. How does your national association define its area of activities? Following which procedure does your association get to establish its official positions (if any)?

SiN: SiN's areas of activities are defined by the annual meeting, where representatives from all the local organizations define a working program for the national association. This is also how the official position is established. The board is supposed to speak on behalf of the whole organization during the year, but local organizations will also have the opportunity to comment.

6. Did your national association ever make a PhD survey or plans to make one? On which topics? Do you think these surveys would profit from data of other countries being included? How do you imagine Eurodoc contributing to that?

SiN: To arrange a national survey has been discussed regarding the Norwegian PhD-candidates working environment/conditions.

To arrange a national survey has been discussed regarding the Norwegian PhD-candidates and their situation regarding a number of issues; Economic funding, promoter/supervisor situation (follow-up, on a regular basis, what happens when the supervisor-candidate situation does not work, including and involving interactive work environment, PhD-candidates from other countries (their situation compared to the national PhD-candidates), yearly budget (amount, access to), office situations (adequate office space, computer equipment). Data from other countries would probably be positive but as the situation in the various countries differs to such a large extent it might be more of a superficial interest. However, it is probably of great interest to acquire a broader view of the European PhD-situation as a function of a international picture. Eurodoc is in a unique position to acquire an overview over the situation in EU.

7. Which are the ideas your association would like to put forward for EURODOC policy in 2005?

SiN: We work to increase the quality of the PhD-candidates through better supervision and that the systems are optimised in this respect. Work to obtain a higher status for PhD-candidates in the various countries as it seems that overall PhD-candidates are more considered students and not as highly qualified resources with University diplomas. The PhD-candidates should more be regarded as part of an interactive research group and obtain a more independent position in its own right with the proper supervision at hand. The use of the term PhD-student should be avoided and the term "PhD-candidate" should be more in use throughout.

Work to secure more funding through both the national and EU systems to be used on the PhD-candidates projects themselves and not be canalised into only into administrative tasks. Work for EURODOC to be more visible as an organisation also reachable for the PhD-candidates at the national levels.

Bologna Process and Lisboa Strategy

8. How would the application of the "Bologna Process rules", like comparability of structures, ECTS systems, Diploma Supplement, affect the Doctoral Level in your country <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/> ?

SiN: The Doctoral Level have been harmonised after the Bologna Process. The idea is to become more comparable standards of quality and quantity than before, when each scientific discipline had their own thesis standard. But the PhD program starts after the 2nd cycle that was normal also earlier, 3+2+3 (3+1) structure.

9. **What is the position of your national association on the insertion of the Doctoral level as the 3rd cycle of the Bologna Process? What are your expectations or fears, if any, related to this?**

SiN: There exists a fear in our organisation that the 3rd cycle will damage our status as labours in favour of a student status that other European countries have. The privileges as labours have may also then be withdrawn. Our expectation is that the quality demand is better implemented for PhD candidates.

10. **Is the [Lisbon Strategy](#) affecting the policy of your country as what regards the recruitment of young researchers?**

SiN: There have been about 100 more PhD candidate positions last year! But the government has not followed up their scientific funding goal. Post Doc positions are not increasing at the same rate.

Labour conditions

11. **What are in your country the advantages and disadvantages of the PhD candidates' status (student/employee/mixed status/external)?**

SiN: Students get much lower paid and have few social rights, but they get student prices in several respects. Employee has better wage, get social rights, worker rights, pension rights, but no student prices and have to pay full student loan. Norway has a mixed status where PhD candidates do not have all social rights of an employee.

12. **What status does your association prefer for PhD candidates and why?**

SiN: We prefer to have employee status. We demand to be treated and paid according to our skills and education. This also focuses on recruitment and higher esteem for academic employees.

Supervision and training

13. **Referring to the [Eurodoc supervision and training Charter](#): is there any concern or action in your country at present to implement standards that would accommodate the standards outlined here? If this is not the case do you see a need to implement a charter of your own or another suitable document?**

SiN: The PhD candidate and the supervisor have to sign an agreement about minimum expectation to the supervision. Largely internal initiatives. There are few exact specifications about feedback meetings unless regularly.

14. **How are doctoral examinations conducted in your country (number of examiners and other people involved, length and format of examination, any specific guidelines on criteria you are given on how PhDs are passed/failed...)? Do examinations vary in style or length in different subject areas or institutions? Are your theses an official publication?**

SiN: One oral presentation is evaluated and the dissertation in 1 to 3 hours with 3 examiners. At least one shall be external is the standard that is more or less national after the Bologna process. The dissertation and the thesis are official.

