

A Survey of Possible New Organisation Forms for NORA



**NORA - Norwegian Artificial
Intelligence Research Consortium**

Denne rapporten er utarbeidet av NORAs sekretariat på oppdrag fra NORAs eiere for å vurdere om NORAs nåværende organisasjonsform fortsatt er den mest hensiktsmessige. NORA er nå organisert som et samarbeid med et nasjonalt styre, og med Universitetet i Oslo som vertsinstitusjon.

Rapporten ble lagt fram på NORAs eiermøte 9. april 2025. Rapporten skulle gi eiermøtet grunnlag for å kunne fatte en beslutning om NORAs organisasjonsform skulle endres. Rapporten, og ikke minst prosessen rundt rapportskrivingen og refleksjonsrunden den har skapt hos NORAs partnere, har også forberedt NORA på å kunne respondere raskt dersom det nasjonale KI-landskapet endres og det tilkommer tungtveiende argumenter for endring av NORAs organisasjonsform.

Selve arbeidet er gjennomført høsten og vinteren 2024-2025. Denne perioden har vært preget av at «KI-milliarden» snart skulle fordeles og nye norske KI-sentre snart skulle etableres. Rapporten er derfor plassert i denne konteksten og har som mål å sikre at NORA kan fortsette å operere som et solid og nyttig nasjonalt nettverk innen norsk KI-forskning, -innovasjon og -utdanning, også dersom nye rammevilkår skulle kreve organisatoriske tilpasninger.

Som grunnlag for rapporten har sekretariatet kartlagt mulige organisasjonsformer gitt NORAs mandat og nåværende og mulige framtidige mål. Et spørreskjema ble sendt til alle partnere og assosierte medlemmer. Rapporten bygger på tilbakemeldingene på disse, og på innspill fra NORAs styre. Hovedkonklusjonen fra kartleggingen er tydelig: flertallet av NORA-partnerne anbefaler å utsette eventuelle strukturelle endringer til KI-milliarden er fordelt, og til det eventuelt kreves eller er fordelaktig å endre organisasjonsform.

Denne anbefalingen var også utgangspunktet for eiermøtets behandling av saken. På møtet vedtok eierne enstemmig at NORA videreføres som et konsortium med UiO som vertsinstitusjon. Begrunnelsen og diskusjonen på eiermøtet var todelt. For det første så ville eiermøtet avvente resultatet av pågående nasjonale prosesser. Både opprettelsen av flere KI-sentre og en varslet utlysning fra Norges forskningsråd om midler til nasjonalt samarbeid vil kunne påvirke hvordan NORA-nettverket og andre forskningsaktører bør organisere seg fremover. Eiermøtet vurderte det som klokt å avvente utfallet av disse prosessene før man eventuelt endrer NORAs organisasjonsform. I tillegg har nåværende organisering av NORA fungert godt. Å opprettholde dagens modell sikrer forutsigbarhet for partnere og ansatte, og mange mener derfor at det bør foreligge tungtveiende grunner før man vurderer å endre NORAs struktur.

Det ble påpekt at arbeidet med rapporten hadde vært en god prosess og det ble foreslått at NORA-styret og NORA-sekretariatet bør vurdere å videreføre denne prosessen også etter at KI-sentre er fordelt, og resultatet av utlysningen om samhandlingsmidler fra Norges forskningsråd foreligger.

Rapporten er ført i pennen av Geir Halnes, og jeg vil benytte anledningen til å sende en stor takk til Geir! Jeg vil også takke alle partnere, assosierte institusjoner og andre som har bidratt

med innsikt og konstruktive råd i denne prosessen. Deres engasjement er avgjørende for at NORA kan fortsette å være et samlende nasjonalt nettverk for kunstig intelligens i Norge.



Oslo, 29. april 2025

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1 Executive summary

NORA's owners have requested a report that assesses whether the current organizational structure optimally serves NORA or if a future reorganization should be considered.

This report is written in a year where the AI-billion investment¹ will unfold in Norway. The report will be set in the context of this investment and its likelihood of having transformative effects on the Norwegian AI landscape. The report should prepare NORA to maintain its leading role in coordinating AI research, innovation and education even if this, on the partner's or the government's initiative, requires changes to be made in NORA's structural organization.

The report represents a survey of what organizational forms may be fit for NORA, considering NORA's mandate and future goals. As a part of this survey, a questionnaire was distributed among NORA's partners and associates, soliciting their opinions on topics related to a possible future reorganization of NORA. While the report is written by members of NORA's secretariate, it incorporates responses from the questionnaire alongside feedback from NORA's general assembly.

As a main conclusion of this survey, most NORA partners recommend deferring decisions about organizational restructuring until the government provides clearer direction on national AI strategies. To prepare for potential future developments, we still include a discussion on whether NORA's objectives and member interests would be better served by maintaining its current consortium structure or by establishing NORA as an independent legal entity.

2 About this report

2.1 Partnership terminology

To distinguish between different partnership relationships, we will in this report use the terms:

- **Main partners (17):** (1) University of Agder, (2) UiT The Arctic University of Norway, (3) OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University, (4) University of Bergen, (5) Norwegian University of Life Sciences, (6) Simula Research Laboratory AS, (7) NORCE Norwegian Research Centre AS, (8) University of Oslo, (9) University of Stavanger, (10) University of South-Eastern Norway, (11) Kristiania University College, (12) Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, (13) Østfold University College, (14) SINTEF, (15) BI Norwegian Business School, (16) University of Inland Norway and (17) Norwegian Computing Center.

¹ <https://www.forskningsradet.no/forskningspolitikk-strategi/ltp/kunstig-intelligens/>

- **Strategic partners (7):** (1) The Brønnøysund Register Centre, (2) Posten, (3) Norsk Helsenett, (4) Ruter, (5) Vestfold Hospital Trust, (6) Tine, and (7) the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration as “strategic partners”.
- **Collaborative partners:** Organizations that are associated with NORA through various collaborations but have no formal partnership agreement with NORA.

Collectively, we refer to all of the above simply as “partners”.

2.2 Who received the questionnaire

The questionnaire was sent out to all main and strategic NORA partners, all prior and current board members, as well as to collaborative partners Sigma2, Digital Norway, Institute for Social Research, NTNU, Nord University, Institute for Energy Technology (IFE), Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), Norwegian Institute of Public Health (FHI), Oslo Cancer Cluster (OCC), and Equinor.

The questionnaire received feedback from main partners Kristiania University College (HK), Norwegian Computing Center (NR), Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet), SIMULA, , University of Bergen (UiB), University of Oslo (UiO), University of Stavanger (UiS), The Arctic University of Norway (UiT), and Østfold University College (HiØ); from strategic partner Brønnøysundsregistrene (BRREG); and from collaborative partner Oslo Cancer Cluster (OCC).

This report reflects opinions expressed in the questionnaire responses, which are referenced throughout the document. A summary of the questionnaire and the responses it generated is provided in Chapter 6.

2.3 Referencing

When a passage in the report refers to the expressed opinion of a particular partner (or several particular partners), the relevant partners are listed inside curly brackets after the statement.

