



# DION onboarding survey report

Report about the settling process at NTNU as experienced by new temporary employees.

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## Summary and main findings

In this survey analysis, DION sheds light on how much time new temporary scientific employees at NTNU need to settle in. We investigate how much and which kind of support they received, how the different types of support increase or decrease settling times and if there are differences based on job position and citizenship. Overall, the analysis shows that citizens from the EU/EAA or outside of EU/EAA and Norwegians have similar experiences, with the exception for challenges that are unique to being a foreigner in a new country. Scandinavian citizens struggled the most and were the most dissatisfied with the settling process. PhD candidates and Post-Docs shared the same experiences regarding how fast and easily they settled in. The type of help new employees receive has a strong influence on the time needed to settle in. Receiving a written guide reduced settling times dramatically. Participants also thought that the settling process was quite inefficient. If the process was more efficient, most participants estimated that they could have saved up to 50% of their time during the settling process in the first months. This suggests that NTNU should provide an overhauled written guide to all new employees when or before they start working at NTNU.

## Background

A DION-project was started in 2017, lead by Ray Pritchard, concerning the onboarding experiences of new employees. The initial proposal was to create a university-wide guide, based on the good examples found in departments such as the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. However, after discussions with multiple HR representatives at the faculty and central administration level together with NIRS it was found that such a document would very quickly become out of date. The DION board still felt like this was an important topic and decided to conduct a survey.

After a first analysis, the DION board took the topic up again in 2019, this time to greater success. The different faculty representatives showed themselves open to implementing new measures after seeing the results of the onboarding survey that DION conducted. In addition, Marit Martinsen of the NV-faculty was able to show what the NTNU onboarding project is currently doing. The onboarding project was started in 2017 and aims to improve the uptake of new employees. The project is set to run until the end of 2021.

The results of the survey will be presented in this report. The survey was distributed in early April 2018 via the email list for all PhDs (in connection with the AGM promotion), in addition to Facebook. As of the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, 212 responses were received.

## Results and Discussion

### Demographics

The survey got 212 responses, and the majority of the participants to the survey have been PhD (60%, see Figure 1). The other two well-represented groups are the Student Assistants (14%) and Postdoc (13%). The responses were also categorized by citizenship. It could be seen that the majority of responses came from people with Norwegian citizenship (or permanent resident permit) (46%), then 26% of EU/EEA citizens, 24% of non-EU/EEA and a small percentage of other Scandinavian countries (4%, see Figure 2).

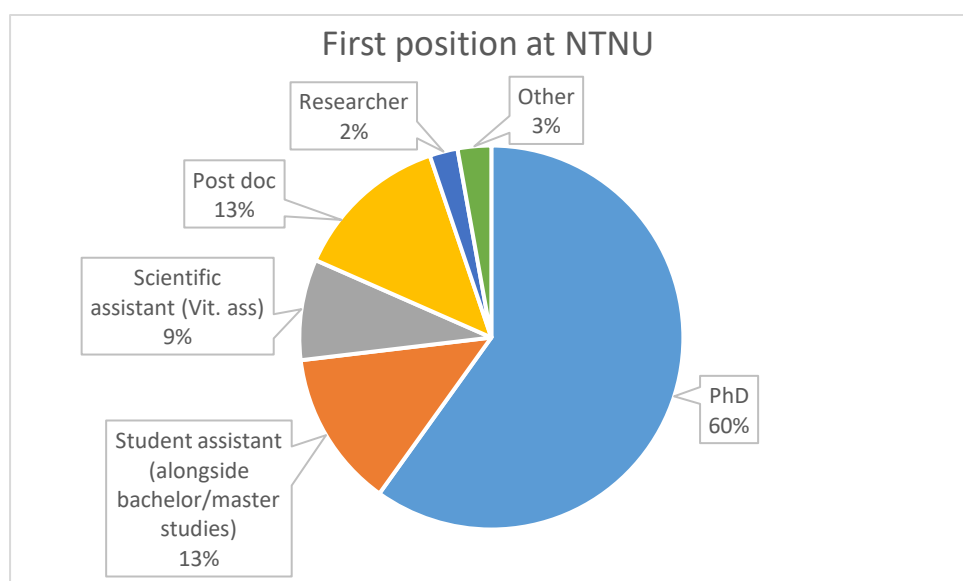


Figure 1: Distribution of answers to the survey by position held at NTNU. The main share of answers comes from PhD candidates. The category "other" includes project managers, HR, and lectors.

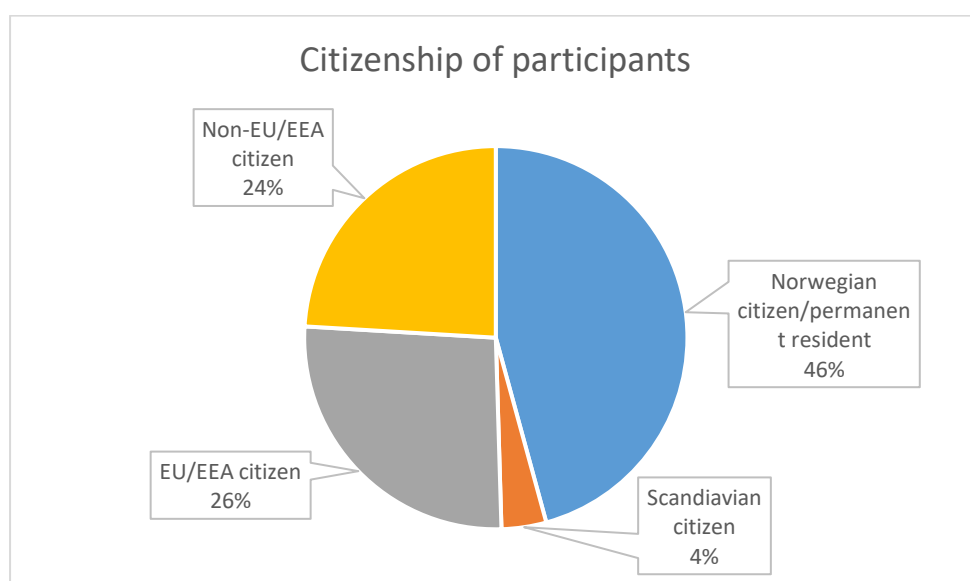


Figure 2: Responses categorized by citizenship. The majority of responses came from people with Norwegian citizenship or participants holding a permanent residence.

### Time needed to settle in

When moving to a new country, people face different types of challenges than people who have been living in that country for their whole life. To see how natives and foreigners feel about the onboarding process at NTNU and how much time the different groups needed to settle in, the data set was analyzed based on citizenship.

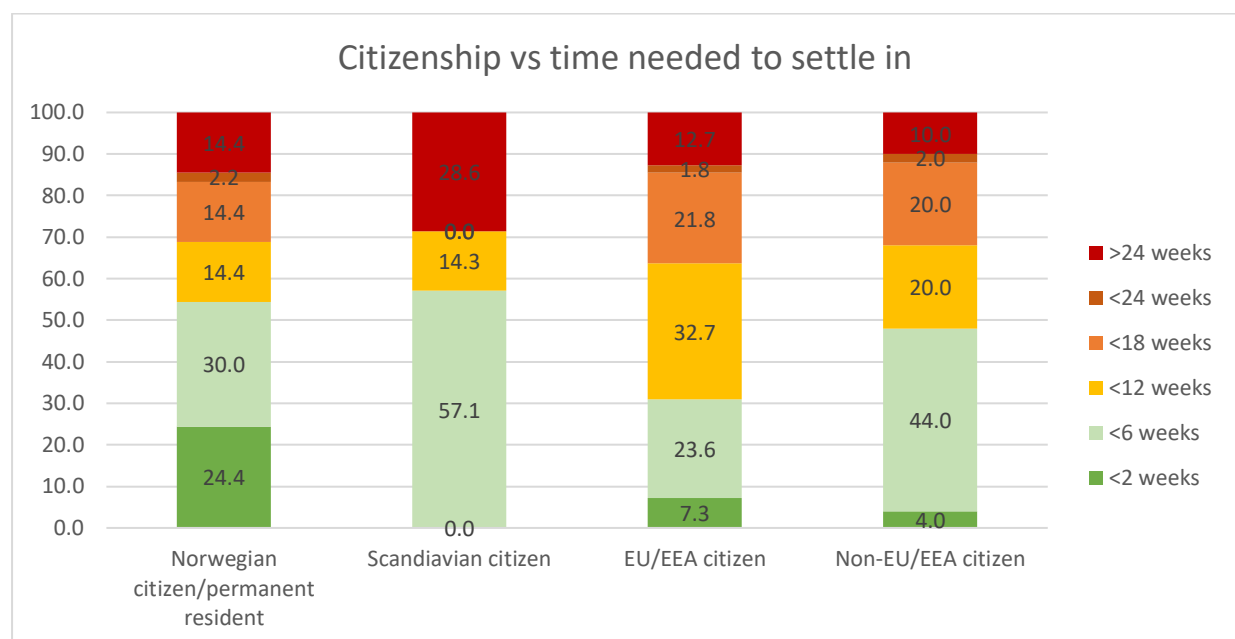
Participants were asked to estimate the amount of time they needed to settle in fully. The time needed to settle in fully spans from arriving at NTNU until finishing with all bureaucratic work. The estimated time to settle in averaged at around 10 weeks. The results show that Norwegians are the fastest to settle in, followed by non-EU/EEA citizens (see Figure 3). Non-EU/EEA citizens take more time Norwegians to settle in, but less time than the EU/EEA citizens despite potential problems with visas. 54% of participants stemming from a non-EU/EEA were done with all necessary work within 6 weeks. In contrast, only 33% of EU/EEA citizens managed to stay within 6 weeks. The group that overall seemed to struggle the most were participants from a Scandinavian country other than Norway. In this group, no one managed to settle in within the first 6 weeks. It should be noted that all groups had respondents that needed longer than 24 weeks to settle in fully.

The numbers are to some extent reflected in the additional comment participants of the survey provided. Generally, temporary employees have positive feedback on their startup experience: 50% or more found starting at NTNU straightforward or good, and 20-30% of respondents experienced minor issues without major delays (see Figure 4). Scandinavians are the exception to this. The majority of Scandinavian citizens (50%) consider their initial experience as bad or poor, and only 25% found starting at NTNU straightforward or good. Interestingly, the group that gave the most positive comments overall were non-EU/EEA citizens. Here, approximately two thirds found their experiences straightforward or good.

