



# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## 2024





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# FOREWORD

In 2024, PNN amplified its efforts to represent the voices and interests of PhD candidates across the Netherlands. As a national network, we are proud to work alongside our member organizations within universities, UMCs, and other research institutions to ensure that the needs of PhD candidates are heard and addressed. Our members—working tirelessly within their institutions—are the heart of our organization. They provide invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by PhD candidates, and PNN ensures these voices are elevated to the national stage. This year, we came together during four General Members' Meetings and celebrated collaboration and knowledge sharing at our annual PhD Organization Day. These gatherings reaffirmed the strength of our network and provided valuable opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices.

At the same time, 2024 was a challenging year for Dutch academia. The announcement of unprecedented budget cuts in higher education and science has cast a long shadow over the future of academic careers. PhD candidates are facing heightened uncertainty, increasing workloads, and an environment where academic ambitions are increasingly difficult to sustain. Beyond this, PhD candidates have had to navigate difficult debates on issues such as the climate crisis, the genocide in Gaza, and social safety misconduct within their institutions. These pressing challenges have deeply impacted academia, and particularly PhD candidates, who form a significant portion of the academic workforce.

Despite these difficulties, PhD candidates have shown incredible resilience. Across the country, many raised their voices against the cuts, both locally within their institutions and nationally, joining PNN and its partners at one of the largest academic protests in recent years. This collective action underscores the importance of standing together and the power of solidarity, and PNN remains committed to supporting and amplifying these efforts.

We invite you to explore our annual report, which highlights the achievements of our network over the past year and outlines our priorities moving forward. As we look ahead to 2025, PNN remains steadfast in its mission to advocate for PhD candidates and strengthen the academic community as a whole.

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or ideas for PNN, we encourage you to reach out to us on [info@hetpnn.nl](mailto:info@hetpnn.nl). Together, we can continue to drive meaningful change.

Warm regards,  
On behalf of the PNN Board,  
Benthe van Wanrooij  
Chair PNN



# GENERAL INFORMATION

Promovendi Netwerk Nederland (PhD candidates Network Netherlands, PNN) was established in 1987 as 'LAI00' - representing AIO's and OIO's (the system preceding the current PhD system). In 2003, its name was changed to PNN. Now, 37 years later, PNN continues to promote the interests of PhD candidates. The goals of PNN, as outlined in its formal statutes, are as follows:

- a. promoting the interests of PhD candidates and similar individuals at a national level;
- b. coordinating and supporting the activities of its Members;
- c. provision of information to and from PhD candidates and similar individuals;
- d. promoting the quality of doctoral research; and
- e. the performance of all acts which, in the broadest sense, may be related to or conducive to the purposes described in points a. to d. of this article.

## *1.1 Structure of the organization*

### Board

PNN is chaired by an independent board of PhD candidates. These PhD candidates are compensated for their work on the board from the universities and UMCs, and typically join the board for approximately one year. This way, PhD candidates are able to combine a board position with their PhD trajectory. PNN strives to ensure a diverse representation on the board, including in terms of gender, age, universities and UMCs, fields of study, and other relevant factors.

In 2024, the board consisted of the following PhD candidates:

- Benthe van Wanrooij, chair
- Lotte Weedage, vice-chair and secretary (until November 2024)
- Ilse Visser, vice-chair and secretary (from November 2024)
- Nina Schwarzbach, external commissioner (until March 2024)
- Max Bloem, external commissioner (from March until November 2024), internal commissioner and treasurer (from November 2024)
- Andrew Elrod, external commissioner (from November 2024)
- Margrietha van der Linde, general board member with a focus on hospital labour conditions (until September 2024)
- Martine van der Linde, general board member with a focus on hospital labour conditions (from September 2024)
- Yvette Koopman, general board member with a focus on university labour conditions (until March 2024)

- Lex Mandos, general board member with a focus on university labour conditions (from March 2024)
- Antonio Pinilla Torres, general board member with a focus on external, scholarship and international PhD candidates (from March until November 2024)
- Marie Stadel, general board member with a focus on wellbeing and social safety (until November 2024)
- Anna Roodhof, general board member with a focus on open science and recognition and rewards (until March 2024)
- Ana Barbosa Mendes, general board member with a focus on external, scholarship and international PhD candidates (until March 2024); open science and recognition and rewards (from March 2024)