2.4 List of abbreviations

ATI: The Alan Turing Institute (in the UK)

BRREG: The Brønnøysund Register Centre

CADIA: The Center for Analysis and Design of Intelligent Agents (in Iceland)

CAIRNE: Confederation of Laboratories for Artificial Intelligence Research (in Europe)

DIGDIR: Norwegian Digitalisation Agency

ELLIS: European Laboratory for Learning and Intelligent Systems

FCAI: Finnish Center for Artificial Intelligence (in Finland)

HIDA: Helmholtz Information & Data Science Academy (in Germany)

HiØ: Østfold University College

HK: Høyskolen Kristiania
NFR: Research Council of Norway
NORA: Norwegian Artificial Intelligence Research Consortium
NR: Norwegian Computing Center
NSGC: Norwegian Smart Grid Center
NTNU: Norwegian University of Science and Technology
OCC: Oslo Cancer Cluster
OsloMet: Oslo Metropolitan University
P1: The Pioneer Center P1 (in Denmark)
R&E: Research- and education.
SIMULA: Simula Research Laboratory
UCIT: University Center for Information Technology
UiA: University of Agder
UiB: University of Bergen
UiO: University of Oslo
UiS: University of Stavanger
UiT: The Arctic University of Norway
USDE: United States Department of Energy (in USA)
WASP: Wallenberg AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Program (in Sweden)

2.5 Disclaimer

The report is written by members of the NORA secretariate without legal expertise in organizational structures and should be treated as such. If the general assembly decides to advocate for a change in organizational structure, an expert group should be put down to do a more thorough analysis of the consequences of such an organizational transition.

3 Background

3.1 Context and ongoing processes

AI is top politics in many countries. In 2023, the Norwegian government allocated a minimum of one billion NOK for artificial intelligence research². In 2024, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Research Council of Norway (NFR) decided to have a coordinated effort on AI through the establishment of four to six AI-research centers. The according call from NFR resulted in 50 applications which are currently under evaluation.

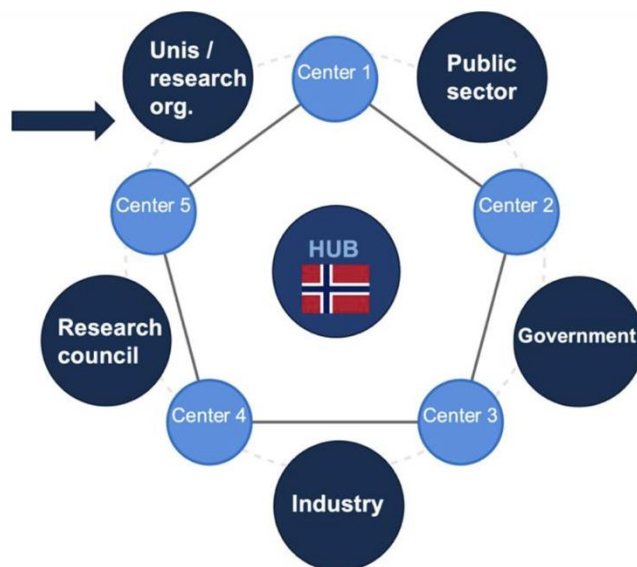
We are now in the year when the 'AI billion' investment will unfold. The Norwegian Research Council (NFR) recently announced that parts of this investment will fund initiatives to

² <https://www.forskningssradet.no/forskningsspolitikk-strategi/ltp/kunstig-intelligens/>

promote knowledge exchange, facilitate collaborations and organize meeting places within the Norwegian AI-scene³. NORA has six years of experience in coordinating Norwegian research, education, and innovation within the field of AI. If NFR or the Norwegian government decides to create new structures for organizing national AI efforts, it would be natural to base it on a NORA-collaboration.

In the NFR board meeting 7, 2023 (Sak S 80/23) it was emphasized that the AI-billion should cover the needs for “concentration, collaboration across disciplines, actors and sectors, and networking and meeting place activities in the continued work”⁴. From the AI billion, 850 million NOK were allocated to the AI-research centers, while the residual funds were preserved for other initiatives. In the NFR board meeting 1, 2024 (Sak S 07/24) it was stated that examples of such initiatives could be research schools, international collaboration and coordination⁵.

Recently, NFR announced that they will issue a call for funding that can cover tasks like (i) establishing a central contact point for AI related issues, (ii) uniting actors from research and industry, (iii) promoting Norway as a leading AI-nation internationally, (iv) organizing national annual conferences, (v) contribute to increased education and information work, (vi) collaborating with EU initiatives, and (vii) applying AI to utilize shared resources and ideas⁶. NFR also held a digital meeting on 19 March to discuss this call.



³ <https://www.forskningsradet.no/arrangementer/2025/ki-satsing-innspel-midlar-samarbeid/>

⁴ <https://www.forskningsradet.no/siteassets/om-forskningsradet/styredokumenter/vedtaksprotokoll-06.12.23.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.forskningsradet.no/contentassets/7a34047590944aaf9399aec15cac585c/vedtaksprotokoll--07.02.24.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.forskningsradet.no/arrangementer/2025/ki-satsing-innspel-midlar-samarbeid/>

Figure: Envisioned AI landscape in Norway post 2025. NFR (and other actors such as Innovation Norway or industry) funds research, notably through 4-6 AI-centers, plus efforts to oversee AI-related initiatives. The oversight (“hub”) could be managed by NORA or a NORA-based collaboration, serving as the national contact point for AI related issues. The hub will be responsible for organizing meeting places, coordinating AI-research schools, facilitating knowledge exchange, fostering collaborations between academic institutions, and between academia and the public or private sector. Furthermore, it will act as a catalyst for the transition from research to practical applications.

About six years ago, NORA was created to have such a facilitating role for Norwegian AI research, education and innovation. NORA has under its six operative years built up considerable experience as an organizer of research schools, scientific conferences and forums to bring together academia and industry. NORA further has a well-established international network (see figure below). Several attendees at the NFR meeting on March 19th noted that many of the tasks (i)-(vii) mentioned in the previous paragraph are already being effectively managed by NORA. Consequently, if funding is designated to enhance collaborations within the Norwegian AI landscape, it thus seems natural that parts of these funds are allocated to strengthening already established initiatives by NORA. Moreover, should NFR or the government decide to establish a new organizing facility for Norwegian AI, it would be logical to base it on a NORA collaboration. Otherwise, the new facility would be perceived as a direct competitor to NORA.

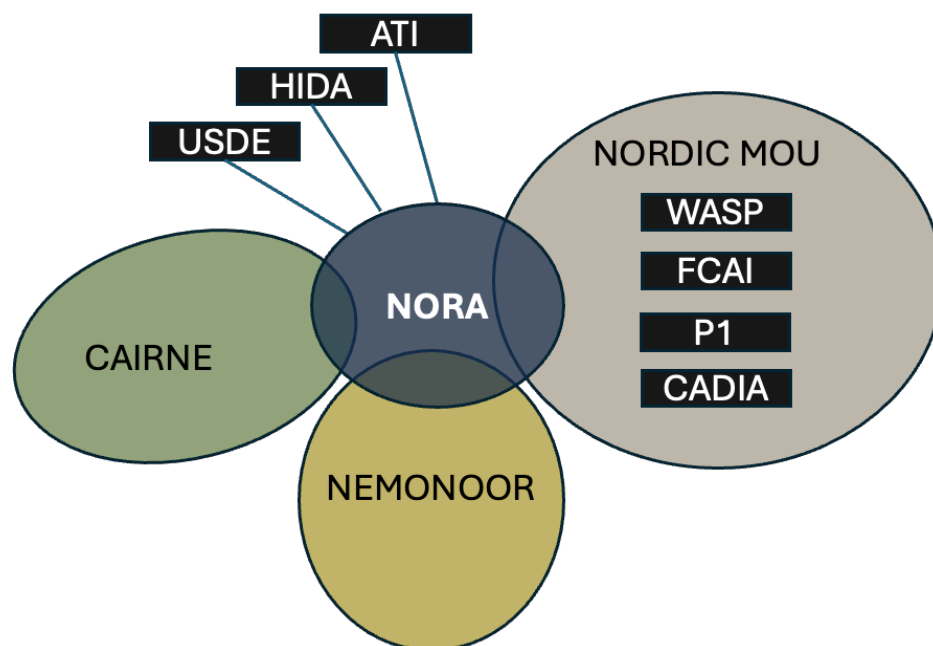


Figure: NORAs international network: NORA recently signed an MoU with the other Nordic AI coordination facilities WASP, FCAI, P1 and CADIA (Section 7.1 summarizes these Nordic initiatives), is part of the European network CAIRNE and the EU-project NEMONOOR, and has collaborative agreements with the The Alan Turing Institute in the UK (Section 7.2), the HIDA in Germany (see Section 7.3) and with US National Labs through the Department of Energy in the USA.

