



Stipendiatororganisasjonene i Norge

The Association of Doctoral Organisations in Norway

Annual report
2023

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1. Executive Summary

The Association of Doctoral Organisations in Norway (SiN) is a nationwide umbrella organisation for doctoral interest organisations at Norwegian higher education institutions. SiN works to promote the interests of PhDs, postdocs and other early careers researchers in Norway, by functioning as a network for its member organisations and representing them on matters of mutual interest at the national level and international level.

SiN consists of a board that is elected from its member organisations and meets approximately once a month. Since the board members are spread across the country, the organisation does not have a visiting or a postal address. Communication with and within the organisation mainly takes place via e-mail, video conferencing and Slack chats, although meetings in person are arranged wherever possible, to strengthen collaboration. For the 2023 board period, the SiN board consisted of nine board members from four member organisations (2.1). The board's activities, however, are structured to promote the interests of all member organisations. In 2023, SiN had eleven full members, one affiliated member, and three aspirant members, who collectively represent more than 90% of all PhDs and postdocs (full-time equivalent) in Norway (3.1 and 3.2).

SiN is a non-profit, voluntary, and independent organisation, and is not affiliated with any trade union or political alignment. SiN's focus is in particular on quality researcher education with regards to supervision and training, stable funding, diverse career development opportunities and perspectives, and healthy working conditions. Safeguarding and improving these does not only benefit individual temporary scientific employees, but also Norway's competitiveness in a global academic community. Improving and developing doctoral education in Norway is a continuous process in which SiN collaborates with other relevant institutions in the sector such as the Ministry of Education and Research (KD), the Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (*hk-dir*), Universities Norway (*Universitets- og høyskolerådet*, UHR), the Research Council of Norway (*Norges forskningsråd*, NFR), the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research (*Komité for kjønnsbalanse og mangfold i forskning*, KIF), the Young Academy of Norway (*Akademiet for yngre forskere*, AYF), national trade unions, and Eurodoc (the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers). To achieve its aims, SiN works in a variety of ways, through formal representation in external bodies, consultation statements, working group surveys and reports, and participation in various discussion forums (4.1 – 4.5).

In 2023 the primary focus in the press was the issue of safeguarding PhD-candidates and other young researchers in temporary positions who speaks out against abuses. We saw, in 2023, two cases where the systems failed, one at University of Agder and one at NHH Norwegian School of Economics. Despise Norway's general egalitarian tendency is academia a hierarchical system, with clear power imbalances between tenured and non-tenured staff, and professors and non-professors. There also exists large discrepancies between the power of academic faculty at different levels versus administrators. We

encourage universities to strengthen its protections of vulnerable candidates who speak up to try and make academia work better for more people.

To address these issues, the 2023 board developed a framework for how to analyse issues, conflicts and problems for Norwegian PhD candidates. At the foundation, PhD-candidates are both (public sector) employees and students, and the PhD program is the transition from “student” to “researcher”. In Norway, all three roles are clearly defined in law and regulation as separate entities, and issues can develop to conflicts and problems as, e.g., resolutions between co-workers in an employee mindset is different from a teacher-student framework. Another example concerns how a workload between researchers might warrant a co-authorship, whereas in a student-supervisor setting it might more naturally be considered supervision and not subsequently warrant a co-authorship. SiN will work to expand the use and clarity of which specific set of roles, regulations and norms are active and informative in all interactions where disputes and issues arise.

We also addressed issues of being international in academia, the problem of tuition fees if Norway wishes to attract talented people, and the “extreme makeover” of the sector which was initiated by the government at the start of 2023.

We met with two public directorate, HK-dir about career guidance for PhD-candidates, and the national ethics committees about our views on research ethics in supervision. SiN president Ole Kristian also attended the “research ethics forum 2023” and have a talk about the framework for handling issues and presented thoughts of PhDs about their experiences of supervision and conflict management at the institutions.

Internally, the organisation spent considerable time and resources making changes to the way SiN operates. The 2022 annual general assembly, AGM22, sentiment was that of a tight financial situation, and the board tried balancing effective representation with operating within our means and being able to gather members for the AGM23. This led to new thinking about how SiN should operate in the future which will be further deliberated in 2024 by the new board. Unfortunately, even with the savings and strict priorities we were unable to commit to a physical AGM23 as the high prices for travel and accommodation would leave SiN with a financial burden beyond what we had available. This has led to some surplus being left for 2024, but which will be used to fund the organisation’s changes in line with our strategic thinking outlined in chapter 5 of this report.

In addition to advocating for the interests of our member organisations nationally and internationally, SiN functions as a network for its member organisations, and as a channel for conveying important information of interest to temporary researchers. To this end, SiN invites member organisations to quarterly meetings, distributes a quarterly newsletter, maintains a Slack channel for local leaders of doctoral organisations, and regularly provides updates on Facebook and Twitter (4.6).

2. Board

2.1 — Board Composition

The board for 2023 was elected on the 26th of November 2022 at the University of Agder, Kristiansand, and consisted of:

- **President:** Ole Kristian Dyskeland (NHH)
- **Vice President:** Regina Paul (NTNU)
- **Treasurer:** Zihao Wang (UiS)
- **Communications Officer:** Nicolas Gibney (NHH)
- **UHR Representative:** Friedrike Schäfer (NTNU)
- **Webmaster:** Yucong Ma (UiS)
- **Event Officer:** Anum Masood (NTNU)
- **Social Media Manager:** Jareef bin Martuza (NHH)
- **Eurodoc Liaison Officer:** Dimitris Polychronopoulos (USN)

On 11 November 2023, the board for 2024 was elected, which currently consists of:

- **President:** Ingvild Bergom Lunde (UiO)
- **Vice President:** Claire Degail (UiT)
- **Treasurer:** Abdelrahman Abdelaal (UiS)
- **Head of Communications:** Ali Hasan Saber Alkaraly (UiS)
- **Head of Government Relations:** Karl Henrik Storhaug Reinås (UiO)
- **Eurodoc Liaison Officer:** Dimitris Polychronopoulos (USN)

2.2 — Board term

The board for 2023 was elected for a period of 12 months, from the 1st of January 2023 until the 31st of December 2023. The invitation for the 2023 AGM was distributed on October 12th, 2023.

2.3 — Gender balance

Of 9 elected board members in November 2023, 3/9 were female and 6/9 were male. Female participation in the board was therefore 33%. In 2024, the AGM elected 5 new members for a total of 6 members on the board, of which 2/6 are female and 4/6 are male. The gender share is this equivalent to 2023.

