

Swiss Network of young Migration Scholars

Annual Report 2020/2021

Summary

The year 2020/2021 was again marked by the Coronavirus pandemic which led the association to cancel several projects. However, it also allowed us to set up new formats that have proven to be of high interest to members, such as the online Writing Days, and to invest our capacities in the improvement of the Website and other communication channels.

The financial situation of the association remains positive with another financial surplus at the end of the administrative year, and another increase in new members. We reiterate our call to members to approach the executive committee with ideas (conferences, workshops, networking, coaching etc.) that need funding, so that we can invest the money from the membership fees in ways that benefit all our members.

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1. Activities

1.1. Association

The administrative year 2020/2021 was kicked off with a **virtual conference on Covid-19, Migration and Switzerland** on 24 August 2020. The conference sparked broad interest and allowed for a reflection on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Swiss migration landscape.

In addition, the year 2020/2021 was marked by the very successful new format of the **Writing Days** which despite the current circumstances provide a unique opportunity for the members to regularly come together and strengthen network of researchers working on migration related issues. The Writing Days also attracted non-members, leading to a **significant increase of members of the association** in the last year. In order to welcome our new members and bring together existing members we held an online “**Apérisnyms**” on 23 March 2021.

Other events, unfortunately, still had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the association remained committed to improve the communication with the members. For that purpose, the **website** was subjected to a comprehensive re-launch and the format of the **newsletter** was updated.

1.2. Working Groups and Activities

1.2.1. Collective inter-disciplinary publication on « Asylum abuse »

The collective book “**Asile et abus. Regards pluridisciplinaires sur un discours dominant/Asyl und Missbrauch. Multidisziplinäre Perspektiven auf einen vorherrschenden Diskurs**” was published at the end of 2020. A soft copy of the book is available in open access on the website of the Seismo.¹

The book holds 9 chapters (in French and German) and a postface by Jean-Pierre Tabin, that each address different forms and materialization of the structuring and performative discourse on “abuses” in the asylum system. The book has received very **positive critiques**, in reviews published in *Jusletter*² and *Vivre Ensemble*.³ In addition, on 3 and 4 June 2021, an **event** was organized at the Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne

¹ https://seismoverlag.ch/site/assets/files/16378/oa_9782883517318.pdf.

² https://jusletter.weblaw.ch/juslissues/2021/1057/rezension--asyl-und-529b9baa08.html_ONCE&login=false.

³ <https://asile.ch/2021/06/07/livre-asile-abus-une-paire-qui-ne-va-pas-de-soi/>.

to present and discuss some contributions with members of the civil society and/or persons who experienced the asylum procedure. This event “L’asile en dialogue. Perspectives scientifiques, expériences pratiques” is available on the Youtube channel⁴ of the NCCR-on the move.

1.2.2. Writing Days

The Writing Days were launched in January 2021. This new format allowed members to meet online in a supportive environment with other migration scholars to work on their individual writing projects. At the beginning of each writing day, goals were set in plenary. The social breaks allowed for a more informal exchange. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Writing Days took place in an **online setting** via zoom. The Writing Days took place every two weeks on a Friday or a Saturday and were actively visited.

1.2.3. Review Lab / Mock Defense

The **SNyMS Review Lab** is an initiative to provide members with a platform to exchange drafts (articles, book chapters, project proposals, grants etc.) and give each other feedback. Members of the SNyMS Peer Review commit themselves to give each other feedback on their texts and to receive input on one’s own writing projects.

Two members took up the initiative and organized a sub-project, a **mock defense** on 27 April 2021. Both presented their ongoing PhD projects and received feedback from other SNyMS members. Through the mock defense setting, both participants gained valuable feedback and insights for their respective projects.

1.2.4. Tandem

The SNyMS Tandem is a **peer-mentoring programme** for SNyMS members to exchange ideas, discuss progress and questions, to give each other feedback and support in a peer-to-peer-setting. SNyMS provides the platform to link members who are from similar disciplines or are working on different topics. In addition, there is the possibility of a mentoring tandem between more advanced researchers and younger members of the Network. Currently, there are three active Tandem teams.

1.2.5. Postponed projects due to Covid-19

Several events had to be delayed due to the pandemic, but will come back as soon as the public health situation allows. First, we postponed our next round of **cine-migration screenings**, instead of creating online events.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxWqqEvz7iXC29yZJiHaxQQ>.

While this would have been an option, we decided against it, in order to not increase the amount of screentime that any of us has experienced already over the past year. We thus plan a fresh start with live screenings and discussions as soon as the public health situation allows.

