

Stipendiatorganisasjonene i Norge

Quarterly meeting

Date: 18.02.2021

Time: 17:00

Place: Zoom

Agenda

1. Communication with local organisations
2. Introduction event for PhDs in Norway
3. Assistance with accounting
4. Memberships for inter-university organisations
5. Formal position of SiN on higher education and research policies

Attendees

- Sin board: Yannik, Ingvild, Camilla (OsloMet), Margret (UiODoc), Idd (DION), Bikal, Grace, Miro
- Local leaders: Camilla (OsloMet), Margret (UiODoc), Idd (DION), Sinziana Rasca (UiADoc), Immanuel Reim (UiBDoc), Sanja Mrksic Kovacevic (UiSDoc), Steffi Schenzle (TODOS), Runa Wolden (IBA-PhD), Damiano Maggi (NHH)

Minutes

Meeting start: 17:05

1. Communication with local organisations

Requests for input: Yannik expresses the intention to send out information on hearings, nominations of UHR representatives and the like to local organisations. Sinziana says it really depends on whether we want input from the board or from their members. People who are not on the board frequently get tired by too many emails and respond more easily on social media. If it is intended more for public dissemination, it can easily be shared there.

Website: Sinziana adds that it can be good to have all the information in a blog post on the website instead of keeping it in an email that can get lost in the inbox. Margret emphasises that this cannot be done in all cases, especially if the information is targeted for a specific audience and is not meant for the public.

Email address: All local organisations are encouraged to have a general email address so we won't have to rely on individual contact points to forward relevant information. Idd, Steffi and Immanuel provide updated email addresses for DION, TODOS and UiBDoc. UiADoc are still working on getting their own email address. IBA-PhD is an inter-university organisation that will be formally constituted on 25 February, and is also still looking into options for this.

2. Introduction event for PhDs in Norway

At the last quarterly meeting a suggestion was made to organise a national event for PhD students who are new to Norway, but this proposal was not discussed in detail.

Demand: Sinziana asks if local organisations organise a similar event at their own institutions. DION, TODOS and UiODOc confess they don't. But several universities do organise an event for new international PhD students. UiADoc organises events for incoming PhD students and they have been a huge success, even after moving these events online because of the pandemic. Sinziana says it would be advantageous to organise a PhD welcome event at the national level to provide networking opportunities, but also to compile and disseminate information that is common across Norwegian universities. There could be a high demand for such an introductory seminar especially for those PhD students who are employed at universities that don't offer much in this regard.

Content: The recommendations and information offered should not be discipline specific, as the event should be relevant to all. Margret proposes, if we decide to go this way, to put together a dedicated group with representatives from different local organisations to brainstorm about relevant content and to collect necessary resources. One idea for a welcome webinar would be to invite an intercultural communication expert. Idd attended a workshop once where Karin Ellis (from Ellis Culture) gave a good lecture about Norwegian working life, covering the legal and administrative sides of working in Norway but also insider tips about the Norwegian cultural code. She does this for a living and is available for bookings.

Timing: If this webinar is held once a year, it will not immediately benefit people who started at different dates throughout the year. To compensate for this, we could make a general welcome booklet available that people can access at any time. Camilla shares a website called "PhD on track" (www.phdontrack.net), and asks if everyone is familiar with it. It is an inter-university collaboration that makes information available on how to successfully complete a PhD in Norway, but does not especially provide tips on PhD life or living in Norway. This website could be one element of a welcome booklet, though. Another option would be to record the webinar, so people can watch it back later. Duration of the webinar is another question. The duration of a live event can be longer, but an online meeting should ideally not take longer than 2-2.5 hours. SiN does not have the capacity to organise this introduction webinar soon, since there is another event and several surveys in the pipeline for this Spring, but we could aim to implement this idea after the summer holidays. Yannik adds that September would be a good month to organise it, because many PhDs tend to start their contracts then.

3. Assistance with accounting

Sinziana asks if SiN could organise a workshop for the treasurers of each organisation to give them some training in financial accounting, since this is something that UiADoc is just beginning to do and would like some support with. Camilla and Margret say that in Oslo the finances are all handled by their respective universities' administration. UiADoc is in the unique position that they have their own bank account and full control over the money they receive from UiA. In the past, they have had to submit proposals for funding on a project or event basis, and UiA has only recently decided to grant them a yearly budget. Margret proposes to compare financial accounting systems at a next meeting, to discuss the differences and what sort solutions actually work best for the local organisations. We can add this to the point of compensation for board duties, because the two topics are closely linked and SiN will issue a call for information about compensation before the next quarterly meeting anyways. If UiADoc

wants help with accounting in the meantime, Grace can put their treasurer in touch with our accountant for assistance.

4. Memberships for inter-university organisations

Voting rights: To circumvent the problem of double representation, it is proposed to distinguish between regular members that are affiliated with a university, and associate members that are associated with research schools or inter-university organisations. The latter would be able to participate in all SiN activities as usual, but without voting rights. Camilla asks what to do with PhD students and postdocs who are represented by an associate member organisation but not by a regular member organisation. In this case, giving them voting rights on an individual basis would be too complicated and difficult to keep track of, but these PhD students and postdocs should be encouraged to start their own regular member organisation. SiN could play an active role in promoting the establishment of more local organisations, if this problem is encountered. Runa likes the solution of granting associate memberships, because despite the fact that many people in her organisation are also part of regular member organisations, they would still like for their organisation to stay actively involved in SiN.

Membership fee: The question is raised whether associate members should pay a lower membership fee than regular member organisations. It is suggested to lower the price for associate members by half. The final proposal will depend on the preferences of the local organisations and should be formally submitted and subjected to a vote at the next AGM. An additional provision could be that organisations who do not have their own funding and basically operate on a volunteering principle, could be relieved from their obligation to pay a membership fee, upon approval of the SiN board.

5. Formal position of SiN on higher education and research policies

When SiN adopts a formal stance, care should be taken that this reflects the majority opinion of its members. In those cases, the board could ask for input and in important matters subject the formulated position to a vote by the regular member associations. Voting in that case does not have to wait until the next quarterly meeting, which could take up to three months, as it can be easily organised online. Local organisations should have the opportunity to discuss the position internally with their own board, so preferably at least a week should be allocated for providing a response. An example could be the precarious position of postdoctoral researchers, for which Yannik was asked to provide commentary on behalf of SiN by a newspaper yesterday. In cases like this, having a resolution would make it easier for SiN to formulate a response that everyone has agreed upon beforehand. These resolutions should not refer to anecdotal evidence, but rather be based on statistics and official reports, such as the postdoc survey that was conducted by NIFU. All local organisations are recommended to sign up for the NIFU monthly newsletter at <https://www.nifu.no/nyhetsbrev/>, to stay up to date on relevant information and resources.

The idea of establishing resolutions is widely embraced. A first resolution could concern a national recommendation for universities to provide funding and infrastructure for PhDs and postdocs at their institution to set up a local interest organisation. This resolution could contain specific recommendations for the budget, compensation and type of infrastructure that should be provided. The call for information about budget and finances can serve as input for a comparison and preliminary proposal that will be discussed at the next quarterly meeting. The deadline for submitting this information should be several weeks in advance of the meeting, so there is sufficient time to draft the resolution to be discussed. Yannik will send out the call and set the deadline. Other resolutions will be drafted and agreed upon as needed in the future.

Meeting end: 18:30



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Margret Veltman

Dato: 18.02.2021