We assume that this finding can be explained by a different cultural background and which type of help is offered by NTNU. First of all, a citizen from a Scandinavian country may have different expectations on how smooth things should work out in contrast to what non-Scandinavian citizens may expect given their upbringing. This can also be seen when comparing the results in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Norwegians were by far the fastest to settle in overall, 30% of people used less than 2 weeks to settle in, another almost 30% used less than 6 weeks. But only 50% of Norwegians found their experience positive, 10% of which found it problem-free. In contrast to that, only about 10% of the non-EU/EEA citizens managed to settle in within the first two weeks. Another 45% used less than 6 weeks. However, more than 60% in this group found their experience positive, of which 25% found

it problem-free. These results suggest cultural background can influence how people perceive a similar situation.

Generally, we think that NTNU is good at supporting foreign employees. The NTNU International Researchers Support (NIRS) offers help specifically tailored to the needs of foreign employees. The results suggest that NIRS is very helpful for the group of non-EU/EAA citizens. While it is positive that many foreign employees manage to settle in at NTNU within a similar time frame to Norwegians, the results suggest that non-Norwegian Scandinavians struggle with the onboarding process and should receive more support from administrative staff or NIRS.



*Figure 3: Graph showing the distribution of needed settling time within the different participant groups. Norwegian participants overall were fastest to settle in, followed by non-EU/EAA citizens. Participants from the EU or EAA needed longer and Scandinavian participants (not Norwegian) needed the longest.*

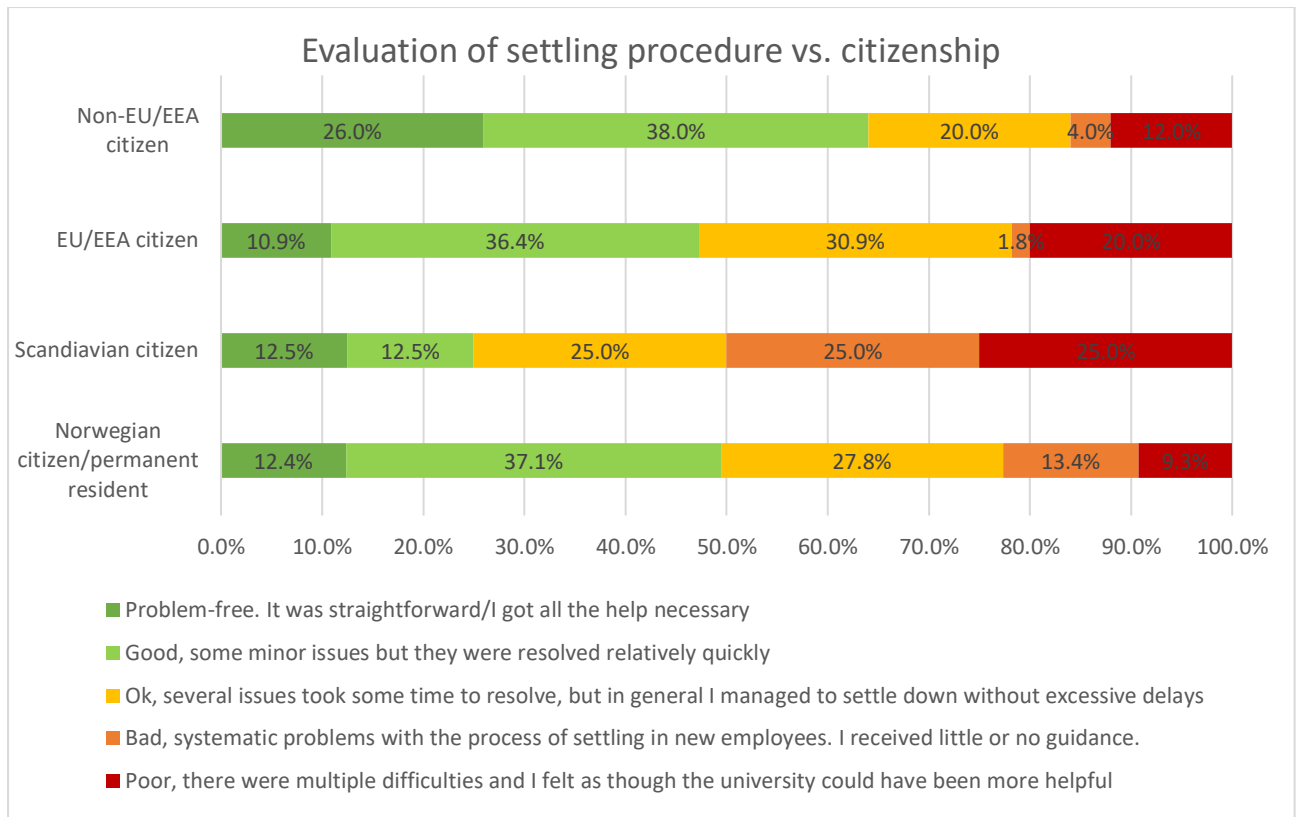


Figure 4: Graph showing the distribution of perceived easiness of the settling process within the different participant groups. Participants from a non-EU/EEA country were the most positive about their experience. The groups of EU/EEA citizens and Norwegians experienced the situation similarly to each other. Straightforward and good were the answers of almost half the people in these groups. Scandinavian citizens gave a similar answer for the problem-free category but otherwise rated the process worse than any other group.

## Difficulties during the settling process

### Challenges for Norwegian citizens and non-Norwegian citizens

To see how natives and foreigners feel about the onboarding process at NTNU and what types of challenges they find the most difficult, the data set was analyzed based on citizenship. Participants were asked how challenging they found the following categories:

- Getting a computer/access to IT resources
- Getting an office space
- Getting access to other facilities (other floors, computer rooms, laboratories, etc.)
- Using PAGA
- Understanding how the tax system works
- Getting an access card
- Ordering travel for work
- Getting an NTNU email address
- Registering for PhD courses
- Meeting colleagues in my department

The challenge rating included the categories “Very straightforward”, “Somewhat straightforward”, “Neutral”, “Somewhat difficult”, “Very difficult”.

The data set was split into two roughly equally sized groups: Norwegian citizens and permanent residents in one group, and Scandinavian citizens, EU/EAA citizens, and non-EU/EAA citizens in the other group.

Overall, the answers given by the two groups are very similar (see Figure 5). Some challenges are overwhelmingly perceived as easy, such as “Getting an office space” or “Getting an NTNU email address”, with more than 80% of participants finding these challenges very or somewhat straightforward to handle. In general, none of the categories seems to be extremely challenging for everyone. Most challenges are perceived as easy by at least half of new temporary employees at NTNU. However, some areas were difficult to many respondents. Using PAGA and getting access to IT resources was perceived as difficult by almost one-third of the participants. Even more new employees found it difficult to order travel for work. These challenges could be made easier through better information online and help provided in written guidance or through the administrative staff.

There was only one category which showed an outstanding difference in the answers given by either Norwegian citizens or non-Norwegians. “Understanding how the tax system works” is perceived as either somewhat- or very difficult by only 16% of Norwegians. This contrasts with 57% of non-Norwegians answering in the same categories.

Presumably, most Norwegian citizens are already familiar with the tax system before they start working at NTNU, and have access to ample resources concerning taxes. Meanwhile, it is not immediately clear why taxes is so difficult for non-Norwegians. It could be that there is too little comprehensive information present to inform non-Norwegians sufficiently. In addition, the online service might provide bad support in English. This is a challenge, where more has to be done to support non-Norwegians. NTNU's International Researcher Support (NIRS) is offering annual seminars to help non-Norwegians with exactly this challenge. Every year, when the tax report comes in, they get people from Skatteetaten (Norwegian Tax office) to come and explain how the system works. They also arrange one-on-one sessions with people who have further questions and officials from Skatteetaten. This practice has been in place for the past 10 years. However, 2020 will be the first year where Skatteetaten has decided to not offer any in- person seminars for groups of users like internationals (information received via NIRS). This is concerning, seeing the numbers of international researchers at NTNU who are struggling with the tax system despite receiving help from institutions such as NIRS. The tax office has made an effort to make more information available on their website, including making the information available in more languages, such as Lithuanian,



Polish, Romanian and Russia besides English and Norwegian. It would be interesting to see how the change in 2020 would affect the numbers of non-Norwegians who struggle with the tax system after this change.

