

International diversity at NTNU

A qualitative study of the experiences of incoming researchers, management and administrative staff

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Preface

NTNU is ranked amongst the 100 most international universities in the world according to criteria measuring mobility amongst students and staff, publication patterns and research funding. One third of NTNU's scientific employees are non-Norwegian citizens.

In order to learn more about international diversity at NTNU and to inform future policies and measures, the Committee for Gender Equality and Diversity at NTNU called for a descriptive study in March 2019. This report presents the results of the study funded by the Committee.

The research team consisted of researchers affiliated with the Center for Gender Studies at the Department for Interdisciplinary Studies of Culture, NTNU: Associate professor Siri Øyslebø Sørensen (project leader), scientific assistant Julie Katrine Flikke, professor Berit Gullikstad, professor Guro Korsnes Kristensen and professor Vivian Anette Lagesen. Flikke has been responsible for the practical work, including data collection, literature reviews and writing up the draft report.

During a six-month period, June–November 2019, we carried out a qualitative study amongst NTNU staff—both international researchers and the management and administrative staff with personnel- and Human Resources- responsibilities—seeking to better understand their experiences of internationalization in everyday work at the university. The aim of the study is to illuminate some central issues in order to suggest further efforts to facilitate the work of international researchers at NTNU.

We want to thank our colleagues at NTNU who willingly used their time and shared their experiences with us.

International researchers at NTNU can by no means be treated as one homogenous group. We are also aware that our report cannot cover the wide variety of experiences that exist amongst NTNU employees. We hope, however, that this report can work as a starting point for discussion and spark further inquiries into the situation of accommodating “internationalization” in ways that do not reproduce or increase inequalities amongst researchers at NTNU.

Trondheim, January 12, 2020

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Introduction

NTNU is ranked amongst the 100 most international universities worldwide (U-Multirank 2018), and increased internationalization is an explicit policy goal of the university. According to the NTNU Action plan for internationalization 2018–2021¹ the aim is to develop a “stronger international orientation amongst researchers at NTNU”, and to “stimulate international education for students and international careers for faculty members”. In line with the NTNU strategy² and Action plan for internationalization, the Action plan for gender equality and diversity 2018–2021³ gives particular attention to the situation of incoming international faculty members and researchers. This is the first time diversity perspectives other than gender equality were included in the action plan. The focus on international researchers as a population within NTNU has been deliberately chosen as a starting point to work on diversity issues.

About one third of the scientific staff at NTNU hold a non-Norwegian citizenship. This group is also referred to as “international researchers” in this report. The share of international researchers varies between employee categories. The share is particularly high in postdoc positions, where 65 percent are non-Norwegians. In other categories, more than 40 percent of all PhD students⁴, 25 percent of associate professors and 21 percent of professors are international (Gunnes et al. 2017; NTNU 2019). Associate- and full professors are also referred to as “permanent scientific staff” in this report.

The most recent publication on international diversity among Norwegian university staff, is the report *More diversity statistics: Statistics on immigrants and descendants of immigrants in Norwegian research and higher education from* (Gunnes et al. 2017).⁵ The report shows that the University of Bergen had the highest percentage of immigrants or people with immigrant backgrounds among the permanent staff, with 24 percent, whereas the University of Oslo had 22 percent, NTNU 21 percent and the University of Tromsø 19 percent. When it comes to temporary staff, NTNU and the University of Tromsø ranked highest, both with 48 percent (ibid).

This shows that NTNU is receiving large numbers of early-career international researchers in temporary positions, as well as a good number of international researchers amongst the permanent scientific staff. We assume early-career international researchers and well-established permanent faculty members, will have different experiences and needs. Additionally, among international researchers who are permanent faculty members, those with a lengthy tenure at NTNU will have differing experiences from those who have recently arrived. Thus, in this report we will include the viewpoints of both temporary and permanent international researchers coming to NTNU. Moreover, both the viewpoints of long-term and newly arrived staff are represented. This allows us to identify agreements and discrepancies amongst staff situated differently—with different backgrounds and different ties to the organization and Norwegian society. We have also included the viewpoints of management and administration at the department level—the main level for directly handling personnel issues—as well as at the institutional level.

1. <https://www.ntnu.no/internasjonalt-handlingsplan>

2. www.ntnu.edu/strategy-2018-2025

3. <https://www.ntnu.no/likestilling>

4. In 2018 192 out of 394 doctoral degrees at NTNU were awarded to non-Norwegian citizens (Adresseavisen 22.11.2019)

5. Unlike the more recent numbers for NTNU, Gunnes et. al. also includes those who have immigrant parents. However, as only 0,4% of the surveyed workforce has immigrant parents, the numbers in Gunnes are still comparable with more recent figures, taking into consideration that Gunnes’ data are from 2014.

In accordance with NTNU’s strategic priorities, there is a group of advisors working specifically to support incoming international researchers in the HR and HSE division of NTNU. These advisors are organized under the NTNU International Researchers Support (NIRS) office, which offers various counselling services for departments, centers and research groups who are recruiting international staff for both long- and short-term period as well as housing support and dual career services for individual researchers who are coming to NTNU. In addition, NIRS arranges seminars, courses and social activities for the international community at NTNU.⁶

The purpose of this study is to contribute relevant knowledge to the discussion about strategies and measures for inclusion and diversity. To do so, we focus on knowledge about how international researchers experience NTNU as a workplace, illuminating the variety of experiences of being included or excluded. Moreover, we describe the experiences of making efforts to facilitate well-functioning diverse work-environments. This includes the efforts made by management and administrative support staff.

In the following we will briefly present existing knowledge on the phenomenon of international mobility in higher education and international diversity in academia as a workplace, with an emphasis on studies from a Norwegian context. Drawing on the existing literature we outline the research questions that guided the empirical study presented in this report.

Internationalization and mobility

International mobility is not a new phenomenon in academia, and over the past couple of decades internationalization within higher education has emerged as a distinct field for practice and research (Bedenlier, Kondacki and Zawacki-Richter 2018). Patterns and forms of academic mobility have been mapped and categorized along different dimensions. The mobility patterns in higher education have changed from mainly permanent emigration, often referred to as “brain drain”, to an international mobility increasingly characterized as a circular flow of human resources (“brain circulation”) (Bauder 2015; Tremblay 2005). Insights into the dynamics shaping the mobility patterns have shown how transnational-, international- and national research policies shape possibilities and barriers (Rizvi 2005; Tremblay 2005). One influential aspect of life in academia is also career patterns. Despite the increased emphasis on “international orientation”, national (and even local) career patterns are rooted in history, language, geography and national hierarchies of disciplines (Musselin 2004).

A growing body of literature also describes the various experiences with international mobility and emigration/immigration amongst academics as a bodily and emotional experience in which sense-making is a crucial part (Coev 2018; Davies 2019; Rizvi 2005; Metcalfe 2016). Moreover, Davies (2019) has outlined how international researchers experience their researcher identities, working practices and material and social conditions differently in different places. The local institutional arrangements and research community is decisive to the effect of international mobility for the individual international researcher. Thus, exploring a diversity of dimensions related to academic mobility and the situated experiences is important.

6. <https://www.ntnu.edu/nirs>

Hoffman (2009) studied international researchers, focusing on their career potential in Finnish higher education and suggests the need for more precise concepts of academic mobility phenomena. He describes three distinct forms of mobility: 1) lateral mobility, a distinct form of horizontal mobility in which early-career researchers move to another country due to job offer, 2) vertical mobility, referring to migrant academic personnel who enter higher education outside of their country of origin “from below”, first as students, and 3) generational mobility, which “refers to the social mobility of individuals from migrant groups in society through higher education” (Hoffman 2009, p. 358). The international researchers participating in the NTNU study represent the first two forms of mobility. They are all either foreign citizens or Norwegian citizens who were born in a country outside of Norway and moved to Norway either as students or because they received a position—either temporary or permanent. The third group of international researchers differs from the first two by how the researcher migrated *prior* to entering academic institutions, while also including those who were born in the country from immigrant parents. This is also an underrepresented group amongst faculty members in Norwegian universities (Gunnes et al. 2017), and it is important to gain further knowledge about the situation of this group. In this report, however, we chose to focus on the categories of international researchers, as this is the group identified as a target-group for NTNU policies and measures.

International diversity in Norwegian academia

The increased internationalization, both in terms of expectations of international research activity and mobility and the rising number of scholars from abroad in Norwegian academic institutions, has caused debate. Concerns about the costs of employing a larger number of PhD students and fear of brain drain from Norway—when PhDs will leave the country instead of remaining in the country—is part of the debate on effects of internationalization (see for example Oksholen 2019). Worries about threats towards Norwegian as an academic language and traditional ways of organizing work in universities in Norway has also been voiced (see for example Østerud 2017).

Empirical research on diversity and internationalization in Norwegian higher education is still relatively limited. Statistical surveys have mapped the current changes and increasing internationalization (Børing and Gunnes 2012; Gunnes et al. 2017), but we know less about the experiences of being an international researcher in Norwegian academia. A recent survey conducted by the Young Academy Norway concludes that young (<45 years) researchers in Norway, regardless of gender or country of origin, express generally positive attitudes towards internationalization and diversity (Erdal et al. 2019). In addition to measuring attitudes towards internationalization, the survey mapped experiences with discrimination. As many as 40 percent of the respondents reported having experienced some form of discrimination. Informal forms of discrimination (remarks, social exclusion etc.) were reported as more common than formal discrimination in recruitment processes.

Almost 23 percent of the international researchers in the survey report experiences with informal discrimination, compared to 15 percent of the Norwegian researchers (Erdal et al. 2019). Almost 25 percent of the international researchers who have experienced discrimination report this as being based of their status as immigrants. Lack of language skills is also reported as the reason for exclusion from particular opportunities and work tasks, such as teaching and

administrative tasks that require knowledge of Norwegian. Thus, it is important to explore further how immigration status and language skills work out in practice.

It is difficult for international researchers to achieve a permanent position and to pursue an academic career in Norway (Askvik and Drange 2019). Maximova-Mentzoni et al. (2016) present results from one of the few qualitative studies conducted on the situation and experiences of international and immigrant scholars in Norway. Here, language is identified as a key factor relating to achievements, inclusion and exclusion. Lack of language skills, a lack of understanding of cultural codes and contexts and weak social and professional networks amongst international researchers are presented as reasons for why it is difficult to succeed in Norwegian higher education institutions. In this context, it is important to note that one aspect of our study is to explore how the lack of competencies and skills in international researchers might be explored from the opposite angle, i.e. to ask: How do institutional, organizational and social arrangements pose requirements that produce these errors and shortcomings? The international researchers surveyed by Maximova-Mentzoni et al. (2016) portray Norwegian higher education institutions as “too Norwegian”, pointing to a lack of acknowledgement of diversity in teaching- and research practices and differences in writing- and communication styles. The phenomenon is designated as “cultural cloning” (Maximova-Mentzoni et al. 2016, p. 67), describing a preference for certain ways of doing research, dissemination and teaching, which influences the way international researchers and their competencies are perceived. This finding echoes points made in the research presented above, namely that research is performed, experienced and evaluated differently in different locations (Davies 2019) and how immigrant scholars report experiences of informal discrimination (Erdal et al. 2019).

It is worthwhile noting how regional background also seems to play a crucial role in the probability of achieving permanent positions in Norwegian higher education. Askvik and Drange (2019) compare regional background, discipline and employment category, finding that researchers from Asia, Africa and South or Latin America have the lowest probability of career-successes in Norwegian academic institutions.

