

NOVA University Network  
Annual Report and Accounts 2014



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### Abbreviations of NOVA member institutions

AU-ST	University of Aarhus, Science and Technology
HU-AF	University of Helsinki, Faculty of Agriculture and Forestry
HU-V	University of Helsinki, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine
LBHI	Agricultural University of Iceland
LIFE	<i>University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Life Sciences (ceased to exist as per 31 December 2012)</i>
KU-HEALTH	University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences
KU-SCIENCE	University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Science
NMBU	Norwegian University of Life Sciences
NVH	<i>Norwegian School of Veterinary Sciences (merged with UMB on 1 January 2014 and formed NMBU)</i>
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
UEF-F	University of Eastern Finland, School of Forest Sciences
UMB	<i>Norwegian University of Life Sciences (merged with NVH on 1 January 2014 and formed NMBU)</i>

### Abbreviations of BOVA member institutions

EMU	Estonian University of Life Sciences
ASU	Aleksandras Stulginskis University (Lithuania)
LLU	Latvia University of Agriculture
LSMU-VA	Lithuanian University of Health Sciences – Veterinary Academy

Report approved by the Board on 26 March 2015.

Text where nothing else stated: Ingrid Aksnes Hjetland

## Executive Summary

The NOVA Annual Report and Accounts 2014 shows that although NOVA meets its main aim of facilitating PhD courses of high international standard, the activity level is low compared to the ambition of offering 25-30 PhD courses per year. In 2014, the network facilitated eight PhD courses and four Master's courses. The number of PhD courses has diminished steadily during the last years.

In 2014, NOVA concentrated on implementing a new strategy for the period 2014-2017, approved by the Board the same year. This resulted in a streamlining and slimming of the organisation as well as in substantial changes in the application process and system. The Board also approved some changes in the application process and the financing of courses in order to increase the number of courses for 2015/2016. The most important change is the 10-11 month application window that will give more flexibility for the applicants. The big changes relative to the application process take time to communicate to the scientists at the member institutions, and it will probably take another call to see the effects of the changes on the number of NOVA courses.

There is a reduction in the number of students on NOVA courses. This is a natural result of the decrease in the number of courses. Some of the Master's courses have experienced difficulties attracting NOVA Master's students from other institutions. The mobility figures for Master's students have diminished in recent years. This is however part of a general trend in the Nordic countries. As an effort to increase the student numbers, the Board has stressed the importance of the marketing of NOVA courses to the students at the member institutions and the creation of a new NOVA website by the end of 2015. In general, the students attending NOVA courses are satisfied with them and give a high score on evaluations.

As another measure to increase the activity level, the Board wishes to increase the external funding of NOVA's activities. The network already receives funding from Nordic Forest Research (SNS) of forestry related courses. NOVA has also started cooperating with the Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research (NKJ) on a course in reindeer industry for 2015. In 2015, the network plans to investigate such financing possibilities further.

## 1. Activities 2014

In 2014, NOVA facilitated eight PhD courses and four Master's courses. The Board approved a new strategy for the period 2014-2017 that aims at increasing the number of PhD courses per year to 25-30 and streamlining the organisation. NOVA has concentrated on implementing the new strategy. The Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) took over the chairmanship and secretariat of NOVA from the University of Helsinki, Faculty of Veterinarian Medicine (HU-V) on 1 January 2014.

### 1.1. PhD and Master's level Education

*Goals: For the strategy period 2014-2017, the goal is to offer 25 to 30 PhD courses a year and to spend approximately 70% of the total activity budget<sup>1</sup> on funding PhD courses. NOVA supports master's level courses in specific areas where Nordic cooperation can add particular value.<sup>2</sup>*

NOVA's main priority is to offer PhD courses of high international standard.

#### Open Call

There was one open call for PhD applications and Master's courses exceeding EUR 5 000 in 2014. The Board approved 11 of 12 PhD course applications and two Master's course applications. One application of each of these two categories was for a yearly course series of which three of four courses were approved. The reason for the rejections was that the applications had severe shortcomings. The total amount reserved for the approved PhD courses to be held in 2015 is EUR 148 083.

In line with the new strategy, the application process has been changed. For example, the home institution has a new responsibility in the evaluation of course applications: evaluating the application before it is sent to the NOVA secretariat for a technical approval. The Board will make the final decision on the applications based on its "Nordic dimension". The NOVA secretariat also developed a simplified application in a new online application system.