SiN strives to maintain representation across the genders, national background and across institutions, but the availability of candidates at the AGM has often posed limit. For the

AGM 2023, the AGM committee initiated new procedure where people were nominated beforehand, and the nomination form was distributed not just to member organisations, but also to their members. We believe this will, in time, widen the pool of available candidates, to ensure proper representation between genders, nationalities, geography and institutions.

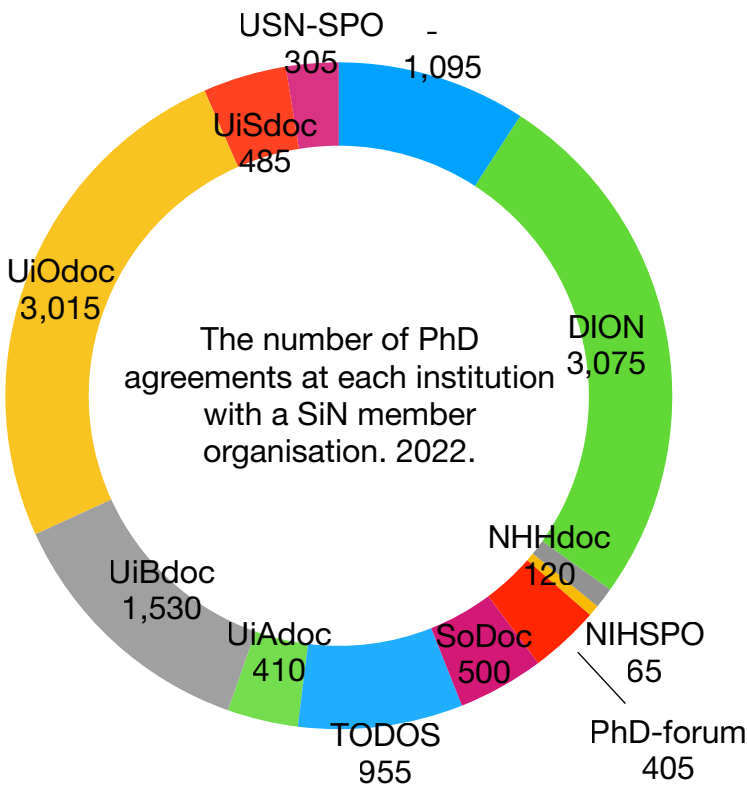
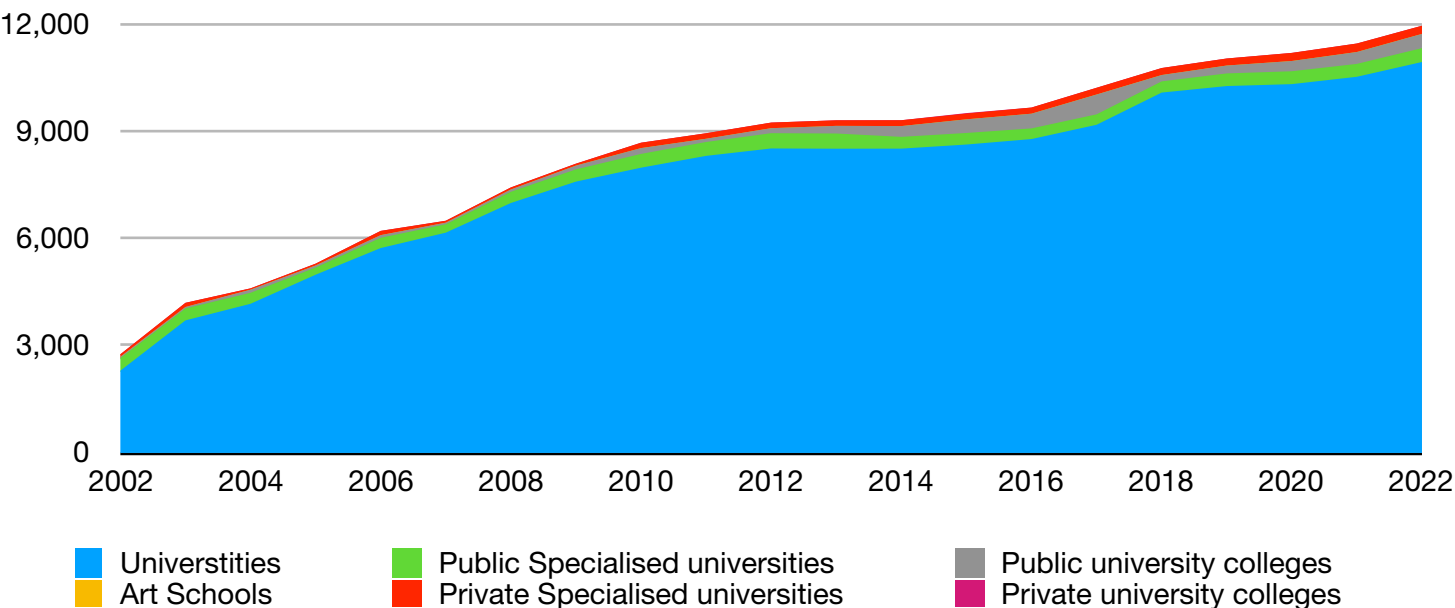
2.4 — Working Environment

All board and quarterly meetings in 2023 were held digitally. In addition to the AGM, SiN board members have met locally for work meetings and participation.

3. Member Organisations

3.1 — Regular members

Total number of PhD agreements in Norway 2022-2022



SiN is reliant on public statistics to determine the number of PhD students we represent, we use the [HK-dir database for statistics about higher education](#), and consider active PhD agreements, which can be thought of as “PhD students” and not just “PhD Research Scholars”.

SiN has 11 full members, representing over 90 % of all PhD candidates in Norway (2022 numbers).

3.2 — Affiliate memberships

In addition, there is a growing number of inter-institutional doctoral organisations or research schools in Norway, with members from different higher education institutions. To allow these organisations the benefits of national cooperation, SiN plans to allow these organisations to join the shared communication platforms of the network as ‘affiliate members. While not having the same formal rights and duties of regular members that are tied to a single institution, affiliate members share many of the same interests and concerns and are therefore valued partners for dialogue and knowledge exchange. The possibility for affiliate membership (at a reduced membership fee) was formally approved at the AGM on 27 November 2021. Prospective members include the IBA-PhD, the PhD association of the National Graduate School in Infection Biology and Antimicrobials; KLM Tek, the association for temporary employees at the Oslo University Hospital; as well as recently started organisations at Nord University, and BI Norwegian Business School.

3.3 — New member organisations

In 2023, there have been no new members of SiN. We have been in contact with Østfold University College and the university college at Svalbard.

SiN continues to reach out to doctoral organisations in Norway who are not yet connected to SiN, and to advise PhDs at institutions who do not yet have a doctoral organisation, and who wish to organise themselves.

