



23.08.2021

Hørings svar på invitasjon til å gi innspill til «En helhetlig stillingsstruktur i akademien»

Stipendiatororganisasjonene i Norge (SiN) is the umbrella organization for interest organizations for doctoral candidates and/or early career researchers (such as Post docs) at Norwegian higher educational institutions. We currently have 9 local member organizations, representing about 90% of all PhD candidates in Norway today. We express the joint opinion of our member organization in this høringssvar.

We have previously given input on both “strategi for forskerrekruttering og karriereveier i forskning og høyere utdanning» as well as UHR’s “Veileder for vurdering av akademiske karrierer», and therefore the responses we gave there will also be echoed here, where it is applicable. Our main interest as SiN is to ensure that all temporary researchers, who are not PhDs, have the same right to career development. Right now, this is not the case.

While we acknowledge that the Higher Education sector in Norway (UH-sektoren) wants to attract and keep talented researchers here in Norway, we argue from the point of view of the needs of the researcher regardless of where he/she/they may want to build a career. We therefore focus on the needs of early career researchers in their field on a global level, wanting to ensure that the structure of positions in academia in Norway gives possibilities for freedom of research globally, and to be able to go build a career which can compete globally in the field one as a researcher is in.

It is important for us that improvements made to the structure of positions in Norway not only keep talent, but also does not hurt researchers who wants to advance globally in their field. However, we do also applaud any measures taken to improve work places and being a lodestar for academic work places in general. It is important, regardless of the reason being wanting to keep talent in the country, to always strive to improve working conditions and the work place for researcher. Being an example to be followed and pointed to by others in the global field that is research.

Based on this, we support a structure of academic positions which is flexible. We agree on the principles of attractivity, flexibility and predictability. We agree that one of the greatest challenges is the high number of temporary employees, as well as misuse of postdoc positions.

Regarding the proposed changes we support the PhD as the base for career development in academic positions. While we agree that post doc positions should be of the necessary length to make sure that career development beyond doing research is made possible, there are some concerns that come with making them 4 years in length. This could for instance be of hindrance to applying outside of Norway for further academic positions. Second, spending 4 years in one place just to uproot yourself and move to somewhere else in the world can be of challenge to people who are also part of families and have

established social networks from where they are coming from. Starting a-new every 3 to 4 years puts a strain on people than shorter stays where it is possible to return without having lost too much. While the length of a post doc can ensure better career development and qualification for a position, it also has impacts on people's lives and how they organize them. The longer the length of the position, the clearer the future afterwards must also be for someone taking on such a position. Research is global, but researchers are also locally embedded with their family and social life. These are two things which often collide, but cannot be seen as independent issues.

The Postdoc is a step on the ladder towards a “førstestilling”, and likewise the tenure track of 6 years to result in a permanent position. We agree and see the need of the tightening of postdoc position in lieu of creating more tenure track positions. However, we are cautious about developments that could lead to 10 years of temporary employment if a tenure track is the natural step after a 4 year Post doc. Therefore, to remain flexible, it should be possible for a postdoc to be turned into a tenure track (with the remaining time and goals added) if performance and job openings allow it.

While we do agree that tightening the use of postdocs is necessary for the position to not be misused to get “cheap labour”, this must not result in just a change in positions hired, which phds can still apply for. Meaning that in practice, PhDs go from applying for postdoc positions to research support positions such as “universitetsforskerstilling”. Thus, moving the problem to a new position while hiring the same people. The question remains on who will be hired to do the job of the “universitetsforskerstilling” which will be created to be used for “pure research labour” and what type of qualifications is needed, as well as what qualifications does it give for someone who is employed in such a position - what are their futures? We therefore agree with Forskerforbundets caveats on this type of position, as what changes introducing such a position to the system we have is very unclear at the moment. The downside will be a creation of temporary researchers with fewer rights than normal postdocs, and very little career development. We see it as something that can end in being only a pseudo-permanent position which a problem is relocated onto.

We also support multiple ways to reach top positions, as well as Forskerforbundet’s proposal for ways to diagonally move between different types of positions. Also, the flexibility to move between academia and public and private sector is desirable, as it also secures a way of spreading knowledge into more parts of society as well as opening new paths for collaborations. In addition, we want to add the insurance of being able to move between different countries and their structures.

We thank you for being able to give input to this report, as well as for the good work the committee has done.

Best regards,

Stipendiatorganisasjonene i Norge

Yannik Schneider

Leder