

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

By OLE KRISTIAN DYSKELAND

Dear SiN community, the SiN board 2023 is pleased to update you on our progress during the first quarter of the year. We are actively engaged in Norway's research and higher education sector to promote and advocate for the needs of PhD candidates and postdocs.

This year the board will focus on three main areas. The first is "skills and career", to promote the broader spectrum of skills that PhD education entails, which Norwegian non-academic employers often fail to recognize. Secondly, we would like to address "mental health and supervision" to follow up the report produced by the previous board, with the goal of improving the standing of PhD candidates in matters related to supervision – an essential resource for any PhD candidate. Lastly, we have a sub-committee working on strengthening SiN's financial stability to ensure the sustainability of the organization's future work on behalf of PhD candidates and postdocs across Norway.

Our newsletter provides an overview of the ongoing efforts and initiatives we are pursuing, and we are excited about the work which lies ahead of us in the rest of the year. We appreciate input, comments and questions from the local organisations, and we look forward to further collaboration opportunities throughout 2023.

SiN's board 2023

At the AGM 2022 SiN elected a new board, which took over from the old one in January 2023. We would like to do an informal introduction of our members, which will hopefully tell you something about us.

Ole Kristian Dyskeland:

I have moved around quite a bit, and have lived in five cities in three countries.

I have always been working to make a change, and it was youth politics which drew me into economics as my academic discipline. I've been called the "shittiest Norwegian" as I'm not particularly fond of sea food, skiing, or the Norwegian language.



Regina Paul: I have lived in 4 different countries and love to learn and understand other cultures and values.



I seek new knowledge and I am always willing to take on new challenges. I also love cooking, organizing various things, reading different genres...and eating all kinds of fish.

Friederike Schäfer: I enjoy living in international communities since I am interested in different cultures. Learning from others and engaging in debates is important to me. I try to put my efforts into projects which I believe will have a positive impact on society. Norway is a great country for me because I like to be in nature. My preferred mode of travelling is by bicycle because one gets to see and experience the surrounding in a unique way.



Zihao Wang: Meet an adventurous and culturally-aware individual who loves

to learn and understand other ways of life. By experiencing local student life in five countries, I pursue my passions by observing and cherishing the details and moments of living. In my free time, I found the best of myself in bodypump workout, oil painting and karaoke.



Nicolas Gibney: You might remember me from all the emails you got in 2022, I'm Nicolas, former president of SiN and now PhD student in my final year.



I've always been passionate about working to help others (and building my CV), which helped lead me to SiN, and other student organizations in the four countries where I've studied. In my 'free time' I like to get outdoors and go cycling, when the Bergen weather permits, but between my research, hobbies, and other activities, it sometimes seems that despite studying management, the only thing I can't manage is my time.

Yucong Ma: In the past two years, I temporarily settled in the city of oil and energy, and this is a place where I can fulfil my curiosity in the field of marine technology. Now it is my last year, and I am approaching the end of a fantastic journey as a PhD candidate. During my free time, I enjoy myself by playing tennis, basketball, football, and cycling – all of these I have yet to gain the skill.



Jareef bin Martuza: I spend most of my day wondering why we do the weird things we do. I probably dream the same. Or is it that I'm living my dream every day? Hard to tell. But what is easy to tell, is that whoever's reading this has worked so hard and will do great things, no matter how difficult things are right now. When I'm not working or dabbling with blogs, I read, ruminate, and run- never more than two at a time.



Anum Masood: Hei, I am Anum originally from Islamabad, Pakistan. Give me cup of chai or a plate of biryani and you will find me the happiest. Growing up, I never lived in a city for more than 2 years because of my dad's job. I speak Urdu, Saraiki, Punjabi, English, a bit of Chinese, and struggling a lot with Norwegian. Other than research, my weeks are typically filled with cooking dinner with friends, hiking or going out, and a weekly videocall with the fam.



Dimitris Polychronopoulos: When I was a child, I dreamt of travelling the world and studying languages so I could converse with the locals, or at least get by with a few words of the local language. Over the years, opportunities arose to make that dream a reality, having lived in seven countries, sojourned in eight, and visited more than 100, across all seven continents. I enjoy biking, cooking, and swimming.



Conferences attended by SiN

Kontaktkonferansen 2023. As representative of SiN, Friederike Schäfer



participated on January 10th at the *Kontaktkonferansen for forskning og høyere utdanning 2023* hosted by Kunnskapsdepartementet in Oslo. The overall theme of this year's gathering was "Rebuilding the country with knowledge - new times, new solutions". The conference started with a presentation of the Minister of Education and Research Ola Borten Moes on the challenges from last year - economic, security, and labor market - and how these impact the research and higher education sector. He also presented the 15 areas which will need "ekstrem oppussing" (extreme renovation) within the higher education and research sector in 2023. Among those areas, he named changes in the financing of the sector, access to higher education, tuition fees for students from non EU/EØS countries, the new universitets og høyskole loven (UH) law, and academic freedom of expression. Further topics were how new technology, new solutions, and new knowledge can be used to develop every part of Norway further. The last session was devoted to research and higher education's role in developing the entire country. Here, the speakers focused on accessibility of higher education through decentralized and digital campuses of universities and university colleges. The conference was closed with a dinner where SiN was able to discuss topics on higher education and research with the leaders of the National Union of Students in Norway (NSO), Forskerforbundet, Universitets- og høyskolerådet (UHR), and the Minister of Education Ola Borten Moes himself. The conference was a good opportunity for SiN to get in touch with the representatives of various orga-

nizations in Norway's higher education sector and to find cooperation partners to achieve the annual goals of the SiN board 2023.