## Network

The members of PNN are PhD organizations at universities, UMCs or other institutions across the Netherlands. Its members are:

Promovendi Overleg Nijmegen (PON), Radboud University  
 Groningen Graduate Interest Network (GRIN), University of Groningen  
 University PhD Council (UPC), Technical University Delft  
 TU/e PhD-PDEng Council, Technical University Eindhoven  
 Central PhD Council (CPC), University of Amsterdam  
 Leids Promovendi Overleg (LEO), Leiden University  
 LUMC Association for PhD Candidates (LAP), Leiden UMC  
 PhD Network UT (P-NUT), University of Twente  
 Promovendi Overleg Utrecht (PrOut), Utrecht University  
 VU PhD Council, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam  
 Wageningen PhD Council (WPC), Wageningen University  
 Tilburg PhD Platform (TiPP), Tilburg University  
 Association of Amsterdam UMC PhD Candidates (ASAP), Amsterdam UMC  
 Promeras, Erasmus UMC  
 Central PhD Candidates Platform (CPCP), Maastricht University  
 HU Promovendi (HUP), Hogeschool Utrecht  
 PhDoc, Leiden University  
 Promovendiraad Universiteit voor Humanistiek (PRAADT), University of Humanistic Studies  
 NKI PhD Council, Netherlands Cancer Institute

This year, two new members joined PNN:

*NWO-i PhD Network*. NWO-i is the foundation for Dutch Scientific Research Institutes. More than 400 PhD candidates are part of one of the institutes, and PNN is pleased to be able to represent their interests better. NWO-I PhD Network was established in 2024 and joined PNN the same year.

*Promoveren in het mbo* (PIM). The number of PhD candidates in senior vocational education (mbo) is increasing, and this network was established to bring these PhD candidates together. PIM was established in 2024 and joined PNN the same year.

The Erasmus PhD association Rotterdam (EPAR) has ceased to exist. PNN is in conversation with Erasmus University Rotterdam to encourage a new initiative.

#### Advisory board

In 2024, PNN reactivated its advisory board, which had not been active in the years before. Since this year, our advisory board consists of:

- Lidwien Poorthuis, director of Landelijk Netwerk Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren (National Network for Female Professors)
- Anneke Kastelein, former chair of PNN and PhD candidate at Leiden UMC
- Sicco de Knecht, director of Nationaal Expertisecentrum Wetenschaps en Samenleving (National Centre of Expertise on Science & Society)



# PRIORITIES AND ACTIVITIES 2024

## *Priorities 2024*

At the end of each year, PNN looks ahead and prioritises several topics and projects in a strategic plan. For 2024, we focused on three key areas: ensuring sustainable PhD trajectories, enhancing the visibility of PNN, and strengthening our relationship with our members, the PhD organisations.

### Sustainable PhD trajectories

The PhD trajectory is a critical period during which junior researchers grow into independent researchers, under the supervision of competent researchers ((co-)promoters). In this phase, PhD candidates develop a broad set of skills relevant for different research career paths while contributing original, high-quality research to the field. Currently, the average contract length of (employed) PhD candidates is four years. Yet, most PhD candidates are unable to finish the final requirements - often the dissertation - within this time frame.

In the past year, our goal was to gain insight into the main factors that play a role in timely PhD completion. PNN successfully acquired a Sofokles grant for this study. In the past months, we have conducted focus groups with a diverse group of PhD candidates across the Netherlands. The results of this study will be presented at a symposium on March 21st in Utrecht.

Although we were unable to obtain the latest PhD completion rates - as recent data is not publicly available from universities and UMC's - PNN remains committed to gathering objective measures on this issue. We will continue to press for this information in conversations with stakeholders.

### Visibility of PNN

It is important to maintain and improve the visibility of PNN towards both individual PhD candidates and policy making bodies to be able to make change and support and represent PhD candidates. By improving the visibility of PNN through social media, institutions and our members, we want to ensure that every PhD candidate knows what PNN is and what we stand for. Furthermore, in order to make PNN's representative role more effective and active, we aim to develop a clear plan on how we can effectively advocate for the rights of PhD candidates.

PNN organized six Know Your Rights sessions this year, informing PhD candidates about their rights across various institutions in the Netherlands. These sessions also give us detailed insight into the problems that are currently arising within the local contexts, and provide input for the collective labour agreement negotiations for universities and UMCs.