We also know that academic careers in general follow gendered patterns. Despite decades of gender balanced PhD cohorts and increasing numbers of women researchers, 74 percent of all professors in Norway are men (Wendt 2019). Although the number of women professors is increasing, we know that recruitment patterns to full professorship differs amongst women and men. A larger share of women professors (70 percent) are appointed at the same institution where they held their previous position, whereas only 60 percent of male professors are similarly appointed (Næss, Gunnes and Wendt 2018). When gender and immigrant background is intersectional, research shows that male applicants with an international background (PhD from an institution outside of Norway) are more likely to succeed compared to women with an international background (Moratti, Lagesen and Sørensen 2019). When women report experiences of informal discrimination (Erdal et al. 2019), it is important to keep in mind the potential intersections of gender and immigrant status, as well as the potential differences of experiences based on regional background (Askvik and Drange 2019).

Briefly summarized, the existing research shows that international researchers might be expected to have common experiences of being “immigrants”, while different experiences based on their regional background (Askvik and Drange 2019; Erdal et al. 2019), and their gender (Erdal

et al. 2019; Moratti et al. 2019). Therefore, considering inclusion in work environments on an everyday basis and concrete strategies and measures at the managerial level are important components of creating academic institutions with equal opportunities for all (Erdal et al. 2019; Maximova-Mentzoni et al. 2016).

Research questions

Drawing on insights from the existing literature, and aiming at exploring both what works well and what can possibly be improved when it comes to international diversity at NTNU, we posed the following questions for empirical investigation:

- How do various categories of international researchers experience being an NTNU employee?
- What kind of barriers do these researchers experience, and what do they see as possible/successful ways of overcoming these barriers?
- How do NIRS and managers and administration at the department level experience working with international researchers?
- What kind of barriers do the managers and administration experience and observe, both for themselves and for the international researchers, and what do they see as possible/successful ways of overcoming these barriers?

Data and research methods

The research design is inspired by a case-study methodology developed to seek a deeper understanding of how dynamics of international work environments function in everyday life at the university (Yin 2011). We used qualitative interviews as the main method for data collection, supplemented by document analysis.

Research design: Sites of inquiry

Two university departments and one Center of Excellence (CoE) were selected as study sites. These sites represent different academic disciplines, including both social science as well as natural science and engineering. According to NTNU's own analysis, these fields have different international profiles. Whereas engineering scores as highly international on all parameters— incoming/outgoing students and staff, research funding from EU and international co-authoring—the social sciences have high scores only on international co-authoring and the number of international PhD students and postdocs (NTNU 2019). Whereas the two department sites are regular academic units in the sense that they run study programs and research, the CoE is a research-intensive unit. The close association between ideals of academic excellence and internationalization (Lund 2015; Henningsen and Liestøl 2013) made it relevant to also include such a unit in the study in order to illuminate a broad spectrum of needs and experiences.

All research sites were selected based on the fact that they have a significant number of international staff members. However, the sites also represent a diversity of situations: In the CoE, most employees—that is both permanent and temporary staff—were international. In the two other departments there was a mix of international and Norwegian citizens amongst the scientific staff. The two departments differed, however, in how internationalization was understood to be part of research activities. In one of the departments the research activity is largely international in the sense that research is conducted in various locations internationally,

and connections to research sites are often linked to employees and their national background. The other department can better be described as engaged in transnational research, meaning that research is conducted within international networks, while national context is less relevant to the research activities as such. The site with a vast majority of international staff used English language only, whereas the two departments mixed the use of Norwegian and English in everyday life at the department.

In addition to the sites on department level, we have mapped the ongoing work with international mobility at NTNU by a combination of document analysis and by investigating the experiences of advisors working with international mobility at NIRS.

Research methods: Qualitative interviews

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of international working environments at NTNU, we chose to use qualitative in-depth interviews as our main research method (Holstein and Gubrium 1995). The interview guide was constructed to cover the following main topics: educational background, career development, experiences with arriving at NTNU and the current working situation including social integration.

Interviewees representing scientific staff were drawn randomly within both temporary and permanent staff from the selected departments' employee lists. Potential interviewees were invited based on presumptions, on the basis of their names, of possible international status. Thus, we might have overlooked international staff whose names did not appear to be foreign. We were aware of the risk of inviting Norwegians with foreign-sounding names. However, we did not, and this could evidence for the underrepresentation of immigrants in Norwegian higher education.

In addition to international researchers, we strategically chose to interview participants according to formal personnel responsibility, including heads of departments and office managers. We also interviewed other faculty members recommend to us by others as central to the work of accommodating international colleagues.

The interviews were conducted during June–October 2019 by the first author of the report, in some occasions accompanied by other members of the research team. The interviews took the form of semi-structured conversations in which the main goal was to facilitate sharing of personal experiences. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

26 interviews were conducted, 10 with administrative staff and leaders and 16 with international researchers. Amongst the researchers, 10 were in temporary positions (PhD students and postdocs), and six were in permanent positions as professors or associate professors. 11 of the interviewees were women, and 15 were men. Seven of the interviewees were Norwegian, eight were from other European countries, two from North America, three from South America, four from Africa and two from Asia.

All interview participants are anonymized in the report. To ensure full anonymity we also anonymized the sites where interviews were conducted. In order to illuminate particular aspects of their experiences, background information of the informants is included in the text, e.g. their

region of origin, former education etc. A combination of information which makes it possible to identify individual interviewees is avoided.

In analyzing the data, we chose to divide the participants into categories according to permanent/non-permanent positions and nationality according to continents, as previous research has shown that regional background influences the dynamics of integration in work environments (Askvik and Drange 2019).

Table 1: International researchers according to position

International interviewees according to academic position (N=16)			
Professors	4	6	Permanent
Associate prof	2		
Postdoc	3	10	Temporary
PhD	7		

Table 2: International researchers according to nationality

International interviewees according to nationality (N=16)	
Europeans	5
North American	2
South American	3
African	4
Asian	2

Table 3: Management and administration nationality

Management and administration* according to nationality (N=10)	
Norwegians	7
Europeans	3

*Includes department heads and professors with research leader responsibilities, heads of office and HR personnel

Empirical results

The following section will show the experiences of international researchers and the management and administrative staff who are trying to navigate them into settling at NTNU, in Trondheim and in Norway.

The general impression, based on the empirical study, is that both managers and administrative staff are very conscious of the situation international researchers at their department are in. Many international researchers describe being well included and have many positive experiences in their workplace. Those hired permanently describe the support system at NTNU as well-functioning, whereas the experiences amongst the temporary employees are more varied. This group seems to depend more on the efforts amongst colleagues and collaborators to find support. All of our interviewees also reflected upon what could have been improved, or that they miss. Thus, there is still some room for improvement, new initiatives and stronger awareness of potential pitfalls in facilitating an internationally diverse workforce.

This section will look at the common themes and dilemmas the international researchers reported, together with the perspectives of the administration on what they do on this complex work. We have focused the empirical study on topics that are possible to address from an institutional and organizational level. Thus, the experiences that we explore in this section includes how international researchers and their working environment deal with a) language issues, b) work-cultures, expectations and practices of working in academia and c) concrete, practical concerns of settling in.

Language: The difficult balance between Norwegian and English

English was used as a working language in all the departments in this study, but in varying degrees. The language practices—how Norwegian and English were used in formal and informal situations—were also described and interpreted differently from different perspectives.

Most of the international researchers we interviewed that are not native English speakers are more competent in English than Norwegian. However, our interviews also showed that learning Norwegian is a central concern for international researchers working at NTNU, including those with English as their native language. Motivations and the sense of purpose of learning Norwegian varied: For some the aim is to be able to conduct advanced teaching, for others the purpose is to be able to conduct small talk at the grocery store in order to “feel more at home”.

None of the departments in this study demanded temporary researchers learn Norwegian, and the requirement of permanent employees to learn Norwegian is not strongly enforced. The international researchers with permanent employment all agreed that learning Norwegian is a fair requirement, but described becoming fluent in Norwegian on a level that meets the standards of academic work as very challenging.

Using English as an everyday language at work was described as generally unproblematic. From the management and administrative staff’s point of view, this was seen as a measure of including all their staff. Still, access to relevant information was a core concern when international researchers expressed their frustrations in the lack of translations from Norwegian into English.

Often, relevant documents and information were translated either by the effort of the international researchers themselves, by use of devices such as Google Translate, or by their Norwegian colleagues, who was sometimes asked to help. Some international researchers also described missing out on staff meetings if they were conducted in Norwegian or expressed reluctance to go if they would be the one to cause a need for switching to English.

Most Norwegian colleagues are fluent in English, and many with Norwegian as their native language conduct most of their research activities in English. However, Norwegian is perceived as being crucial to teaching situations and in order to disseminate research to the Norwegian public. Norwegian is also required for certain administrative procedures.

In the following, we address some of the dilemmas and challenging situations in regard to language that our informants have experienced and how they are dealing with it in their everyday work lives.

Information sharing

One challenge for many international researchers is that there is a lot of administrative work and internal communications at NTNU that requires fluency in Norwegian. From the perspective of the international researchers, it was a point of frustration that they would receive emails containing information in Norwegian. This relates in particular to documents from faculty administration and information shared amongst all employees at NTNU on Innsida (intranet). One postdoc put it this way:

Some meetings are in Norwegian, mostly e-mails from administrative staff are in Norwegian. So that I find definitely a challenge. To engage also, like I couldn't attend the staff meetings because they happen in Norwegian, which is fair enough, like I am not against that. But for me it is a challenge. I need to learn Norwegian to be able to share more.

Even in one of the departments where there were more international than Norwegian members and where English was the primary working language, some interviewees still encountered these difficulties with information shared from administrations outside the department. One international researcher said:

NTNU sometimes shares information only in, in Norwegian. And some of these things are quite important, so I am a bit surprised about that. I mean, a lot of things are communicated in English, but there is also still quite a bit of communication about administrative matters in Norwegian only.

Not providing information in English was interpreted by some as constituting an implicit requirement to reach a level of Norwegian fluency sufficient to handle at least practical information. As one PhD student answered when asked about their motivation for learning Norwegian even when not required by NTNU to do so:

This country doesn't give you the choice. To me it is not a choice. It is a must to be integrated fully. You have all the communication in Norsk [at NTNU]

The same PhD student continued, explaining how she interprets the varying practises of including English information:

What I usually do when I look at [the] NTNU website, Innsida, [or the] communication page for the staff and students: When something has an English version to it, then, to me, it means it is for everyone.

The use of English in sharing information is not only a matter of easy access to information for all; it is also interpreted as a signal of who are welcomed and not.

Other international researchers also said that they do not read documents shared internally at NTNU if it is only in Norwegian because they assume that it is not for them. If the information is relevant for everybody, they assume that NTNU would have made an English version of it. Some still try to read everything, often with the assistance of Google Translate or Norwegian-speaking colleagues. This lack of translation of information into English can, therefore, lead to international researchers missing out on vital information.