4. Activities

4.1 — Board meetings and quarterly meetings

SiN has held nine regular board meetings from January 2023 until November 2023. The regular meeting times were set in the afternoon/evening for the last Monday of every month except June, when the board was on summer break.

Date	Type
07.01.2023	Transition meeting
30.01.2023	Board meeting
27.02.2023	Board meeting
27.03.2023	Board meeting
24.04.2023	Board meeting
30.05.2023	Board meeting
31.07.2023	Board meeting
28.08.2023	Board meeting
25.09.2023	Board meeting
30.10.2023	Board meeting
27.11.2023	Board meeting
18.12.2023	Final board meeting

To facilitate dialogue with our member organisations between the Annual General Meetings, SiN hosts quarterly meetings with representatives of local organisations at 3-month intervals. Following each Quarterly meetings, a newsletter was sent out summing up the most important discussion points and items for follow up. In the board period 2023, the Quarterly meetings were held on the following dates:

Date	Type	Attendance
30.02.2023	Quarterly meeting	SiN: Ole Kristian, Regia, Zihao, Friederike, Dimitris, Anum Member org.: UiOdoc, UiBdoc, UiSDC, NHHdoc, TODOS

24.04.2023	Quarterly meeting	SiN: Ole Kristian, Regina, Friederike, Yucong, Dimitris, Anum, Nicolas, Jareef Member org.: NHHdoc, UiSDC, USN SPO, UiOdoc, UiAdoc, DION, UiBdoc, SoDoc
12.09.2023	Quarterly meeting	SiN: Ole Kristian, Regina, Dimitris, Anum, Nicolas, Jareef Member Org.: USN SPO, TODOS, NIHSP0, UiOdoc, UiAdoc, DION, UiSDC, UiBdoc, NHHdoc, SoDoc

Minutes from all board meetings and quarterly meetings can be found on the SiN website.¹

4.2 — Representation in external bodies

Universities Norway, UHR

Each year, SiN has a delegate in the working committee of the research section of Universities Norway (UHR-forskning), which consists of representatives of each member institution. The section meets 1-2 times a year, and the committee 4-6 times a year. In addition, UHR hosts an annual conference. During 2023, SiN attended the following UHR meetings:

Date	Meeting	Location
10.01.2023	Kontaktkonferanse	Oslo
06.02.2023	Working committee	digital
09.02.2023	Samarbeidskonferanse	Oslo
12.04.2023	Fellesmøte	hybrid
08.05.2023	Enhetsmøte UHR-Forskning	Oslo
31.05.2023	Working committee	digital
30.08.2023	Working committee	digital
16.10.2023	Working committee	digital

¹ <https://stipendiat.no/documents-2/documents/>

This year the second Enhetsmøte UHR-Forskning and UHR-conference were not attended by SiN due to financial restrictions.

Eurodoc

In 2023, SiN remains an active member of the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers, representing one of 29 national doctoral organizations from 26 different countries across Europe.

The position on the SiN board of Eurodoc Liaison Officer at the SiN AGM in 2022 became a two-year position, to help the continuity and to strengthen contact between SiN and EuroDoc.

The responsibilities of this position included screening incoming emails from Eurodoc, forwarding relevant information to the SiN board and communication team for national distribution.

Starting from November 2022, Dimitris Polychronopoulos was elected as the Eurodoc Liaison Officer at the AGM, succeeding Friederike Schäfer who served as Eurodoc Liaison Officer the previous year.

Throughout the year, SiN actively participated in several international events, including:

- EuroDoc's AGM: the Eurodoc Liaison Officer attended the Eurodoc AGM in person in Uppsala, Sweden SiN also responded to the annual questionnaire prior to the EuroDoc AGM.
- EuroDoc Conference and pre-conference, held in Uppsala and Stockholm, Sweden
- EuroDoc Board meetings the Eurodoc Liaison Officer attended an online board meeting of EuroDoc
- EuroDoc working groups the Eurodoc Liaison Officer participated in working group meetings on career development in the spring of 2023 and in the autumn of 2023 the working group dynamics are switching, so the Eurodoc Liaison Officer will either shift focus to doctoral training or mental health

Meeting	Date
General meeting: Annual questionnaire, working groups, AGM	8 February 2023
Working group: Career Development	22 March 2023
Working group: Career Development	10 May 2023
Pre-conference: Mental Health and Career Development	6 June 2023
Conference: Open Science, Discrimination and Academic Freedom	7-8 June 2023

Meeting	Date
AGM: Reports of the board, budget for the new year, Eurodoc statements, statutes and internal regulation changes, elections of the new board, and future goals of EuroDoc	9-10 June 2023
Board meeting: Treasury and Board strategy	31 August 2023

Committee on Gender Balance and Diversity

In 2023 SiN continued its representation of PhDs and post-docs on the Kif Committee (Komite for kjønnsbalanse og mangfold i forskning / the Committee for Gender Balance and Diversity in Research). The members for 2023 were Nicolas Gibney (Member) and Ole Kristian Dyskeland (Deputy Member).

Kif work in 2023 centered on the inclusion of immigrants and indigenous persons in Norwegian academia. To that end, the committee visited the Sami University of Applied Sciences in Kautokeino in July. Beyond this meeting, the committee met several more times throughout 2023 including for its annual conference held at NMBU and UiØ.

SiN's representative in Kif additionally joined the committee members in providing comments to a number of government position statements advocating for further inclusionary measures for international researchers. Finally, SiN's representative was able to join a meeting the Norwegian Minister of Research and Higher Education at the end of 2023.

Further information on the work of the Kif Committee can be found on their website (kifinfo.no)

4.3 – Consultations

In 2023, SiN replied to the following national consultations from the Ministry of Education and Research (KD):

Consultation	Date
Ny modell for opptak til universiteter og høyskoler	09.03.2023
Innspel til arbeidet med ein handlingsplan for norsk fagspråk i akademia	28.04.2023
Akkreditering av universiteter	03.05.2023
Innspill om Forskningsrådets rolle og funksjoner i det norske forskningssystemet	01.09.2023

SiN participation in UHR-Working group: Veilederutdanning i høyere utdanning

The goal of the working group is to outline current challenges and good practices in current supervisor training at PhD level in the higher education sector, based on experience from the sector, other facts and research. In the final report, the working group gave recommendations on how higher education institutions can strengthen or build up their PhD supervisor training. The aim is to ensure good conditions for PhD candidates and their careers through high-quality and effective development of supervisors' expertise at higher education institutions, well adapted to the social mission of higher education institutions today. The final report will be published in December 2023.