PNN further participated in diverse events of our members, such as panel discussions during symposia that our members organized. Our online presence is growing steadily: the newsletter, our website and LinkedIn are our main platforms, and continues to be a point of attention for PNN.

Regarding our visibility towards stakeholders, PNN has maintained and improved its relationships with partners. Over the past year, the PNN board followed a lobby training, and held numerous meetings with relevant stakeholders over the past year.

### Relationships between PNN and its members

PNN is an association whose members are the local PhD organisations (POs). To ensure PNN represents the interests of all PhD candidates in the Netherlands, it is vital that our relationship with the POs is strong and that there is a regular exchange of information between POs and PNN. Furthermore, PNN aims to facilitate POs in taking steps to improve policy around PhD matters in the local context. Therefore, PNN continuously aims to improve its relationship with the POs.

In the past year, PNN welcomed two new PhD organizations (NWO-i PhD council and PiM, Promoveren in het mbo). We are happy to expand our network, ensuring better representation of the diverse environments in which PhD candidates conduct their research. During our GMM, and in the joint WhatsApp group for our members, lively discussions have taken place on many topics: social safety, collective labour agreements, career perspectives, budget cuts, and more. Further, we have organized our annual PO-day for the third year in a row, making it a tradition.

### *Other activities that we want to highlight*

This year, the opportunity arose to apply for a grant from the ministry of Education, Culture and Science to enhance the professionalization of PNN and strengthen our cooperation with PostdocNL. With valuable input from our members, PNN and PostdocNL wrote a subsidy application and successfully secured the first share of this grant. We will begin implementing this funding starting February 2025.

One of PNN's working groups, LOUP, focuses on pursuing a PhD within a hospital setting. Over the past year, this group has met up seven times, providing a platform for fruitful discussions on the specifics of doing a PhD in a hospital environment.

PNN is a co-signer of a covenant on social safety in higher education and research, and therefore represents the interests of PhD candidates and postdocs (on behalf of PostdocNL) in the national steering committee on social safety.

PNN supports the national action plan for diversity and inclusion in academia and takes turns together with PostdocNL in attending the working group sessions.

This year, the Raad van State did not issue a final decision in the UMCG MD/PhD legal case. However, the attorney-general provided advice, which has allowed PNN to resume conversations about whether further judicial steps are possible. In 2025, PNN aims to assist former PhD candidates involved in the scholarship experiment.

PNN is an active participant in the recognition and rewards steering group, and the CS-NL advisory panel, and has advocated for better implementation of recognition and rewards among PhD candidates, among others by writing an essay about this.

PNN thanks our partners for the cooperation in the past year: De Jonge Specialist, Landelijke Vereniging van Artsen in Dienstverband, De Jonge Akademie, AcademicTransfer, Landelijk Netwerk Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren, Universiteiten van Nederland, Nederlandse Federatie voor Universitair Medische Centra, Vereniging Hogescholen, PostdocNL, APNet, Algemene Onderwijsbond, Federatie Nederlandse Vakbonden, het Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, Landelijke Studentenvakbond, Interstedelijk Studentenoverleg, Nationaal Expertisecentrum Wetenschap en Samenleving, Eurodoc, Rathenau, Regiegroep Sociale Veiligheid, Regiegroep Erkennen en Waarderen, Regiegroep Open Science, Neth-er, Nuffic, Sofokles, het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, WO in Actie, Christelijke Nationale Vakbond, and many more.

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2024

The financial year 2024 was both an exciting and challenging year for PNN in terms of financial management. One of the most significant achievements was the successful development and submission of a subsidy proposal to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW). After considerable effort and time investment, we were granted the subsidy, ensuring the financial health and stability of the organization for the coming years. This success allows us to grow and develop further, even in times of increasing financial austerity and limited funding opportunities for similar organizations. It marks an important milestone for PNN, strengthening our capacity to represent and support PhD candidates at a national level.

However, alongside these successes, the year also posed challenges. One of the main difficulties was the transition of the treasurer role, which changed hands three times throughout 2024. These transitions, while necessary, made it difficult to maintain continuous financial oversight and required flexibility from the board to ensure financial processes continued uninterrupted. The complexity increased with the introduction of the new subsidy, which required more advanced financial management, far exceeding our previous setup. While the team rose to the occasion, it became clear that a more robust financial management structure was essential for the future.