At the same time, local administration is facing a difficult balance. Having meetings and sharing documents exclusively in English can lead to alienation of Norwegian staff who are not fluent in English and would prefer things in Norwegian. One head of department pointed out that the department management cannot control what happens at the faculty levels, or that that leadership meetings are in Norwegian if only Norwegians are present. All the administrative staff at the departments we studied were aware of the problems with having meetings in Norwegian when it comes to accommodating international employees. At the same time, they also saw the importance of respecting those who are more comfortable speaking Norwegian. This ultimately resulted in situations where it seemed up to international researchers individually to interpret situations based on the language used and choose whether to try to engage even if Norwegian was used or to engage mainly with information and activities in English.

Division of work-tasks

Norwegian is used for most administrative systems and procedures at NTNU. Lack of sufficient Norwegian skills thus can cause international researchers to be unable to perform certain types of administrative work. For temporary staff this might mean that they are less likely to establish a further career at NTNU, which is in line with what is suggested by existing research (Maximova-Mentzoni et al. 2016). On the other hand, there is also a risk that Norwegian-speaking staff might get overburdened with these administrative tasks, as their international colleagues lack sufficient Norwegian skills to be able to do it on their own.

Amongst administrative staff, Norwegian language skills have, to a greater extent, been applied as a criterion for job opportunities. Thus, administrative staff in all levels of NTNU work predominantly in Norwegian. This is, of course, efficient in an environment where everyone masters the same language. Even in the CoE, where English was the only language used in meetings and information sharing, it was the case that they saw the need to demand knowledge of Norwegian from their administrative personnel:

All the systems at NTNU are in Norwegian. Even if we have highly qualified international applicants to an administrative position, we cannot hire them, just simply because all the systems, all the meetings about economy is held in Norwegian. This is challenging for us, and it requires a lot of local recourses to handle and it puts limitations on who we can hire.

Since the management and administrative staff at the department level are supposed to support research and teaching, the cost of translating is borne on department level, and it has to be done by staff with knowledge in Norwegian.

Teaching is another work-task where Norwegian language qualifications become relevant. Since language skills in Norwegian is rarely used as criteria for hiring research staff, quite a few of the international PhD students have a teaching responsibility as part of their work-duty. The fact that many of them are unable to teach in Norwegian becomes a problem, since study programs in many cases give courses mainly in Norwegian. This added to the language challenges, as one African PhD described:

I am supposed to teach courses in the department, but I can't teach courses in Norwegian, of course, for the bachelor programs. And, and then it is one of the, that was one of the issues that we had, but also meetings and academic discussions are mostly in Norwegian. So, you, you are left by yourself. I of course try to learn Norwegian and all, but that doesn't work with your, always, analogue to work in, with the PhD. So, language is of course really, really a challenge.

For this PhD student it would be valuable to have more support in learning Norwegian in order to be able to complete work-duties. Intensive practising would be required, but might be challenging by lack of arenas to practise in.

Language barriers in social situations

Whereas scientific conversations by necessity most often were held in English if one of the international researchers did not speak or understand Norwegian, more informal conversations—such as those taking place in breaks or in the corridor—tended to be in Norwegian when Norwegians took part. In one of the departments with a relatively large number of employees in total, there were international researchers that shared regional backgrounds, and the interviewees reported that people tended to automatically prefer to speak their own language amongst themselves in social settings. Most of the international researchers acknowledged that Norwegians prefer to speak their own language, but this is also perceived to be something that everybody prefers. Therefore, language may determine who socializes with whom at the departments. A European PhD student said:

Norwegians can speak English, but they do feel more comfortable, or it is more natural to talk in your own language.

For some of the international researchers, the Norwegians' preference for Norwegian was seen as an opportunity to practicing this new language. Others, however, reported that this was not something they appreciated, as they felt left out. In particular, in the department where there

was an unequal distribution of Norwegian and international researchers across the categories of permanent and temporary employees, this could create a feeling of being excluded from social interactions. This was especially clear in the case of lunch breaks. At one department where most of the permanent staff were Norwegian and most temporary staff were international, an American associate professor said:

They eat lunch together every day at 11.30 and I know that if I go then, you know we will have to have a break away conversation in English. You know, I mean there are other people, PhD students and the other two faculty members, they never come to lunch.

This informant provided the potential interpretation that this had to do with prioritizing time use differently, but at the same department, an international PhD student said: *"We have a lunchroom, but I never go there. Exactly because I don't know the language".* She explained how she only would enter the lunchroom if she saw other non-Norwegians already in the room. Lunchroom talk in this department mainly took place in Norwegian, but it was not experienced as an arena to practise Norwegian skills. The PhD student previously cited described it like this: *"Everyone will automatically speak Norwegian, and I will just sit there and eat".* This language barrier is also replicated in more formal settings like meetings, as the PhD student explained:

And I don't equally attend department meetings. The only department meeting I attended was when I was being introduced to the department. And that particular meeting when they are introducing new staff, especially if they are not Norwegian, they do have, they do speak the English. But these other meetings are in Norsk. And because of that most of the international students don't go in, lots of international PhDs or postdoc, don't go in those meetings.

Those who know Norwegian better than others of the international researchers may take on the role of a bridge and help others, as one South-American who had lived in Norway for some years said:

Because as I said I speak Norwegian usually, I blend more among the Norwegians. So, I am making the bridge with the foreigners and usually if they have, as I have lived here longer, usually they come to me to ask things.

Acting as a translator is one strategy that can be enacted by individual researchers. In the following section we will elaborate more on various experiences of dealing with language barriers and language training.

Language training and social integration

International researchers and the administration have various strategies to deal with issues of language use, language mixing and translation. Some placed the responsibility on themselves, as one South-American PhD student said:

If you don't study Norwegian it is hard to, but I think this is natural in any country because if you really want to integrate language is a barrier that you have to, you have to make your effort to.

They felt that it is their responsibility to learn Norwegian while living in Norway. Almost all our interviewees were learning Norwegian or were planning to, even though English functions well as a working language at their respective institutes. This was because they perceived the language as central to becoming integrated into Norwegian society and something that will make it easier to be socially included. A PhD student from Central Europe said:

You can have conversations in both English and Norwegian and people can just switch without a problem. But outside the department or in the real world, then I would say you need to know Norwegian.

This PhD student had chosen to learn Norwegian. This is interesting, because those who have a PhD or postdoc position are not contractually obligated to learn Norwegian. Those who are hired for permanent positions, however, have learning Norwegian in their contract as an NTNU policy.

Almost all the international researchers have some experience with the language course offered at the Dragvoll campus. This is mostly described as positive and effective for learning. On the other hand, most also see this course as an additional burden that comes on top of all their other responsibilities. Many do not see why they must go to another campus in the middle of the day and in addition complete homework. Some professors and associate professors also feel a bit out of place being the oldest in the room filled with many PhD students who have more time and energy to devote to serious study. One associate professor told us that he would rather go to the UDI website to renew his residence permit every two years rather than applying for permanent residency as this would require him to learn Norwegian better, which he simply did not have the time for. Another researcher said:

So, I would just basically need a semester to do just like that, just to study Norwegian, and then probably I would feel 100 % included.

This shows how important language is for being able to feel part of the Norwegian society. When talking about challenges concerning language, however, none of the international researchers expected NTNU to switch completely to English, or for everybody to speak English in their day to day life. Preferring your own language was taken for granted.

There is an understanding that this is a difficult balancing act. As most international researchers are trying to learn Norwegian for better societal integration, they have the goal to be able to at least join in conversations or have a basic understanding of documents. Still, the fact that Norwegians in general are well spoken in English caused a lack of opportunities for informal practice. One of them said:

If you are out on street, people, even if you try to speak Norwegian, they hear that you are speaking with an accent and they will just flip over to English. It is like a 'non-issue'.

Most of the international researchers described feeling that learning Norwegian would mean having a smoother social process by removing the need for Norwegians to 'switch' languages to include them. One South American researcher described the eagerness to switch to English as a matter of securing effectiveness, and as a lack of patience:

And sometimes people they don't have this patience for inclusion, that I think is the big challenge to address, how, how can I include more people and be effective at the same time. Because being effective I think is also kind of the Norwegian DNA".

It is not clear whether this effectiveness is perceived to be a part of Norwegian or academic way of thinking, but it may play into why international researchers can struggle to learn Norwegian.

The motivation for learning Norwegian also depended on the life situation, what kind of life they had or wished to have outside of work and in what degree they imagined themselves living in Norway in the future. Those who had or were planning to have a family with children here in Norway had both an additional motivation to learn Norwegian, and a way to learn it. As an American researcher said:

Actually, I have learned a lot from my kids, when they started 'barnehage'. And they would come home with new words and I just kind of learned Norwegian with them.

Their learning process would be helped by speaking Norwegian, but they have faced the obstacle of many Norwegians switching to English when they hear someone struggling in Norwegian, which does not help their development.

Staff at the International Researcher Support office (NIRS), saw the process of learning, or trying to learn, Norwegian as helpful to all international researchers both because it makes people feel like a part of society and to connect better with coworkers. They also know several examples of international researchers who initially came on a temporary contract for 3–4 years and did not feel the need to learn Norwegian, but who ended up wanting to find, or have found further employment, and maybe even a partner, and have ended up staying.

Work-cultures: Living in an international working environment

Diversity as such was described in positive terms by most of our interviewees. Differences in knowledge, habits and expectations did, however, create tensions in the workplace. The life situation outside the university influenced how the international researchers experienced their situation in the workplace. Furthermore, it is evident in our study that situations are experienced differently by researchers and staff positioned differently in terms of language skills, previous academic work experiences, length of stay in Norway etc. In this section we elaborate on the experiences of being part of an international working environment.

The benefits of diversity

People of different national and cultural backgrounds working together has some consequences for the working environment at the departments at NTNU. Among the interviewees, it was almost universally described as a positive experience, and several pointed specifically to the advantages of being part of an international staff. Some remarked on how lucky Norwegians are, since they themselves had to travel the world to experience other cultures. Norwegians get it right into their lap, as an Asian PhD student said:

Yeah and that has a very big advantage like I got an international environment after coming to Norway, but Norwegians get an international environment at their home. So that is a big privilege.

A diversity of educational, work and cultural backgrounds was first and foremost seen as a resource both by the administrators and by the researchers themselves because it provides a multitude of perspectives and solutions. Many of those recruited internationally mentioned that diversity was a sign of quality research and a good working environment. They would not have accepted the position had they seen that they would be coming to a department with only Norwegian employees, both because they would have been the only one sticking out, but also because that would have been a sign of poor quality. As one Asian PhD student said: *"You do not have to transform yourself completely into another human being. You can live the way you are, if there is diversity"*. Coming to a research environment that already had a certain cultural and national diversity meant that there was more openness to differences, a bigger chance for finding someone to identify with and maybe someone who spoke their mother tongue, as well as other people to ask for aid in practical issues who had gone through the same process. A North American said: *"The international aspect contributing to things being more open"*. This often also means that there is already a culture for speaking English.

The lunch—a challenging situation

To be part of an international staff seems to create an awareness of situations which can be experienced as more challenging because of sociocultural polarization. A local administrative employee mentioned that common lunches are held in the departments to socialize and create a good working environment and saw it as a conscious effort of inclusion that people were told when and where people eat lunch the first weeks they were working. She thought that people were more interested in participating if they were told that this was expected of them, as this was not something that everybody was used to from their previous workplaces. To make the lunch a place for all was also important to avoid national subgroups self-segregating. This could easily happen as one PhD student said:

I think most part of the people using the lunchroom are the Norwegians, because the foreigners they have this culture of having a warm lunch, and not a sandwich. And then we usually go to the canteen.