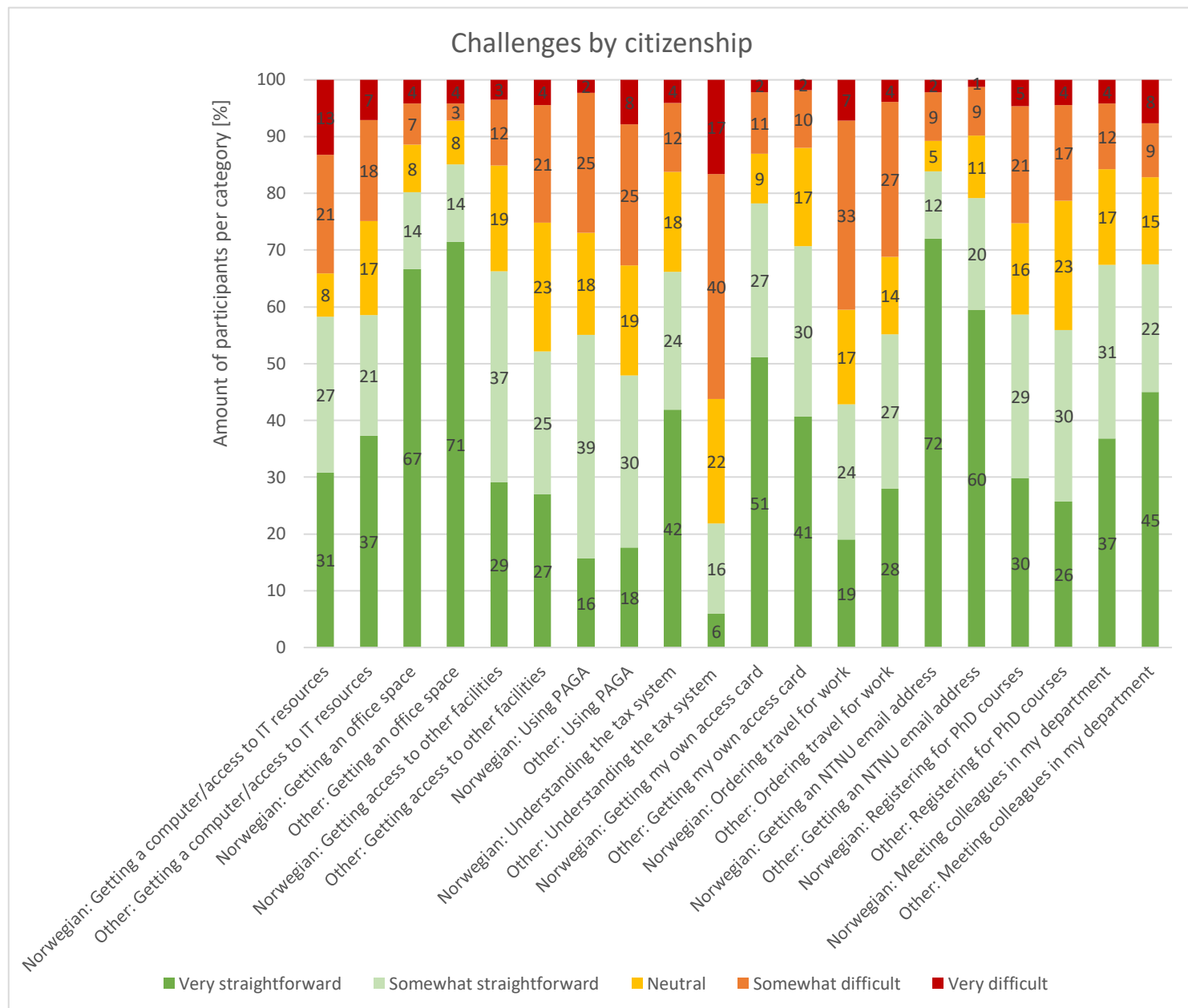


Figure 5: Challenges as they are perceived by new employees holding a Norwegian citizenship or residence permit and new employees who do not (Scandinavian, EU/EAA, non-EU/EAA). Most of the challenges are perceived with the same degree of difficulty by both groups. The main difference lies in understanding how the tax system works, which is much easier for Norwegian citizens.

### Challenges for non-Norwegian citizens

Some challenges, like getting a personal ID number, are only challenges when one moves to a new country. DION has asked survey participants to rate the challenge of some topics that are specifically a challenge for foreigners. These included:

- Getting a GP (doctor or fastlege)
- Finding accommodation
- Getting my tax documents
- Opening a Norwegian bank account
- Getting a SIM card
- Police station service for foreigners
- Getting a place on the Norwegian course
- Finding a kindergarten/school place
- Getting D-number
- Getting a personal ID number

The challenge rating included the categories “Very straightforward”, “Somewhat straightforward”, “Neutral”, “Somewhat difficult”, “Very difficult”.

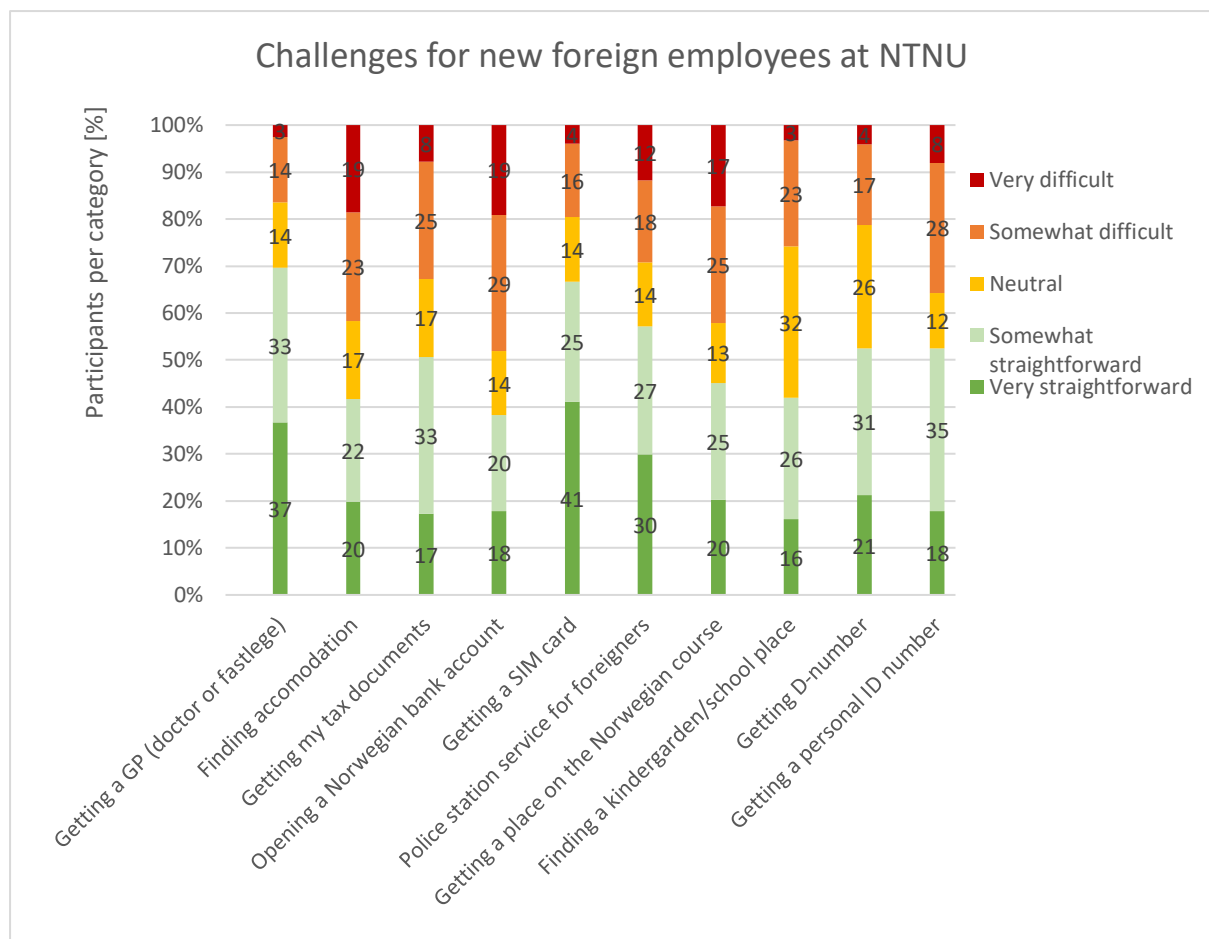


Figure 6: Challenges and their difficulty as they are perceived by new from Scandinavian, EU/EAA or non-EU/EAA. Most of the challenges are perceived quite difficult with few being very easy. The most difficult challenges are setting up a Norwegian bank account and getting a spot in a Norwegian language class.

When it comes to analyzing the answers from the foreigners (including Scandinavian citizens), to the challenges listed above, it can be seen that most of the categories are perceived as harder to deal with than the categories reported in Figure 5. Only getting a GP (fastlege) and a SIM card are very easy for foreigners.

The challenge perceived as most difficult is to open a bank account, half of participants found it very or somewhat difficult (see Figure 6). This might be since in Norway, to open a bank account, one first has to go through a quite long process, since one needs a Norwegian ID to be able to open a bank account. This carries some other challenges behind it. For some it might mean going without a salary until the bank account has been set up. Additionally, a bank account is necessary for access to other services to other services, such as getting a phone contract.

The next most difficult challenges are finding accommodation and getting a place on the Norwegian course, both with 42% of participants finding it very or somewhat difficult. Getting accommodation when not residing in the same city is always a challenge. It is impossible to physically look at flats and there could also be a language barrier when trying to rent in the private market. However, this is very difficult to give aid with. NTNU is already doing quite a lot here by offering some amount of temporary housing for foreign employees. NTNU owns some building complexes, which have flats of different sizes to accommodate single-person households or even families. Foreign employees can apply online for temporary housing in these flats<sup>1</sup>. This offer is a unique offer, DION is not aware of any other university offering anything like this. Still, the flats owned by NTNU/SINTEF Boligstiftelsen are not enough to accommodate all new foreign employees.

Another challenging topic is getting a place in the Norwegian language course. English is widely spoken in Norway and specifically at university. However, the teaching of many university courses happens in Norwegian and the private industry handles most things in Norwegian. Therefore, many foreigners try to learn Norwegian to some extent, specifically if they plan to stay in Norway for an extended period. Unfortunately, NTNU does not do a good job providing the necessary access to a Norwegian class to its foreign employees. There are many challenges that employees have to deal with, which become very apparent when NTNU is compared to other Norwegian universities. Most of the other big Norwegian universities offer courses specifically targeted at their employees. Employees either have priority to get into the course or they offer courses for employees only and to employee-friendly times (outside of normal working hours). However, none of this applies to NTNU. Norwegian language courses at NTNU are targeted at an international student group and only take place during working hours at the Dragvoll campus. This is problematic for several reasons. First of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://innsida.ntnu.no/wiki/-/wiki/English/Help+your+employees+find+housing>

all, the course spots are limited, and employees do not have priority to get in. So, some employees do not get access to the supported course at NTNU. Secondly, the courses only take place during working hours such as between 9-12 twice a week with mandatory attendance. In addition to that, courses take place only at Dragvoll campus, which is situated at the periphery of Trondheim and hosts fewer employees than Gløshaugen. This means most employees need to spend extra time during their working hours to get there and back to work. All these factors together make the Norwegian language course situation at NTNU challenging for foreign employees. It is possible to take language courses that are offered by other institutions. However, these cost extra money which is commonly not supported or paid for by NTNU.

### The influence of different factors on settling time

#### Influence of the different form of guidance on the settling process

Survey participants were asked what type of guidance they received to help them settle in at NTNU. They were also asked to estimate how much time they could have saved if they had received more or different guidance. Overall it can be seen that more than half of the employees need longer than 12 weeks to settle in at NTNU (see Figure 7). Alarming, 13% of participants reported that they needed more than 6 months (>24 weeks) to settle in. The survey reveals a correlation between the type of guidance new employees receive when they settle in and the amount of time, they spend in the settling process. New employees spend less time settling in if they receive a written guide comparing to receiving other types of help (e.g., help from administrative or non-administrative staff or both, see Figure 8). Receiving written guidance before or after the official starting date, helps new employees to settle in within 7-8 weeks on average. Without this form of guidance, the time new employees spend to settle in increases by up to one month, from 7 to 11 weeks. An interesting finding is that the trained administrative staff is only a little more helpful than non-administrative colleagues. New employees needed a little more than 10 weeks on average to settle in when receiving help from administrative staff. This time increased by only about a week when new employees received help from non-administrative staff only. This suggests that the procedures that the administrative staff is using is either not efficient or detailed enough to make a real difference in comparison to untrained personnel.