In response to these challenges, PNN has already taken concrete steps to improve and professionalize its financial management. We are currently transitioning from managing finances through paper-based documentation and Excel sheets to implementing dedicated accounting software. This will not only streamline our financial administration but also ensure greater accuracy, transparency, and ease of reporting. In addition to this, we have created a new board position to reflect the growing financial responsibilities of the organization. A combined position of Internal Commissioner and Treasurer has been introduced, ensuring a board member is dedicated to overseeing financial management and internal operations. This structural change is an essential step forward in safeguarding our financial future and enabling us to grow sustainably.

These efforts lay the foundation for a stronger and more professional organization, capable of navigating the complexities of modern financial management. As we move into 2025, we remain committed to continuing this progress, ensuring that PNN remains well-positioned to support PhD candidates across the Netherlands. We look forward to building on this year's successes, learning from its challenges, and maintaining our focus on representing the interests of PhDs at the highest level.

## Balance sheet

<b>Assets</b>		
	<b>31/12/2024</b>	<b>31/12/2023</b>
<i>Fixed assets</i>	€ 0	€ 47.39
<i>Liquid Assets</i>	€ 17,145.28	€ 18,803.59
<i>Accounts receivables</i>	€ 0	€ 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 17,145.28</b>	<b>€ 18,850.98</b>

<b>Liabilities</b>		
	<b>31/12/2024</b>	<b>31/12/2023</b>
<i>Equity</i>	€ 17,148.64	€ 18,850.98
<i>Provisions</i>	€ 0	€ 0
<i>Accounts payable</i>	€ 0	€ 0
<b>Total</b>	<b>€ 17,148.64</b>	<b>€ 18,850.98</b>

### Comments

Fixed assets include the PNN mobile phone, which is used by the PNN chair. The costs for the phone are written off over 5 years (acquired in 2019), and consequently should be 0 on 31 December 2024. The board has chosen not to invest in a new phone right now, as this phone is still working.

Liquid assets include the sum of PNN's Bank and Savings accounts.

Accounts receivables would include unpaid invoices from either our sponsors or the UNL. All outgoing invoices were paid by 31/12/2024.

Accounts payables would include late travel expense declarations, or other invoices for costs made in 2024 but not yet paid by 31/12/2024. This was not the case.

## Profit & Loss statement

<b>Income</b>	<b>Budget 2024</b>	<b>Actual 2024</b>	<b>Actual 2023</b>
Contribution	€ 0	€ 0	€ 0
Sponsoring	€ 2.300	€ 800	€ 2850
Miscellaneous	€ 0	€ 77.06	€ 704.10
Structural support	€ 12439.35	€ 12439.42	€ 11308.50
Advisory Services	€ 0	€ 0	€ 1500
Sofokles	€ 0	€ 8500	€ 0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>€ 14,739.35</b>	<b>€ 21,816.48</b>	<b>€ 16,362.60</b>
<b>Costs</b>			
Administration	€ 1170	€ 964.77	€ 1053.36
GMM	€ 700	€ 508.21	€ 503.50
Daily Board	€ 1700	€ 1258.16	€ 1127.37
Presents	€ 250	€ 204.47	€ 189.77
Communication	€ 1872	€ 852.20	€ 268.54
EURODOC	€ 900	€ 618.11	€ 1206.50
Travel expenses	€ 2200	€ 2482.69	€ 1739.96
Strategy days	€ 3600	€ 2384.23	€ 2798.01
Representation	€ 500	€ 650.14	€ 406.94
Events	€ 3500	€ 3078.97	€ 3540.74
Unforeseen	€ 1473.94	€ 107.58	€ 350.39
Depreciation	€ 49.20	€ 47.39	€ 49.20
Sofokles	€ 0	€ 10361.90	€ 0
<b>Total Costs</b>	<b>€ 17,915.14</b>	<b>€ 23,518.82</b>	<b>€ 13,234.28</b>
<b>P&amp;L RESULT</b>	<b>-€ 3,175.79</b>	<b>-€ 1,702.34</b>	<b>€ 3,128.32</b>

### Comments

In the comments, we pay additional attention to the items for which the difference between budget and realisation was the largest or striking.

Income: Miscellaneous. This post covers two instances of refunds following a smaller number of board members who stayed overnight during Strategy Days.

