

PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

By OLE KRISTIAN DYSKELAND

Dear reader,

When we published our first newsletter about three months ago, we were still finding our footing in our board positions. But now, we're feeling a lot more comfortable and have been keeping busy with various activities.

SiN is pleased to observe that the supervision of PhD candidates has received significant attention this year. We'll be sharing more details about this in a separate post in this newsletter, so keep reading!

Recently, Nicolas and I had the opportunity to meet with both the National Research Ethics Committees and the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills. We discussed important topics such as research ethics in supervision and a report on career guidance for PhD candidates. It was great to have these conversations and contribute to the ongoing discussions.

Looking ahead, I am thrilled to represent SiN and all PhDs in Norway at the 'Research Education Conference 2023' and the 'Research Ethics Forum' this autumn.

This summer we're planning to take some time off to recharge. However, come August, Zihao and I will be busy preparing for a tax audit. And towards the end of the month, we're really looking forward to having a physical board meeting at a cozy cabin in Kongsvoll. It'll be a perfect setting to plan our agenda for the autumn season.

Oh, there is something else! We are very excited about our upcoming event focused on the development of transferable skills. If you are curious, and want to know more, make sure to keep reading!

Have a nice summer and see you in autumn!

Better supervision in 2023

We are happy to see that not only is SiN working on supervision-related issues in 2023, but the national research press and community have also embraced this important topic.

Friederike is collaborating with the Universities Norway (UHR) on a report about the current state of supervision in Norway. Leading this group is Trine Fosland, a professor, specializing in PhD supervision. We have already received a briefing from Trine about the work, and we have been informed that we will be asked to review a draft in the upcoming autumn semester. We will provide you with more updates as we progress.

Additionally, Ole Kristian and Nicolas had the opportunity to meet with the National Research Ethics Committees, which focuses on the ethical aspects related to supervision. At the national Research Ethics Forum in September, the topic will be "the role of supervisors in research ethics", where Ole Kristian will have a keynote about "the supervisor relationship from the PhD candidates' perspective".

The topic at hand has attracted significant attention in the press, with Khrono taking a particular interest. On June 26th, Ole Kristian, along with numerous other individuals and our collaborating organizations, published an op-ed shedding light on the urgent need for improved systems to support and care for PhD candidates and young researchers who report conflicts in supervision or with other entities within their academic institutions. The following day, Khrono featured an article chronicling the journey of Sofie Høgestøl, a prominent legal scholar in Norway, whose struggles with inadequate

supervision nearly caused her to drop out of her PhD program. SiN appreciates that Ragnind Hennum, the dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Oslo, as quoted (with our translation), "I understand that the [PhD candidates] experience changing supervisor as dramatic. But for the institution it is not. [that] is something they have routines for", which we would hope is both true and more universally understood – both among the PhD candidates themselves and the more senior faculty members.

Khrono has also highlighted that 1 in 3 supervisors do not know how to supervise when a candidate writes an article based (cumulative) PhD thesis. The insecurity partly arises from the supervisors themselves who had written a monograph. Therefore, SiN believes that implementing improved training for both new and experienced supervisors would greatly contribute to alleviating the sense of insecurity and enhancing the quality of supervision.

This this week, professors Trine Fosland and Anne Hagen Gausdal (from the UHR working group on supervision) co-authored an op-ed highlighted the significance of individual PhD candidates' supervision not only for their own development but also for the overall success of the academic system.

Furthermore, we are pleased to see that the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) is considering the introduction of mandatory supervision training for potential supervisors of PhD candidates. While such training is already offered by most institutions on a voluntary basis, making it mandatory would ensure greater consistency and competence in the supervision process.

Lastly, we also would like to highlight Khrono's portrait of Alf André Orvik, who was PhD candidate during the pandemic COVID-19. Despite his positive experiences, the headline emphasizes that "Doing a PhD is [not a picnic]".

Key highlights in the spring term

Meeting committee on research ethics to understand how the national research committees think about the supervisor-PhD candidate relationship when developing guidelines for research ethics. We're looking forward to further discussions at their Research Ethics Forum in September.