AI research coordination has been done somewhat differently in the different Nordic countries. Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland use university-based coordination through

NORA, the P1, FCAI, and CADIA, respectively. In comparison, Sweden has a more centralized approach through WASP that both funds and coordinates Swedish AI research as well as education and faculty recruitment. Through FCAI, the Finnish strategy has a strong emphasis on applied AI and focuses more strongly on business application than the other Nordic countries. A summary of these initiatives is given in Section 7.1 of this report.

While the other Nordic initiatives are, at least partially, funded directly from the government, NORA distinguishes itself by predominantly being funded by membership fees from the partners. As such, NORA could be said to be a “a grass-root initiative”, established by partners who realized the importance of such a coordinating facility for Norwegian AI-related research and education. The initiative is anchored at the top level at NORA’s partners’ organizations.

NORA also distinguishes itself from other Nordic initiatives by having an independent secretariate which is not part of a specific environment conducting its own research. This latter distinction may not be as significant as it seems, since research is indeed actively carried out within the NORA consortium by NORA’s partners. In an agreement between the partners, it was decided that NORA as an entity should not apply for research funding, as this would put NORA at risk of competing with the interests of individual partners.

The NORA secretariat has still coordinated applications towards NFR calls for hosting research schools, hosting an EU network, establishing a Nordic conference, and also for the infrastructure project NORA.LLM. Through the NORA.LLM project proposal, submitted by NORA and partners to the Research Council of Norway in 2023 under the call National Financing Initiative for Research Infrastructure, NORA aimed to strengthen its role a national access point by initiating larger AI projects of national importance. Despite receiving the best grades from the reviewers (the best grade 7 on all four criteria), the proposal was administratively rejected by NFR, partly because *“The administration assessed that there is uncertainty regarding which parts of the project fall under the objectives of the INFRASTRUCTURE scheme.”* While this may be a valid point, there is no doubt that the development of such infrastructure is paramount for the future of AI in Norway and should be prioritized through one funding scheme or another.

Foundation models should be seen as basic national infrastructure, and their development is often too complex and extensive to be managed by a single institution or a few institutions. In the replies to the questionnaire, most partners were positive to NORA taking more responsibility towards the development and maintenance of large national (or Nordic) foundation models, not only for text, but different modalities (images, text, sound, multimodality, etc.). Most partners stressed, however, that NORA should mainly do so in a management and facilitating role.

How the Norwegian AI-initiatives will be coordinated from 2025 and onwards is not yet established. One could in principle imagine that a single entity is given the mandate to coordinate all aspects of AI, including research, hardware infrastructure (computing power),

industry, ethics and safety aspects, or alternatively, that these responsibilities are split between various actors, e.g., Sigma2 for compute infrastructure, the NORA consortium for organizing AI research, education and innovation, and DigDir and/or Digital Norway for facilitating AI applications within the public sector and industry. In any case, NORA's future depends on NORA maintaining a central role in this endeavor and should be prepared to adapt its organization to align with governmental strategies.

Given the uncertainty about how the Research Council and Ministry of Education plan to organize AI centers and related AI initiatives in the time to come, it would be prudent to maintain NORA's current structure and defer any organizational changes until the situation becomes clearer. As follows from the replies to the questionnaire sent out earlier, this opinion is shared by several of the NORA partners and means that we currently do not become a separate organization but remain under UiO.

Given the changing AI-landscape in Norway as well as NORA's growing network, both nationally and internationally, we should nevertheless consider whether the affiliation with UiO remains the most suitable choice for NORA in the time to come and be prepared to make future structural changes in NORA if the majority of the members advocate for it or if the government decides to establish an AI body that is organized differently from what NORA is now.

3.2 NORA's current organizational structure

NORA was established on 21 November 2018 with the aim of strengthening Norwegian research, education, and innovation within the field of AI. Since then, NORA has grown steadily, attracting an increasing number of projects and organizing a variety of events. The NORA secretariat is today 60% financed by partners, 40% by external projects, and has in addition a good equity. Today the NORA consortium consists of 17 partners and 7 strategic partners.

According to NORA's Articles of Association, the NORA collaboration is based on recognized national and international ethical standards and norms for AI, promoting sustainable, transparent and inclusive use of AI.

NORA functions as a meta-organization⁷ whose members are organizations that comprise researchers, practitioners and educators. NORA convenes, coordinates and directs its members as nodes of a national network, working across and between other types of institutions without competing with them.

⁷ A metaorganization can be defined as an organization whose agents are them-selves legally autonomous and not linked through employment relationships: [Gulati, R., Puranam, P., & Tushman, M. (2012). Meta-organization design: Rethinking design in interorganizational and community contexts. *Strategic Management Journal*, 33(6), 571–586. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.1975>]

Since its start, the NORA secretariate, responsible for day-to-day management, has been affiliated with UiO, meaning that NORA officially is part of UiO. As part of the agreement, the chair of the NORA board must then be affiliated with one of the other partners and is currently Tom Ryen from UiS. Partners pay for membership, and trust NORA (and UiO) to administer the money in a responsible and fair manner. As a host, UiO is rewarded for NORA-organized activities, but also takes a substantial risk since their role as a host makes them responsible for all the permanent administrative NORA positions.

The reasons for establishing NORA as a UiO-hosted organization were mainly practical, as the UiO affiliation has many advantages. Being affiliated with a large university gives NORA access to solid administrative and logistical infrastructure that can support NORA's operational needs, such as event organization, communication, and promotion of research collaborations. Being affiliated with UiO also gives NORA the status as an NFR-approved research organization that can apply for NFR funding for research schools and, in principle, research funding. In general, establishing an independent organization with privileges such as these would be substantially more challenging than exploiting already established infrastructure. From the secretariate's perspective, UiO staff has been instrumental for NORA's success. They have shown great flexibility and help in offering services crucial for building NORA, especially during periods when NORA was understaffed.

Most partners seem somewhat content with the current way that NORA works, where NORA is hosted by UiO but operates under a trust-based agreement between all partners. The NORA-secretariate enjoys the benefits and security that come with having permanent positions at UiO. Having office space at UiO puts the NORA secretariate in close proximity to active research groups.

3.3 NORAs strategy

NORAs mission is reflected in the 2023-2026 strategy approved by the NORA board in April 2023. The strategy states the ambition, vision and mission for NORA and outlines eight strategic goals summarized in the Figure below⁸.



Figure: A summary of NORA's strategy.

⁸ For more, see the annual report at <https://www.nora.ai/norsk/news/2024/nora-arsrapport-2023.html>

3.4 Possible future goals

Any future reorganization of NORA, if relevant, must be guided by our partners' motivations for continued participation. Any structural changes should strengthen, not hinder, our ability to execute our strategy through 2026, but could also be discussed against more long-term goals for NORA. A list of proposed future goals for NORA is given below and discussed against partner interests.