**Income and Costs: Sofokles.** We did not include a budget for Sofokles on either the cost or income side because, at the time of budgeting, we were not yet aware that we would be granted this funding. The Sofokles grant was awarded to support our research on the duration of PhD trajectories. The total grant amount is €17,000, distributed over two years in two equal tranches of €8,500. In the first year, we incurred high start-up costs leading to an overspend of €10,361.90. This initial investment was necessary to kick-start the research and lay a strong foundation for its continuation. While this resulted in a temporary discrepancy between budget and actual costs, the overspend will be balanced with the second tranche of €8,500 that will be received in 2025. It is important to note that the overspending is a timing issue rather than a structural one. With the second tranche of funding, we will cover the remaining expenses and bring the project back in line financially. Moving forward, we will closely monitor this grant to ensure the project stays within its allocated budget.

**Income: Sponsoring.** The actual amount of sponsorship income this year was €800, which is significantly below the budgeted €2,300. This shortfall occurred because we did not invest as much time and effort into securing sponsorship as initially planned. Obtaining sponsorship is a time-intensive process, and given our limited resources, we prioritized higher-impact activities. One of these priorities was pursuing a subsidy from the Ministry of OCW. Considering the effort required for both endeavors, we decided that focusing on the OCW subsidy was a more strategic choice. This decision explains the reduced sponsoring income, but it will ultimately provide more sustainable financial support in the coming years.

**Costs: Communication.** We underspent on the communication budget this year. However, we are actively developing a comprehensive communication strategy to ensure higher spending in 2025. With the additional funds from the OCW subsidy, we plan to invest in updating our website and communication materials to enhance our outreach and visibility. One key reason for the underspending was that many communication products have relatively high costs (often exceeding €1,000), which made it difficult to utilize the allocated budget fully this year.

#### **Costs: Strategy Days**

We underspent on strategy days due to lower costs following a smaller number of board members who stayed overnight. In 2025, with support from the OCW subsidy, we will organize more strategy days to focus on developing our multi-annual strategy and governance structure. This will provide us with a stronger strategic foundation and align our activities with long-term objectives.

# AUDIT REPORT 2024

Audit committee: Loes Lindiwe Kreeftenberg (ASAP) en Jurgen Moonen (PON)

PNN representative: Max Bloem (treasurer) and Benthe van Wanrooij (chair)

Date of audit: 20 February 2025

On 20 February 2025, the audit committee reviewed the financial administration for financial year 2024. They reviewed the profit & loss statement, the balance, the budget and the cashflow. Furthermore, they conducted a random representative check of mutations, from the invoices and reimbursements.

There was a minor mistake in the profit and loss statement that the board has since corrected. There is one irregularity in the financial management. The balance is not completely balanced, with a 3 euro difference. The PNN board cannot explain this discrepancy. Other than that, no irregularities were found.

The audit committee also gave feedback on the financial report to improve readability. Changes have been made by the treasurer to incorporate this feedback.

The audit committee has the following remarks:

1. This year, PNN has seen many changes in the treasurer role. This is a risk for the financial management of the association. We are happy that the board has changed the roles in the board, to ensure that there is one person dedicated to financial management of the association.
2. PNN is changing towards an online budgeting system. The audit committee is happy to hear this, especially considering the significant increases in budget in the upcoming years. Right now, the financial management is done in an extensive Excel-file, which is error prone, and costs a lot of time.
3. The audit committee notes that not many members critically reflect on the financial documents presented at a general members' meeting. We urge the PNN board to think of ways to increase member engagement on the finances.

The audit committee is satisfied with the financial administration.

Loes Lindiwe Kreeftenberg

Jurgen Moonen





# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

As we step into 2025, PNN remains dedicated to tackling the key challenges faced by PhD candidates, further building its organizational capacity, and strengthening its advocacy efforts. By focusing on these goals and working closely with key partners, PNN will continue to strengthen the position of early-career researchers and foster a supportive academic environment. Our priorities for the coming year include:

- Countering the €1.1 billion budget cuts in higher education, which jeopardize the quality of PhD trajectories and the well-being of PhD candidates.
- Engaging with the national Recognition & Rewards movement to ensure PhD candidates receive acknowledgment for their diverse contributions to academia.
- Concluding our research on PhD duration in partnership with SoFoKLes, including sharing findings and building on the results.
- Advancing social safety in academia by monitoring trends, advocating for improvements, and supporting initiatives that promote safe working environments.
- Further professionalizing PNN, optimizing internal structures, and deepening collaboration with partner organization PostdocNL with support from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science (OCW).