As an effort to increase the number of courses in 2015/2016, the NOVA Board approved some changes in the application process and the financing of the courses. The most important change is the 10-11 month application window.

#### Evaluation

The relative low number of applications in the open call 2014 may partly be a result of there being only one open call in 2014. There were substantial changes in the application process and the application itself that take relatively long time to communicate to the applicants. The application looks very different, and it will probably take another open call to see the effect of the changes. However, the process is now more streamlined. It is possible that the number of courses running in 2015 might

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<sup>1</sup> Activity budget = PhD courses, master's courses, other projects and the planning of courses, NOVA guarantee, NOVA Student Board, strategy seminar.

<sup>2</sup> NOVA Strategy 2014-2017

increase compared to the number of courses approved in the open call 2014 as the Board has decided that courses approved in March 2015 can be held in the autumn 2015.

#### PhD courses 2014

In 2014, NOVA offered eight PhD courses, see table 6 for detailed information on the courses. Of the 175 students attending the courses, 145 (83%) were NOVA PhD or qualified Master’s students, 12 (7%) were BOVA students and 18 (10%) other students. One course was cancelled due to a low number of enrolled students. The course “Management and measures for social forest values in Northern Europe” was rescheduled and the number of students able to participate was reduced from 12 to three.

#### Evaluation

With eight PhD courses in 2014, NOVA reached one third of its goal of number of PhD courses. The number of NOVA PhD courses held in 2014 and of NOVA PhD or qualified Master’s students attending these courses are the lowest in the period 2003-2014. The number of courses and students is reduced by half from the peak in 2010-2011, cf. table 1. The numbers have decreased gradually in the period. It is therefore questionable if the goal of 25-30 PhD courses per year is a realistic goal.

NOVA nearly met its goal of using approximately 70% of the activity budget on PhD courses in 2014. For the courses held in 2014, NOVA used 65% of the activity budget i.e. EUR 79 000 of EUR 122 000. For the courses that NOVA reimbursed in 2014, the percentage was 72%.

The majority of the course participants are still NOVA students (83%), which constitute the main target group. Table 4 shows that the percentage of NOVA PhD students attending the NOVA PhD courses was at its highest in 2013-2014 with more than 80%. The student evaluations on the courses show that in general the students are very satisfied with the NOVA courses.

The average share of students from each member institution (tables 4 and 5) partially reflects the number of students from each institution, the number of courses hosted by each member institution as well as the course topics. For example, the reduction in the number of SLU students from 2013 to 2014 can partially be explained by the fact that the university organised a smaller number of courses in 2014 than in 2013. However, the increase in the share of students from the University of Helsinki continued in 2014 while the number of courses it offered was the same as in 2013. The number of NMBU students on NOVA PhD courses also increased in 2014. As in 2013, the university did not offer any courses in 2014. The raise in AU-ST’s figures is explained by it joining NOVA in 2009. The figures on enrolled students show that it is important to promote the NOVA courses actively among the students at the member institutions.

*Table 1: Number of PhD Courses and PhD Students 2003-20014*

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of PhD courses	17	13	16	14	14	17	19	19	21	16	11	8
Number of NOVA PhD students on the courses	270	186	162	200	197	264	301	331	317	265	193	145