Another reason for not taking part in the common lunch could be that, if there were several employees from the same country, they could want to speak their native language amongst themselves.

One South American PhD student worked in a department where the difference in food culture often led to Norwegians and foreigners eating separately. He spoke Norwegian well after living here for several years, and, in a conscious effort to socialize with Norwegians and practice his Norwegian, he occasionally tried to sit down with his Norwegian colleagues for lunch. But he faced a challenge:

I can speak Norwegian and have an everyday conversation, but I cannot discuss philosophy in Norwegian. And sometimes also, if I sit down at the lunchroom and they

make jokes, I don't have the same background, so it is, sometimes: 'ah, that is not funny', but everybody is laughing. So, yeah but I don't know the music, so it is a bit of learning the culture also, and I didn't grow up here. But even learning things about the culture is really hard, for example I didn't grow up listening to Kurt Nielsen or some famous Norwegian singers. And sometimes they joke about that.

This shows that while language is a central part of what makes one feel as part of a group or not, this is also connected to knowledge about local context and culture. This researcher pointed to this as a reason that, no matter how well he learned the language, he could never become completely Norwegian, simply because he has not grown up with all these things that Norwegians use to bond over. There is a social capital in being able to participate in this inside humor that people who have grown up in other countries lack. This is an especially big problem when there are many Norwegians and few international researchers in a setting. In the departments where there are many international researchers, they tended to stick together because of the things they have in common and what separated them from others.

The challenge of gender norms

Some conflicts may also arise from differences in cultural norms. There are not many examples of this, but those that were mentioned tended to be related to gender norms. For example: A local administrative employee at one of the departments said that they had some problems with people from certain countries who had problematic attitudes towards women. One female European professor at the same department mentioned that there may be some trouble because of different gender norms:

I know that, like, cultural diversity can bring for example some stereotypes, for example I am a woman so if I need to supervise, maybe a man that is not used to, like having equal relationship with a woman, that can be a challenge.

When it comes to adaptation to Norway, another professor thought there may be problems in the fact that women they recruited may come from more protective cultures than the Norwegian one and could find the expectation for a high level of independence when they came here as a bit of a shock. One postdoc had told this professor that before she came to Norway, she had never even taken the bus alone without a male relative, and realizing that she was expected to do everything herself was a big contrast from her home culture.

Gender considerations also came up in questions of recruitment, because one of the departments have a lack of female researchers, especially female professors. The department head engaged in a conscious effort to recruit more female professors, but there were not many on "the market", and even less who wanted to move to Trondheim. When recruiting women, they were conscious of highlighting things like Norway's kindergarten system. Another head of department reported that they were told by women they tried to recruit that the lack of other female professors made NTNU less attractive for qualified female candidates.

Work-life balance or making an international career?

One aspect of working in a diverse working environment that may lead to conflict is differing work cultures relating to aspects like working hours, understandings of hierarchies and roles and attitudes towards independence and collaborations. Several of the international researchers, especially ones with permanent positions, reported how positive it is that they have come to a job where it is accepted that work is not the only important thing in one's life. Another positive feature is the relatively flat organizational structure in Norwegian workplaces making people feel included. This is contrasted to other institutions where they have worked around the world, where their bosses expected them to keep long hours at the office, no matter how productive they may be. A European professor said:

I think that to me that is very positive in one sense, that leaving here, I have the possibility of choosing. So, I have the feeling that it is absolutely fine if I leave at 03:30 pm, and then I come the day after and then I have my working hours. I have the impression that especially coming from some countries, the working culture is completely different; so, people expect you to just sit in the office longer, in respect of productivity. When you come from some countries your boss expects you to be sitting there with the light on for a longer time.

She could tell that Norwegians tried to prioritize their personal life a bit more, while the international researchers tended to stay longer at the office.

Researchers who have children and spouses especially mention this work-life balance as a positive factor. An American researcher who previously worked in a high-pressure environment reported:

In terms of a location where you can raise a family and also do, like, high quality research, this offered a really nice opportunity for that. Particularly because culturally it is very friendly and supportive towards families and people can have kids. So that makes it actually very attractive to try to stick around. And to keep doing science and raising kids in the environment that is here. Generally, people have a much easier time here than in other countries.

A postdoc from the same department said:

Other places where you, they would not care at all about your family for example. And you, if you have a partner or kids, they might, they would just care about you coming to work every day, and it is it. And here you feel that there is support and at least a willingness will help that you get established here in some sense and settle.

He connected this to Norwegian culture and in particular NTNU. This postdoc could see how having many ambitious international researchers affected a working environment:

The fact that some people work many more hours than others can create a bit of a perception of pressure for the people that work less, for example. Some people might work the number of hours that they are supposed to and then go back home to their families, as they should in my opinion. Or should be entitled to if that is what they want to do. But some other people might not do that, because they come from a different culture

where work has different emphasis or family is not balanced in the same way with work. And they might work sixteen hours a day or something, and weekends and so on and the people who are keeping a more balanced lifestyle might start feeling some pressure, just because of this.

This department had high turnover and many people recruited internationally and had outspoken tension because of different working cultures, which mainly manifested itself as a difference between the administrative and technical staff on one hand and the researchers on the other. The Norwegian work law concerning reasonable work hours may not go hand in hand with researchers' ambitions. Many researchers come from research working cultures where competition among coworkers and keeping long hours is expected and find it difficult to adapt when they come to NTNU. People may also have different opinions in what can be expected from others, for example how brusque you can be with your students or how much you can expect of your team when it comes to their time. At this department, the administration had to 'force' people to take time and holidays off.

Young, ambitious researchers may also feel that if they do not spend a lot of time at work, they will lose out to others when they are going back out on the international market. One international professor who had a lot of international PhD students and group members, described this situation:

But if you want to be competitive, even in Norway as later as a faculty member, you have to go through those processes, which means that then you are still competing with people from Turkey, people from United States, people from Italy, people from Germany. So therefore, I mean while we kind of appear to be isolated here within the Norwegian system of the work environment and so, we also still are all aware of the realities of the world, because we, our competitors are not here.

He saw that this was particularly precarious for foreigners, and especially those from non-EU countries. Because for them, once their contract is over, they must either apply for a more permanent residency or consider where to move next:

I see that it is a bit strange thing to sort of adapt to. Because you come to an environment where it is very sort of low pressure in general, right. And employees are very well protected also against any terms of pressure, which is wonderful. And at the same time, you still have to think about the realities of the rest of world.

This may also lessen their motivation to learn Norwegian, as other things will be valued on their resumé in an international market. This creates pressure for everybody that can be unhealthy and lead to personal conflicts. The polarization between groups again appears here, as one researcher pointed out that after a certain time of the day, the only people left at work are international researchers.

At the departments where people tend to keep more 'normal' hours, this may have its own downside. Young researchers who do not have family in Norway may feel especially isolated by the fact that after a certain time of the day, most of their Norwegian co-workers disappear home to their families. Where there are more Norwegian than international researchers, this becomes particularly noticeable. Many felt that Norwegians need to plan and have a starting and finish

point for social activities, which they are not used to. The local administrations also talked about how they see that young researchers without a family or network in Norway spend a lot of time alone. This experience was seen as dependent on life situation, not necessarily background. One PhD student from Africa described Norway as a very 'home-oriented' country, where not much socialization among co-workers is arranged because everybody goes home to their families at the end of the day. He himself had a family to go home to, but still described this as:

We don't have any other events than work or research seminars. So probably that is also one thing that does contribute to like, I don't know, we call it coldness, like there is no social interaction.

He hoped for a positive development:

When I came here 10 years, 9 years ago it wasn't this many foreigners in Trondheim. It was less, less foreigners, so the more you have outsiders coming into the city, the more open, hopefully, the more open people will be to, to speaking to strangers, and just speaking to each other like the Norwegians.

Those who work at NIRS could also see that many international employees were sitting at home alone at nights, weekends and holidays, with the result being that they spend more time at work. Some of this befalls the local administration; one professor who had a lot of work with international students invited a Vietnamese student home for Christmas dinner because she was alone on Christmas Eve. Some perceived too many cultural activities they would be interested in participating in in Trondheim were only in Norwegian and many are used living in more bustling cities. Many struggled with the lack of a social network in Norway, which made inclusion at the working place particularly important to this group. Those who have children in general described being more "integrated" into the Norwegian working system than those who do not, but the request for more social activities came from almost everybody. This may prevent loneliness, particularly from those who are used to having families around or come from a more socially oriented culture. An employee at NIRS said that more Norwegians should invite international researchers home, as this could be enriching and positive for both parties, and too few do this today.

"I can never live a secure life as an international"

When the international PhD and postdoc researchers were discussing what they thought of their place and future at NTNU, many touched upon the uncertainty that comes with not knowing where they would be once their project is finished or contract is up. There was a general feeling that knowing Norwegian is a strategic advantage in the difficult process of making a career in academia, and, more surprisingly, there was also a feeling among some that it was an even bigger advantage to be Norwegian. Many also perceived being ethnically white and European as an advantage.

Among our interviewees, people from Africa felt the most foreign at NTNU. An African PhD student said: *"No matter how good I will study, no matter how, I be able, no matter, even if I had the capacity to, to establish myself here".*

She was convinced that: *"I can never live a secure life as an international, because I will never be sure of, will I have a job, after this job what happens next",* and she connected this uncertainty to her international status:

And I don't want to sound racist, but what is claimed, and this is not just racist, because it is not about colour, it is about nationality. What goes around, or what I hear, or what I have come to understand, and which I am coming to believe is that once you are not Norwegian it is difficult to have you as a permanent employee here.

The topic of insecurity in getting a permanent position arose in relation to concerns regarding representation at the departments. When talking about diversity at their departments the international researchers themselves described their work environment as diverse, but pointed out that this was mainly concerning the PhD and postdoc researchers, and not the permanent staff: *"It is more diverse, but if you go to, okay who are the professors that you have for permanent then you wouldn't see that bit of diversity".* In contrast, the international researchers perceived the permanent positions as predominantly Norwegian, European or North American and white. Because of this, some of the international researchers could not see themselves working at NTNU in the future. They did not think NTNU had a place for them. When asked about his future at NTNU, another African PhD student said: *"I feel like, as a, as a PhD you, for instance I don't kind of see myself working in the department in the future. Because I don't see any foreigner working in the department".* This shows that representation is just as important when it comes to national diversity, as it is when discussing gender balance.

Social integration and services at NTNU

With all these different people who have different experiences, there are several experiences of social integration that relate to culture. What we can see is that the lack of a social network outside of work makes social integration particularly important at the departments where the international researchers are employed. One Asian professor described foreigners as 'orphans' because of this:

Foreigners, we are a bit like orphans because you have, you know, very little people and as a student it is slightly different because you go to sometimes classes and so your network is broader. But when you come at, let's say postdoc level, for example, and later on, your networks are really limited. I can imagine that it may not be so easy always.

Many international researchers wanted in particular more ways to facilitate better relations between co-workers, especially those that were organized into research groups. Norwegians were described as being a bit reserved and reluctant to make the first move for social contact, exacerbated by the fact that most of them have families to go home to.