1. NORA should continue to serve as an instrument for the government to solve or facilitate the solving of national AI tasks with longer time horizons and larger scopes than what one institution can handle alone.
 - a. This goal is aligned with NORA's current mission. Several partners nevertheless stress that NORA in this context should be cautious not to take on roles that conflict with the interests of the partner organizations. Specifically, NORA should not act in ways that reduce the likelihood of individual partners receiving funding.
2. NORA should take responsibilities towards the development of large models as infrastructure in a role as reflected through the NORA.LLM proposal.
 - a. The majority of partners agree with this but (in line with point 1a) emphasize that NORA should only/mainly do this in a management/enablement role, so that NORA does not become a competitor to its partners.
 - b. NORA should also work for this on a political level to highlight the importance of such infrastructures for decision makers {OsloMet}.
 - c. Some partners are somewhat open to the possibility that NORA takes on a development role {HIØ, UiS, SIMULA}. Whether it is realistic to take such a role will probably depend on how the government decides to allocate the AI-billion in 2025. SIMULA stresses that a possible development role only is an option if NORA enters in an innovation context, and suggests that NORA then could act as a developer aiming to make quick turnovers from research to industry.
3. NORA should be in the forefront of adapting new AI tools to Norwegian use, as reflected through NORA's earlier work with Deepmind's AI algorithm AlphaFold. This work was mentioned in NFR's Long-term plan ("Langtidsplanen") for research and education 2023-2032⁹. Deepmind's AlphaFold is an open-source AI algorithm for predicting protein structures and can be used (among other things) to develop pharmaceuticals. On the initiative of NORA, UCIT at UiO and Sigma2, the algorithms were quickly installed on Norwegian infrastructure and made available to Norwegian research communities.

4. NORA's main focus should be on research, education and research-driven innovation, but then mainly in an enablement/management role. It is an open question whether NORA should broaden its scope and take stronger roles when it comes to AI governance (safety and regulation issues) or AI application issues (deployment of existing AI infrastructure to solve specific tasks).
 - a. Many partners stress that NORA's primary focus should remain on overseeing research, education and innovation, which are the core activities of the main partners.
 - b. Many partners note that NORA already has a broader (political) scope in giving knowledge-based input to the society and the authorities, and states that NORA should focus on the political enablement level and not the operational. UiB stresses that NORA should only raise a "political voice" in cases where the members share the same views.
 - c. SIMULA proposes that "Innovation and related education (e.g., etter- and videreutdanning) is what is currently most needed in Norway, and that a future step for NORA could be to take an important and needed responsibility for enabling quicker turnover from research to innovation {SIMULA}. BRREG expressed similar thoughts.
5. NORA aims to secure long-term funding through becoming part of the national budget.
 - a. The coordination of AI related initiatives in Norway should be conducted according to a long-term strategy. To ensure continuity, an organizing facility for such efforts should be ensured secure base funding from the government. Securing predictable governmental long-term funding for NORA is a goal that many partners seem to share.
 - b. Many partners suggest that the possible establishment is of NORA as an independent entity will only/mainly be relevant if based on financial support from the government {BRREG, HiØ, OCC, OsloMet, UiB, UiS}.
 - c. Being funded by the government might also make it more attractive for other relevant organizations to become NORA members, partly for financial reasons, and partly because such government funding could come with a strengthened mandate to organize all Norwegian AI research activity.
6. NORA aims to be perceived as a truly national and truly neutral actor that facilitates and administers AI research and its ties to industry nation-wide. Although this is how we in NORA already perceive ourselves, the image may be challenged partly by (i) NTNU not being a NORA-partner, and (ii) partly by NORA legally being a part of UiO.
 - a. Most partners are content with UiO hosting NORA, at least as long as the government does not advocate for another organizational solution. A key argument is that UiO is the most suitable host, and that one cannot find an alternative host that is more neutral than UiO.
 - b. According to UiB, a main priority for the future is to get NTNU on board in the NORA collaboration. UiB will advocate for a change in the organizational structure of NORA if this is a criterion for NTNU-membership. Also NR suggests that NTNU-membership might be desirable.

- c. Some partners have suggested a model where the secretariat is distributed among the partner institutions {UiT, HiØ}.
 - d. HK commented that the NORA secretariat could have more focus on communicating that there are many partners involved in NORA and more focus on visiting all the partners.
- 7. NORA should maintain the privilege to apply for research funding together with partners.
 - a. If hosted by UiO (or another NFR-approved research institution), NORA automatically has this privilege, but there are mixed opinions among the partners on whether this privilege is important for NORA.
 - b. NORA currently does not directly employ personnel to do AI research, but we could in principle consider a model where NORA conducts research via a buyout arrangement (“frikjøpsordning”), e.g., by NORA offering 20% positions to researchers affiliated with partner universities. Such arrangements are deployed, e.g., by the Alan Turing Institute in the UK. The NORA partners are generally against the idea that NORA should conduct research or apply for research money, as this can lead to competition between NORA's interests and the individual interests of partner organizations.
 - c. Maintaining the status as a research organization is, however, also relevant for NORA as a host for research schools (see next point) or for managing larger national NFR-funded projects (like what was described in the NORA.LLM application).
- 8. NORA should maintain the privilege to host research schools. NORA today hosts a nation-wide AI-research school and has applied for funding for a second.
 - a. According to NFR regulations, research school funding is only granted to “degree awarding institutions”, and the privilege to host research schools thus requires that NORA is hosted by a university or university college.
 - b. Regulations for NFR funded research schools have led to some frustrations within the NORA collaboration due to NFR’s criterion that administrative tasks cannot be delegated. Thus, for the NORA secretariate to administer a research school, the research school has to be hosted by UiO (since UiO hosts the NORA secretariate), even if we within the NORA consortium would prefer another arrangement.
 - c. Most partners are positive to NORA hosting research schools, but UiT thinks that NORA should facilitate research schools/projects at partner institutions instead of hosting them.
 - d. We note that NFR’s regulations regarding hosting of research schools might not be so well-considered, and that amendment proposals can be submitted to the Research Council Board¹⁰. If it becomes relevant, we should advocate for amendments that allow the NORA secretariate to also administer research schools hosted by partners outside UiO.
- 9. NORA is the Nordic office of CAIRNE (previously known as CLAIRE), the Confederation of Laboratories for Artificial Intelligence Research in Europe.

¹⁰ Personal communications with Espen Sandøe Karlsen (senior adviser at NFR).

NORA should also initiate work towards establishing an ELLIS unit in Norway (ELLIS: European Laboratory for Learning and Intelligent Systems), and possibly (as a long-term ambition), a Norwegian ELLIS center, like FCAI has achieved in Finland. If so, it is natural that this initiative is led by Norwegian ELLIS members, with support of the NORA secretariat.

4 Changing the organizational structure of NORA

Below we discuss if changing the organizational structure of NORA will be advantageous for NORAs future role as a facilitator for Norwegian AI efforts.

A key question is whether NORA should stay a consortium like today, hosted either by UiO or another suitable organization, or if NORA should be re-established as an independent legal entity.

4.1 Incentives for changing the structure of NORA

1. Several partners have indicated a willingness to consider reorganizing NORA to align with government requirements for allocating the AI billion in 2025. In this context, an improved chance of securing government base-funding could be a motivation for reorganizing NORA.
2. NORA might appear more “neutral” if it were not affiliated with UiO, or if the secretariate were located outside the UiO campus.
3. New big partners (such as e.g., NTNU) may be more likely to join NORA under another organization form {UiB, UiS}.
4. Although most partners express satisfaction with UiO as a host for NORA, a few partners have earlier expressed dissatisfaction with UiO receiving most of the rewards from NORA-organized activities.
5. According to current NFR regulations, research schools and their administrations must be hosted by the same organization. This has been a problem, as NORA previously wished to host a research schools at a partner university other than UiO (where the secretariate sits). It is, however, unclear if this problem can be solved through a reorganization of NORA. It is possible that it can be solved by proposing that NFR regulations can be changed in the future.
6. We may speculate whether NORA.LLM would have received funding if NORA was an independent unit or hosted, for example, by a national center or institute.
7. Being part of UiO (or some other host organization) limits NORA’s autonomy and flexibility. Establishing NORA as an independent legal entity could make us more flexible when it comes to (i) signing national or international agreements, or (ii) adapting to future demands and changes in the AI landscape. BRREG proposes

that NORA, if established as an independent legal entity, could take an institutional role and possibly become Norway's AI-competent authority¹¹.