Table 2: Percentage of NOVA PhD students in the NOVA PhD courses 2002-2014

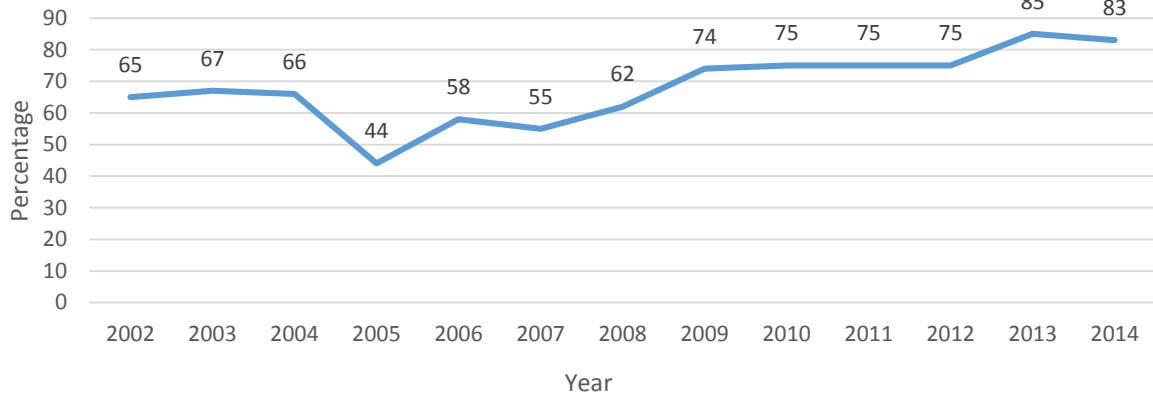


Table 3: Student attendance by member institution for all NOVA PhD courses 2014

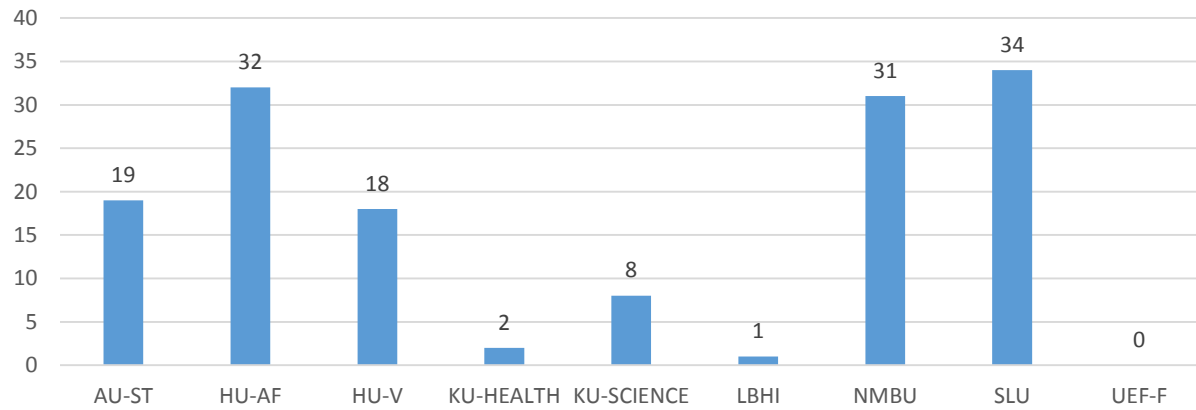


Table 4: Percentage of students by member institution, all NOVA PhD courses 2014

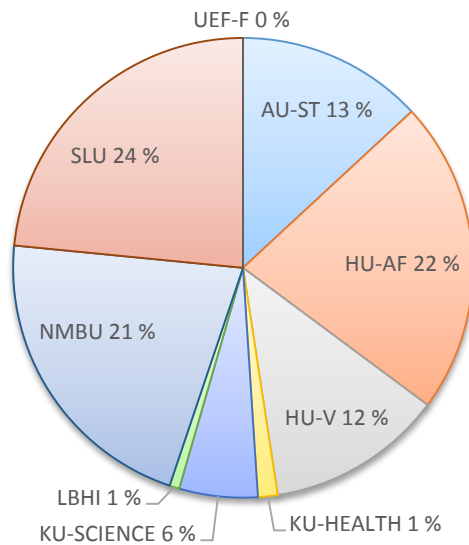
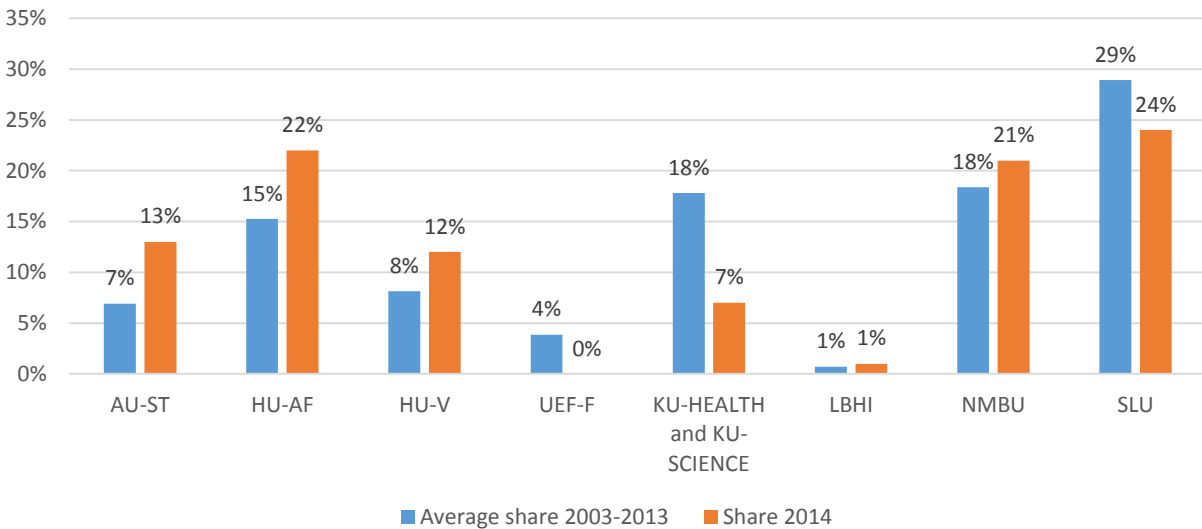