As a SiN representative, Friederike Schäfer participated in the following meetings of the working group:

Date	Meeting	Location
16.02.2023	Start-up meeting	Digital
02.03.2023	Working group meeting	Digital
28.04.2023	Working group meeting	Digital
30.05.2023	Working group meeting	Digital
26.06.2023	Working group meeting	Digital
29.08.2023	Working group meeting	Digital
13.09.2023	Forskerutdanningskonferansen	Ole Kristian Dyskeland Oslo
27.10.2023	Working group meeting	Digital
19.12.2023	Final working group meeting	Digital

SiN strives to provide input on all plans, strategies and policy proposals affecting early career researchers in Norway, issued by national governments, councils and interest organisations. In doing so, SiN aims to give a fair representation of the interests of our member organisations, informed by formally adopted positions statements. Where pre-

existing positions are not available, SiN will ask its member organisations for input in order to come to a balanced commentary. All consultation statements and input on surveys and reports can be found on the website².

4.4 — Contact with member organisations

SiN strives to connect and support doctoral organisations across Norway in their daily activities. Given the increasing number of doctoral organisation, both in Norway and as SiN members, it is no longer possible to include all member organisations in the SiN board. The partial representation of member organisations in the SiN board entails two risks: firstly, that SiN might lose sight of some of its members and therefore give a biased representation; and secondly, that member organisations might lose informal ways to get in touch with each other and hence opportunities to learn from and support their peers.

These risks are partially compensated through the initiation of quarterly meetings in between the Annual General Meetings, which provide an opportunity for the SiN board to collect a diverse set of opinions as well as a meeting place for organisations to become acquainted. A balanced representation is also ensured by consulting member organisations on important policy developments initiated by SiN, such as the covid-19 extensions; the academic career structure; and the government's long-term plan for research and education; as well as during every public consultation SiN submits.

To prevent lengthy processes for each new case that SiN is requested to give input on, and facilitate a fast response to media enquiries, SiN aims to formulate concise position statements through a bottom-up process on a small set of broad topics. Future statements will be added, and it is SiN's ambition to add more detail and update these policies as the conditions and needs of our members change. SiN also plans to have all future statements available in both Norwegian and English, as well as translating the statements already posted. All adopted positions are formally adopted through a vote among our member organisations and published on our website³.

To strengthen information flow within our growing network of member organisations, SiN has also established a digital communication channel where the leaders of member organisations can exchange views and contact each other directly without mediation of the SiN board. In 2022, Slack was selected as the tool of choice for these purposes – although this is not fixed and might change depending on preferences of the member organisations.

The platform is not used by SiN for formal communication. SiN continues to use email for all formal communication with its member organisations, including meeting invitations, newsletters and consultation processes, and keeps an updated database of contact points, including the leaders and general board email lists.

² <https://stipendiat.no/documents-2/hearing-statements/>

³ <https://stipendiat.no/documents-2/resolutions/>

SiN also serves as a direct contact point for PhD candidates and postdocs across Norway and has, among other things, received questions about supervision, intellectual property, Norwegian language training, compensation for the effects of Covid-19, and what to do when experiencing harassment or bullying at work. In the event of such inquiries, SiN either responds directly or forwards the inquiry to the relevant member organisation or other partners.

In addition to serving the interests of our current members, SiN reaches out to doctoral programmes at higher education institutions that do not have a doctoral interest organisation yet, and offers support to those who might be interested in setting one up.

4.5 — Working groups

SiN started with working to direct their efforts towards important topics in 2019, and has continued this way of working throughout 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. During the transition seminar, with advice of the 2022 board, the three working groups were decided on: management control, supervision and mental health, and careers and PhD soft skill training.

Management Control

The management control working group was set up as the financial realities, and the dire financial position of SiN after the 2022 AGM was made clear. The working group consisted of the president and the treasurer, to systematically address issues within the organisation's management protocols. SiN has, in accordance with expectations from the government, run down formerly saved funds. The pace has been large, and uncontrollable, and the 2023 board saw a need to review the management control of the organisation. In addition to the organisation's savings to have become depleted, a deficit from the 2022 board would have to be covered within the 2023 allocation from the department of education to SiN.

The level of the board compensation had for numerous years been unpredictable, and measures to taken to ensure the board compensation was a known and predictable budget post. These new procedures and now in place. In addition, control measures to ensure cost-effective spending on travel and accommodation were implemented (application based spending where president approves the necessity and treasurer reviews proposed levels for travel and accommodation). A push to engage with partners to arrange events led to a fruitful collaboration with Forskerforbundet, as other unions were unresponsive. Additionally were the a precedence set where the full board are regularly presented with prognoses on the organisation's liquidity management, and the levels of committed and uncommitted funds.

Supervision and Mental Health

SiN's 2023 working group on PhD-Supervisor Relationships was led by Nicolas Gibney. This working group was started to begin looking into the experiences of PhD candidates in Norway with their supervisors, and procedures in place at member universities for conflict resolution, both between supervisors and PhDs as well as more generally between PhDs and other employees. This was motivated by increasing anecdotal stories of PhDs having unresolved conflicts with their supervisors, as well as high-profile stories in Khrono about PhDs having poor relationships with their supervisors, and what SiN saw as insufficient care paid to the PhDs.

This working group conducted a survey designed to collect qualitative data about specific conflicts PhDs had experienced with their supervisors, whether these conflicts had led to mental health issues, and whether the PhDs were aware of or had used mental health support or conflict resolution channels at their universities. The survey was disseminated to all SiN member organizations, though communication difficulties made it such that only 4 members were able to disseminate the survey to their members.

Despite this, the working group produced a report on the findings of the survey, with a recommendation to follow up and perhaps re-send the survey in the 2024 board period to obtain more comprehensive information. SiN believes that this is still a vital issue to understand and address, particularly as the 2023 survey pointed out that while the proportion of PhDs who encounter issues with their supervisors is not high, there is very little knowledge available about how PhD-Supervisor conflicts are to be resolved, and given a perception that resolutions always favor supervisors, very little faith in the conflict resolution systems.

Careers and PhD Soft Skills Training

In 2023, SiN established a working group named Career, consisting of Friederike Schäfer and Regina Paul. The group surveyed the courses offered for PhD candidates on transferable skills at Norwegian universities and university colleges. The survey received a total of 178 responses, with the majority of responses affiliated with NTNU. Therefore, the survey represents a small sample of all Ph.D. candidates in Norway, and its application to the entire Ph.D. population at Norwegian universities and university colleges is limited. However, it provides insights into general trends.

According to the survey, most respondents (55.6%) are aware of transferable skills courses offered by their institutions. However, 14% indicated that their institution lacks such courses, and 30.3% are unsure of their availability. This result suggests that the current communication regarding interdisciplinary courses is lacking, and there is a need for improved communication to inform candidates about course offerings.