8. In the long run, establishing NORA outside UiO could have economic advantages. Today, NORA pays an overhead cost of 40% for having the secretariate employed in administrative positions at UiO. With today's staff, this amounts to roughly 2 million NOK per year. The costs of renting office space, hiring an accountant or other administrative staff (if needed), and purchasing infrastructure, services and resources needed to run NORA as an independent unit might be lower than this (but probably not much lower: see Section 7.5 for a crude estimate).
9. Transitioning NORA into an independent legal entity could offer increased autonomy and flexibility, allowing for strategic decision-making and adaptability in the AI landscape. This status might facilitate direct funding and resource allocation. Some models also open up potential revenue streams if this would be needed, for example temporarily to facilitate technology transfer (see ATI example, Section 7.2). An independent governance structures could also promote accountability and transparency. However, these benefits must be weighed against the challenges and responsibilities associated with operating independently, including increased administrative and regulatory obligations.

4.2 Changes to NORA within a consortium model

The simplest way forward, at least from a legal perspective, is for NORA to keep today's overall structure as a consortium. NORA then maintains access to crucial existing infrastructure through the host institution. A number of organizational changes will still be possible provided that they are agreed upon by the board.

One possible reorganization could be to change host institution. However, most partners consider UiO a suitable host for NORA, and several partners comment that it is difficult to picture an alternative host that is more neutral than UiO.

UiO is willing to remain the hosting institution of NORA but will accept moving NORA to another host institution provided that the new institution has sufficient capacity to handle the risk of employing the NORA secretariate permanently. A relevant alternative could be UiB, who are willing to consider taking over the hosting role if this becomes relevant. However, also UiB considers Oslo to be a good location for NORA since it puts NORA near the authorities and national policy scene.

Staying hosted by UiO (or another single institution) is not per se in conflict with NORA functioning as a national coordinating facility for AI. The Pioneer Center P1 in Denmark,

¹¹ EU AI Act, Article 70: Designation of National Competent Authorities and Single Point of Contact
<https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/article/70>

with the vision to “support world-class artificial intelligence research focusing on societal challenges, people and design while putting Denmark at the international forefront”, has a role similar to what NORA has in Norway, and is hosted by The University of Copenhagen.

A less dramatic restructuring of NORA could be to stick with the UiO as host but move the NORA secretariate to a separate physical location, for example outside the main campus of UiO. This was, for example, done for the Pioneer Center P1 in Denmark, which is legally hosted by the University of Copenhagen, but have separate offices in the Observatory in the Botanical Garden in the center of Copenhagen. In principle, this could convey a better understanding of NORA as an unbiased, national organization which is affiliated with UiO only for practical reasons {UiB} and could improve the situation for some of NORA’s members {OsloMet}. However, the cost of such a move would have to be taken into account {HK}. Most partners deem such a relocation as unnecessary {HiØ, NR, SIMULA, UiS, UiT}, at least as long as NORA does not host researchers/PhD students.

Several of the NORA partners are in favor of keeping NORA as a consortium {HK, NR, SIMULA, UiO, UiT}. One argument is that NORA might lose the privilege to administer the AI research schools if becoming an independent entity {HK}, unless NORA’s work with infrastructure, research-schools etc. could be funded directly from the government {UiS}.

Another argument is that many universities and institutes have AI focus and AI labs or centers already, and that an independent NORA might appear to enter on equal terms with these {SIMULA}. A third argument is that in recent years, several clusters and organizations outside the research- and education sector have taken positions related to AI and draw investments away from research and higher education in AI {UiO}. UiO thinks NORA should remain anchored in the research-and education sector to represent an important counterforce to this trend.

UiO is not in favor of establishing the NORA secretariat as an independent membership organization outside the research & education sector and says that they are likely to leave the NORA consortium if the general assembly prefers such a development.

4.3 Establishing NORA as an independent entity

The alternative to maintaining the consortium model is to cancel the current partner agreement and register NORA at BRREG as an independent entity. Becoming an independent unit could in principle provide a range of benefits, including enhanced autonomy, financial flexibility, and the ability to engage in diverse activities. [EKSEMPLE?]

Changing the organizational structure of network-organizations like NORA is challenging. Since universities and institutes typically have different objectives, the same model will generally not be beneficial for all partners. Moreover, universities and institutes are governed by different laws, which can lead to legal conflicts.

Turning NORA into an independent entity on the partners' initiative will raise a series of challenges related to the funding model and the roles of the NORA partners. For example, to establish NORA as a limited liability company ("aksjeselskap" such as e.g., Sigma2 or Digital Norway: see Section 7.4.3), the partners must enter as stakeholders. To establish NORA as a foundation ("stiftelse" such as e.g., Design and Architecture Norway: see Section 7.4.4), the partners must put money into the fund and make a declaration that specifies the foundation's purpose and how it will be financed. If NORA is to change legal form on the partners' initiative, more viable options might be membership-based organization forms like an association (a "medlemsforening" such as e.g., the Norwegian Smart Grid Center: see Section 7.4.1) or a cooperative ("samvirkelag", such as e.g., Oslo Cancer Cluster: see Section 7.4.2), as these arguably bear stronger resemblances to NORA's current ownership-structure.

Establishing NORA as an independent legal entity will probably be a realistic option only if it happens on initiative - and with financial support - from the government. Ideally, the "new NORA" should then become part of the national budget and have secured base funding from the government. According to BRREG, one could aim for NORA to be established as a non-profit organization that can be funded equally by the Norwegian ministries, Norwegian business federations, and professional associations. In such a scenario, several legal organizational forms might probably be viable options.

As indicated by the example organizations in Section 7.4, organizations performing services that in some regards are comparable to NORA's exist across all organization forms in Norway. To evaluate which form will fit NORA best, we should start by carefully consider (1) what room for maneuver we are unwilling to lose, (2) what room for maneuver that we can accept losing, and (3) what new room for maneuver that we hope to gain through a reorganization¹². All organizational forms have their advantages and disadvantages, and the choice of organization form should be based on NORA's long-term goals, funding needs, and desired flexibility.

We do not in the current report go further into the pros and cons associated with the different organization models, as we believe that converting to a new organization model will require a new report drafted with assistance from financial and legal experts to ensure that all legal requirements and regulations are met in the process. If the board decides to re-establish NORA as an independent organization, NORA partner BRREG has offered to assist in the process. Also, UiO has an agreement with Hjort AS law firm who could aid in the process.

¹² Consultancies with the legal office at UiO.

5 Summary of the replies to the questionnaire

Below, we summarize (question by question) how partners have replied to the questionnaire and highlight some selected viewpoints/suggestions. We note that key viewpoints have already been represented earlier in this report.

Question 1: Who replied?

Replies were received from representatives from:

- Main partners:
 - Kristiania University College (HK)
 - Norwegian Computing Center (NR)
 - Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet)
 - SIMULA Research Laboratory (SIMULA)
 - University of Bergen (UiB),
 - University of Oslo (UiO)
 - University of Stavanger (UiS)
 - The Arctic University of Norway (UiT)
 - Østfold University College (HiØ)
- Strategic partners:
 - Brønnøysundsregistrene (BRREG)
- Collaborative partners¹³:
 - Oslo Cancer Cluster (OCC)

All repliers agreed that their opinions could be included in the report. Replies to specific questions are summarized below.

Question 2: How do you think changes in NORA's organizational structure will impact NORAs ability to work with its core issues related to research, innovation and education?

The repliers expressed different opinions on whether the organization structure is important for NORA's ability to work with its core issues. Some thought it was very important {BRREG, OCC, OsloMet}, some thought it was unimportant {NR, UiO, UiT}, and some suggested it was moderately important {SIMULA, UiB}. HiØ replied that "If the change in organizational structure comes from a wish from the government, the impact would be rather low (score 1 to 2), as specific agreements will have to be made. However, if NORA decides to change organizational structure as an independent agency, then the impact will be rather substantial (4-5)." As the reply from HiØ suggests, the answer to this question may have some dependencies, and for that reason, it may be difficult to interpret what other replies to this question actually mean.