One of SiN's working groups is focused on strengthening the development of transferable skills among PhD candidates at Norwegian institutions. In order to gather a comprehensive understanding of the situation in Norwegian institutions and take action based on the results, we released a survey in spring 2023. Thanks to your collaboration and the efforts of local organizations in spreading the information, we successfully reached out to 178 individuals from the following institutions: UiB, NTNU, OsloMet, NiH, UsN, UiO, UiT, UiA, NHH, and UiS. We plan to evaluate the survey throughout the summer and will subsequently provide you with the results.

Highlights from the Quarterly Meeting

SiN greatly appreciates the possibility to have an ongoing exchange and collaboration with the member organisations. These interactions allow us to ensure that we accurately represent the interests of PhD candidates across Norway. In May we had our second quarterly meeting. [The detailed minutes are available on our website.](#)

We began the meeting by summarising the three consultations SiN has submitted this year and briefly discussed upcoming consultations. We have made a statement on a government white paper for a new undergraduate (bachelors degree) admissions system. Balancing individual student's interests with society's needs is

important, however, we emphasized the significance of considering research trajectories and not solely prioritizing the demands of top employers. Additionally, we issued a statement about Norwegian as a professional language in academia. While we acknowledge the importance of promoting and preserving the Norwegian language, we stressed the need to create an inclusive environment that welcomes and involves international staff, rather than making them feel excluded or dissuaded. Lastly, we made a short statement on a proposal to adjust the requirements for university accreditation.

We provided a summary of the work conducted by this year's working groups, which focuses on organizational finances, careers, and supervision. SiN's financial situation remains challenging, but we hope to find some solutions in the autumn. We are also preparing to publish a survey on supervision for doctoral candidates across Norway, and the careers group is following up on a survey regarding transferable skills that was conducted earlier this spring. Here, we would like to thank all the member organizations for sharing the survey on transferable skills within their institutions. We greatly appreciate your support.

The topic of "PhD supervision" was discussed, and we shared the progress made by SiN on this issue. Most of the details can be found in the dedicated supervision section, and the working group got valuable input for their ongoing work.

SiN received a question from a concerned PhD candidate regarding the coverage of residence permit costs for international PhD candidates from non-EU/EEA countries. The policies regarding this matter vary and are inconsistent among universities, resulting in these candidates often receiving effectively lower wage. SiN acknowledges the importance of addressing this issue.

There was a brief discussion about funds for language refinement of the thesis. Most institutions provide some of the funds for that matter. It was agreed that was agreement that seeking SiN's action or attention on this matter is not necessary.

Additionally, we discussed the availability and accessibility of Norwegian language courses. It was brought to our

attention that when institutions face budget cuts, they often limit these courses to permanent staff members due to their legal obligation to ensure sufficient Norwegian proficiency (B2/C1 level).

Highlights from the media

In late May, [Ole Kristian and Regina](#) wrote an op-ed urging universities and university colleges to adopt more sensible policies to actively engage and include young, international faculty members. While Norway invests significantly in young researchers, certain administrative and language policies tend to discourage many from staying in the country. This is lost, valuable talent which can be integrated without necessitating an abandonment of the Norwegian language. By allowing people to participate and communicate in English within research administration, an environment is created that promotes further language development for individuals.

In late June, [Ole Kristian and a "consortium" of authors](#) who called for a better system to protect and support vulnerable PhD candidates who bravely speak out against unfair behavior and practices. This call to action has garnered media attention, as discussed in the section "Better supervision in 2023" of this newsletter.

Additionally, [Ole Kristian was quoted in an article about SiN's position on supervision and PhD ombudspersons](#). Being a supervisor is not an inherent entitlement, and whereas some people possess natural aptitude for the role, we believe that proper training and guidance could address common issues that arise in supervision, benefiting both new and experienced supervisors.

Furthermore, Friederike, Ole Kristian and Nils Hallvard Korsvoll, the Chair of the Academy of Young Researchers in Norway, have an op-ed to be published in Forskerforum. This piece will be about the role of young, international PhD's in the government's reform of the research and higher education sector in Norway.