The survey also highlighted disparities in recognizing interdisciplinary courses among universities and faculties. Results indicate that 58.5% of respondents can include these courses in their academic training plans, but 32.6% cannot earn ECTS credits.

Regarding mandatory transferable skills courses, 42.1% of respondents noted their inclusion in their PhD programs, while 43.3% do not have them. Regarding optional transferable skills courses, 36.5% reported that their PhD program offered optional courses, while 31.5% stated that none were available. However, 14.6% of respondents were uncertain about whether their PhD program included mandatory courses, and 32% of respondents were unsure about the availability of optional transferable skills courses. This again highlights the necessity of clear communication.

Opinions are divided on the necessity of mandatory transferable skills courses, with 36% in favor and 37.1% preferring not to have them. In contrast, there is strong support (78.7%) for optional transferable skills courses, which could be integrated into individual study plans for ECTS credits.

Roughly half of the respondents (49.4%) have not asked their supervisors for support, leaving it uncertain whether they can allocate time and project resources for transferable skills courses. On the other hand, 40.4% of participants have received support from their supervisor to partake in these courses, with the possibility of utilizing project resources and time.

Regarding the potential acquisition of ECTS credits for completed courses at other Norwegian or international institutions within their mandatory academic training/individual study plan, most respondents (55.1%) remain uncertain. Only 27% of respondents know they can incorporate ECTS credits from transferable skills courses offered by other institutions. In comparison, 18% are sure that these courses cannot be included in their mandatory academic training/individual study plan.

Furthermore, the results reveal significant variations in the courses offered between universities and even within faculties. Most courses offered are aimed at academic careers, yet less than half of Ph.D. candidates see themselves in academia after their defense. There is a notable absence of offerings for career development and business skills, despite over 50% of PhD candidates aiming for non-academic careers.

Therefore, SiN believes that including interdisciplinary courses in all Norwegian doctoral programs and simplifying credit transfer processes is essential. Expanding course offerings to cater to diverse career paths beyond academia is crucial. Institutions must recognize the importance of interdisciplinary competencies and offer various credit-worthy courses. To facilitate easier access to relevant courses across faculties and institutions, we propose the establishment of a national course portal for doctoral programs.

4.6 — Outreach

In addition to formal representation and writing reports and articles, SiN strives to disseminate information and advocate for PhDs and postdocs by maintaining an active presence in the public arena. To achieve this, SiN attends major conferences in the field of higher education policy and research politics, gives invited presentations at conferences and higher education institutions, and publishes content on our website.

In addition to the activities outlined in the former sections, the president and communications officer met with HK-dir to discuss their work on a guide for career advice for young researchers, and the national research ethics committees as input for their guide on research ethics in supervision.

Conference Participation

In addition to the conference participation by the UHR representative, SiN, through the president, was present at three other conferences:

Date	Conference	Role
13.09.2023	Forskerutdanningskonferansen	Oslo Participant
19.09.2023	Forskningsetisk forum	Oslo Speaker
04.12.2023	Kif-konferanse: Vi må snakke om sosial klasse i akadmeia	Oslo Participant

At forskerutdanningskonferansen, the president supported a UiO doc representative who made comments on presentations on findings from a survey of UiO PhD candidates. At forskningsetisk forum, the president held a presentation and discussed how issues arise in the regulatory frameworks of students, (public) employees, and researchers. He also presented survey findings about the well-being of PhD candidates in Norway.

4.7 – Communications strategy

The communication team has made a concerted effort to implement SiN's communication strategy in practice. The strategy was developed and integrated in the guidelines only during the previous board period, and there is still work to be done in establishing SiN as a strong voice for PhDs and other early-career scholars in the Norwegian public.

In our work to strengthen SiN's public presence and advocacy role, the board has made a conscious effort to improve information flows both with member organisations, and with the 'general public' of PhDs and postdocs in Norway. The former was done by consulting member organisations about public statements and (less time-sensitive) interview requests, promoting the activities of local organisations, while also encouraging them to engage with each other and SiN both publicly and in our internal communication platform (Slack). We also tried to engage responses from candidates directly through our own social media channels. The latter was accomplished by highlighting current issues in Norwegian academia and distributing surveys on our online platforms (website, Facebook and Twitter), where anyone can follow us, engage with our content and provide us with useful comments.

We are aware that public debate on higher education in Norway is largely inaccessible to non-Norwegian speakers, and the communication team has seen part of its purpose in trying to bridge this gap.

4.7.1 — Media coverage in 2023

The board (in particular the president) and communication team made it a priority to take an active part in public debate about Norwegian academia in 2023. We contributed to several stories by nation-wide outlets such as Khrono and Forskerforum. We also had success in getting our own press releases, position statements and op-eds published. The most covered topic was the issue of taking care of PhD-candidates to speak up, or makes formal complaints. Below is a selection of media coverage of SiN during the present board period:

Article	Date
<i>Innføring av skolepenger — en kortsiktig løsning på et problem som ikke finnes.</i> Op-ed by Nicolas in Khrono	6 April 2023
<i>Are we dissuading international talents from Norwegian academia?</i> Op-ed by Regina and Ole Kristian in Khrono	24 May 2023
<i>Mangelfulle systemer for konfliktutsatte stipendiater</i> Op-ed by Ole Kristian and 8 others in Khrono	22 June 2023
<i>Ikke glem de unge forskerspirene!</i> Op-ed by Friederike, Ole Kristian and president AYF in Forskerforum	18 July 2023
<i>Tanker til nye veiledere.</i> Op-ed by Nicolas and Ole Kristian in Khrono	17 August 2023
<i>Store utfordringer for stipendiater og postdoktorer</i> Interview Nicolas in Khrono	6 January 2023
<i>New Dion board members elected, Eikrem candidacy may have increased participation.</i> Interview Regina in Universitetsavisa	24 April 2023
<i>Grande: Ingen menneskerett å være veileder.</i> Interview Ole Kristian in Khrono	5 July 2023
<i>“Forskningsetisk forum 2023: Hvordan sikre god veiledning”</i> Summary of presentation Ole Kristian at Forskningsetisk Forum 2023	29 September 2023
<i>Ett universitet skiller seg ut med strengere stipendiatregel. — Pinlig og smålig.</i> Interview Ole Kristian in Khrono .	1 December 2023
<i>Høye gebyr for stipendiater fra land utenfor EØS.</i> Interview Regina in Forskerforum .	9 February 2024
<i>Should all PhD candidates learn Norwegian? We are concerned.</i> Co-signed oped by Ole Kristian & Ingvild in forskersonen , Nor and Forskerforum	1 February 2024