Table 5: Share of students (PhD) by member, years 2003-2013 and 2014



\*LIFE ceased to exist on 31 December 2012 and was replaced by KU-HEALTH and KU-SCIENCE. Numbers from 2003-2012 are for LIFE. Numbers from 2013 are for KU-HEALTH and KU-SCIENCE.

\*\*NVH and UMB merged to NMBU on 1 January 2014. Numbers from 2003-2013 are for NVH and UMB. Numbers from 2014 are for NMBU.

Table 6: NOVA Courses and Projects 2014

Course title	University/Faculty	Maximum grant	Grant paid	ECTS	Total number of ECTS produced by NOVA students	Total number of ECTS produced	Number of NOVA students	Total number of students	Price per NOVA student	Price per 1 ECTS (all students)	NOVA student ECTS price	Percentage of maximum grant used
<b>NOVA PhD courses</b>												
Genomics for plant breeding	HU-AF	13860	12487,52	4	80	92	20	23	624	136	156	90 %
Advanced quantitative genetics for animal breeding	HU-AF	13200	11026,61	3	66	84	22	28	501	131	167	84 %
Molecular methods for detection of foodborne pathogens	HU-V	13750	11900,00	3	62,5	71	22	26	541	168	190	87 %
Genomic and transcriptomic sequencing - a revolution in Plant Pathology	KU-SCIENCE	16500	14452,44	6	150	156	26	27	556	93	96	88 %
Applied statistics with R for the agricultural, life and veterinary sciences	KU-SCIENCE	16167	11678,34	6	132	144	26	30	449	81	88	72 %
Effects of pre- and postnatal experience on behavioural development (Cancelled)	NMBU	13750	0,00									0 %
EpiNOVA Advanced Course - Data Quality*	SLU	14520	12993,70	3,5	66,5	91	19	26	684	143	195	89 %
Nordic dendrochronological fieldweek 2014	SLU	7260	4620,00	4	28	44	7	11	660	105	165	64 %
Management and measures for social forest values in Northern Europe*	SLU	11711	614,35	4	12	12	3	4	205	51	51	5 %
<b>Total NOVA PhD courses</b>		<b>120718</b>	<b>79772,96</b>		<b>597</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>66 %</b>
<b>NOVA Master's courses</b>												
International wood harvesting**	HU-AF	2300	1902,60	3	27	60	9	20	211	32	70	83 %
Nordic Zoo, Wildlife and Conservation medicine**	KU-HEALTH	14251	14251,00	6	102	144	17	24	838	99	140	100 %
Cryptograms and nature conservation	SLU	4983	4328,00	15	90	255	9	21	481	17	48	87 %
Molecular plant-microbe interactions laboratory course	SLU	4950	4950,00	3	24	24	9	9	550	206	206	100 %
<b>Total NOVA Master's courses</b>		<b>26484</b>	<b>25431,60</b>		<b>243</b>	<b>483</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>578</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>96 %</b>
<b>NOVA Other projects</b>												
Yield gaps and sustainable cropping systems	HU-AF	4 000	2407,00									60 %
Beenova	HU-V	3100	2123,56									69 %
Pathology of large animal models	KU-HEALTH	2800	2800,00									100 %
<b>Total NOVA Other projects</b>		<b>9 900</b>	<b>7330,56</b>									<b>74 %</b>
<b>Total all NOVA courses and projects 2014</b>		<b>157 102</b>	<b>112535,12</b>		<b>840</b>	<b>1 177</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>249</b>				<b>72 %</b>
<b>Total NOVA PhD courses paid in 2014 (*)</b>		<b>81507</b>	<b>67258,61</b>		<b>522,5</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>83 %</b>
<b>Total NOVA Master's courses paid in 2014 (**)</b>		<b>16551</b>	<b>16153,60</b>		<b>129</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>0 %</b>