15. **What are the different routes you have to a doctoral qualification (for example this may be full time research, part of a teaching fellowship or be a longer doctorate with taught elements)? Also give details of any doctorates ("professional doctorates" or "taught doctorates") other than the research doctorate (PhD), such as EngD -doctor of engineering- or PsychD -doctor of psychology- : specify their length, entry requirements and any difference in level they may have.**

SiN: 3 years full time are normal but also 4 years with 1 year teaching is normal. Some are employed by private foundations and a few do the PhD on their own. Earlier there were specific doctorates within the different scientific specialities, the last years all are harmonised to be PhD candidates.

16. Are you aware of any means by which standards on research degrees in your country are monitored? For example, is there an outside agency that will audit institutions on their performance, or are there forums to evaluate performance? Please give any details you have on the above that will measure quality assurance in your institution.

SiN: The government has invented an agency, NOKUT, which monitor and evaluate the higher education system. The dissertation and thesis is normally the quality assurance at our institutions.

International mobility

17. Which are the main opportunities (institutional agreements and exchange programmes) for the mobility of researchers offered in your country? Which of them are the most popular?

SiN: Exchanges within the Nordic countries are very popular, due to easy access, similar languages and bilateral agreements on work and travel.

Exchange programmes to the US are popular due to tax and bilateral agreement with the US, leading to a tax-free income for researcher during their time in the US.

Exchanges within the EU are also popular, due to Norway's participation in the EEA Agreement and the large availability of travel grants.

Strong bilateral agreements exist with France.

18. What is the awareness of young researchers about the possibilities of the various exchange programmes? How could this be improved?

SiN: The awareness of all the different possibilities seems rather low; however mobility is highly stimulated and flourishing, indicating the success of the different programmes. No overview of all available programmes and funds is available at this time, the information is provided by the different faculties and departments. A central national website by the Norwegian Science council (NFR already partially available) and university/high school websites providing updated information should be made more clearly and have a special mobility section.

19. Which grants and scholarships are offered to enhance mobility of national researchers to go abroad? (list in order of their popularity)

NFR travel grants for all NFR related PhD projects.

Research/exchange within the Nordic countries (Norplus, Norforsk)

Meltzer fund, Norwegian fund for stimulation of scientific activity

University/high school funds specifically for travel and education of researchers

EU-exchange programmes under Socrates

Grants to Germany (DAAD, RWE, Ruhrgas)

Grants to France (FNS, Aurora)

Grants to Japan (JSPS & Monbukagakusho) & China (NSFC)

Grants to North America (L. Eirikson, Fulbright, Nato)

State financed grants to 25 countries

KULSPES, grants to India, Egypt & China

ESF-grants, European grants also sponsoring exchange

Marie Curie grants, European funding for mobility

European large scale facility grants

A large selection of study related private and public grants and funds.

20. Which grants and scholarships are offered to enhance mobility of foreign researchers to come to your country? (list in order of their popularity) Can foreign students and/or students from EU member states get a grant for PhD programmes in your country?

Grants and scholarships:

EU-exchange programmes under Socrates

Marie Curie grants, European funding for mobility of young researchers

Scholarships for US students (Fulbright)

JSPS grant for Japanese researchers

National study grants for students from developing and eastern and central European countries (Quota programme)

Russian-Norwegian cooperation (Norwest, many study specific programmes)

Study grants for short term visits at specific institutes (UiB, UiO)

“Krupp stiftung” – Germany. Some PhD candidates from Germany participate in research programs initiated by the University (“Forskingskoler”)

All foreign nationals can attain a PhD in Norway. Since a work permit is needed for a PhD the process to obtain permission to start is considerably harder and uncertain for non-EU, non-US/Canadian citizens. Some grants are country specific and some grants are for Norwegians only. Some grants have to be written in Norwegian only, increasing the barrier for foreign nationals. A recent demand of the NFR for proposals to be written in Norwegian is a worrying development. PhD theses can be delivered in Norwegian, English and French.

Women normally get priority for most grants, to increase gender equality in academia. For a lot of grants foreign nationals are prioritised to make academia more multi-cultural.

21. Do you have any examples of institutionalized “joint degree programmes” for European or international PhDs? (if any, indicate number of programmes, their locations and concerned academic disciplines as well as number of participants and their origin/destination country) What are the requirements to get this label (whatever it is called)?

SiN: A joint degree programme exists for nursing between the US and Norway, supported by a Fulbright scholarship. Business and management schools seem to allow joint programmes, but joint degree programmes are not common at all in Norway.

PhD degrees from Australia, Russia, US and EU countries are recognized in Norway and joint degrees can be obtained, but seem to be rare. Only within the Nordic countries it is common to take joint degrees under for example Norforsk programmes. Courses within the EU and Nordic countries are accepted within the Norwegian PhD programme.