To remedy this, they requested more social activities outside of work. However, many of those interviewed who wished for more social engagements were not aware of NIRS or any of the activities or seminars that they offer. Most of the PhDs and postdoc researchers were aware of the existence of DION, but they were not aware of the extent of the activities that were available. The fact that many international researchers wanted more social activities to be arranged but were not aware of what was already available points to an exclusionary

information gap. Some were aware of NIRS, but they wished that there could be more social activities in the departments and between colleagues, as this is where the most basic social inclusion or exclusion happens. Others explained that they were aware of things being arranged by NIRS but did not have the time to go. Those people did, however, express that it is positive to know that it exists, it has a value on its own, even though they never participate. As a PhD student put it: *"I think when you are sitting alone, or when you are working alone for such long hours you also lack some energy"*.

What we find is that social activities that are arranged for the entire group of international researchers by NIRS are positive, but what is missing is something in the day to day life in the departments. People may not find the time to go to meetings with big groups where they socialize, but they would appreciate if they were given opportunities to bond with their colleagues whom they see every day. People want to find people of a similar position as themselves, whether in age, research focus or personal interests. Those who work at Dragvoll expressed an uncertainty of whether the courses that are arranged by organizations that are at Gløshaugen were even open to them. A PhD student who worked at Dragvoll wondered about this: *"I feel like DION is situated in Realfag or in Gløshaugen. I don't know if we really have a connection here or the activities are down there in a way"*. There is thus a gap in information about what is available, and for whom.

When evaluating the social activities that are currently offered by NTNU, the reception was mixed. Some described going out to pubs with DION or Christmas workshops with NIRS and were happy that these opportunities existed, as they were an arena to socialize and ease their way into Norwegian social life. As a South American postdoc told us: *"Also the way that things here tend to be arranged around clubs, it is also something that might not be obvious to all foreigners"*.

A European professor had attended both seminars and social activities arranged by NIRS and said that it was important for her. She attended their Christmas workshop, and described it like this:

What was also very nice for me, it was, let's say Christmas craft workshop. Where we came with kids, it was very nice also because for instance then Christmas time is coming, the locals, they have like more like families and relatives. But we are still like, 22th of December we are here, and we need some more activities like to feel this, this atmosphere and the Christmas craft workshop was really nice option like when we expressed ourselves. Especially like family and kids and this, because this is, the time is very dark and is kind of like sad, but this was really good option. And the concerts and activities what they are doing is really nice. They really helped us a lot.

It is clear to see that the existence of such things is important to families, especially around the holidays.

The department with the most turnover and international recruitment described an especially good working relationship with NIRS, both when it came to practical matters and to the social integration of their international researchers. The department's local administration said that they told their researchers about the activities offered by NIRS, most of the international researchers interviewed in the department said they were aware of them. In contrast,

international researchers at the other departments, where the local administration did not tell of the same level of cooperation with NIRS, were less aware of these programs, and the information they did find was through their own online research. This shows that where there is cooperation concerning one aspect, there might be an easier flow of information concerning other things as well.

International researchers described their Norwegian coworkers as being generally friendly at work, but seldom taking initiative to meeting outside for socializing. As a South American postdoc who had come to NTNU within a few months of our interview said:

But in terms of social inclusion I have been able to socialize, I don't feel that has been any kind of impediment for me to, to meet people. I have some friends, like most of my colleagues here I interact within the working hours, sometimes I hang out with people here. But a lot of friends that I have met here now they, I have met them outside university. But then it is, I think, yes anybody as anywhere else you, you have to make an effort to try to engage and socialize in other environments. So now I am not, there is no reason why I would feel that I am not included. Definitely I think I have more interactions, probably know more people that are foreigners. I think also because most Norwegian people have families and, so they will go to their places and spend time"

An African PhD student felt the same way:

Social life is very slow here. I have very few friends that we try to meet up and to grab a beer or something. But that's it, you don't make, there is not social circumstances where you can make friends. It is not there.

Many international researchers are used to there being more of a culture of going to a pub or for dinner together after work and to people being a bit freer in their time, while social activities in Norway usually have a defined start and end time. The type of activities they wished for differed from person to person. One Asian PhD student had tried going to the mountains with the department for a hike and described it as *"not fun"*. Another PhD student from Europe who works at a different department said:

I know there is a PhD organization. But I haven't had the time to take part in their activities. I am more of an outdoor person, so I don't really find something that was for me amongst that organization.

The most common desire is for a platform to better socialize with all of their colleagues, because today many are friends only with other international researchers. Leaving Norway without a single Norwegian friend is not something that they want, but they lack the tools to prevent it.

Practical challenges: tacit knowledge and the need of support

In the previous sections we have described experiences of everyday life in the university. In this section we illuminate the first phase of arriving as a new employee at NTNU—often referred to as "onboarding". Onboarding includes all the practicalities necessary for getting started, such as

registering for a Norwegian person number, enrolling in the NTNU payment system, opening bank accounts etc. Finding housing and facilitating work or school for family members is also crucial in the experience of settling in.

The international interviewees had different experiences when it comes to where, and by whom, they found support to settle in. However, many had a sense of the importance of the first impression in shaping the perception of and relation to the university.

Information—too little, too late

Something that is common in all the interviews is that the international researchers all had difficulties with some practical issues that arose while moving to Norway. This relates to even the most basic of practical issues such as winter heating, as one European professor reported:

There are, I think some aspects that, at least my experience as a foreigner, I was not aware of, like for example, okay, when it is winter and it is very cold then you may need not to turn off the heating, because otherwise the pipe will explode. Like very practical things you may not just be aware of.

Many international researchers, regardless of where they came from, what their position was or what departments they arrived at, reported receiving very little information before arriving in Norway. This was especially important when it came to the onboarding process.

One American associate professor mentioned that she was surprised with how little information she received before arrival. She was told that if she had any questions, “just ask!”, and after that, there was silence. She constantly felt like she had to interrupt people in their work and be a burden with all of her questions. In the university where she had worked previously, there was a new employee orientation, but here “it just seems like a lot of things are left up to me to either figure out or ask about”. Several people shared this feeling. The international researchers were not always sure what was their own responsibility to figure out by themselves and what they could expect to have help with. Someone even had to contact the department just days before arriving to remind them that they were soon arriving since they had not been given any information on what to do after coming to Trondheim. This lack of coordination surprised many. The NIRS representatives we interviewed were very aware of this situation and had already begun a project to streamline onboarding for international staff.

It is worth noting, however, that amongst the international researchers in this study there was a general lack of awareness of what resources are available at NTNU. Many have simply asked supervisors or colleagues who had gone through the process before them to assist and give advice. This worked in the sense that most of the international researchers had met “nice individuals” in the either department or faculty administrations or co-workers who were very nice. Many felt that as they had to ask question after question, people began to lose patience with them, making them feel like nuisances. As one PhD student said: “people became annoyed after the fourth or fifth time”. This is not limited to position at NTNU, as a professor from the same department told us:

So the communication flow or what are your tasks and what are your responsibilities, what do we expect from you. I think that maybe I missed, at that time. So, it was a little bit left to you to figure it out what your role was and what the expected contribution was.

Many wondered why they were not simply given this information right away, rather than having to ask for it as the need appeared along the way.

Others again felt that they received too much information, became overwhelmed, and missed out of key things because they did not know which parts to start with. This can be especially overwhelming for those who arrived in Norway for the first time having no prior knowledge about how administrative procedures are run by either the Norwegian state or by the university. One researcher described:

Because if you have a new, say somebody has never been to the Nordics, kind of Nordics countries coming to Norway for the first time, and they suddenly see Norwegians all over and it is like, you need to apply for this, you need to apply for this, it is a lot of information.

The key is that even when there was not a lack of information, many did not get the tools to know what information was the most important and where to begin.

Navigating a difficult, bureaucratic system for the first time

The international researchers described navigating the bureaucratic Norwegian system as particularly difficult. In addition to individual situations, such as finding a school for their children, most of the international researchers reported struggling with finding a way to engage with the NTNU or Norwegian bureaucracy and did not receive any information or assistance from NTNU about how they might do so. Many described the onboarding process as haphazard and uncoordinated. Understanding bureaucratic systems was described as especially important when it comes to the immigration process, since the system is quite sequential in nature. For example, opening a bank account requires one to already have an ID. Many international researchers are not prepared for the waiting time at official offices, and in the worst-case scenario peoples’ economy might suffer. Several of the international researchers had experienced getting stuck at some step of the process, which poses a challenge for the smoothness of their first time at NTNU.

Language issues also come into play in this context. We have already described that documents that concern administrative matters from the central administration at NTNU and the faculties are in Norwegian. This hinders people who do not master Norwegian in getting vital information. Some have also described the fact that institutions like banks may not have information readily available in English either, as was the experience of one incoming researcher:

I think the challenge at that time was we received all this information from UDI, from the bank, from all those institutions in Norwegian. And then it was difficult to know what, because by then I didn't have any idea about Norwegian. So, what we did was we had to google translate everything. And it is like you got an e-mail, the letters were not things you can just copy and paste in google, you have to type. And some of this came with

laptops, and the laptops didn't have these Norwegian keys, so then it was a bit challenging, you know to translate it and everything.

General information available may have been in English, but after a short introduction, more detailed information was only available in Norwegian. Some saw that Norwegian colleagues could quickly resolve an issue by making a phone call. But when they themselves tried to make a phone call to solve their problems they were not able to find a quick solution. This shows that Norwegian colleagues possess the necessary knowledge about where to reach out to regarding a particular issue and what to ask for but that a newcomer to Norway and NTNU does not.

Difficulties were not only experienced due to content of or level of detail in available information. The form that information is presented also played a crucial role. For example, there are many digital solutions that some found difficult to understand and use. Some newcomers, especially younger international researchers and those who had a lot of previous experience with international mobility, said they could find things online by googling it. However, others were surprised that they were not provided with a physical packet of ready information, and they were not sure how to find that information on their own. One associate professor who had recently arrived at NTNU when they were interviewed said:

I think for me, because I am more like a tactile person, instead of having to go online for everything, if there was a booklet that I had just been given, I mean, I know it is not like the most sustainable thing maybe, but I would have really, that would have really helped me to just have a physical booklet that was like, here is a check list of things you need to do.

It is not always easy for someone to google their way to responses to questions they did not know they needed to ask. This obviously relates to what the individual researchers are already used to, but the fact that practical issues is something that almost all the researchers have struggled with to some degree shows that there is a general gap of information. Those who had struggled less with these issues often attributed this ease to their supervisors, a friend or someone else who had personally provided a great deal of assistance, showing how this work may fall on other individuals.

As we will show in the next section, this phenomenon of the information provided being “too little, too late” is particularly challenging in connection with financial situations.

The most common frustrations: housing and financial costs

Administrators—both those working at the local, departmental level and in central HR division—and international researchers themselves all agreed that the most prevalent need among international researchers is finding housing upon their arrival. NIRS has a service to help international researchers with housing. NTNU offers a limited number of apartments as accommodation for international researchers who arrive in Trondheim, thus NIRS also offers help with finding rentals on the open market. This service is a support for the departments at NTNU. However, due to the considerable growth in the number of international researchers and staff, there is not enough housing available. There might also be a discrepancy between the researchers' expectations and what the offices can offer. Some have applied for housing only to

be told weeks later that there are no available apartments. Many find that landlords on the private market are rarely interested in short-term leasing. Some also felt that Norwegians are given preference over them, especially when they are applying from abroad. When they have arrived in Trondheim and are settled and can meet potential landlords in person, it is easier. But some departments have experienced that researchers arrive to start work without secure housing for them or their families, even though central and local administration had worked hard to accommodate them. More available housing could solve this. One of the departments have chosen to hire an apartment of their own to accommodate the researchers they recruit instead of seeking support from NIRS.