## Master's Courses 2014

NOVA facilitated four Master's courses in 2014. 44 NOVA Master's students and 30 other students attended the courses. One of the courses, "Nordic Zoo, Wildlife and Conservation Medicine" received funding from Nordplus as well as from NOVA.

### Evaluation

According to the strategy, NOVA supports master's level courses in specific areas where Nordic cooperation can add particular value. However, some of the Master's courses have experienced difficulties attracting NOVA Master's students from other institutions. The part of non-NOVA students attending the NOVA Master's courses was relatively high with 41%. The promoting of the courses on the NOVA website and at the NOVA member institutions is thus very important to try to increase the number of NOVA students from other institutions than the home institution. The good results of the student evaluations show that the students are satisfied with the quality of the courses.

## 1.2. Other Projects

NOVA supported three other projects in 2014. These were all projects for planning NOVA course applications.

### Evaluation

The possibility of receiving funding for planning courses is one measure for increasing the number and quality of NOVA courses that the network can promote actively.

## 1.3. Mobility

Undergraduate students going on exchange to NOVA and BOVA institutions can be eligible for a mobility scholarship from the NOVA BOVA Nordplus Network or from Erasmus +. Most of the network member universities have established Erasmus + agreements so that most of the long-term exchange can be carried out using the Erasmus + programme and more of the funds from Nordplus can be used on express mobility for the intensive courses.

In the academic year 2013/2014, 80 NOVA Master's students and six NOVA teachers received Nordplus mobility funding, see table 7. Most of the funding for this comes from Nordplus centrally. However, NOVA covers some of the mobility with the NOVA guarantee.

Table 7: NOVA Master's Students on Mobility

	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14
Number of Master students on standard Nordplus mobility (> 4 weeks)		68	37	52	53	23	32	39	47	35	20
Number of Master students on express Nordplus mobility (< 4 weeks)		17	35	50	73	69	110	66	45	42	60
<b>Total number of Master's students on Nordplus mobility</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>80</b>

### Evaluation

The mobility figures presented above are under-reported as much of the exchange is facilitated through the Erasmus + programme and other cooperation agreements. Table 7 shows that the use of Erasmus + funding for long-term exchange has had an effect as more of the scholarships for NOVA Masters's students are for express mobility. This is also more profitable for the students since they can normally

receive more funding from Erasmus + than from Nordplus, and the Nordplus scholarships for express mobility can be increased as less money is spent on long-term mobility. The total number of students on mobility is reduced from the peak in 2008/2009. However, there has lately been a general reduction in the mobility in the Nordic countries, also prevalent in the numbers for Erasmus + mobility. More detailed information on the mobility between NOVA and BOVA can be found in the *NOVA-BOVA Collaboration Report 2014*.

#### 1.4. NOVA BOVA Nordplus Network activities

NMBU took over the secretariat of the NOVA BOVA Nordplus Network from HU-V in September 2014. The network met regularly during 2014. Most of the meetings were video meetings. One face-to-face meeting was held at the Estonian University of Life Sciences (EMU). NOVA and Nordplus funded the meeting.

The network was granted funding from Nordplus to run the courses below in 2014. NOVA supported the courses with the NOVA guarantee, i.e. mobility grants for NOVA students and teachers:

- Woody biomass plantations: option for cost-effective mitigation of climate change effects, March 2014, LLU
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Rural Development, April 2014, EMU
- Genomic selection in livestock populations, May 2014, HU-AF
- Prevention of obesity – a community approach, August 2014, Helsinki
- Sustainable pig production, on-site course in Sweden week 8 and in Estonia week 14 2014, SLU
- Nordic Zoo, Wildlife and Conservation Medicine, pre-learning in June and July, on-site course in Norway in August 2014, KU-HEALTH (also funded by NOVA)
- Land Administration in Baltic Countries, Oct. 2014, EMU

#### *Evaluation*

The NOVA BOVA Nordplus Network has a good success rate in terms of receiving financing from Nordplus, and the number of courses offered is satisfactory. More detailed information on the network can be found in the *NOVA-BOVA Collaboration Report 2014*.