Professional Future

22. Are you aware that the European Commission is about to release a European Researchers’ Charter and a Code of Conduct for the recruitment of researchers?

Does your association have any opinion on these documents?

SiN: No, we are not aware of the charter and the content in it. We welcome better guidelines.

23. Which way can these European recommendations be better promoted and implemented at the national and institutional level?

SiN: To implement it in Norway, the best is through national directives.

24. Does your association have any opinion on intriguing issues like the duration of contracts, the assessment of the scientific production, the different career paths and their comparability in academia and industry (or other)?

SiN: We are most interested in 4 years contracts. Easier mobility between academia and industry and back again.

Gender equality

25. Are there any initiatives in your country that you estimate to have been at least partially successful in reducing gender imbalances existing at the PhD level or at later academic stages? If yes, please give details. If not, please identify the probable reasons for this and indicate what the most important steps would be towards a programme that really has a practical impact.

SiN: The gender imbalance has been gradually reduced at PhD level. 40-50% is women. Women use longer time to finish, but they are not acknowledged for having babies during their PhD period. At academic levels gender balance is not successful yet and more work has to be done. Thirty-five percent of post doctorals are women and a few Professors. See [SiN report from EURODOC 2004](#). There is a goal in Norway to achieve 40% women representation in boards.

26. Are there notable differences in the gender distribution between comparable positions in academia and other sectors? What are the reasons for this? What is the tendency?

SiN: Women are underrepresented generally both in public and private services. But they are much more implemented in public services, included academia (28%) versus private sector (19%).

PART TWO: FIGURES

1. How many institutions in your country offer PhD degrees? Specify the different types of institutions with PhD awarding powers (research only institutions / universities / colleges / other), and their ratio.

SiN: 14 institutions offer PhD degrees. 5 universities (93%) and 9 colleges (7%).

2. What is an approximate total number of PhD candidates in your country? What has been the trend in the past five years?

SiN: About 4500 PhD candidates in 2003. Has been a tendency to increase the last five years.

3. What is the average age of students entering doctoral programmes in your country? What is/are the entry qualifications for getting into a PhD programme (Bachelor's/Honours/Master's degree)?

SiN: About 30 to 32 years old on average. They need a master degree to enter the PhD programme.

4. How many candidates defended their PhD last year? What has been the trend in the past five years? What is the average age of the PhD candidates at the time of completion of their doctorate?

SiN: 782 candidates defended their last year. The trend has been an increasing number that have defended their PhD the last five years. The average age is about 35 to 37 years. Differences among the science disciplines.

5. What is the nominal length of PhD programmes? What is the average time from start to finish? What is the average active time spent to complete the PhD programme? Are there official part-time modes for PhD programmes?

SiN: Three or four years with 25% work load. The average is 4,1 to deliver the thesis and 4,5 years to dissertation (2001). There are big differences between different research disciplines. About 4,2 years active time included work load. There are part time modes where you can study on 50% basis and use 6 years.

6. What is the percentage of PhD candidates who complete their PhD? Among those, what is the proportion of those who complete it within the allotted time period?

SiN: Less than 75 % of candidates in a doctoral program complete their thesis, and only between 8% and 40% complete their thesis within 4 ½ years. The stipulated timeframe for doctoral students in Norway is three years + one year which encompass duty work like teaching, thus for most candidates, four years is the stipulated time frame. We here report 4 ½ years as 'completion on time'. Statistics on rate of completion is not gathered on a regular basis. The most recently published data is from 2003, and concerns a throughput analysis of doctoral students in the period 1993-1997. An evaluation report describes data for the 'old' and the 'new' doctoral programs in Norway, and completion time and completion degree is given for various studies. There are large variations between different disciplines (p. 91-2): The report estimated that no more than 3 out of 4 candidates defend their thesis. This is an estimate, and cannot be assessed exactly.

For different specializations, between 8% and 40% of candidates in the doctoral programme had defended their thesis within 4.5 years. Humanistic and social sciences have the lowest completion rate within 4.5 years.

Between 37% and 84% of candidates had defended their thesis within 8.5 years. Engineering has the highest completion rate. Candidates within humanistic subjects generally have the lowest completion rate.

Source: [Kyvik, Svein. 2002. Evaluation of the Norwegian doctoral programme. Norwegian Research Council, p. 91-92.](#)

7. What is the percentage of PhD candidates who withdraw? Are there interim qualifications for those who do not complete their doctorates (Mphil degree or other)?

SiN: We do not have data to distinguish between candidates who withdrew from the program from other candidates who did not complete a dissertation. In Norway there is not intermediate degrees awarded to candidates who partially completed a doctoral program.