5. Future Plans

5.1 — Planned activities for 2024

Among those that started their PhD between 2010-2016, Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skill did an analysis from the Student Information System and found that 15% of those who started their PhD between 2010-2016 finished their PhD in the proposed 3 years, 19% had not finished after 10 years⁴. A central challenge for PhDs is that they have one work task for a long time where it is difficult to attain a feeling of mastery due to the length of this single work task and that the feedback is generally in the form of criticism. Some responsibility is on the PhD candidate in regard to how to learn to feel mastery at a daily, weekly and monthly level. But these statistics imply that the academic system and culture, and central actors in power also needs to take responsibility and help find solutions to reach the common aim of doctoral candidates finishing on time and/or finishing at all. Therefore SiN 2024 aims to:

- Raise awareness for PhD candidates about their rights, what they are responsible for and how they can help themselves to feel mastery at a daily, weekly and monthly level
- Lobby for the academic system and culture, as well as central actors in power, to take more responsibility to reduce the “symptoms” that may help finishing PhDs on time or at all, for example by lobbying for:
 - Better rights and conditions
 - Better supervision
 - Inspiring research environments
 - Clarity on career opportunities outside and inside of academia
 - Improve mental health
 - Talk more about feelings of mastery
 - The unique vulnerability of international PhD candidates
- Identify areas of concern for post docs and other early career researchers

The 2024 board will work to meet these aims in several ways.

Working groups will work with the priority areas in-depth and we are in the process of establishing them. We currently have identified four working groups and named them “Harrassment, mental health and the free scientist movement”, “make SiN visible”, “compensation” and “Careers after PhD”. The working groups will in the beginning of the year come up with a plan for what they can achieve for 2024 and what the results should be (opinion piece in media, survey, advice to government, a PhD/postdoc day etc). It should be a doable plan that will finish by the end of the board term.

The SiN board will have monthly meetings, they will mainly be digital, but the plan is to have one to two physical meetings in order to build a good team, to get focused and more complex work done and to keep the motivation going throughout the entire year. The working groups will meet outside of the meetings, and there will be contact between the board when needed outside of the formal meetings.

The board will continue to have contact with the membership organisations through: three annual meetings with the membership organizations and the final Annual General Assembly in autumn; newsletters; contact with the membership organisations when needed inbetween meetings; update the slack account for the local membership organisations for the member organisations to stay in contact. The 2024-President has invited all local presidents/boards for a talk to get to know the local members and to learn about their need at a national level and have already spoken with most of them.

In terms of events, the SiN board may arrange a PhD/postdoc/early career researchers-day(s) event with talks, debates or other to bring value to this group at a national level, as well as providing a

⁴ Direktoratet for høgare utdanning og kompetanse (2022) [Avtalelengder og tidsbruk i ph.d-utdanninga. Ei undersøkning på grunnlag av data frå Felles studentsystem](#). Utarbeidet av Magnus Fodstad-Larsen, Arne Haugen, Bjarne Mundal og Stig H. Pedersen.

place for the membership organisations to meet in person. This may be done in collaboration with The Academy of Young Researchers, “Organisasjonen ferske forskere” and The Norwegian Association for Researchers. A potential challenge for creating this day is limited funding and dependency on willingness and resources of collaboration from the other actors.

SiN plans to raise its visibility by actively engaging in the public debate through actively suggesting cases to journalists, responding to media requests and writing opinion pieces. SiN social media account will also be used to increase the visibility.

In terms of external collaborations, SiN plans to continue talks with national actors, particularly the Academy for Young Researchers, The Norwegian Association for researchers and Organisasjonen Ferske Forskere. Internationally, the Norwegian PhD researchers currently sit on the board and in working groups of EuroDoc; this situation should, inasmuch as possible, be maintained to give SiN a voice at the European level. The 2023 board and the President of the 2024 started collaboration with the Danish PhD activist Maria Toft and the establishment of the Free Scientist movement in autumn 2023, and will continue this collaboration by writing SiNs position statement on the movement together with the member organisations as well as participating in shaping the movement.

Finally, in 2024 the board has or plans to attend the following conferences: Kontaktkonferansen for forskning og høyere utdanning, Samarbeidskonferansen, The creation of a free scientist movement april symposium Göteborg, EuroDoc’s AGM and conference, NIFU Årskonferanse, Nasjonal forskerutdanningskonferanse, Forskningsdagene, Forskningspolitisk seminar, Kunnskapsgrunnlagskonferansen, KiF-komite konferanse, and the UHR-konferansen. SiN will also attend further conferences to which it is invited, as well as other meetings of the UHR and KiF committees and other actors that may come forward.

SiN has a number of quite ambitious plans for 2024, and as such, will likely use a significant portion of its current equity. In order to operate to its fullest potential, both in 2024 and beyond, SiN will need higher levels of grants in the future. While the 2024 budget necessarily chooses to use SiN’s existing equity, this is not sustainable in the long-term, and SiN requests higher levels of support in 2025 and beyond.

5.2 Budget for 2024

The SiN board operates on the budget approved on the AGM the previous year, we present here the budget as approved by the AGM:

Incomes		Amount	Subtotal
Membership fees	Regular members	NOK 32 000,00	NOK 32 000,00
HKdir	Subsidy	NOK 300 000,00	NOK 300 000,00
Total income			NOK 332 000,00
Expenses			
Board work	Compensation	NOK 115 800,00	NOK 175 500,00

Incomes		Amount	Subtotal
	Taxation for board compensation	NOK 59 700,00	
AGM	Travel and accommodation	NOK 40 000,00	NOK 59 900,00
	Catering (lunch, coffee and snacks)	NOK 7 000,00	
	Dinner for board and delegates	NOK 10 500,00	
	Buffers	NOK 2 400,00	
	Transition dinner for old and new board	NOK 6 750,00*	
Transition seminar	Travel and accommodation	NOK 35 000,00	NOK 44 375,00
	Dinner	NOK 5 625,00	
	Lunch	NOK 3 750,00	
Extra board meeting	Travel and accommodation	NOK 12 000,00	NOK 12 000,00
EuroDoc	Membership fee	NOK 3 600,00	NOK 6 600,00
	EuroDoc AGM	NOK 3 000,00	
Representation & conferences	UHR delegate	NOK 20 000,00	NOK 37 500,00
	UHR conference	NOK 7 500,00	
	Other conferences*	NOK 10 000,00	
Events **	PhD day	NOK 0,00	NOK 0,00
	Forskningsdagene	NOK 0,00	
Other	Website	NOK 800,00	NOK 19 650,00
	Invoice fees	NOK 300,00	
	Bank fees	NOK 4 800,00	
	Accountant (auditor)	NOK 13 750,00	
Total expenses			NOK 330 025,00
Balance			NOK (1 975,00)

*Beløpet er oppgitt i eget regnskap, men ikke i powerpoint ved AGM, totalbeløpet 59 900 er korrekt

***Beløpet er oppgitt i eget regnskap, men ikke i powerpoint ved AGM, totalbeløpet 19 650 er korrekt

The 2023 SiN board initiated a subcommittee to evaluate and plan for the organisation's financial situation. Without strengthening the revenue side of the organisation, its activity and engagement on behalf of PhD students and postdocs in Norway will not be sustainable.