Another common concern was financial matters. NIRS's seminars on taxes are among their most popular. Many of the questions international researchers have are related to economics. In some cases, the lack of information and the difficulty of getting everything in order has led to unfortunate situations. One South American postdoc said:

Everything here in Norway works fairly well, very, very well when you are in the system. But if you are not in the system yet, it is, it is being more challenging for you to, to get started, when you arrive here.

As a result of a lack of information, she did not do enough in advance of coming here. It was 2 months before she got her ID number, and hence a tax reduction card. Because of this, initially, 50% of her paycheck was deducted for taxes. At the same time she was also looking for a place to live and required 3-month deposit once she did so. The lack of an ID also held up opening a bank account. She had to go to the post office for giro and was “cash-full in a cash-less society”. Getting information before she came to Norway would have helped her avoid this situation, and she is not the only one who talks of this.

This is particularly critical, as many arrive to find Norway a very expensive country, both when they first come, but also before. One postdoc from Africa told of expensive moving fees, like plane tickets for an entire family. He knew that some departments cover these costs for their employees, and some do not:

So if the university covers that, 7,000 or 10,000, it is not a lot, a lot for the university. But it could be something you know that increases the motivation of, you know, the researchers.

This would help NTNU hire the best qualified, not just those who can afford to move. Not everyone has the economy to handle this with ease, and a financial burden like 50% tax on top of this can be very problematic. Fortunately, such incidents are not that common as far as we can see, but this is something that would be concerning to any international researcher.

Most researchers are hired onto projects that they are very motivated for, and they are eager to start their work. This makes it particularly frustrating when they are then saddled with bureaucratic processes that may take weeks or months to resolve in addition to their normal work. One international professor mentioned that he, as a professor, was very well taken care of with practical help with such tasks as police appointments and opening a bank account. But not all receive help with these things, and he could see that this can cause frustration. He also worked in a department with a lot of international recruitment from multiple countries including Vietnam, India and the US, and:

challenges with regard to integration and work-conditions, and strategies for overcoming such challenges.

The main impression from our study is that there is a high awareness and understanding of the situation of international researchers amongst management and administrative staff. The general impression is also that the international researchers are mostly satisfied with their onboarding experience and their current work situation at NTNU. Still, the interviews have demonstrated that there is room for improvements in accommodating an internationally diverse workforce in the university. Three main topics emerged as particularly important areas to address: 1) language, 2) work cultures, and 3) practical challenges related to the first phases of the onboarding process. The report is structured around these three topics and presents best practices, problems and dilemmas as perceived by the international researchers and the parties responsible for receiving them. In the following we summarize the main findings:

The process of settling in (onboarding) was described as challenging by international researchers with no previous experience of living in Norway. Although all of our interviewees eventually sorted out these practicalities, we found that difficulties in the initial phase of coming to Norway affected the general perception of NTNU as a host institution for international researchers.

Most of the international researchers we interviewed, both professors and PhD students, described how they had received help from Norwegian or more experienced international colleagues. Many had been given tips and information and had been told to ask questions if they needed assistance. However, asking the relevant questions, to a relevant person, was difficult for many, as this requires a certain level of prior knowledge. Furthermore, many of the international researchers described how they felt like they were bothering colleagues with questions. They were aware of the extra efforts required from supervisors or other researchers to help them. Some of the international researchers did not know that the International Researcher Support office (NIRS) exists at NTNU.

The management and administration on the department level was aware of NIRS, but there were varying practices regarding referring individual researchers to NIRS, or to ask the office for support. One issue raised by HR on the department level was the need to be able to support international researchers in engaging Norwegian bureaucracy, such as the processes of The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration or Norwegian taxes. The necessary level of expertise required was seen as impossible to sustain on the department level, and to pay for external consulting is expensive. This was especially emphasized by the CoE, which has a particularly high number of international staff—both in permanent and temporary positions—coming from a wide range of countries.

Thus, we conclude that there is a need for more information in the early stages of the onboarding process and that more visible and accessible international researcher support would be beneficial. We also suggest that there is a need to look further into what kind of onboarding expertise NTNU should have in-house in order to make the onboarding processes efficient, both for the international researchers and their colleagues at the department level. For example, one concrete measure developed by one of the departments we studied—a buddy program—was

Sometimes things are not as smooth for those people, I see that. So, providing some professional help, like the university have done for me to also those people could be, making their life a bit easier.

Many others have described that the manner of their arrival affects their wellbeing during their entire stay, and that practical issues dampened their enthusiasm in a way that they have remembered for years. Both workers in the administration and professors with responsibility for foreign researchers pointed out that a good reception is important not only to welcome people, but also to make them stay at NTNU. The fact that there are several former master students who have been recruited to PhD positions because of their merit is proof that recruitment on this level works, as there are a lot of very qualified PhD students among the former master students at almost all departments. Those who first came as master students also told of a rather different process, where the International Office arranged many practical things for them in advance and were taken to their different appointments in groups when they arrived. This is often put in contrast those who arrived as PhD students and were left more to their own devices.

It should be noted that this also has to do with expectation management. Many of the researchers described being well received and having their questions answered. Several of those who have lived in Norway for many years said that things that they struggled with are now fixed, so their PhD students have a better support network at NTNU than they did 10 years ago. There is also clearly a difference between the expectation of someone who arrives as a PhD student and a star scientist who has been headhunted to NTNU. The problem is not necessarily that the administration does not do enough, but clearer information could be given about what to expect or not, so that everybody can manage their expectations. Streamlining the onboarding process so that it is not so dependent on individuals is a way to start.

Concluding remarks

In this report we have presented the findings from a qualitative interview study of international diversity at NTNU. The aim of the study was to contribute with empirical knowledge relevant for the university in order to further develop measures to improve the support of international researchers and internationally diverse working environments. The study contributes to the existing reports on international diversity in academia by taking an organizational approach, including the perspective of both international researchers coming to NTNU and the perspective of the management and administrative staff responsible for HR and international researcher support. In this vein, the study contributes new insights into how local situations within an academic context matter. Furthermore, the study shows the importance of acknowledging differences in needs, motivations and priorities.

Three departments were selected as sites for conducting interviews. One department was a CoE with a particularly high number of international researchers, and the two others were ordinary departments with a high and an average number of international staff. We interviewed 16 international researchers (6 permanent staff, 10 temporary staff) and 10 managers and administrative staff, including both staff on department level and from the international research support staff in the central administration of NTNU (NIRS). Open-ended questions about experiences from everyday life at the university was asked, and more specifically we asked about

considered particularly positive both by the international researchers and the administrative staff.

Information sharing internally at NTNU on Innsida, is a topic that was frequently discussed in the interviews. The lack of language consistency in the use of Norwegian and/or English made it difficult for the individual international researcher to figure out how to relate to the information. The use of English was interpreted as a sign of information that was relevant to all employees, whereas when information was only in Norwegian some took it as a signal that it was not meant for international staff. Other international researchers described how they used translation tools (Google Translate) or had to ask colleagues for help.

Language skills was a main concern for all our interviewees. According to standard NTNU work agreements, international researchers in permanent positions are required to learn Norwegian. None of the professors or associate professors we interviewed questioned this requirement, but none of them had seen this requirement being enforced in terms of being sanctioned if one failed to advance in Norwegian language skills. The language issue also came forth as a dilemma. On the one hand, both the management and the individual researchers were aware that it takes time to master a language on a level where one is able to teach advanced courses. On the other hand, they also realized that being able to communicate in Norwegian is important for being integrated both into the Norwegian society and into the academic work-environment, even when English is the working language.

Many had participated in the language classes offered to international researchers and students. However, the language course was described as practically challenging to fit into busy work schedules. Some also thought that reaching a level of language skills necessary for academic work in Norwegian would be too time consuming. From the management perspective, the challenge of international researchers acquiring sufficient Norwegian language skills was seen as problematic for the departments because a portion of their employees cannot teach in Norwegian or perform administrative tasks in Norwegian.

The majority of the international interviewees, including the researchers in temporary positions, expressed motivation to learn Norwegian, mainly in order to be able to communicate and participate in everyday social interactions. Some international researchers expressed frustration with the lack of clearly defined arenas to practice Norwegian. While some reported that they avoided situations where Norwegians spoke Norwegian amongst themselves, others were frustrated by the fact that many Norwegians tended to immediately switch to English as soon as they heard an accent, thus taking away the opportunity to practice Norwegian.

In other words, the findings in this study suggests that a more flexible and tailored language course would cater better for the substantial variation of needs with regard to language skills. Moreover, open conversations about language use, expectations, motivations and purposes to learn Norwegian and/or practice English is important on the department level.

Work cultures and social life were identified by all participants in our study as important aspects of feeling integrated into a new workplace. The social activities offered by NIRS and organizations like DION were highly appreciated amongst the international researchers who had

participated in them. Quite a few of them missed a stronger sense of being socially integrated on the department level through activities outside of the work situation.

Due to the limited number of participants we have not been able to analyze differences associated with gender, geographic- or educational backgrounds in a systematic way. However, it is evident that international researchers with experience from universities and societies with a stronger emphasis on hierarchical structures describe the relatively “flat” structure of Norwegian academia as a feature they need to adapt to. Most of the international informants appreciated this social system and described it as a situation in which they felt free to pursue their own research interests. Some of the international researchers in temporary positions were concerned about the fact that they were not likely to succeed in having a permanent position at NTNU. Language played a part in this, but some also mentioned the lack of visible role models they could identify with in permanent positions.

Thus, we propose that there is a need for enhanced awareness of how to make internationally diverse work environments inclusive. Consciousness and awareness need to be built in all levels of the organization and in particular in everyday work environments on the department level. Some experiences are shared by many international researchers, but they should not be treated as a homogenous group. Situations and concerns differ between departments and a strengthening of awareness on diversity issues should include procedures for developing local action plans in addition to the overarching NTNU action plan for equality and diversity.

Suggestions for further research

Since this study is limited in scope, further empirical research is needed. We cannot claim that we have exhausted all relevant experiences of “being international” or “doing internationalization” at NTNU. There is a palpable need to expand and further the study of local practices of internationally diverse working environments. Our study suggests that it is particularly important to further investigate the dynamics of local, national and transnational careers, as well as racialized and gendered dynamics in academia.

Academia is facing the challenge of an increasingly precarious workforce, with a growing number of postdoc scholars and researchers on temporary contracts. Given that 65 percent of postdocs at NTNU are international, there is a need to further explore tensions between local (institutional/departmental), national and transnational careers. Through their mobility, this group plays a crucial role in connecting research communities internationally. The knowledge of what international mobility entails in terms of transforming research is still underexplored (Coe 2018; Davies 2019). We know from previous research that immigrants are underrepresented and face challenges in establishing a career in Norwegian higher education (Abrahamson and Drange 2015; Askvik and Drange 2019; Gunnes et al. 2017; Støren 2016; Maximova-Mientzoni 2016). A deeper understanding of how research careers vary across locations is thus pertinent. Further research could also benefit from including other groups that constitutes “diversity” in the university.