8. Are PhD candidates registered as such in any place (e.g. at a university or a ministry)?

SiN: They are registered on the University 3 to 12 months after they are employed, when they apply for a PhD program. All doctoral candidates are to be registered in a [national database 'DBH' \(DataBase for Higher education\)](#) administered by NSD - Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste AS (Norwegian social scientific dataservices ltd.).

9. Are PhD candidates considered students? Do they have to pay fees? How much is it? Does this apply equally to foreigners (EU/ non-EU)?

SiN: PhD candidates do not pay school fees. Candidates who receive a grant are considered temporary employees, and have the same employee rights as others. This is the normal written relation between a PhD candidate and the university/institute where he or she is enrolled. In addition there may be people who are enrolled in the doctoral program without having an employment relation to the university, e.g. candidates employed in a company. There are also

certain groups, especially from the third world, who are PhD candidates on special economic terms, i.e. a lower salary or are considered more like students.

10. What is the proportion of PhD candidates who get funding for their research activity? Specify the different types of fundings and their ratio.

SiN: We do not have data on candidates who receive funding versus those who do not receive funding (most do). For the candidates who receive funding, the sources of funding are the following:

39% of candidates are externally funded (by private companies etc.)

34% of candidates are funded by the education institution's own operating budgets

27 % of candidates are funded by the Norwegian Research Council

Aggregate share of funding is based on data on 5315 PhD candidates registered for autumn 2004 at the different Norwegian education institutions with doctoral programmes. (Source:

<http://dbh.nsd.uib.no/dbhvev>).

11. What is the average stipend/salary or bursary of the PhD candidates with funding (please give references for comparison : national minimum salary, average salary, salary of people with the same skills)?

SiN: Salaries about 3000 euro pr month minus tax. This is about 400 euro less than an industry worker.

12. What is the proportion of PhD candidates having workers rights and duties? Specify the rights and duties provided to these PhD candidates (social, unemployment benefit, taxes etc.).

SiN: All PhD candidates are employees on temporal contract with almost the same worker right and duties.

13. What is the proportion of PhD candidates that practice teaching during their PhD programme? Are they paid separately for their teaching duties?

SiN: 60 to 80% have working duties. No separate payment for teaching duties within the institution.

14. What is the amount of time spent on this activity?

SiN: The amount of time spent on other duties is more or less than 25%. If the PhD candidate is delayed it can reach 50%.

15. What proportion of PhD candidates are involved in a collaboration between academia and industry during their PhD?

SiN: 1/3 is employed by non-academic institutions.

16. What are the numbers of incoming and outgoing PhD candidates in your country every year? What are the numbers of incoming and outgoing junior researchers (postdoctoral level)?

SiN: Of the PhD-candidates in Norway 50% have 1 month, 14% have more than 6 months abroad during their PhD program.

Foreigners make 19-21% of the PhD theses delivered in Norway in 2004 ([NIFU/STEP publication: PhD degrees in number, 2005 \(Norwegian\)](#)).

A survey over the Post doc program has been monitored through a questionnaire in 2003. Of the 256 responders about 50% had had a period abroad. Every fourth Post Doc position in Norway is a foreigner, 2/3 from EU countries. ([NIFU skriptserie 37/2003. The Post Doc program in Norway, \(Norwegian\)](#))

17. What is the proportion of PhD candidates who remain working in academia after they defended their PhD?

SiN: 57%

18. What proportion of young researchers go to R&D departments in companies? How many of them are involved in programs provided by the

government to support the employment of young researchers in the private sector (if any)?

SiN: There are no good figures of young researchers outside academia, but the 43% remaining are divided between government and industry and abroad.

19. What is the average salary of young doctors in academic and private sector?

SiN: 42 000 euro. 45 000+ euro per year.

20. How many members (local organisation or individual) does your national organisation have? Specify if they are local organisations (how many of them) or individuals (how many of them). At how many of the PhD awarding institutions do you have members?

SiN: 9 local organisations out of 14 PhD awarding institutions. Nearly all of the PhD candidates are members of SiN.

References:

- Norwegian Research Council. Evaluation of Norwegian Researcher education, 2002. Ref Type: Report (Norwegian). <http://www.forskningsradet.no/bibliotek/publikasjonsdatabase/filer/pub-10066.pdf>
- NIFU, STEP group, Statistisk Sentralbyrå. The Norwegian Science and Innovation System - statistics and indicators, 2003. Norwegian Research Council. Ref Type: Report (Norwegian). http://forskningsradet.ravn.no/bibliotek/statistikk/indikator_2003/
- Similar reports to the [EURODOC Conferences in 2004](#).