5.3 — Need for more funding

SiN's primary mission is to be the central representative body for PhD candidates, postdocs and other temporary researchers in early career phase in Norway. As such, we answer government consultations, engage with other bodies and committees, we represent PhD candidates and postdocs' voices in the national media, and we do advocacy on behalf of our members to improve or influence public policy. We do so by being available in the forums where policies affecting our members are being discussed, and work to be proactive in the public debate. Conference attendance, and having people present in these fora constitute a significant cost for SiN. Our member organisations do tremendous work locally working with PhD candidates and postdocs, and the institutions. As the number of PhD candidates and researchers grows, our workload grows with it. This ranges from more position statements, media debates, to greater participation at conferences, to more physical and digital events organised for all PhD and post-doctoral researchers in Norway, and potentially in the Nordics. We also observe a growing generation of young researchers who will more openly claim their rights and talk out against injustice. When we engage more in this way, the expectations and opportunities for even more engagement raises.

SiN took a real hit in its activity repertoire during the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2023 board has attempted to increase the activity plan SiN supports in offering PhD candidates in Norway. However, given the organisation's financial situation, the 2022 AGM decided that bigger events such as PhD Day would constitute a financial risk to keep up in 2023. The 2023 board also had planned on attending events such as Arendalsuka to foster discussion with our partners and to promote the value of the PhD degree to civil society. The board of 2024 wants to arrange a PhD day too, this has the potential to be a great day *both* to promote the interests for PhDs to learn about their responsibility, rights and roles in the greater research system, and for member organisations to meet and work together across the country.

The current funding does not allow SiN to be start big and sustaining initiatives such as regular events or meet-ups to foster collaboration between the member organisations at the institutions; creating a website solution where PhDs and postdocs can come and discuss challenges and experiences, thus easing the inclusion burden to Norwegian society; nor does it allow effective advocacy on behalf on the PhD candidates in arenas where other groups advocate for their stake holders. We thus wish to increase our ability to financially and administratively support to the local organisations AND promote their interests at a national level.

Regardless of what SiN's members expect, as the number of PhD candidates and postdocs grow, the workload continue to increase for SiN's board. To provide the best possible support to members, it would be expected that the workload expected of the board exceeded the planned 800 hours per board period, as it has done for the past 3 board periods. The current compensation rate has been held constant for years, and we find that for many interested applicants, it is tough to motivate setting aside potential research time to do work for SiN at the current compensation rate.

Especially among Norwegian candidates which may have more experience navigating the Norwegian public sector system, we experience that more and more choose not be engaged, and we believe we will be able to work with public agencies and others with less friction when there are Norwegians on our board who speak the language and know the system's culture up front. The 2024 president has engaged in the public debate before her engagement with SiN, and because of this she has also started teaching on the supervisory relationships and for PhD candidates prior to her engagement as president. This complements her position as president of SiN, and will benefit SiN greatly, but it's not sustainable to expect future presidents and board members to be able to make use of such opportunities. She also experiences that when she now is the president of SiN there are invitations and expectations that she contributes to give even more talks, media comments or lectures without payment and which the compensations of SiN will not cover as it will affect the other board members compensation. In the future, it would benefit actors in power, the academic system and culture that SiN can spend more time promoting the interests of PhDs, postdocs and other temporary staff with increased funding.

PhD candidates in Norway are employees, students, and varying degrees of researchers. All three of these are defined roles with different degrees of legal and regulatory structure around it. Being among the few, if not the only one, roles where such clearly defined, individual, roles are combined, issues regularly arise where employment law dictate one set of considerations whereas student law dictate a completely different set of considerations. SiN observes great work of our members at most of the established degree-awarding institutions in Norway, but engagement and public discussion lead to a greater expectation to ensure symmetry in how the law is applied to PhD candidates in equal employment at different institutions are treated. SiN can function here as a great partner for the government and parliament, the institutions, and young researchers across Norway.

The more funding we have, the more thoughtful we can be in advising policies making clear where borderlines should be drawn for PhDs between student and employees.

The general consensus from the studies on PhD candidate welfare shows that there are an excessive degree of mental health issues among the PhDs, and that the levels of stress and depression are critical. In 2023 we worked on systematising this knowledge and finding solutions to ease the mental burden many PhD candidates feel. With more funding we can follow that up and work closer with the local organisations and universities and do

more outreach to make sure the candidates who are uncomfortable talking to their advisor, administrators or HR about their issues can be heard and represented.

SiN's output has also grown along with its membership. We refer to section 4 of this report to see what we managed in 2023, with more funding in 2025, we should be able to better represent the voice and be constructive in making Norway the best place for PhD candidates to work and study.

We have three suggestions for funding for 2025:

1. Keep it at the current level

This can function, but we unfortunately see several limitations with this structure where most of the time goes to going to a minimum of meetings, representations, consultations, and it is dependent on unique motivations and times of the members of the board.

Incomes	Subtotal
Membership fees	NOK 33 000,00
HKdir	NOK 400 000,00
Total income	NOK 433 000,00
Expenses	
Compensation for board members	NOK 200 000,00
AGM	NOK 59 900,00
Transition seminar 2025	NOK 50 000,00
Physical board meeting(s) (1-2)	NOK 20 000,00
EuroDoc	NOK 10 000,00
Representation & conferences	NOK 37 500,00
Events	NOK 15 000,00
Other	NOK 37 625,00
Total expenses	NOK 430 025,00
Balance	NOK (2975,00)

2. Increase the funding

This will make it possible to increase the compensation for the board members so it better reflects their actual work time, it may also encourage Norwegian to be in the board which

is beneficial in communicating the interests of PhDs, postdocs and other researchers in early career phase at a national level. It also increases the amount of funding for arranging a PhD day.

Incomes	Subtotal
Membership fees	NOK 33 000,00
HKdir	NOK 600 000,00
Total income	NOK 633 000,00
Expenses	
Compensation for board members	NOK 350 000,00
AGM	NOK 59 900,00
Transition seminar 2025	NOK 50 000,00
Physical board meeting(s) (1-2)	NOK 20 000,00
EuroDoc	NOK 10 000,00
Representation & conferences	NOK 37 500,00
Events	NOK 65 000,00
Other	NOK 37625,00
Total expenses	NOK 630 025 000,00
Balance	NOK (2975,00)

3. Have a new organizational structure with increased funding (point 2), 100% permanent employee and 20% employment status to the elected president.