HiØ and UiS suggest that a restructuring of NORA will mainly be relevant if requested by the government. UiB and UiS are not per se in favor of reorganizing NORA, but suggest

¹³ What we refer to as "collaborative partners" have no formal agreement with NORA.

that a reorganization can be relevant if a new big partner puts it up as a requirement to become partner. SIMULA argues that “At the moment it appears that the job of NORA is done. A reevaluation of what to focus on in the future would be important and can make NORA focusing on important next needs for the AI community in Norway.” SIMULA indicates that a restructuring of NORA could be relevant in the next phase.

Question 3: How important is it for NORA to have status as a research organization?

The partners are divided also on this question. NR, OCC, OsloMet, SIMULA and UiT think that having the status of a research organization is not important for NORA. BRREG and HiØ thinks that the importance is moderate. HK, UiB, UiO and UiS deems it to be very important for NORA to maintain this status.

Several partners express concern that the research-organization status puts NORA at risk of becoming a competitor to its members and emphasize that NORA should focus on enabling research within its partner organizations but not be the main applicant for research funding {UiT, OsloMet, BRREG, OCC}. Related remarks were made also by other partners (under different questions in the questionnaire). Hence, there seems to be somewhat of a consensus that NORA should facilitate research but not conduct research.

UiT is also negative to NORA hosting research schools, and states that: “In particular, the secretariat of NORA should help facilitate research projects and the national research school at the partner institutions and not be the host of them, in a similar manner to how Sigma2 facilitates the use of the HPC infrastructure.” Other partners have, however, expressed a positive attitude towards NORA hosting the AI-research school {HK, NR, UiB, UiS}.

Question 4. Should NORA’s primary focus be research, education and innovation, or should we broaden the scope of NORA and focus more on policy/security/regulatory or other issues?

Most partners agree that NORA’s primary focus should remain on research, education and innovation, which are the core activities of the partner institutions. Some partners comment that NORA already has a broader (political) scope, but that we should stick with current strategy {NR, UiB, UiS}. Some partners warn that NORA should focus on the political enablement level and not the operational {OsloMet, UiT}. UiB warns that an increased focus on policy and related issues requires that all member organizations have the same views, and that this will probably not be the case for most issues. “In the case where all members agree and find it important to raise a voice, then NORA can be this voice” {UiB}. UiO thinks that a possible broadening of NORA’s scope will depend on NFR’s decision regarding AI-billion.

Some partners argue that NORA should shift its focus more towards the turnover from research to industry {SIMULA}, or towards accelerating the uptake of published

knowledge on AI by Norwegian organisations {BRREG}. According to SIMULA, “Innovation and related education (e.g., etter- and videreutdanning) is what is currently most needed in Norway. NORA could take an important and needed role enabling quicker turnover from research to innovation. An example could be taking a researcher/innovator in residence and providing with a small team of engineers the means to make a model or algorithm into a product.” {SIMULA}.

Question 5. Should NORA take more responsibility towards large national foundation models?

In line with the opinions expressed under question 3 and 4, most replies to this question go along the line that it is good if NORA takes such responsibilities, as long as it is in the role of an enabler and facilitator that does not compete with the interests of individual partners. OsloMet comments that NORA should work on the political level to highlight the importance of these infrastructures for decision makers. UiO thinks that NORA in principle should not take such responsibilities, but adds that this depends on the NFR-decision regarding the AI-billion.

None of the repliers suggest that NORA should build up competence to take a research-role in this context. HiØ is somewhat open to the possibility that NORA enters in a development role, while SIMULA and BRREG point towards a potential role for NORA as innovation coordinator in this context.

Question 6. Should we aim to organize national research projects e.g., by affiliating researchers directly with NORA?

Many partners are against this {BRREG, HK, NR, OsloMet, UiB, UiO, UiT}. Arguments are that this may bring NORA in conflict with member interests, or that it is outside of NORA’s mandate.

OCC and UiS are positive to the idea. SIMULA is not open to this idea in a research-setting, but suggest that it might be relevant in an innovation setting: “Maybe quick turnover from research to industry. E.g. a researchers have developed a new model, in a 20% affiliation this will be turned into a service (e.g. NB-Whisper from NB).” HiØ is open to the idea provided that it comes as government initiative, but points out that NORA must not become a competitor to individual NORA partners.

Question 7A. How likely is it that your institution supports NORA 10 years?

Respondents were asked to rate this from 1 (not likely) to 5 (very likely), and it appears that NORA will keep most of its partners. The ratings were: 5 {OsloMet, UiO, UiB, HK, OCC}, 4 {BRREG, HiØ, UiS}, 3-4 {NR}, 3 {SIMULA}. NR and UiT replied that this

depends on NORAs mandate in the future, and UiO replied that it depends on the AI-billion-process.

Question 7B. Will the (future) organizational form of NORA affect this?

According to UiB and UiS, the organization-form is not important as long as NORA does not change in a way that diminishes the value of being a partner. In contrast, NR, OsloMet and UiT fear that some organizational structures can cause NORA to come in conflict with the interests of individual members. BRREG, NR, OCC, OsloMet, UiT, and UiO indicated that the organizational form will be critical for their future participation. HiØ, SIMULA and HK replied that they were unsure.

The variation in the responses probably reflect varying expectations of how much the organization forms will affect NORA's ability to work in a way that facilitates its members' interests rather than strong general opinions about organization forms as such.

According to HiØ, the best long-term option is for NORA to secure continuity by receiving funding from the government (perhaps, through this, indicating that the organizational form may be of secondary importance). Also OsloMet, UiB and UiS indicate that government funding could motivate an organizational change.

UiO replied that they are not in favor of establishing the NORA secretariat as an independent membership organization outside the research- and education sector, as they believe that this will inhibit NORA's ability to work in the benefit of this sector. UiO stated that if the majority of NORA's partners prefer such a development, it is highly likely that UiO will not wish to continue participating.

Question 8A: Should NORA remain a consortium affiliated with UiO?

Many partners think that this is the best solution {HiØ, HK, NR, UiB, UiO, UiS}, at least as long as the government does not decide otherwise {HiØ}. HiØ also commented that NORA currently works well, and that changing it poses a risk.

BRREG, SIMULA OsloMet and OCC would favor NORA not being hosted by UiO. BRREG thinks that NORA should become an independent unit. OsloMet argues that "being organized under UiO gives NORA the ability to compete with its members on both research, innovation and education. We therefore believe NORA is better organized outside UiO." Contrarily, NR argues conflict of interests between NORA and the current members can occur if NORA becomes an independent entity.

UiT speaks in favor of a more distributed hosting, suggesting that a major part of the secretariat should be distributed and hosted by other partners. Also HiØ suggests this as a possible option.

UiO's reply to this question is that they will accept another hosting arrangement (among the partners) provided that the new host has the necessary capacity.

Question 8B: Should NORA be moved to a separate physical location, and if so, where?

Most partners (at least those in favor of keeping NORA hosted by one of its partners) see no point in moving the NORA secretariate to a new location {HiØ, NR, OCC, SIMULA, UiS, UiT}, while some {HK, UiB and OsloMet} are open to the idea. The argument for not changing location is that a change in location will not make much of a difference, at least as long as NORA does not host researchers and PhD-students. Arguments for changing location is that this "may improve situation for non-members" {OsloMet} or that it "would give a better understanding of NORA as an unbiased, national organization that is attached to UiO only for practical reasons" {UiB}. HK and UiB comment that moving the secretariate is only viable if such a transfer is not too costly or impractical.