Similarly, we needed to postpone the **Writing Retreat** that was planned and would have gone into its second round. In this case we were able to establish shorter writing days that functioned as a good alternative (see 1.2.2). While initially we thought about in-person writing days in different cities throughout Switzerland to increase networking and productive work sessions outside of the general office atmosphere, we have for now reverted to online meetings that have been frequented by several members of the network and beyond. We will maintain these days and will do hybrid options in the future.

Finally, we postponed the **Doctoral Seminar** that was planned for fall 2020 together with the Center for Migration Law. This event will now take place on September 2nd-3rd 2021. We shared a little survey with the participants in spring 2021 in order to decide whether to hold the event earlier and online. Since the majority opted for an in-person meeting we chose a date in fall hoping that it may take place and we are optimistic that we will all be physically present for the two days of presentations and workshops. If this is not possible we have decided that we will not postpone the seminar another time, but need to pursue the event online in order to make use of the acquired funding and to set a final date for the presenters.

1.3. Executive Committee

The executive committee is currently composed of the following members:

- Lisa Borelli, Sion
- Nula Frei, Fribourg (co-chairperson)
- Anne Kneer, St. Gallen
- Anne-Cécile Leyvraz, Vevey (co-chairperson)
- Monika Plozza, Lucerne
- Barbara von Rütte, Basel
- Nesa Zimmermann, Genève

During the reporting period, the executive committee met at irregular intervals. Due to the Coronavirus, but also due to board members staying abroad, the meetings were held virtually which allowed for more flexibility, and especially for short organisational meetings. The board updates the members on its work by email.

2. Some Facts and Figures on...

2.1. ... Members

As of 31 July 2020 the association had 58 members. In the last year, **twelve new members** joined the association. The large increase in members can be explained with the success of the Writing Days and increased networking with the NCCR-On the move. The profiles of the members are very diverse: there are PhD students and post docs, coming from different Universities, disciplines and regions.

With the new **newsletter** “News from the board” the members are informed about the ongoing projects and activities of the association. In addition, the executive committee communicates with the members via the mailing-list and the website.

2.2. ... Finances⁵

The financial situation of the association is still very good. SNyMS is exclusively funded through the membership fees of 30 CHF per member per year. This is the first year that we have not asked for NCCR on the move founding. Due to the corona pandemic, SNyMS did not have a lot of projects and related costs.

in CHF	expenses	revenues
Balance at 1 July 2020		8643.85
Membership Fees		1200
Writing retreat Grindelwald (online)	155.50	
Travel expenses	43.60	
Bank account fees	71.35	
Website (Wix: 2 years plan)	540.80	
Total Revenues and Expenses	811.25	1200
Balance 1 July 2021		9'032.60

The executive committee decided to invest in the website. The costs of CHF 540.80 are for a two years plan. For the year 2021/2022 there will be just the costs for the domain of CHF 12.-.

⁵ Covering the period from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

There are still some difficulties regarding the payment discipline of members. Different payment methods for the members (eg. lump sum for lifelong membership, 5 year plan, free first year) are currently being evaluated.

3. Outlook

SNyMS remains committed to **improving the communication** with its members. For the coming year, the outreach to our members and the active involvement of our members in the activities and projects of the association will continue to be one of the key priorities for the board. We hope to be able to return to in-person events and activities in the coming months (such as the Ciné-Migration screenings), but at the same time are happy to keep up the successful online-activities we have established over the last 15 months.

We are looking forward to the **Doctoral Seminar** which will be held as our first in-person event since the Coronavirus outbreak. It will take place on 2nd and 3rd September 2021 in Münchenwiler.

The successful **Writing Days** series will resume after the summer break. Depending on the public health situation, we will revive the idea of in-person writing days at different Universities throughout Switzerland (so as to increase networking and productivity), keep a hybrid format or continue with the online meetings.

If the situation allows, we will also try to finally organise the highly popular **Writing Retreat in Grindelwald** that had to be cancelled due to the second wave of the Coronavirus last fall.

On a more administrative side, we are still improving the association's **website** and have decided to invest some money in a plan that offers possibilities for a more professional appearance of the website and e-mails. Finance-wise, we are also still evaluating alternative payment methods for the **membership fee**, such as a lump-sum for lifetime membership, a five-year membership and other options.

Since the financial situation of the association is still very positive and we are constantly taking in more money than we are spending, we **explicitly encourage our members to approach us with ideas**, be it a conference or a workshop that the SNyMS could co-finance, a collaborative research project, a networking event or any other idea, as long as is in line with the goals of the association.

Bern, 25 July 2021