This report has focused on the experiences of employees at NTNU. In our study several of the PhD students had a background as master students at NTNU. Their prior knowledge of the

university played an important role in them choosing NTNU. This indicates that it is relevant to pursue a more nuanced approach to internationalized careers. Amongst the PhD candidates and postdocs we interviewed, we found that some researchers were clearly motivated to take what they learn at NTNU back to their home countries. Others were oriented towards a more international career, and yet others were oriented towards the possibilities of a continued career at NTNU. The latter was often due to their life situation, often involving a partner and/or children, where continued international mobility was considered stressful or undesirable. In the latter group there was also an awareness of the perceived "Norwegianness" and whiteness of the permanent faculty, which made some less optimistic about their chances of getting a permanent position. Thus, considering the underrepresentation of Norwegians with immigrant background, and the phenomenon of generational mobility (Hoffman 2009), racialized dynamics (Ahmed 2012; Mählick 2013 and 2015) is an important topic to explore further.

Recommendations for following up the findings of the report

1 Strengthening NIRS and making it more visible

Today, NIRS plays an important role both when it comes to the reception and following up of international employees. Presently, this responsibility is mainly meant to be a support for departments, who have the formal responsibility of following up with their staff. However, in many cases, NIRS also works more closely with following up of individual researchers, both before and after their arrival at NTNU. There is little systematization in who receives or uses this opportunity, and while this sometimes relates to particularly demanding immigration cases, at other times a department or research leader who recruits internationally may have a particular knowledge about NIRS and its competences. Another important aspect of NIRS's work is the seminars and social activities offered to international employees. Because of NTNU's ambitions for internationalization, NIRS has seen a great increase in its workload. This means that today, it must prioritize how to handle all the requests from individuals and departments. Our study shows that NIRS has a level of competence on internationalization that is unrealistic for the departments to acquire. A further strengthening of NIRS will be able to raise the quality of NTNU's work with internationalization considerably. We therefore recommend the following:

a) More resources to NIRS

With increased resources, NIRS will be able to take on first-line responsibility for both reception and practical follow up of all international researchers, which will help relieve departments and streamline job offers. This will also make it possible to increase the capacity of the most popular seminars and activities, so that all who want to can participate, as well as offer new seminars should the need arise.

b) More clear division of labor between NIRS, departments and faculties

All departments and faculties must acquire knowledge about what NIRS can offer. This could, for example, be a job for the task forces at the departments (see more about this below). It is also important to have a clear division of labor between what NIRS should do and what the departments and faculties themselves should do.

c) The visibility of NIRS's work to international staff

To make sure that all international staff know of NIRS and what it can offer, it is important to make NIRS's work even more visible. This should be done both as a routine through recruitment- and hiring processes, start-up meetings and appraisal interviews, and through regular information bullets on Innsida (intranet) for those who are already hired.

2 Measures for better integration in the local environment at department level

Even though central administration is upscaled with special competence on reception and following up of international staff, it is in departments that international researchers have their everyday life. Our study shows that there are big differences in how the departments work with maintaining international diversity, what needs the researchers have for different kinds of facilitation and how staff at the departments experience their situation. We therefore propose the following:

a) The buddy arrangement

It is demanding to adapt to a context where, in addition to lacking knowledge about how to solve practical issues in everyday life, one does not know all cultural codes. Our study shows that there are big differences in how different departments ensure that their international staff have a good working day, and it was clear that several of the international researchers had challenges in adapting in some environments. One arrangement that was described to us as very positive was the “buddy” arrangement, where all new staff were given a more experienced coworker who had a particular responsibility to take care of them, both academically and socially. We therefore recommend that this arrangement is implemented as a routine with all new hires.

b) Use the report “International diversity at NTNU” and other research as tools for awareness

This report has been written with all university employees as its intended audience. Experience from previous work with gender balance at select departments at NTNU has shown that summarizing empirical knowledge about a situation at people’s own working place has an important function. In university environments, research-based science has a different impact than other forms of awareness-campaigns. Therefore, ensuring that this report is communicated to the departments will be an important step in ensuring that the work has been widely received and acted upon.

c) Establish a forum for sharing experiences

Establish a forum for sharing experiences both at the department and faculty-level where, for example, heads of departments, heads of office and leaders of professional groups meet to establish good practice within the field of internationalization. The responsibility for establishing and organizing this forum could be given to NIRS. This measure could also be connected to systematic work at the departments, as described in the next recommendation.

d) Temporary working groups at all the departments

As this study confirms, the effects of increased internationalization have been very different amongst different departments. There also seems to be a large variation in what kind of knowledge the departments have when it comes to their international staff and how conscious they are in terms of what international diversity entails, both academically and socially. We therefore recommend that all departments set aside resources to maintain a temporary task force whose responsibility it is to map out the situation for international researchers at their departments. This information may then be good groundwork for developing measures and practices to ensure better integration and communication between international researchers and the rest of the department. This mapping out could, for example, be done by arranging conversations with international researchers. Here, it could be possible to make use of internal expertise at this kind of information gatherings.

Important themes that should be mapped out are:

- General experiences with being an international employee at the particular department
- Language politics and language practices at the department

- Social integration
- Practical issues
- Experiences with NIRS (the task force should know of NIRS’s work and what it can offer).

e) Plan of action for equality and diversity, and follow up

All departments should be ordered to have a plan of action for equality and diversity that is based, among other things, on information from the task forces. This plan should be followed up and regularly reported on to heads of departments and at faculty meetings.

f) Contact person at faculty levels

To ensure a good communication and collaboration about international diversity between department and faculty, there should be someone at the faculty level who has this as their responsibility.

3 Measures for better language policy

The report shows that there is a need to clarify and communicate a clear language policy at NTNU. There is a need to ensure that all staff have the same access to information. Because there is such a large international staff, NTNU should consider making two-language practice a requirement for all administrative and academic information. Today different departments find practical solutions to communication, but we see that there is need for international researchers to learn some Norwegian to avoid them feeling excluded.

a) Develop a tutorial for language policies

There are many different interests to consider when it comes to the usage of Norwegian and English in an international working environment. Therefore, a good tool could be to develop clear guidelines for language practices for the working day at the departments. It is, however, difficult to imagine that one practice could fit all departments and for all purposes. We therefore suggest that the committee should start work to develop a tutorial for how guidelines can be shaped.

b) More flexible Norwegian training

The report clearly shows how mastering Norwegian is perceived as being an integral part of participating in local communities. It is also seen as crucial for social life both inside and outside the university. For PhD and postdoc researchers, it was seen as very demanding to take the Norwegian course in addition to the effort their research work takes. That several of them still chose to use the offered course shows how important learning Norwegian is seen for integration. The permanent employees saw the Norwegian course as particularly challenging in addition to their many other tasks but understood the expectation of learning the language. However, when faced with having to choose between the Norwegian course and a meeting or a supervision, the course still lost. Several also found it impractical to move between campuses in the middle of the day. Therefore, a more flexible program for learning Norwegian would be an important measure for better integration. Some universities have arranged pilots with discipline adapted language

courses, which have received positive evaluations and is something that NTNU should consider as well.⁷

4 More knowledge about international diversity in academia

The report showcases several areas where there is still a need for more knowledge. We therefore suggest several ways this could be done.

a) An annual announcement of masters' scholarships

When preparing this report, there was no opportunity to make empirical studies among students. There is a large need for more knowledge on how to better accommodate international students to participate actively in the organized student environment in Trondheim. There is also a need for knowledge about how social student activities can become more inclusive and less exclusive. We therefore suggest that the Committee for Equality and Diversity establishes a master grant where one (or more) grants for master students are announced every year. This grant should be launched as a fixed arrangement, at least for a period, to ensure that relevant departments can arrange for students to receive this opportunity.

Relevant programs of study could be the master program of sociology, political science, social anthropology, and equality and diversity (LIMA), but this could also be relevant to other disciplines. Late autumn/November is most likely a good time to have the deadline for grant-applicants. All the study programs mentioned above as particularly relevant have deadlines for master's thesis during the spring semester. The grant should be advertised in good time before the deadline.

b) More in depth research

The report concludes with a need for more knowledge at some areas. This is research that is not easy to cover within the framework as a master's thesis. We therefore suggest that the Committee for Equality and Diversity should consider the possibility to announce a PhD scholarship or research projects that focuses on one or more of the knowledge-gaps that are identified in this report.

⁷ <https://khrono.no/norskurs-for-ansatte-bidrar-pa-flere-mater/422162>

Internasjonalt mangfold på NTNU: En studie av erfaringene til forskere, ledelse og administrasjon

Bakgrunn for rapporten

Økt internasjonalisering og bedre mangfoldspolitikk er et viktig mål for NTNU. Ifølge NTNUs handlingsplan for internasjonalisering 2018-2021, er ambisjonen at 'NTNU skal styrke sin deltagelse og sitt bidrag i den internasjonale kunnskapsutviklingen i betydelig grad', at det 'skal utvikles en tydeligere internasjonal orientering i alle fagmiljø' (NTNU 2018: 5). Det foreligger i dag lite systematisert kunnskap om situasjonen til internasjonalt ansatte ved NTNU. Av den grunn har NTNUs handlingsplan for likestilling og mangfold i samme periode (2018-2021) utarbeidet et tiltak om å 'gjennomføre en studie om inkludering og mangfold ved universitetet, med det formålet å øke kunnskap og kompetanse om temaet. Studien skal bidra til god situasjonsforståelse og kartlegge utfordringer'.⁸

I mars 2019 utlyste NTNUs utvalg for likestilling og mangfold midler for en slik undersøkelse. Prosjektgruppen som fikk tilslaget og som har utarbeidet den foreliggende rapporten består av førsteamanuensis Siri Øyslebø Sørensen (prosjektleder), vitenskapelig assistent Julie Flikke, professor Berit Gullikstad, professor Guro Korsnes Kristensen og professor Vivian Anette Lagesen, alle ved Institutt for tverrfaglige kulturstudier.

Målet med rapporten er å gi en oversikt over hva vi allerede vet om internasjonalt mangfold ved norske universiteter, og NTNU spesielt, med hovedvekt på hva som fungerer godt og hva som kan gjøres bedre. Hoveddelen av rapporten er basert på en empirisk undersøkelse blant ansatte ved NTNU ved to institutter og ett senter for fremragende forskning. Disse enhetene ble valgt ut fordi de representerer forskjellige fagfelt med hver sine internasjonale profiler. Vitenskapelig ansatte med internasjonal bakgrunn ved disse tre enhetene er den største gruppen av intervjuede i studien. I tillegg har vi intervjuet administrativ- og vitenskapelig ansatte som har ansvar for mottak av internasjonale forskere ved disse enhetene. En tredje kilde til data er intervjuer med ansatte i det sentrale mottaksapparatet NTNU International Researcher Support (NIRS), som både tar imot forskere som kommer til NTNU og bistår NTNU-ansatte som skal på utenlandsopphold.

Anbefalingene som presenteres nedenfor er basert på analysen av datamaterialet i rapporten. Rapporten er skrevet med flere målgrupper i tankene og må sees som forslag til prioriteringer utvalget kan gjøre ved å gi innspill til organisasjonsutvikling ved NTNU. Som det fremgår av forslagene ønsker vi at rapporten skal brukes som et virkemiddel i seg selv. Anbefalingene er dermed rettet mot flere relevante grupper ved NTNU, men først og fremst institutt-/senternivået.