When new employees did not receive written guidance, the average time needed to settle in increased by nearly 40% (from 7 to 11 weeks). This theoretical number is in accordance with people's estimates of how much time they could have saved by receiving a different type of guidance. More than half of the participants estimated that they could have saved 20--50% of their working time if they had

received different instructions (see Figure 9). The average time to settle in was 12,5 weeks. This means that employees spend on average 2-6 weeks of paid work inefficiently. This finding suggests that the current practice of settling in at NTNU needs to be significantly improved. We suggest that NTNU should implement providing a written guide that helps new employees settling into their new job, soon after they accept the job offer.

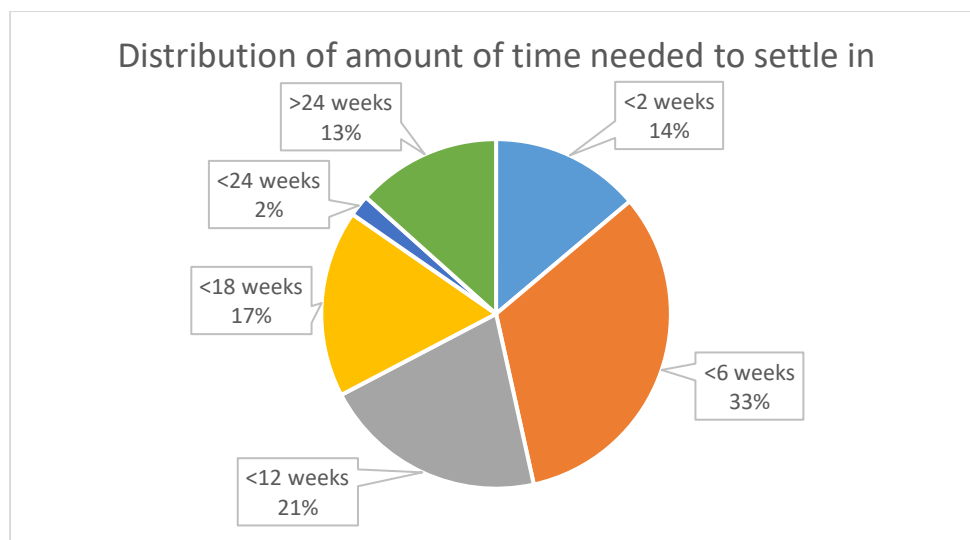


Figure 7: Distribution of new temporary scientific staff at NTNU regarding time they needed to settle in. Almost half of new employees manage to settle in within the first 6 weeks. However, 13% also reported to need 24 weeks or longer. The overall average was 12,5 weeks.

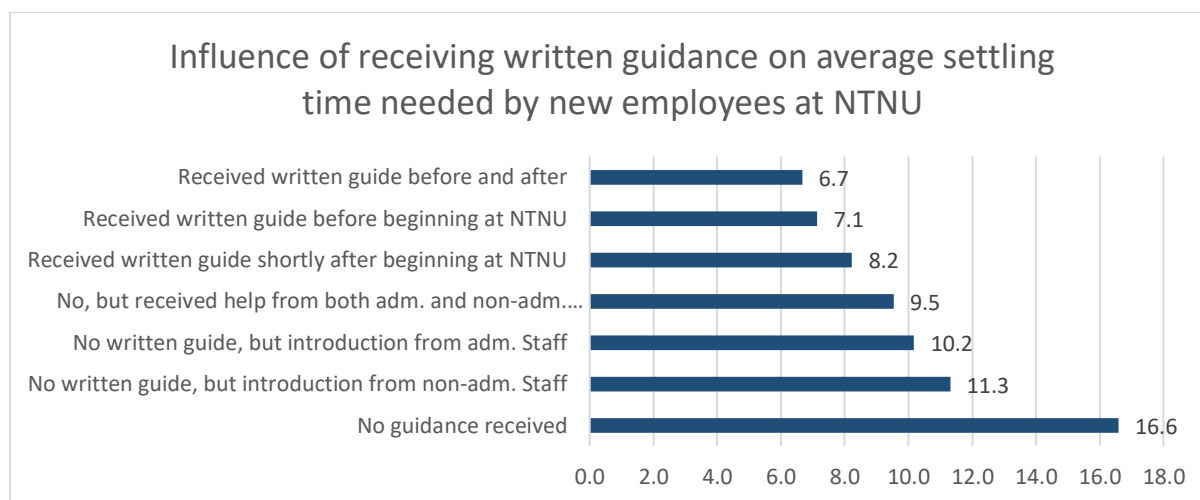


Figure 8: Average settling time is influenced by the form of guidance that was received by the new temporary scientific employee at NTNU. When new employees start at NTNU, they are done with the settling process much faster if they receive a written guide before or shortly after they started. Average settling time increases to around 10 weeks when there is no written guidance, but the new employee receives guidance through the administrative staff. Settling time doubles to 16 weeks when there is no guidance available.

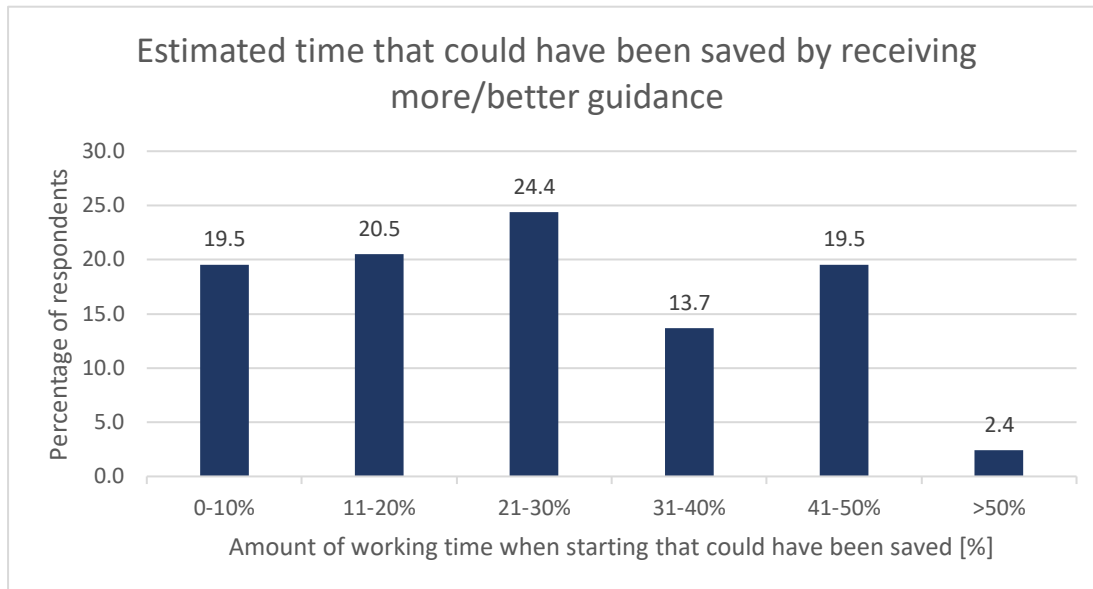


Figure 9: Answers to the question "If, when you started, you knew as much as you do now about the process of starting work at NTNU, how much working time do you think you would have saved in the first weeks/months while settling in?". The answers show how much time participants estimated they could have saved by receiving more or a different kind of guidance than what they received.

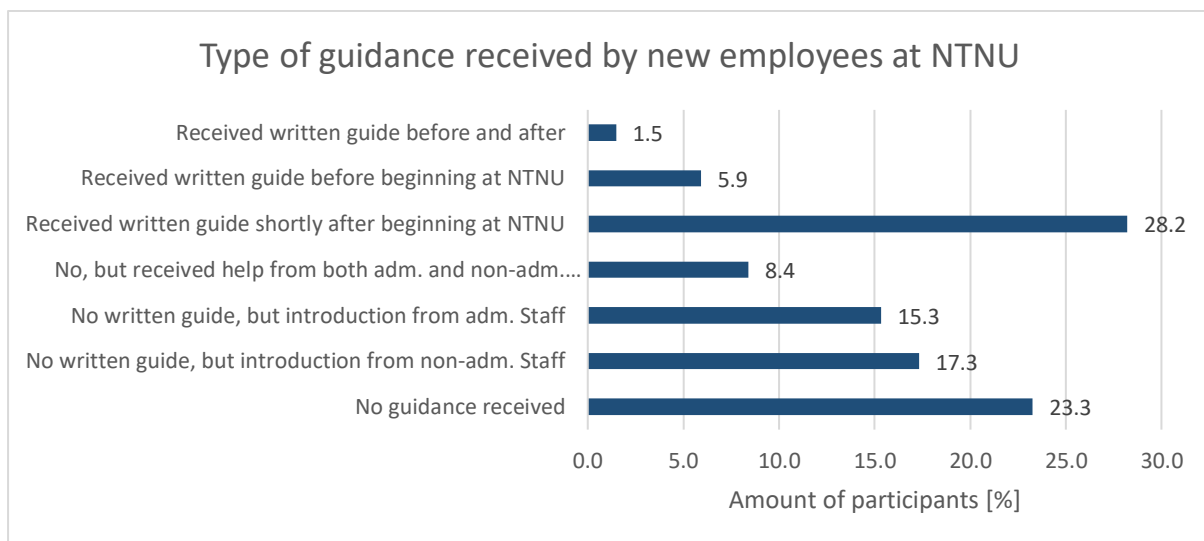


Figure 10: Distribution of type of guidance received among new temporary staff at NTNU. About 35% of new temporary staff receives a written guide, whereas almost as many (38%) receive help from either administrative staff or colleagues or both instead. Almost one-fourth reports to have not received any form of guidance.