The shared trait of PhD candidates and postdocs is the temporary nature of the work; three or four years. The nature of the work has thus far played an important role, but we see a need to transition the organisation to a situation with a greater degree of permanence. In order to maintain a holistic view of the sector, and concurrent processes, we would wish to hire a 80% permanently employed secretary, the presidents' position to be 20% employment for the board term and have an elected board each year who receive compensation based on a set pot approved at the AGM. This would allow our national work on a national and system-level scope a more consistent experience, and would connect our work in the national discourse to the issues observed locally.

Their role would help provide a consistent experience for our government partners, as well as for the other groups under among other Universities Norway, and our members. Even though we try to maintain overlapping engagement over years to preserve institutional

knowledge, the tight time constraints of temporary research roles means that the current SiN structure of part-time engagement in a board period is the only viable option, and it poses challenges for us to follow policy strains which develop over several years. Having someone on payroll would release more time to provide better feedback to the Ministry of Education and Research, and our other partners. Better in terms of grounded in the discourse in which a consultation of policy suggestion is presented, in terms of more time (and resources) to make sure SiN is consistent in different fora, and with more time to properly involve the PhD candidate and postdoc body across Norway.

Incomes	Subtotal
Membership fees	NOK 33 000,00
HKdir	NOK 1 167 000,00
Total income	NOK 1 200 000,00
Expenses	
Compensation for board members (excluding president)	NOK 350 000,00
AGM	NOK 59 900,00
Transition seminar 2025	NOK 50 000,00
Physical board meeting(s) (1-2)	NOK 20 000,00
EuroDoc	NOK 10 000,00
Representation & conferences	NOK 37 500,00
Events	NOK 65 000
General secretary 80 % position	NOK 478 946, 16*
Elected leader 20 % position	NOK 119736,54*
Other	NOK 37 625,00
Total expenses	NOK 1 196 707,70
Balance	NOK (3 292,30)

*Med utgangspunkt i statens lønnstrinn 53 (524 700 nok) inkludert arbeidsgiveravgift 14,1%.

6. Accounts for 2023 / Årsregnskap 2023 (in Norwegian)

6.1 — Inntekter og utgifter

Ved årets inngang hadde SiN NOK 252 120.58 i egenkapital.

Note	Inntekter	
1	Medlemsinntekter	NOK 33 022,00
2	Offentlig tilskudd	NOK 254 000,00
3	Kunnskapsdepartementet	NOK 5000,00
	Innsamlede midler og gaver	NOK 20,65
	Sum inntekt	NOK 292 042,65
	Driftsutgifter	
4	Reise- og møtekostnader	NOK (25 985,07)
5	Seminarer og konferanser	NOK (6 813,00)
6	Eurodoc medlemsavgift	NOK (3 556,29)
7	Nettside	NOK (1 141,50)
8	Banktjenester	NOK (3 927,60)
9	Revisjonshonorar	NOK (13 750,00)
10	Styrekompensasjon	NOK (163 669,00)
11	Skatt for styrekompensasjon	NOK (72 819,00)
12	Postboks	-
13	Regnskapshonorar	-

Note	Inntekter	
14	Skatt for regnskapshonorar	-
15	Kontor Forsyninger	-
	Sum driftskostnader	NOK (291 661,46)
	Driftsresultat	NOK 381,19
	Finansinntekter og -kostnader	
16	Renteinntekter	NOK 20,65
	Sum finansinntekter	NOK 20,65
	Årsresultat	NOK 401,84
	Overføringer	
17	Avsatt til annen egenkapital	NOK 0,00
	Sum overføringer	NOK 0,00

6.2 — Eiendeler

SiNs eiendeler er:

Note	Eiendeler 2023	
	Bankinnskudd	NOK 100 767,16
	Sum inntekt	NOK 100 767,16

Og av egenkapital og gjeld:

Note	Egenkapital	
18	Annen egenkapital	NOK 100 767,16

Note	Egenkapital	
	Sum inntekt	NOK 100 767,16
	Kortsiktig gjeld	
19	mottat tilskudd, ikke benyttet	NOK 0,00
	Sum inntekt	NOK 0,00
20	Sum egenkapital og gjeld	NOK 100 767,16

Se noter til regnskapet som:

- 1 Medlemsavgift fra medlemsorganisasjoner – av årsinntekten til lokalorganisasjonen min 1000 kr og maks 6000 kr
- 2 Tilskudd fra tildeler Direktoratet for internasjonalisering og kvalitetsutvikling i høyere utdanning (Diku)
- 3 KUNNSKAPSDEPARTEMENTET
- 4 Utgifter i forbindelse med SiN generalforsamling 2023 og andre møter, herunder
 - Reiseutgifter for styremedlemmer og delegater
 - Måltider
 - Sosialisering event
- 5 Deltakerutgifter for styremedlemer i forbindelse med UHR-Konferansen 2023 og overgangsseminar mellom gammelt og nytt styre
- 6 Årlig medlemsavgift til Eurodoc.
- 7 Årlig kostnad for nettside
- 8 Administrasjonskostnader for bankkonto.
- 9 Revisorkostnader for 2022-2023
- 10 Kompensasjon for SiNs styremedlemmer.
- 11 Arbeidsgiver-skatt for styremedlemkompensasjon.
- 12 Gjelder ikke lenger
- 13 Gjelder ikke lenger
- 14 Gjelder ikke lenger
- 15 Gjelder ikke lenger

16 Renteinntekter

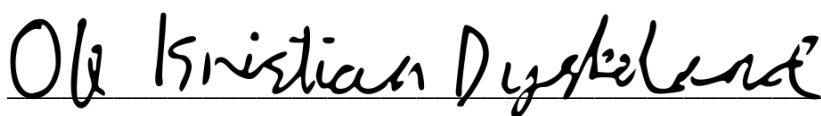
17 Medlemsinntekter avsatt til egenkapital

18 Medlemsinntekter avsatt til annen egenkapital.

19 Ubenyttet tilskudd fra Kunnskapsdepartementet, grunnet arrangementen av Eurodoc-konferansen i 2017

20 Egenkapital og gjeld for 2023

Signatures



President 2023: Ole Kristian Dyskeland (NHH)



President 2024: Ingild Bergom Lunde (UiO)



Vice-President/Secretary 2024: Claire Degail (UiT)




Treasurer 2024: Abdelrahman Abdelaal (UiS)



Head of Government Relations 2024: Karl Henrik Storhaug Reinås (UiO)



Head of Communications 2024: Ali Hasan Saber Alkaraly (UiS)



EuroDoc Liaison: Dimitris Polychronopoulos (USN)