Highlights from UHR

In the past three months, SiN's UHR representative Friederike participated in the two scheduled UHR-Forskning meetings. On April 12th, all strategic sections of the UHR (Forskning, Innovasjon, Ut-danning) came together for a joint session (Fellesmøte). Topics in the joint session were the predicted skills need in Norway in the upcoming years which was highlighted through a working group summarizing a strategy for education, recruitment and retaining of qualified personnel in health and care services. The last agenda point in the joint session was an update on NOR-CAM and CoARA. In the following UHR-Forskning's meeting, discussions were focused on open publishing after 2024, European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), and Norwegian as a research language.

The last UHR-Forskning meeting before the summer break took place on the 31st of May. The meeting was focused on the ministry's strategy for industrial research and development expenses of 2% GDP by 2030, sensitive research areas, new regulations for recruitment and promotion, Norwegian action plan for European Research areas, and review of the Research Council of Norway.

Currently, SiN is working on a consultation statement on the role and function of the Norwegian Research Council, which will be sent out to all members in August and it is planned to discuss it in the next quarterly meeting.

Highlights from Eurodoc AGM

As the national umbrella association of PhD organisations in Norway, SiN is an active member of EuroDoc, a European

group that shares similar goals and works on a broader scale across Europe. Recently, EuroDoc held its Annual General Assembly in Uppsala, Sweden, from June 6th to 7th. Our EuroDoc liaison Dimitris attended the assembly and has provided us with the report of the event. We will shortly publish this on our website.

The EuroDoc conference focused on various relevant topics related to sustainable academia, mental health issues, research assessment, and gender equality in European countries. Representatives from different universities and organizations shared their research and experiences during the conference. The report provides an overview of the key discussions and highlights from the conference.

On June 6th, there was a pre-conference focusing on five specific topics: i) Sustainable Academia in Sweden and Europe, ii) Mental Health and Research Assessment, iii) Research Assessment Reform, iv) Gender Equality and Academic Freedom, and v) PhD Candidates' Concerns and Career Development.

The conference/AGM focused on employment conditions for post-docs, academic sustainability, and open research practices. Panel discussions were conducted on various critical issues, including post-doc employment conditions, sustainable agenda for academia, with a particular emphasis on reducing greenhouse emissions, promoting sustainable practices within academic institutions; combating discrimination; and upholding academic freedom. The conference also delved into the ongoing debates surrounding publishing practices, including the choice between publishing in prestigious journals and adopting open science practices.

After the sessions, Karl Kilbo Edlund shared valuable information regarding Sweden's guidelines on the relationship between supervisors and PhD candidates. This knowledge exchange will facilitate the sharing of a template between SiN and Norwegian universities, enabling the implementation of similar guidelines within our national context. We are going to share this template with our member organizations.

The EuroDoc conference concluded with fruitful discussions on crucial topics such as ecocide, open research, discrimi-

nation, and academic freedom. The conference provided valuable insights and fostered collaboration among representatives from various European countries, promoting sustainable academia and addressing the challenges faced by PhD candidates and early career researchers.

Upcoming event

SiN is pleased to announce an upcoming event to strengthen the development of your digital presentation skills "Digital communication that works" with [Vibeke Holtskog](#).

Considering that there is still a lot of meetings, conferences, and workshops held online, it has become crucial for PhDs and PostDocs to deliver effective digital presentations. Such presentations require a slightly different approach compared to in-person presentations. Thus, our workshop aims to equip participants with valuable tools to professionally navigate the digital realm and effectively convey their research and messages.

If you are seeking answers to any of the following questions:

- How do you best prepare for digital meetings and presentations?
- How do you make people interested in your message?
- How do you create psychological safety and room for dialogue?
- What can create noise and steal attention from your message?
- How do you keep the audience interested and create engagement in the digital meetings?

then attending our workshop is a must!

The workshop will be conducted in a digital format, with a tentative schedule set for **September, specifically during week 37**. Further details will be provided soon.

We are grateful to [Forskerforbundet](#) for generously sponsoring this workshop.