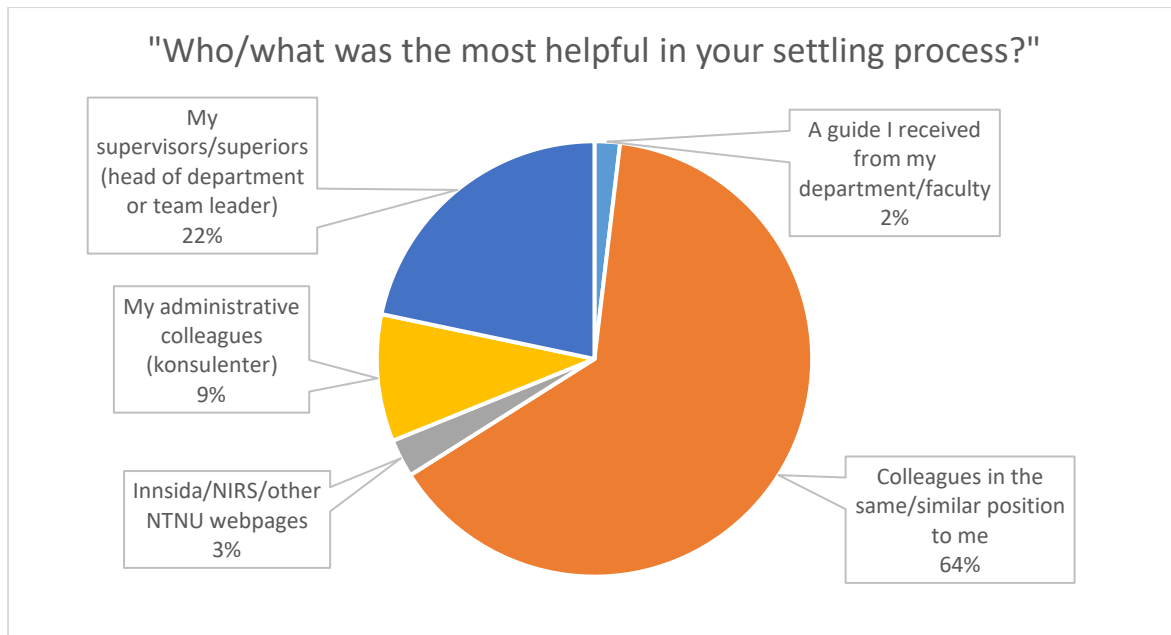


Figure 11: Distribution about what participants thought who helped them the most to settle in. The majority (64%) think other colleagues helped them the most, followed by their supervisors with 22%. Administrative staff was considered the most helpful by 9% and Innsida and other similar means as well as a written guide were perceived as the least helpful.

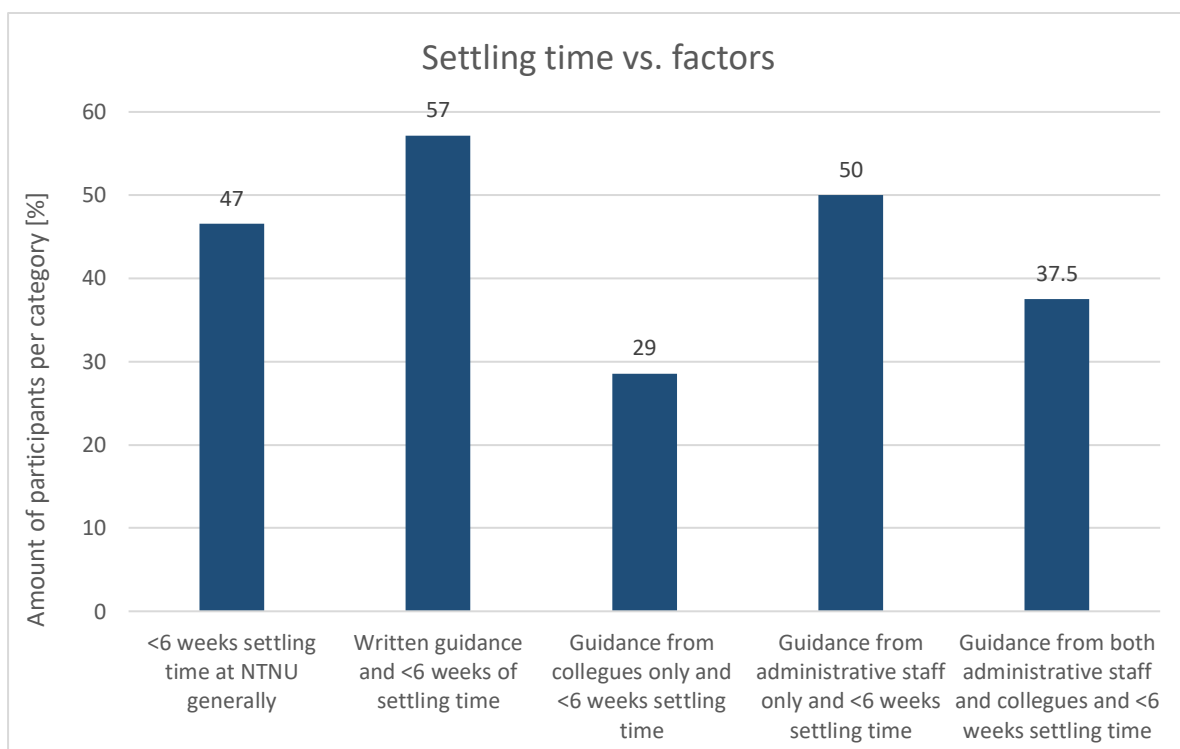


Figure 12: In general, almost half of the new employees settle in within 6 weeks. This number improves when new employees receive written guidance. Of the people who have received written guidance, almost 60 % settle in within the first 6 weeks. In contrast, when new employees received guidance from only the non-administrative staff, the amount of people who settle in quickly decreases. Less than 1/3 of people who received help from only their colleagues managed to settle in within 6 weeks.

Overall at NTNU, about one third of new temporary employees at NTNU received a form of written guidance when starting their new job, which leaves a lot of room for improvement (Figure 10). 17% received help from non-administrative staff only, while a quarter received help from administrative staff or administrative staff and colleagues. 23% of participants reported to not have received any help at all.

It is interesting to see that there is not perfect alignment between which factors people perceive as most important to settling in, and which factors actually correlate with settling-in times. As established above, receiving written guidance correlates with more people settling in faster and therefore shortening the average settling time by about a month. However, when asked "Who/what was most helpful to you in getting settled in at NTNU?", only 2% of employees said a written guide was the most helpful (see Figure 11). In contrast, the majority says that their colleagues were the most helpful, while, receiving only help from colleagues seems to slow down the process. From the people who received help from only their colleagues, only one third managed to settle in within 6 weeks (see Figure 12). Compared to that, half of new employees who received help from administrative staff settled in within 6 weeks. Despite this correlation, the administrative staff was ranked low in their helpfulness. Only 9% of participants said that the administrative staff was most helpful in their settling process (Figure 11). These findings show that for one, people are subjective when rating what helps them the most. Secondly, this hints at that there is probably a psycho-social component involved that leads to that people feel better cared for when they are well integrated with their colleagues even if they need longer to settle in.

#### [Influence of job position on settling time](#)

Looking at settling time needed for the different temporary scientific staff positions, the survey results for PhDs and Post Docs have a similar distribution. About half of PhDs and Post Docs manage to settle within 6 weeks (see Figure 13). Since the distribution is so similar, it seems like the programs in place to welcome PhD candidates and Post Docs at NTNU are working in a similar fashion. The overall fastest group to settle in were the scientific assistants. This could be because the scientific assistants are often not new to NTNU but have either been a student or been working at NTNU already beforehand. Unfortunately, we did not ask in the survey if people had been new to NTNU, therefore this is just an assumption and cannot be verified. The group that struggles the most are the student assistants. Only 39% are able to settle in under 6 weeks. This could be because these people do their work on the side while still studying, so their main focus will be on their studies rather than their work. They also potentially do not work every day, which makes it harder to settle in. The data for the group "Other" includes researchers, lecturers, engineers and project managers. The data suggest that these groups settled in very well. However, these groups are not well



represented in the data, since only a small number of participants answered the question of these people and the group is quite diverse. It is important to notice that, in all positions but “Other”, there were participants that were not able to complete the settling process in less than 6 months (24 weeks). Most noteworthy are PhDs and student assistants here, with 15.6% and 18% respectively. DION analyzed the same data set, sorting the answers by faculty instead of position, to see if some faculties are better at helping their employees with the settling process.

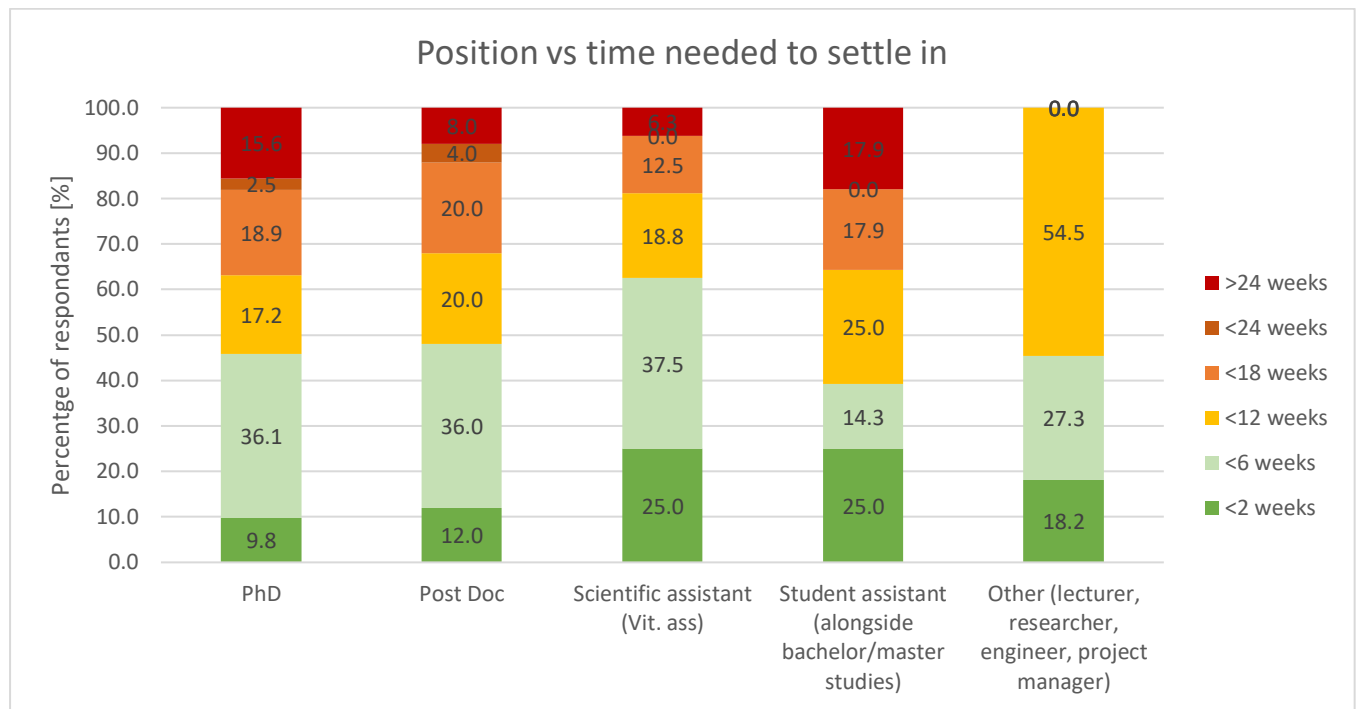
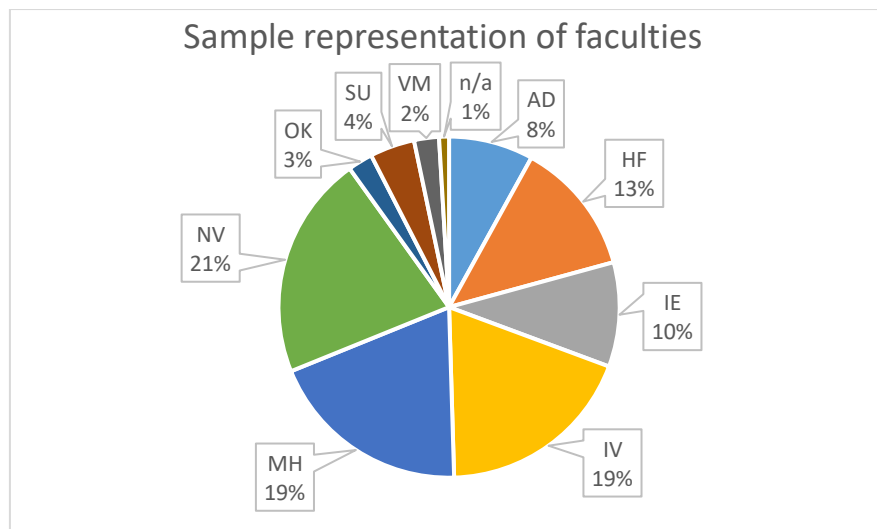


