Dear Members of the Dual Career ~ Spouse Network

As February approaches, so does the longer and brighter days. However, we still have a month left of Winter in Copenhagen with cold and rainy days. To light up your daily life in the city, the annual Copenhagen Light Festival is back!

All around Copenhagen, you will be able to find light art decorations to light up the dark evenings. The festival is free and open during most of the month. You can take a walk around the city to experience the beautiful exhibition, exactly as you please!

However, February in Denmark is quite a special time, as it is time for “Fastelavn”!

Fastelavn is a Nordic carnival tradition celebrated on a Sunday in February. Fastelavn was traditionally a feast the day before Lent. However, today Fastelavn mainly serves as a celebration for kids, where they can dress up as whatever they want and have a fun time with their friends. Children go trick-and-treating on the day of Fastelavn and sing the traditional Fastelavn songs.

In recent years, “fastelavnsboller” has grown massively popular at bakeries all over the country. You simply cannot enter a bakery in Denmark that hasn’t created their own version of the sweet bun with a whipped cream or jam filling. Some places you even have to order them in advance to secure the popular buns!

We also have many exciting things happening at ISM this month. On the 5th of February we have a workshop regarding the Danish work model. You will hear about key aspects of the communication style at Danish workplaces and the culture related, such as informality, flat hierarchy, equality, trust, and collaboration. There will be a focus on both communication in teams as well as with managers. You will get an introduction to the Danish model and the role of trade unions in this – and how the communication works between employers and employees. You can read more here!

Kind regards,
Mary K. Kobia, Diana Lund Nordstrøm & Katrine Sandahl Mortensen
ISM Dual Career Team – University of Copenhagen

"In the coldest February, as in every other month in every other year, the best thing to hold on to in this world is each other"

— Linda Ellerbee
How long have you been looking for a job in DK?
It took me around 2 years after my work in academia in Denmark to get a job in the industry.

What has been most challenging about your job search?
For me, networking and talking to people has been the most challenging. Firstly because it is a tedious task for an introvert to go out and make casual conversation with people. It is a lot of investment of energy, which many times never gives you any returns. Secondly, learning to communicate my thoughts in a way that is appealing to people here in Denmark also made it quite challenging.

What is your best advice to someone who is not living in DK, but looking for a job there?
LinkedIn is your best friend. Identify your companies of interest and connect with ppl working there via LinkedIn. If you have the time and are sure about moving to Denmark, it pays to take up Danish lessons.

How has IDCN helped you?
IDCN helped me get back my confidence and feel better about myself. It gave me the joy of being involved in something and keeping my mind busy. Meeting other internationals who can relate to what I was going through, helping each other, meeting up for coffee or exploring the city's museums together-IDCN gives you that friendship boat to sail through the unemployment period!!

What surprised you the most about the Danish job interview?
The very informal nature of it. It's almost just like a casual conversation, but it's not. It is tricky to be able to appear casual yet put forth your skills and impress the interviewer.

What is your best advice to someone going for a job interview?
I have learned that practice is key-when you prepare your answers for the most common questions, you are bound to be more relaxed and enjoy the conversation. It took me many interviews to find the balance between being too stressed about it and being too casual about it. But the one that landed me the job, was the interview I prepared the least for!

What kept you going – your motivation, when things didn’t always turn out the way you expected?
I don’t want to sound very cheesy but I think it is love, from my family, my husband, and my well-wishers. But besides that, it was a period where I learnt more about myself and how to love myself. During those times when nothing was going my way, I found calm and recharged myself by doing the things that I love. I learnt about this technique of practising Gratitude: everyday list 3 things you are grateful for. It has helped me so much on those bad days because it helps you shift focus from what you don't have to what you do have.

What are you most excited about doing in your new job?
I am excited to be part of a young biotech company. I look forward to contributing to its growth by working together with my new colleagues.

Reflecting back on your job-seeking process and experiences in DK, what advice do you have to give to other spouses?
As someone who has been both the supporting and the dependent spouse in Denmark, I’d like to say that the job-seeking process is tough on both you and your spouse. Obviously if only one of you is working, it shifts the balance in the relationship and makes it so easy to get frustrated with your spouse. It is important to not compare your career with that of your spouse.

Spotlight: Practice is key!

Sumana K Narayana
From: India
Currently job-searching