Question 9. Should NORA be a consortium under a "more neutral" host institution than UiO?

Many partners indicate that UiO is the preferred host if NORA is to remain a consortium like today {HiØ, HK, NR, OsloMet, UiB, UiO}. A key argument (made in some form by HiØ, HK, OsloMet and UiB) is that no other host will be more neutral (or less unneutral) than UiO. HK stresses that if NORA is to change host organization, then all the partners must be invited to stand for election.

In contrast, SIMULA suggests Digital Norway (with a focus on innovation and implementation) or Sigma2 (option with a similar focus but a more focused role on models as infrastructure) as new and "more neutral" hosts for NORA. Also OCC think that a "more neutral" host would be desirable, and suggests that NORA could be directly under some ministry or NFR.

HiØ is of the opinion that NORA should stay as it is unless otherwise is requested by the government but suggests that NORA in principle could be co-hosted by all partner organizations. UiT advocates more strongly for a future where NORA is co-hosted among its partners, and with a distributed secretariate.

UiB states that the most important goal of an organizational change for NORA should be to get NTNU on board as a member. UiB suggests that a change in host organization is relevant only if this is what it takes to recruit NTNU. Also NR comments that NTNU-membership would be beneficial. Also UiS (under question 10) expressed a willingness to consider a re-organization of NORA if a "new big partner" puts it up as a requirement to become partner.

UiB also proposes that they could become a new host for NORA if this is desirable, but note that they are pleased with UiO as the host of NORA.

Question 10. Should NORA become an independent entity?

HK, NR, SIMULA, UiO and UiT do not think that NORA should become an independent entity. HK comments that “it is important that NORA has the research school, and this will probably not be possible with another organization such as an independent entity”. SIMULA argues that NORA should not be an independent entity since “many universities and institutes have AI focus and AI labs or centers already”. Likewise, NR argues that if NORA becomes an independent entity, conflict of interests between NORA and the current members can occur.

HiØ thinks that NORA should become independent only if this is expressed as a wish from the government. Similarly, UiS thinks NORA should become independent only if funded directly from the government or if a new big partner sets it up as a criterion to join.

OCC are in favor of an organizational change, but comments that this must be based on practical and financial government support. Similarly, OsloMet favors an independent NORA, but indicate that this may depend on governmental funding: “governmental support for establishing NORA as a joint platform for research, education and innovation within AI would be a significant step.” {OsloMet}.

UiB comments that NORA could become an independent entity since: “if it is practically possible and doable without increasing the costs for partner institutions, this could give more credibility to the independence and impartiality of NORA”. BRREG advocates for NORA being reestablished as an independent entity based on the argument that “NORA’s structure must provide more institutional accountability and independence than its current form”.

NR comments that “if it is seen as important to leave the UiO affiliation, we would alternatively suggest NORA to become a *medlemsorganisasjon*, formally organized as a *Forening*.” NR comments that Oslo Science City is a successful example of such an organization form and encourages NORA to explore this option.

HiØ comments that if NORA becomes independent, they would prefer it to be established as a foundation (“stiftelse”). OsloMet would prefer NORA to become a non-profit limited company (“ideelt aksjeselskap”) or an association (“forening”). OCC propose that NORA could be established as a cooperative (“samvirke”), suggesting themselves as an inspirational model. UiS and UiT suggest that if NORA goes independent, the best solution might be to become a limited company (“aksjeselskap”). Here UiS proposes Sigma2 as an inspirational model.

6 Comments from the NORA secretariate

The NORA-secretariate enjoys the benefits and security that come with having permanent positions at UiO, but are not per se against a future reorganization of NORA should this be of the partners' interest.

The secretariate does, however, wish to comment one issue raised in this report: We are not in favor of a model with a distributed secretariate, particularly concerning the core team. Currently, we have cultivated a strong and harmonious team dynamic, where members collaborate effectively, fulfill complementary roles, and can cover for each other when needed. We believe that a distributed model could challenge our team-identity and reduce work efficiency, a sentiment echoed by former staff from Digital Life Norway with experience in such a model.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that a distributed secretariat might offer certain advantages. If the secretariat expands with new roles, for instance, to manage interactions between NORA and new AI centers or among the centers, it would be sensible for these positions to be affiliated with various partner organizations beyond UiO.

7 Reference material

7.1 AI coordination in the other Nordic countries

Other Nordic AI initiatives that are most comparable to NORA include WASP in Sweden, the Pioneer Center P1 in Denmark, FCAI in Finland and CADIA in Iceland. The Swedish, Finnish and Danish initiatives are quite large, with budgets on the order of 500 million Euros for WASP, 250 million Euros (FCAI), and 50 million Euros (P1). Like NORA, the abovementioned initiatives are national, and have a focus on research, education and research-driven innovation.

FCAI is a Finish Flagship program, aimed at fostering innovation and facilitating research and collaborations between research institutions and industry. Compared to NORA, FCAI is more directed towards industry. Flagship programs have similar time-scopes (~8 years), funding schemes (national research council + contributions from industry partners + possibly other national sources), and focus on research-industry collaborations similarly to Norwegian Centers for Research-based Innovation (SFIs).

In comparison, Danish Pioneer Centers have a stronger emphasis on high-quality, fundamental research, and pursuit of scientific excellence, and may be more aligned with Norwegian Centers of Excellence (SFFs). Their funding scheme is a national undertaking and involves contributions from the Danish Ministry of Higher Education, partner universities, and 5 private foundations. P1 has been granted secured funding for 13 years.

WASP sticks out by being through the Wallenberg-foundation. With a strong focus on research and education, WASP is by far the largest individual research program in Sweden and is partnered with both universities and actors from the private industry. By organization, it may to some degree resemble NFR's special research programs, although the funding and time scope of WASP is on a whole different level.

Organization-wise, NORA is a different creature than the abovementioned initiatives. While FCAI, WASP and P1 funnel money to research, the NORA budget of about 10 million NOK annually covers the services provided by the secretariate and is primarily covered by membership fees paid by the partner institutions.

Like SFEs and SFIs, Finnish Flagships and Danish Pioneer Centers are hosted by a single research institution, which for FCAI is Aalto University (in close collaboration with the University of Helsinki and VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland), and for P1 is The University of Copenhagen. In this way, the Finnish and Danish initiatives resemble NORA, while WASP sticks out in being run with a higher degree of autonomy.

Unlike the others, CADIA operates as a center within a single university (The University of Reykjavik) and is more focused on conducting specific research projects and academic programs.

7.2 Alan Turing Institute (UK)

The Alan Turing Institute, with which NORA has a collaborative agreement, is the national institute for data science and artificial intelligence in the UK. While NORA functions as a network comprising a coalition of Norwegian academic and research institutions, the ATI is a more centralized organization, anchoring its activities around its headquarters in London. The ATI directly partners with key stakeholders across sectors, but operates as an independent, not-for-profit entity that serves as a hub for AI and data science research. As a centralized institute, it also provides physical spaces and infrastructure conducive to collaborative research.

Originally, ATI covered basically all aspects of the AI field. However, the AI Safety Institute in the UK, established in 2023 is taking over many of the safety aspects.

For the topic of the current report, it may be interesting to note that ATI was established as a charity, but today also has an interconnected corporate entity, Turing Innovations Ltd. While the charity status grants ATI certain tax benefits, opportunities to receive

charitable donations, etc., the corporate unit focuses on commercial activities that arise from the institute's research and innovations. This can include the commercialization of research outputs, engaging in partnerships with industry, and facilitating technology transfer. Turing Ltd is for example used to assist ATI-affiliated researchers to establish startup companies. The proceeds from Turing Innovations Ltd typically support the charitable activities of the institute, reinforcing its (non-profit) research and educational objectives¹⁴.