Figure 13: Settling time needed split by position at NTNU. It can be seen that for both PhD candidates and Postdocs the distribution of settling time needed is similar. Half of the PhD candidates and Postdocs needed less than 6 weeks to settle in, which is similar to the group of scientific assistants, with 63% needing less than 6 weeks to settle in.

### Influence of faculty on settling time

The survey was answered by participants covering all faculties at NTNU, which are the following:

- Architecture and Design (AD)
- Faculty of Humanities (HF)
- Faculty of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering (IE)
- Faculty of Engineering (IV)
- Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (MH)
- Faculty of Natural Sciences (NV)
- Faculty of Social and Educational Sciences (SU)
- Faculty of Economics and Management (OK)
- NTNU University Museum (VM)



*Figure 14: Pie chart showing the distribution among faculties of all participants over NTNU indicated by their official faculty abbreviation which can be found in the text; n/a means there was no data available for some participants. While all faculties are present in the data set, the distribution is uneven. Some faculties are strongly represented, while others are strongly underrepresented.*

As can be seen in Figure 14, most participants stemmed from a few faculties, mainly Engineering (IV), Medicine and Health Sciences (MH) and Natural Sciences (NV) with 60% of total participants of the survey. This means that participants from three faculties out of nine faculties at NTNU are overrepresented in the data set, while three other faculties (Economics and Management (OK), Social and Educational Sciences (SU), University Museum (VM)) are underrepresented with a total share of 9%. For the faculties that had only a few employees taking part in the survey, the data analysis is likely not representative for all temporary scientific staff at those faculties. Therefore, the results and interpretation of the data analysis must be taken with care.

When the answers were analyzed based on the amount of time needed to settle into different faculties, it showed that the situation differs from faculty to faculty. Some faculties have more than 70% of employees who affirmed to be completely settled in after only 6 weeks (see Figure 15). Some of these faculties (HF, OK) are also among the ones in which a high percentage of the participants declared to have received some form of guidance before or shortly after start working at NTNU (see Figure 16). On the other side, in those faculty where very little guidance is received like Architecture and Design (AD), Medicine and Health Sciences (MH) and the University Museum (VM), 40% or less of new employees needed less than 6 weeks to settle in. This correlation suggests that employees who receive written guidance can settle in much faster than new employees who do not receive a written guide. We therefore recommend implementing written guidance NTNU-wide.

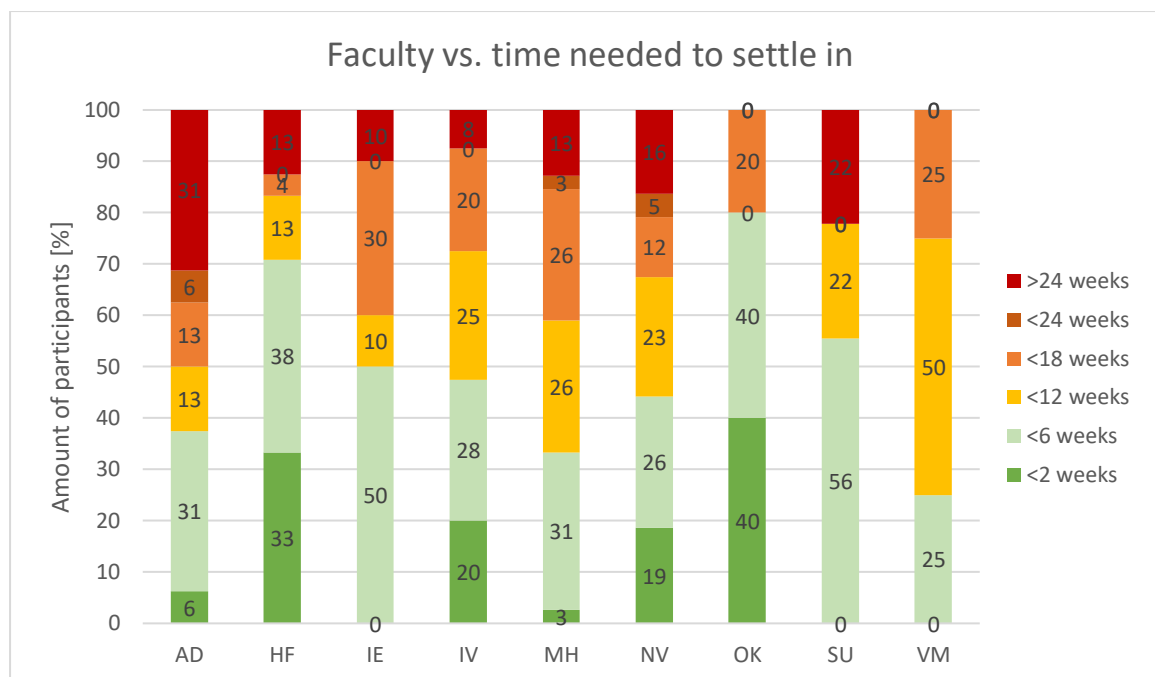


Figure 15: Bar diagram showing how long members of the different faculties at NTNU need to settle in. It can be seen that the settling time at the different faculties is distinct. The Faculty of Humanities (HF) and the Faculty of Economics and Management (OK) have 70% or more participants that report to have settled in within the first 6 weeks. Other faculties (AD, MH and VM) have as little as 25% of employees that managed to settle in within the first 6 weeks.

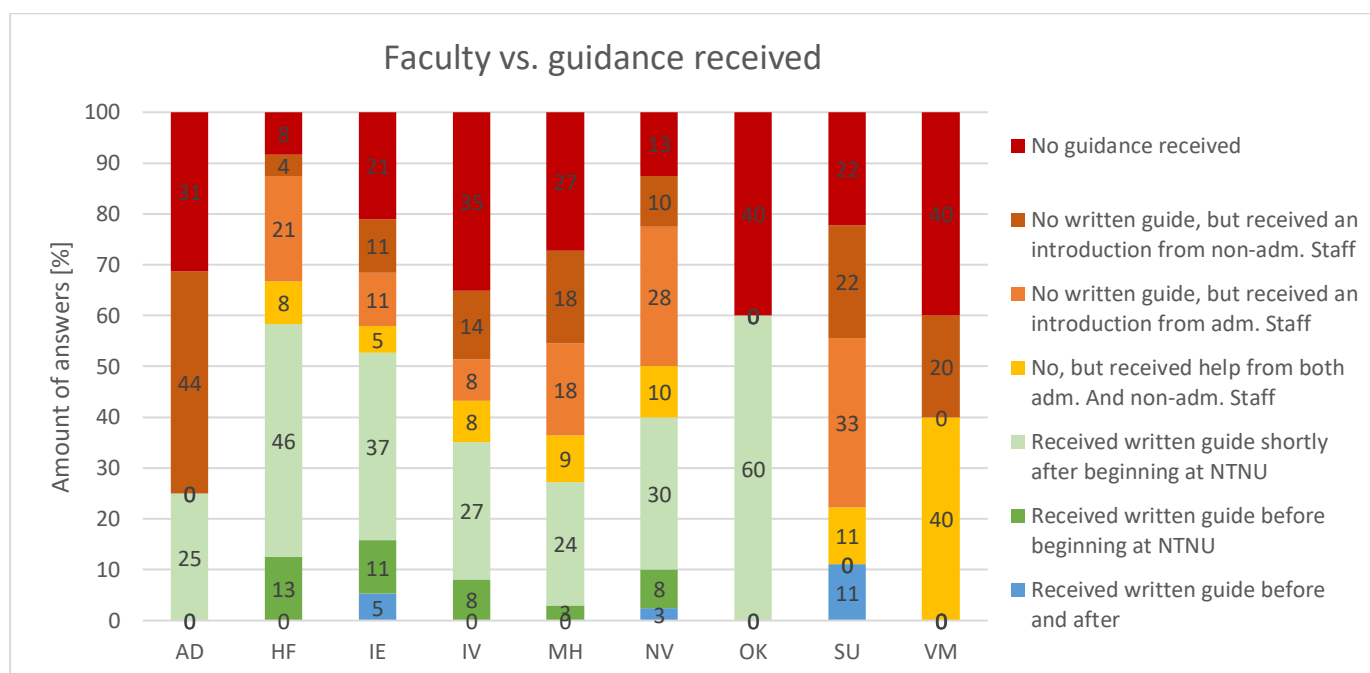


Figure 16: Bar diagram showing how much guidance members of the different faculties at NTNU received to help them to settle in. The Faculty of Humanities (HF) stands out as the faculty that overall does best in giving guidance. Nearly 60% of new employees here received written guidance either before starting at NTNU or shortly after and many others received some sort of help from administrative staff or colleagues or both. Participants from the NTNU University Museum (VM) report an overall bad situation where none of the participants has received any written guidance and in addition a large percentage receiving no guidance at all (40%).

### Implementation of the mentorship programme at NTNU and its influence on settling times

Some departments at NTNU run a mentor programme. The mentor is supposed to be there for a new employee. It is important to notice that the mentor does not equal supervisor. The description of the mentor programme can be found on Innsida:

“Your mentor's assignment is to give you practical and social information so that you can get settled in your new position as quickly as possible. Your mentor will often have the same type of job as you have. If you are a PhD candidate, for example, you might be assigned another PhD candidate as your mentor.”<sup>2</sup>.