## 2. NOVA Board and Strategy Seminar

The NOVA Board had three board meetings in 2014, one face-to-face meeting, one video meeting and one per capsulam meeting. The Board decided to slim and streamline NOVA. The Board and representatives of the NOVA Student Board and NMBU teachers participated at the NOVA strategy seminar 2014. NMBU hosted the seminar. The theme was awareness/marketing of NOVA including how to increase the number of NOVA courses and students. The major changes that the Board approved were results of the discussions at the strategy seminar e.g. the opening of a 10-11 month application window in the open call and the creation of a new NOVA website by the end of 2015. The Board also decided to set down a taskforce on external funding.

## 3. NOVA Student Board

The NOVA Student Board (NSB) had three meetings in 2014, one face-to-face meeting and two video meetings. The NSB was slimmed and reduced by half by 1 January 2014. All but one of the members are now PhD students. The NOVA Board decided in November 2014 to increase the number of NSB representatives on the NOVA Board from one to two and that these representatives should each have a vote on the Board.

## 4. Cooperation Partners

NOVA has started one new cooperation in 2014. NOVA and the Nordic Joint Committee for Agricultural and Food Research (NKJ) plan to offer a course in the reindeer industry that NKJ will finance. The collaboration agreement between NOVA and BOVA is scheduled for review and renewal in 2015. As the NOVA KUF ceased to exist on 31 December 2013, there has not been any meetings between KUF and the BOVA CC in 2014. NOVA still receives funding from the Nordic Forest Research (SNS) on forestry related PhD courses. The North European Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFINORD) and NOVA teachers plan to offer a forestry related NOVA PhD course in 2015. The Nordic Association of Agricultural Scientists (NJF) and NOVA plan for further cooperation with a joint NOVA PhD course and a NJF seminar.

## 5. Future Challenges

NOVA is in a transition period where the organisation is slimmed and streamlined. While continuing this process in 2015, the most important future challenges to increase the activity in the network are to:

- Increase the number of PhD course applications.
- Develop further a new and attractive NOVA website by the end of 2015.
- Improve the marketing of the open call and of the simplified rules and application.
- Improve the communication between the secretariat and the local NOVA coordinators on the home institutions' role in the internal evaluation of the applications.
- Increase the number and share of NOVA students on NOVA Master's courses, including the number of NOVA students from other institutions than the home institution.
- Increase the student and teacher mobility between the NOVA member institutions.
- Increase the external funding of NOVA courses.

## 6. Financial Accounts 2014

Result and balance 2014 (numbers in 1000 EUR)

<b>BALANCE (equity) 31.12.2013</b>		<b>341</b>	
	<b>Accounts 2014</b>	<b>Revised budget 2014</b>	<b>Bud. Var.</b>
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>			
Total member fees	168	178	-10
External funding SNS	11	0	11
<b>INCOME total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>1</b>
<b><u>COSTS</u></b>			
<i>Activities</i>			
PhD courses	66	110	-44
Other projects	17	50	-33
NOVA-guarantee and N+ support	5	55	-50
NSB	2	7	-5
Strategy seminar	2	10	-8
<i>Activities total</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>232</i>	<i>-140</i>
<i>Secretariat</i>			
Salaries	46	49	-3
Travels	2	5	-3
Other	11	15	-4
Project: application platform and website	-	-	-
<i>Secretariat total</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>69</i>	<i>-9</i>
<b>COSTS total</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>301</b>	<b>-150</b>
<b>RESULT</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>-123</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>BALANCE (equity) 31.12.2014</b>		<b>369</b>	<b>150</b>

## Appendix

Table 1: Number of students in the NOVA PhD courses 2002-2014

Year	Total no. of students	Average number of students per course
2002	292	29
2003	402	24
2004	282	22
2005	366	23
2006	346	25
2007	355	25
2008	391	23
2009	382	20
2010	444	23
2011	398	19
2012	355	22
2013	236	21
2014	175	22

Table 2: Number of NOVA students in NOVA PhD courses per member, in total, and average per course, 2008-2014