⁸ <https://innsida.ntnu.no/wiki/-/wiki/Norsk/Politikk+for+likestilling+og+mangfold+2018-2021#section-+Politikk+for+likestilling+og+mangfold+2018-2021-Bedre+integring+av+internasjonalt+ansatte>

Anbefalinger for oppfølging av rapportens funn

1 Styrking og synliggjøring av NIRS

NIRS har i dag en viktig rolle både når det gjelder mottak og oppfølging av internasjonalt ansatte. Per i dag er imidlertid dette ansvaret primært ment som en støtte til instituttene, som har det formelle ansvaret for å følge opp sine ansatte. I en del tilfeller yter NIRS også mer omfattende oppfølging av enkeltforskere, både før de er kommet til NTNU og etter at de er ankommet. Det er imidlertid ingen systematikk i hvem som får og benytter seg av denne muligheten, og mens det noen ganger handler om spesielt krevende immigrasjonssaker handler det andre ganger om at et institutt eller forskningsgrupeleder som rekrutterer internasjonalt har særlig god kjennskap til NIRS og deres kompetanse. En annen viktig side ved NIRS sin virksomhet er kurs og ulike aktivitetstilbud for internasjonalt ansatte. NIRS har som følge av NTNUs internasjonaliseringssambisjoner fått en stadig økende arbeidsbyrde, slik at de i dag må prioritere hvordan de skal håndtere alle forespørslene fra enkeltpersoner og institutter. Vår undersøkelse viser at NIRS har en kompetanse på internasjonalisering som det ikke er realistisk at instituttene skal opparbeide seg, og at en ytterligere styrking av NIRS vil kunne øke kvaliteten på NTNUs internasjonaliseringsarbeid betydelig. Vi anbefaler derfor:

a) Mer ressurser til NIRS

Med økte ressurser vil NIRS kunne påta seg et førsteplinjeansvar for både mottak og praktisk oppfølging av alle internasjonale forskere, hvilket vil bidra til å både avhjelpe instituttene og å strømlinjeforme tilbudet. Det vil også være mulig å øke kapasiteten til de populære kurs- og aktivitetstilbudene, slik at alle som ønsker kan ta dem, samt tilby nye kurs ved behov.

b) Tydeligere arbeidsfordeling mellom NIRS og institutt og fakultet

Alle institutt og fakultet må gjøre seg kjent med hva NIRS kan tilby. Dette kan f.eks. være en oppgave for instituttens arbeidsgrupper (se mer om dette nedenfor). Det er også viktig å ha en tydelig arbeidsdeling mellom hva NIRS skal gjøre og hva instituttene og fakultetene selv skal gjøre.

c) Synliggjøring av NIRS sin virksomhet overfor internasjonalt ansatte

For å sikre at alle internasjonalt ansatte kjenner til NIRS og vet hva de kan tilby, er det viktig å synliggjøre NIRS sitt arbeid enda mer. Dette bør både gjøres som rutine ved rekrutterings- og ansettelsesprosesser, oppstartsmøter og medarbeidersamtaler, og gjennom regelmessige informasjonsskriv på innsiden for å nå de som allerede er ansatt.

2 Tiltak for bedre integrasjon i lokalmiljøet på instituttnivå

Også med en betydelig oppskalert sentraladministrasjon med spesialkompetanse på mottak og oppfølging av internasjonalt ansatte, er det i instituttene at de internasjonale forskerne har sin arbeidshverdag. Vår studie viser at det er store forskjeller både i hvordan instituttene jobber med ivaretagelse av internasjonalt mangfold, i hvilke behov de ansatte har for ulike former for oppfølging, og i hvordan ansatte på ulike institutt opplever sin situasjon. Vi foreslår derfor å:

a) Buddy ordning

Det er krevende å tilpasse seg en kontekst hvor man ikke kjenner alle kulturelle koder, i tillegg til at man mangler kunnskap om hvordan praktiske ting i hverdagen kan løses. Vår studie viser at det er store forskjeller i hvordan ulike institutt jobber med å sikre at internasjonalt ansatte får en god arbeidshverdag, og i noen miljøer var det tydelig at en del av de internasjonalt ansatte hadde utfordringer med å finne seg til rette. En ordning som pekte seg ut som særlig positiv var buddy-ordninger (fadderordninger), hvor alle nytilsatte fikk utnevnt en mer erfaren medarbeider som hadde et særlig ansvar for å ta seg av denne både faglig og sosialt. Vi anbefaler derfor at denne ordningen innføres som rutine ved alle nyansettelser.

b) Anvende rapporten "Internasjonalt mangfold ved NTNU" og annen forskning som verktøy for bevisstgjøring

Rapporten er skrevet med universitetsansatte i alle kategorier som tenkt målgruppe. Erfaring fra tidligere arbeid med kjønnsbalanse ved utvalgte institutter på NTNU har vist at kunnskapsoppsummeringer og empirisk kunnskap om situasjonen ved egen arbeidsplass har en viktig funksjon. I universitetsmiljøer har forskningsbasert kunnskap en annen gjennomslagskraft enn andre former for holdningskappende arbeid. Et viktig tiltak for å benytte arbeidet som allerede er gjort med denne rapporten vil derfor være å sørge for formidlingsarbeid ut mot fagmiljøene.

b) Etablere erfaringsdelingsfora

Etablere et erfaringsdelingsfora både på institutt- og fakultetsnivå, hvor for eksempel instituttledere, kontorsjefer og faggrupeledere møtes for å etablere gode praksiser innen internasjonaliseringfeltet. Ansvaret for å opprette og organisere dette forumet kan tillegges NIRS. Dette tiltaket kan også knyttes opp til et systematisk arbeid på instituttene, som beskrevet i det videre:

c) Midlertidige arbeidsgrupper ved alle institutt

Som også denne studien bekrefter, er effektene av den økte internasjonaliseringen svært forskjellig for ulike institutt. Det ser også ut til at det er stor variasjon i hvor god oversikt instituttene har når det gjelder de internasjonalt ansatte og hvor bevisste de er når det gjelder hva internasjonalt mangfold innebærer både faglig og sosialt. Vi foreslår derfor at alle institutt setter av ressurser til å opprette en midlertidig arbeidsgruppe ('task force') som har som ansvar å kartlegge situasjonen for internasjonale forskere ved det aktuelle instituttet. Denne informasjonen kan så være grunnlag for å utvikle tiltak/praksiser for å sikre bedre integrering og kommunikasjon mellom internasjonale forskere og resten av instituttet. Kartlegging kan eksempelvis gjøres ved å arrangere samtaler med internasjonale forskere. Her kan det også være mulig å innhente intern ekspertise på slike typer av informasjonsinnhenting.

Viktige temaer som bør kartlegges er:

- Generelle erfaringer med å være internasjonalt ansatt ved dette instituttet
- Språkpolitikk og språkpraksiser på instituttet
- Sosial integrasjon
- Praktiske behov
- Erfaringer med NIRS (arbeidsgruppene bør kjenne til NIRS sin virksomhet og hva de kan tilby)

d) Handlingsplan for likestilling og mangfold og oppfølging

Alle institutt bør pålegges å ha en handlingsplan for likestilling og mangfold som baserer seg blant annet på informasjon fra arbeidsgruppene. Handlingsplanen bør følges opp som fast rapporteringspunkt på instituttleder møter og fakultetsmøter.

e) Kontaktperson på fakultetsnivå

For å sikre god kommunikasjon og samarbeid om internasjonalt mangfold mellom institutt og fakultet, bør det være noen på fakultetsnivå som har dette som sitt ansvarsområde.

3 Tiltak for bedre språkpolitikk

Rapporten viser at det er et behov for å avklare og kommunisere en tydelig språkpolitikk ved NTNU. Det er et behov for å sikre at alle ansatte får lik tilgang til informasjon. Med en stor andel internasjonalt ansatte bør NTNU vurdere å ha et krav om tospråklig praksis på all administrativ og faglig informasjon. I dag finner fagmiljøer praktiske løsninger på kommunikasjon, men vi ser at det krever et visst nivå av norsk-kunnskap hos internasjonale forskere for at det ikke skal oppleves ekskluderende.

a) Utvikle en veileder for språkpolitikk

Det er mange hensyn å ta når det gjelder bruk av henholdsvis norsk og engelsk i et internasjonalt arbeidsmiljø. Det kan derfor være et godt virkemiddel å utvikle tydelige retningslinjer for språkpraksis i arbeidshverdagen ved instituttene. Det er imidlertid vanskelig å se for seg at en praksis skal fungere i alle fagmiljø, og for alle formål. Vi mener derfor at utvalget bør iverksette et arbeid for å utvikle en veileder for hvordan retningslinjer kan utføres.

b) Mer fleksibel norskkopplæring

Rapporten viser tydelig hvordan norsk-kompetanse forstås som en viktig del av det å kunne involvere seg i lokale miljøer. Det oppleves som viktig for sosial trivsel både i og utenfor universitetet. For ph.d.- stipendiater og postdoktorer ble det opplevd som svært krevende å følge norsk-kurs i tillegg til innsatsen som krevdes i forskningsarbeidet. At flere likevel valgte å benytte seg av tilbudet, viser hvor viktig det å lære norsk blir oppfattet som integrering. De faste vitenskapelig ansatte opplevde norskkurset som særlig krevende i tillegg til de mange andre oppgavene sine, men uttrykte forståelse for forventningene om at de lærer norsk. I valget mellom norskkurs og et møte eller veiledning, taper likevel kurset. Flere synes også det var upraktisk å forflytte seg mellom campuser midt på dagen. Et mer fleksibelt opplegg for norskkurs ville vært et viktig tiltak for bedre integrasjon.

4 Mer kunnskap om internasjonalt mangfold i akademia

Rapporten avdekker flere områder hvor det fortsatt er behov for mer kunnskap. Vi foreslår derfor noen måter dette kan gjøres på.

a) Årlig utlysning av masterstipend

I arbeidet med rapporten var det ikke rom for å gjøre empiriske undersøkelser blant studenter. Det er et stort behov for mer kunnskap om hvordan det kan legges bedre til rette for at internasjonale studenter deltar aktivt i det organiserte studentermiljøet i Trondheim. Det er også behov for kunnskap om hvordan studentsosiale aktiviteter kan bli mindre ekskluderende/ mer

inkluderende. Vi foreslår derfor at Utvalg for likestilling og mangfold etablerer en masterstipendordning der det lyses ut ett (eller flere) mastergradsstipend hvert år. Stipendordningen bør lanseres som en fast ordning, i alle fall for en periode, for å sikre at aktuelle fagmiljøer kan legge til rette for at studenter får denne muligheten.

Aktuelle studieprogram kan være masterprogram i sosiologi, statsvitenskap, sosialantropologi, samt likestilling- og mangfoldstudier (LIMA), men det kan også tenkes at stipendet er aktuelt for andre fagretninger. Sen høst/november er antakelig et godt tidspunkt å ha søknadsfrist for stipend. Samtlige av studieprogrammene som er fremhevet som særlig aktuelle har innlevering av masteroppgave i våsemesteret. Stipendet bør gjøres kjent i god tid før søknadsfrist.

b) Mer utdypende forskning

Rapporten konkluderer med behov for mer kunnskap på noen områder. Dette er forskning som vanskelig kan dekkes innenfor rammen av en masteroppgave. Vi mener derfor at utvalg for likestilling og mangfold bør vurdere muligheter for å lyse ut et PhD stipend eller forskerprosjekter som retter seg mot ett eller flere av de kunnskapsbehovene som identifiseres i rapporten.

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