It is not clear on Innsida which departments run this sort of programme. However, half of new employees that participated in DIONs survey reported that they never had heard about such a programme (Figure 17). Another 21% said they know about others having a mentor, but they did not have one themselves. Almost as many said they indeed had a mentor – but an unofficial one. This means that one or more of their colleagues was kind enough to provide enough support and help that they would consider them a mentor. Only 13% reported that they indeed had a formally assigned mentor. This suggests that only a minority of departments implement a mentor programme. When looking at the faculty-specific data, it is clear that the faculty does not impose this system on their departments since the answers vary within every faculty from having an assigned mentor to never even having heard of the mentor programme (Figure 18).

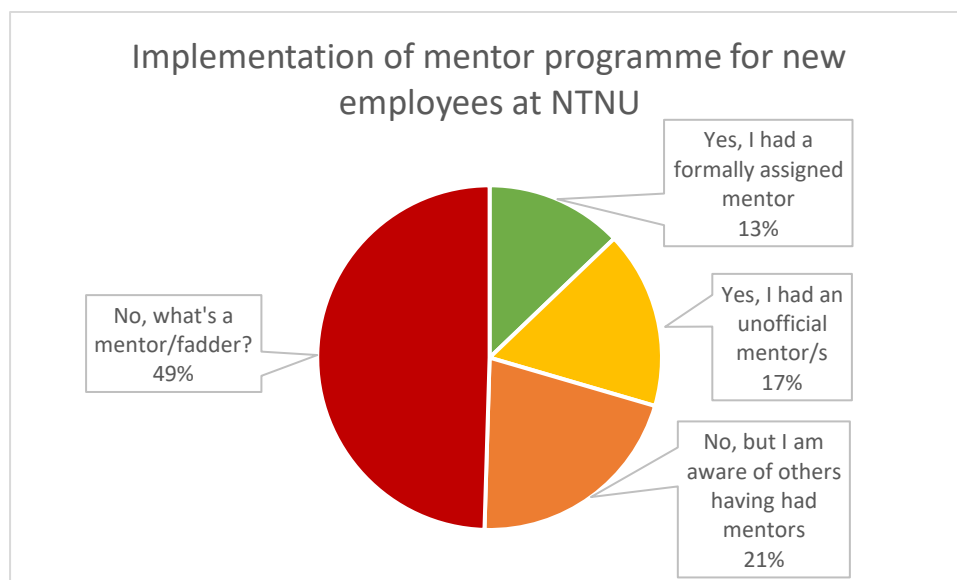


Figure 17: NTNU wide implementation of the mentor programme. Most new employees (87%) do not have an officially assigned mentor.

<sup>2</sup> <https://innsida.ntnu.no/wiki/-/wiki/English/Mentor+programme> (accessed 20.03.2020; 11:04)

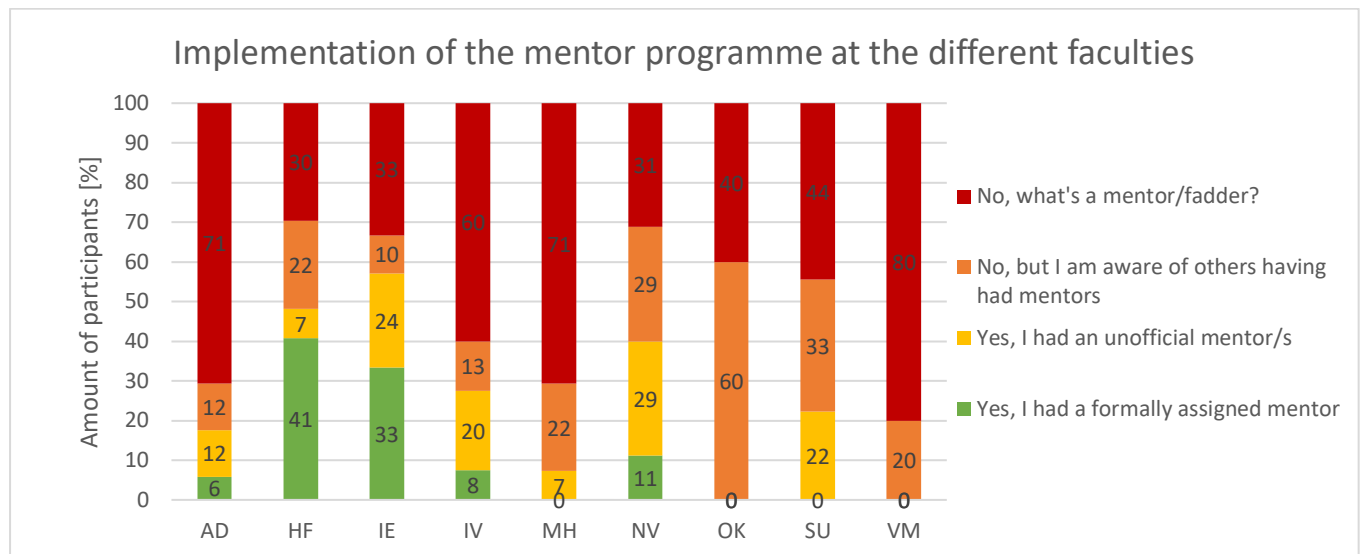


Figure 18: Distribution of mentor programme at different faculties. None of the faculties seem to have a mentor programme ongoing in all their departments. Some faculties have a much wider implementation like the Faculty of Humanities (HF) where 41% of new employees had an official mentor assigned.

Unfortunately, we have no data available that would split the data into department level. However, the implementation of the mentorship programme seems to correlate with what type of guidance has been implemented at the faculty. Overall, the faculties that give written guidance also seem to be the faculties where the mentorship programme is more strongly implemented (see Figure 19). This suggests that the gap between settling procedures at the different departments and faculties is wide. The faculties that are already providing better guidance through written guidance, are also the faculties at which the mentor programme is in place to a greater extent. This casts a bad light on the faculties where neither written guidance nor the mentor programme is offered and suggests that these faculties care less about helping the new temporary scientific staff to settle in quickly. Figure 19 suggests however that the influence of written guidance has more effect than the mentor programme. This is confirmed when correlating the date directly with each other. Generally, about half of the new employees at NTNU managed to settle in within the first 6 weeks. If one had a mentor does not seem to make a difference, since also only about half of new employees that had a mentor managed to settle in within the first 6 weeks (Figure 20). However, when receiving written guidance, the number increased to about 60%. It does not seem to have an influence on the amount of people who manage to settle in within a short amount of time, however written guidance seems to correlate. This is supported by the results in Figure 8, which shows that the type of guidance received correlates with the amount of time needed by new employees to settle in.

The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the mentor programme as such is a nice idea but does not seem to have an effect on settling times. This does not mean that DION recommends abandoning the programme. Quite the opposite, what should be done is implementing a better practice for the mentor programme. The mentors do not receive any help or guidance themselves on how to be a good mentor. So even when a new employee has an assigned mentor, this person is likely of very little use since they are not prepared for how to help out this new employee. This might be supported by the fact that more people settle in faster with an unofficial mentor versus one that has been assigned to them. An unofficial mentor would be any colleague who helps out the new person when not officially required to do so. It is a truly voluntary act and would usually be driven by friendship. This could make the unofficial mentor feel more emotionally invested in the well-being of the new employee compared to someone officially assigned as a mentor, which could be the reason for why the different types of mentors lead to different settling times. This just means again that assigned mentors should receive some training or guidance themselves on how to be good mentors.

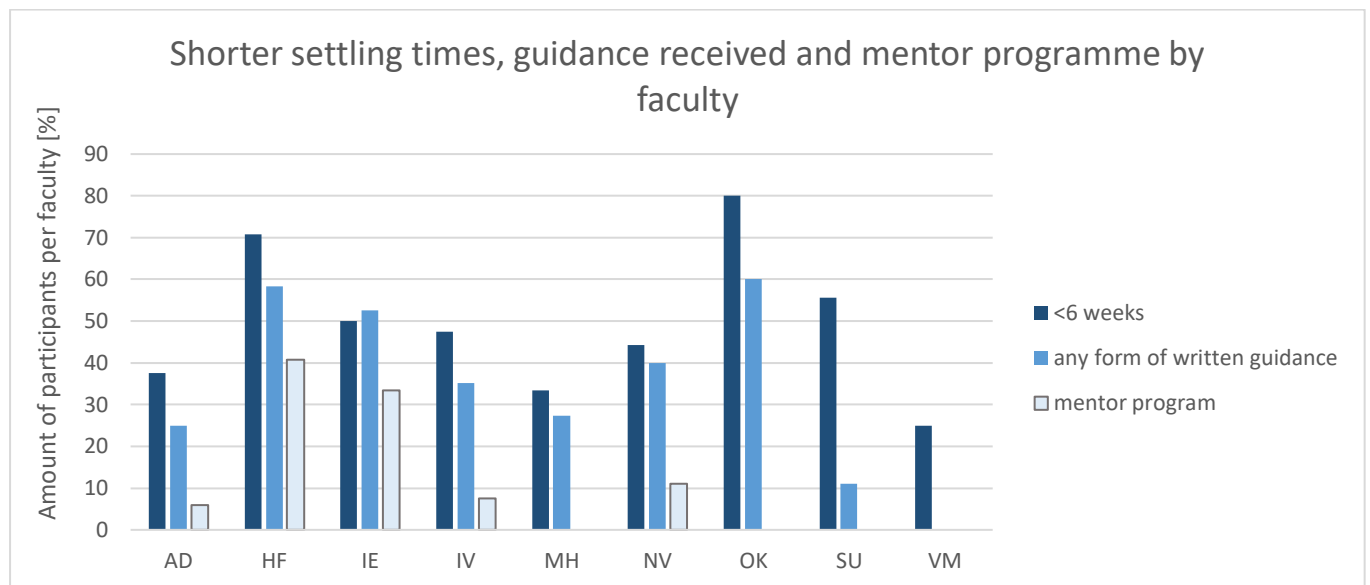


Figure 19: Amount of people in percent in the different faculties that have short settling times (dark blue, <6 weeks), receive any form of written guidance (blue) and offer a mentor programme (light blue). The presence of a mentor programme does not correlate to faster settling times. Written guidance correlates with faster settling times.