	AU-DJF	LIFE	KU-HEALTH	KU-SCIENCE	HU-AF	HU-V	LBHI	UMB	NVH	NMBU	SLU	UEF-F	NOVA total	NOVA PHD stud./course	NOVA PHD stud. %
2008	*	55			30	29	7	28	18		86	11	264	14	62
2009	18	47			27	19	3	52	27		91	17	301	16	74
2010	36	59			61	15	2	58	11		71	18	331	17	75
2011	40	52			52	3	4	43	4		83	19	300	14,286	75,38
2012	39	38			52	29	3	20	5		71	8	265	16,563	74,65
2013	22		8	14	34	24	1	29	5		56	11	204	18,545	86,44
<b>2014</b>	<b>19</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>83</b>

\* AU-DJF became full member from January 2009

\* LIFE was split in 2013 to KU-HEALTH and KU-SCIENCE

\* NVH and UMB merged to form NMBU in 2014.

Table 3: Non-NOVA participants on NOVA PhD courses 2002-2014

	Baltic	Other	Total non-NOVA	Percentage non-NOVA
2002	0	37	37	13 %
2003	60	32	92	23 %
2004	33	51	84	30 %
2005	48	132	180*	49 %
2006	57	67	124	36 %
2007	33	119	152	43 %
2008	46	81	127	32 %
2009	20	61	81	21 %
2010	30	83	113	25 %
2011	29	50	79	20 %
2012	10	80	90	25 %
2013	13	18	31	13 %
2014	12	18	30	17 %

\*The large number of non-NOVA participants partly explained by NOVA supporting two PhD courses with main funding from external donors (EU, NordForsk).

Table 4: Number of BOVA and other non-NOVA students 2002-2014

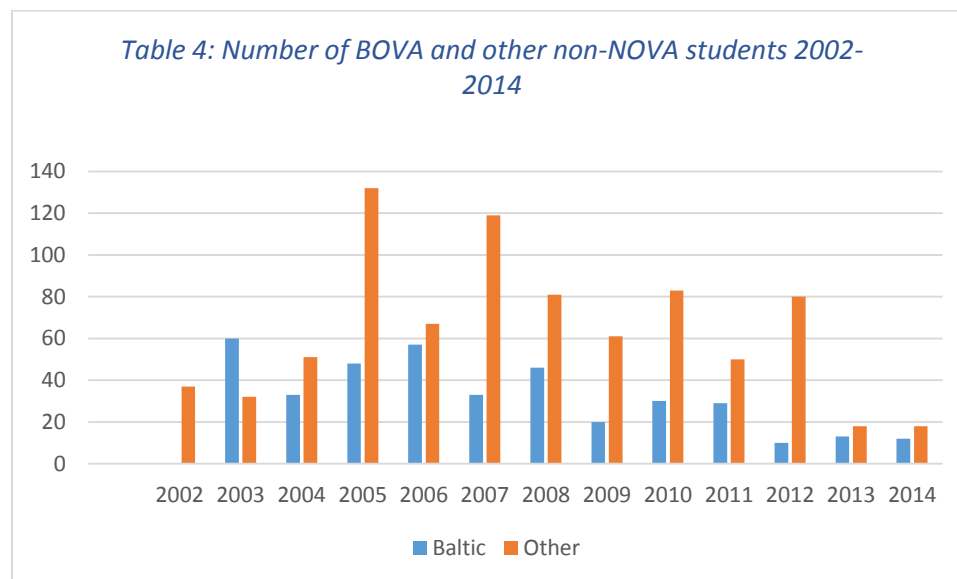






Table 8: Matrix on number of students on express mobility 2012/2013

		HU-AF	HU-V	UMB	SLU	LBHI	HEALTH	SCIENCE	UEF-F	AU-ST	LSMU-VA	LLU	EMU	ASU	Practice		
From	HU-AF				6						10	7	2			25	
	HU-V				1										6	7	
	NMBU															0	
	SLU	1											4			5	
	LBHI											3				3	
	SCIENCE	4														4	
	HEALTH															0	
	UEF-F												9			9	
	AU-ST													7		7	
	LSMU-VA													5		5	
	LLU											6				6	
	EMU		1									6	3			10	
	ASU															0	
			5	1	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	22	22	18	0	6	81

The number of students who received express mobility funding is 82. One student from HU-V is not registered in table 4 as her destination was not listed.