Samarbeidskonferansen 2023. On February 9th attended Friederike Schäfer as a representative of SiN the *Samarbeidskonferansen 2023* in Oslo. This conference is hosted every year by the University and University Colleges Council (UHR) and Forskningsinstituttene fellesarena (FFA), which is the interest organization of research institutions in Norway.

The aim of the Samarbeidskonferansen to bring together actors from the higher education sector with actors from outside academia to address the community challenges identified in the long-term plan for research and higher education. The conference provides an opportunity to identify new or other collaboration arenas between the sectors and required developments for a research system of the future.

This year's conference focus was on the two topics – sustainable feed and how



to include more children and young people in education, work and social life. Around 100 people attended the conference.

Representatives of the Young Academy of Norway were also present at the conference. SiN will contact them to discuss a collaboration to reintroduce the Forsk Grand Prix during the Forskningsdagene in September.

Supervision Training

In February, SiN started to collaborate with UHR's working group on a report mapping the current practices of PhD supervisory training at universities and university colleges in Norway. The goal of this report is to show the existing forms of PhD supervisory training at Norwegian higher education institutions, highlight best practices, and give recommendations to the institutions on how to implement supervisory training in the future. The report is to be submitted by 1 December 2023.

SiN will prepare one chapter of the report giving the insights into the relationship between PhD candidates and supervisors. This chapter will be based on the information provided by our member organizations during the 1st Quarterly Meeting of 2023 and your written comments. In the 2nd quarterly meeting, we plan to present the chapter and get further feedback on it. Therefore, we kindly ask you to distribute the survey on how supervision is experienced by PhD scholars, which Ole Kristian sent you on the 14th of March 2023. The PhD candidates perspectives matters: share your story about your doctoral journey! Make our voices be heard!

This collaboration is a unique opportunity for SiN to directly participate and provide input on the important topic of supervision. Therefore, it is very important that we take this opportunity and bring forward our interests. If anything regarding supervisory training comes up within your organization, please don't hesitate to contact us. We are happy to receive as much input as possible.

Quarterly Meetings

SiN held its first Quarterly Meeting on 20 February 2023. Leaders (and deputies) from 7 local organisations attended the meeting. The main topics were supervision and transferable skills. Regarding supervision, the participants were asked questions, which had to provide an insight into the challenges which PhDs face with respect to supervision, influence of supervision on time needed to finish a

PhD within the time of the PhD contract and influence of supervision on a PhD candidate's mental health. Regarding transferable skills, the participants were asked about the course offer at their institution and local organisation's effort (e.g. events). We thank you for your input!

SiN will hold its second Quarterly Meeting for leaders of local organizations on Monday, the 22nd of May. We kindly ask you to inform us about the new composition of your board if your organisation holds an election in March/April/May. This way we can invite the relevant participants and have as many representatives of local organisations as possible at the meeting.

Annual Report

On March 14th, we submitted our annual report for 2022, [it is available here](#). At the 2022 Annual General Assembly we were pleased to welcome a new member organization, the "Stipendiary and Post-Doctoral Organization" at the University of South-Eastern Norway, USN-SPO. According to official statistics, we now count more than 10 500 PhD students and 1 500 postdocs in our member organisations.

The 2022 board was active and made SiN more visible than in previous years. SiN commented on six government policy proposals, three for Universities Norway (UHR) and one for the Research Council. Additionally, SiN was active at the European level, contributing seven times to various Eurodoc matters. Lastly, SiN has been represented in the media thirteen times.

Financially, SiN is in a difficult position, and the board has established a subcommittee to look for ways to improve the organisation's financial situation.

Consultations

So far in 2023, SiN has submitted one consultation and started preparing two others.

The first consultation was on public commission's proposal for a new admission system for undergraduate students (bachelors degree).

The commission proposed to maintain a nationally centralised admissions system. They want to remove incentives to hold off applications by waiting for additional points based on specific courses, age, gender, etc. To allow people second chances to get into their preferred choice, they suggest a standardised admissions test. The commission emphasised the importance of striking a balance between society's need for diversity and the individual's need for fairness. This topic may seem distant for many PhDs, but bringing people in degree programmes where they can excel may also get them on a research track.

We prepared a draft on the hearing regarding Norwegian language as a professional language in academia. Furthermore, we provide you a draft of the consultation for accreditation of universities. We hope to receive as much feedback as possible from our local organisations.

KiF-committee

In 2022 a representative from SiN was appointed to the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (KIF) for the 2022-25 period. The committee is appointed by the Ministry of Education and Research and is mandated to advice institutions on policy towards better integration of equality and diversity aspects in higher education and research management. In 2023, Nicolas Gibney is the SiN Representative, with Ole Kristian Dyskeland is his deputy.

In January, Ole Kristian attended the first meeting of the committee this year and visited the Norwegian Academy of Music. The next meeting will take place in April.