7.3 Helmholtz Information & Data Science Academy (Germany)

HIDA is Germany's largest network for information and data science training in research. HIDA is registered as organization within the Helmholtz Association, Germany's largest research organization. Unlike NORA, which operates as a university-hosted consortium, HIDA is an independent entity with its own administrative structure. Through formal institutional partnerships with multiple research centers and universities, HIDA coordinates activities across six Helmholtz Information & Data Science Schools (HIDSS).

HIDA's model demonstrates how a data and AI-focused organization can operate effectively as an independent entity while maintaining strong connections to research institutions and coordinating educational initiatives across multiple locations. If it is decided that NORA should be reorganized, the organizational structure of HIDA could serve as an inspiration.

7.4 Inspirational model organizations in Norway

Below, we present some model organizations that may serve as inspirational if we at some point decide to change the organizational structure of NORA. The list is not exhaustive and is in some respect arbitrary. We have focused on organizations that resemble NORA in the sense that they to a large extent (i) work as facilitators/enablers within a specific field, (ii) are not predominantly research-organizations, (iii) are connected to several partner organizations, and (iv) work across and between other types of institutions without competing with them.

7.4.1 Norwegian Smart Grid Center: “medlemsforening”

Organization-wise, there are similarities between NORA and Norwegian industry associations such as IKT-Norge, Abelia, Norwegian Oil and Gas Association and The

¹⁴ Three members from the NORA secretariate visited ATI in January 2025 and discussed the rationale with this split (charity + ltd) organization structure.

Federation of Norwegian Industries to mention some. These are all membership-based organizations that have a large number of member companies and receive a substantial proportion of their funding through membership fees. Unlike NORA, the above-mentioned organizations have their main focus on advocating for industry interests, where NORA is more focused on facilitating collaborations and knowledge exchange.

An organization with a mandate more relatable to NORA's is the Norwegian Smart Grid Center (NSGC). NSGC is a membership-based non-profit association ("medlemsforening") for R&E ("FoU") institutions, companies, organizations, and public entities that wish to work towards the association's goals. Like NORA, NSGC focuses on research, development, and collaboration without having financial gain as its main objective. NSGC usually does not conduct its own research but rather facilitates and coordinates research activities carried out by its members and partners, organizes seminars, workshops, and conferences to disseminate knowledge and promote discussion, builds bridges between academia and industry, and helps to identify research needs, develop research agendas, and seek funding from national and international sources.

The organization-form "medlemsforening" allows for flexibility and collaboration across sectors and provides the opportunity to seek funding from both public and private sources. In the replies to the questionnaire, NR and OsloMet proposed "medlemsforening" as a possible future organization form for NORA.

7.4.2 Oslo Cancer Cluster: "samvirkelag"

Another membership-based organization form is that of a cooperative ("samvirkelag"). A relevant example for comparison with NORA is Oslo Cancer Cluster (OCC). Rather than conducting research itself, OCC serves as a facilitator and coordinator of efforts towards improved cancer treatments, thus having a role somewhat similar to NORA although in a different field. Replying to the questionnaire, OCC suggested that NORA could consider the possibility of becoming a "samvirkelag", suggesting themselves as an inspirational model.

While both are membership-based, a key difference between associations and cooperations, is that associations tend to be non-profit and tailored to promote the member's interest, while cooperations can distribute economic dividends to members based on their use of the cooperative. While cooperatives are regulated by the Cooperative Act, associations are not regulated by specific law, but by general association legal principles.

7.4.3 Sigma 2 and Digital Norway: "aksjeselskap"

Other inspirational models for NORA could be Sigma2 and Digital Norway, both established as limited companies ("aksjeselskap").

NORA and Sigma2 could be said to have complementary roles in the Norwegian AI-landscape: While Sigma2 takes responsibilities for the hardware-part of AI infrastructure, NORA takes responsibilities for the software-part through its R&E-focus. NORA and Sigma2 are in good relationship and have collaborated (together with other partners) in developing AI infrastructure via the NFR project Norwegian AI-cloud (stipend number: 322336).

Sigma2 was originally established as a government-owned non-profit limited company which in practice was a continuation of the NOTUR project (Norwegian Metacenter for Computational Science), a high-performance-computing infrastructure project hosted by NTNU in partnership with Meteorologisk Institutt and the universities in Oslo, Bergen and Tromsø. Following a series of re-structuring and fusions, Sigma2 AS is currently a limited company (“aksjeselskap”) and a daughter company of SIKT. Sigma2 is owned by the Ministry of Education and Research, whilst receiving contributions from the universities in Bergen, Oslo, Tromsø and NTNU. In the replies to the questionnaire, UiS and UiT commented that if NORA goes independent, the best solution might be to become a limited company (“aksjeselskap”), and UiS proposed Sigma2 as an inspirational model. Also OsloMet suggested a non-profit limited company (“ideelt aksjeselskap”) as a possible organization form for NORA.

Another “aksjeselskap” that can be compared with NORA is Digital Norway, as both are organizations that bring together multiple institutions. Like NORA, Digital Norway coordinates efforts across different organizations rather than conducting their own primary activities, and both entities facilitate sharing of expertise and capabilities across member organizations. While both NORA and Digital Norway include partners from both the academic and industry sectors, Digital Norway has a much stronger industry focus. NORA has a stronger academic focus and operates under a different legal structure with much stronger university backing.

It may be interesting to note that the Alan Turing Institute in the UK (ATI) was established as a charity, but today has an interconnected corporate entity, Turing Innovations Ltd, which allows certain commercial activities to arise from the institute's research and innovations (see more in Section 8.2).

7.4.4 Design and Architecture Norway: “stiftelse”

Replying to the questionnaire, HiØ suggested that foundation (“stiftelse”) could be an attractive organization form if NORA were to be reorganized in the future. Several research organizations in Norway are formally organized as foundations, well-known examples being Sintef and Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center.

A foundation that might more comparable with NORA is Design and Architecture Norway (DOGA). DOGA was founded to promote understanding, knowledge and use of design and architecture in business and society at large. Like NORA, a main goal of DOGA is to coordinate and facilitate collaboration between actors within its specific field. DOGA

runs award programs, organizes, exhibitions, conferences, and workshops, and resembles NORA in their focus on knowledge sharing and competence building.

7.5 Economy of renting “private” office space for NORA

UiO’s overhead cost for hosting the NORA secretariate (currently eight persons) is roughly two million NOK per year. We here give a crude estimate the cost of breaking out from this hosting arrangement and renting new offices for the secretariate.

Office rental depends on desired standard and location, but Scout Eiendom’s “Space finder”¹⁵ gives an estimate that central office space for eight persons in Oslo (including electricity, office furniture, cleaning and service charges) will be about 730.000 NOK per year.

In addition, we may assume that access to various digital tools such as Chat GPT, Claude, Nettskjema, Fritt, Office packages, management tools (e.g., Astana or Monday), Communication tools (e.g., Zoom), cloud storage and security (VPN-solution) will be in the order of 100.000-150.000 NOK per year.

We might also need staff for accounting and system administration, but needs like this can probably be covered through rented services or employees hired in reduced position, amounting to, say, 500.000 NOK per year.

After the initial setup costs, annual costs for office equipment such as computers, phones, monitors and printers may be estimated to about 100.000 NOK per year.

With the numbers above, the cost of running NORA outside of UiO is just below 1,5 million NOK per year. We note that the secretariate, in such an arrangement, have lost certain privileges such as access to use the Fritt-platform¹⁶, access to UiO’s legal services, the access to various scientific journals that comes with the UiO-affiliation, and the use of UiO premises for hosting events. We also note that the numbers above are conjectures (based on googling and questions to Chat GPT and Claude), and have not been subject to thorough calculations.

¹⁵ <https://scouteiendom.no/#spacefinder>

¹⁶ <https://www.ub.uio.no/skrive-publisere/open-access/fritt/>