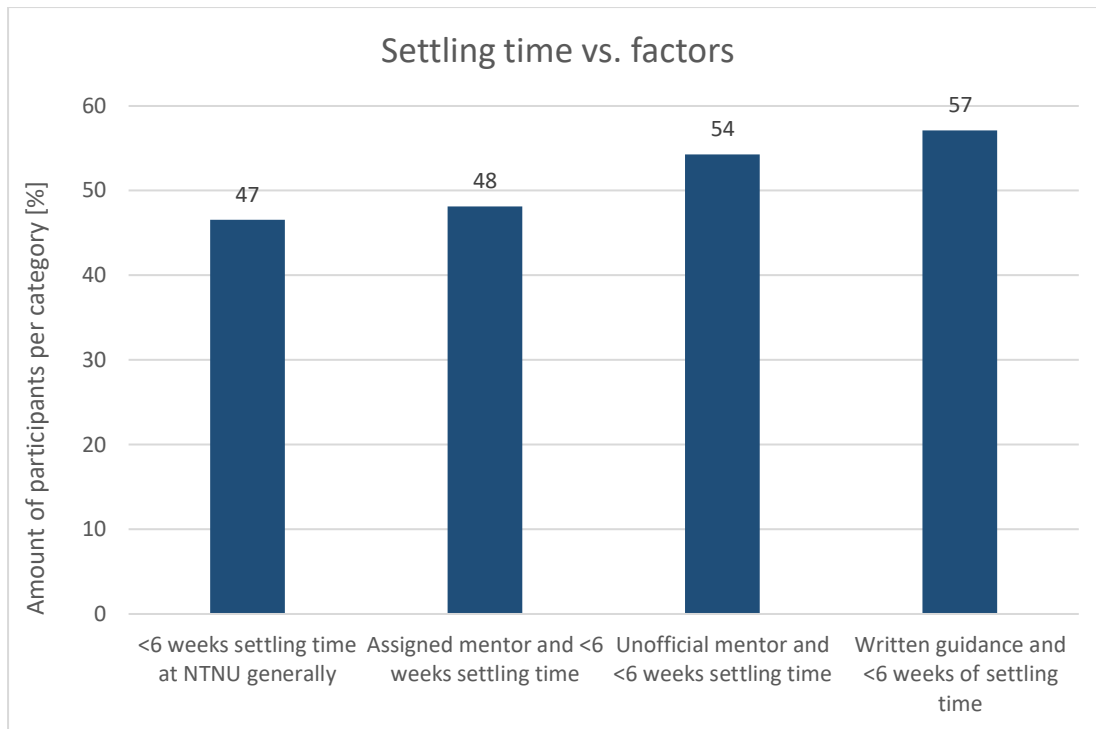


Figure 20: Amount of people in percent NTNU-wide that need less than 6 weeks to settle in. Overall, 47% of new employees settle in within 6 weeks. Having an assigned mentor has no influence. Of the people who had an unofficial mentor, 54% managed to settle in within 6 weeks.

### Additional comments

As part of the survey, participants had the chance to give feedback or suggestions concerning their experiences beginning as an employee at NTNU, eg: regarding how the necessary information to start working could be provided.

About one third of participants chose to provide further feedback. Their answers could be categorized into different main topics ranging from implementing a mentor programme to providing more information about teaching duties (Figure 21). A few comments were selected to give some examples of what participants had to say. The most repeated feedback was to implement a comprehensive written guide to new employees. A big share of the comments also wished for Innsida to be clearer, to have all the pages available in English and also to collect data in this one place rather than scattering information over different systems.

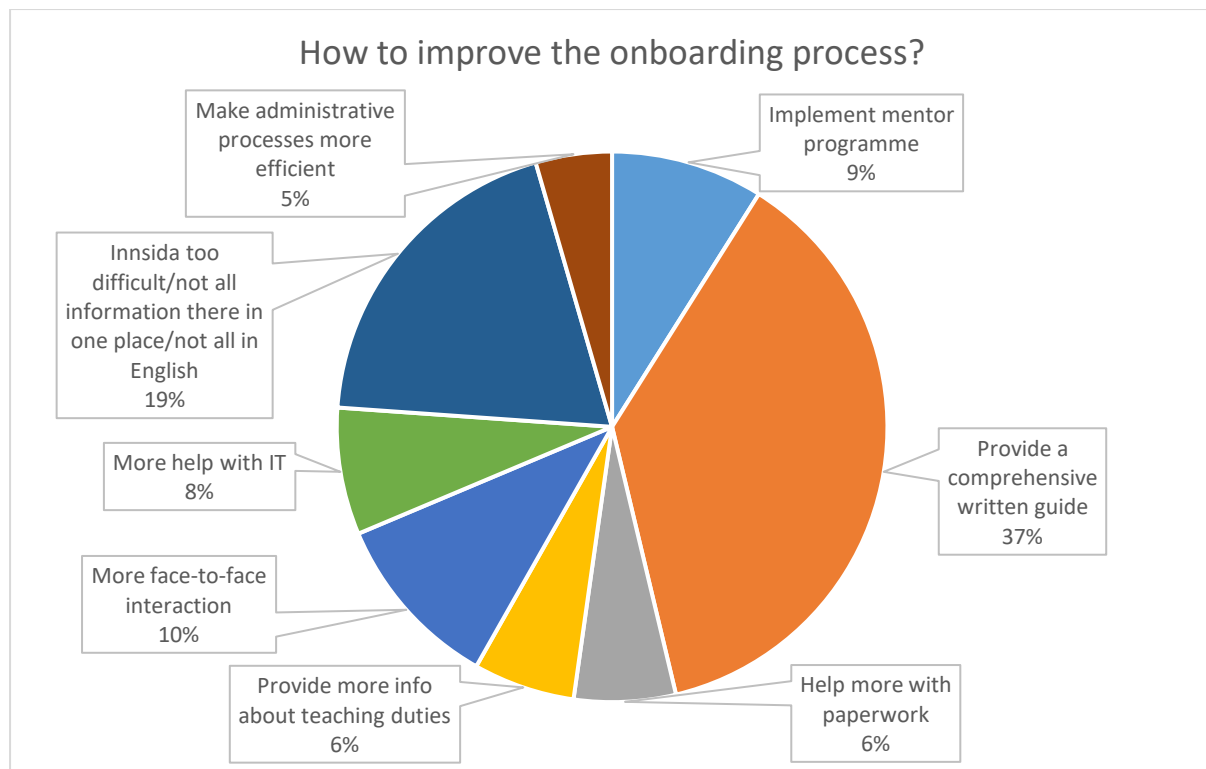


Figure 21: General topics people would wish to be improved in the onboarding process.

“Administrative tasks that should have been prepared prior to arrival. Took way too much time to complete, or the lack of them being prepared cost a lot of time being limited in ability to work effectively.”

“An online tutorial would do most of the task, I guess. Like a step-by-step guide to doing all the little things you have to do at first, plus a minor intro to travel orders and other orders, etc.”

“It would be good to have all the necessary information in one place. Right now, it's scattered everywhere.”

“I think the mentor (fadderordning) program is very important, and those who are assigned as mentor should be explained properly what is expected of them (both to guide the new employee socially and give advice on administrative stuff). All new PhD candidates should receive a kind of 'welcome kit' containing all necessary information. The administrative staff play an important role in the beginning, and should make sure to follow up the candidates administratively.”



## Conclusion

The onboarding survey conducted by DION asked participants to report about their experiences when they started working at NTNU as a scientific temporary employee. Scientific temporary employees are commonly PhD candidates and Post-Docs but also include the groups of researchers, student assistants, lecturers, project managers and more. These groups are usually employed on a specific project that has to be finished by the end of the temporary employment time. Therefore, it is crucial to settle in these new employees as efficiently as possible. DION wanted to know how the current practices are at NTNU, how fast new employees manage to settle in and how satisfied they are with the process. Furthermore, DION wanted to know if there are different practices implemented at different faculties and if there was such a thing as a “best practice” that would help new employees to settle in faster. In addition, DION looked at if there was a difference between participants with Norwegian citizenship and participants without Norwegian citizenship.

Overall, the results show that about half of the participants managed to settle in within the first 6 weeks of their contract and over half thought the process was relatively problem-free and fast. However, a majority thought that they could have saved up to 50% of the time during the first months if the process would be more efficient. This can mean saving between 1-2 months that could be used on conducting research instead of trying to get a computer, access to facilities, etc. For employees on a temporary contract, this equals valuable time simply lost due to inefficient procedures. This strongly suggests that the process itself needs to become more efficient. One of the things that can be done to reach that goal is providing more centralized and thorough information.

Comparing Norwegian citizens and non-Norwegian citizens showed that most of the challenges that come up during the settling process are rated with a similar level of difficulty regardless of citizenship. Understanding the tax system is the only challenge that causes more troubles for foreign employees. This is overall a very positive finding which suggests that foreign employees are not discriminated against and receive enough help to make things go as smoothly for them as it goes for Norwegians. In addition to the challenges that everyone faces when they start at NTNU come challenges that are unique for foreigners moving to a new country. Many of these challenges were hard to deal with for the foreign participants. However, despite being subjected to more challenges and settling in a little slower than their Norwegian colleagues, employees from EU/EAA and non-EU/EAA were overall more satisfied with the settling process than Norwegians. Scandinavian citizens (not from Norway) were the most dissatisfied with the settling process and need the longest amount of time. This group of employees might be expected to need very little help and therefore they might also receive much less help and support than other foreign employees. This is a topic that should be followed up on.

The different faculties at NTNU support new employees in different ways in their settling process. Some faculties implement procedures such as providing a written guide to new employees and having a mentor programme, while this is completely absent at other faculties. The data suggests a correlation between the type of guidance and how much time new employees spend on settling in. Settling times were reduced from 11 to 7 weeks on average when new employees received a written guide either before or after starting at NTNU compared to receiving guidance through the administrative staff. With this in mind, it is not surprising that faculties that provide new employees with a written guide also had the highest percentage of people who settled in within 6 weeks or less. This provides a strong argument for giving a written guide to new employees as a mandatory NTNU-wide implementation.

## Data

Unified data and preliminary analysis

[https://spfarm.ntnu.no/sites/project/206/\\_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc={A0D1200B-B60E-4CC1-BFEC-8E5AB5560FC0}&file=Onboarding%20survey%20\(Responses\).xlsx&action=default](https://spfarm.ntnu.no/sites/project/206/_layouts/15/WopiFrame.aspx?sourcedoc={A0D1200B-B60E-4CC1-BFEC-8E5AB5560FC0}&file=Onboarding%20survey%20(Responses).xlsx&action=default)

Google responses (summarized by question)

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1cquDNc7Rn8T06X5GykBX0O3Ob5K7Qs3bBP8Y\\_tNK3Xo/edit#responses](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1cquDNc7Rn8T06X5GykBX0O3Ob5K7Qs3bBP8Y_tNK3Xo/edit#responses)