Dear Members of the Dual Career ~ Spouse Network

Lately, it has felt like we have entered the summer months, as the weather has been out of this world. However, we still get to enjoy May, before summer is here. And while it is still spring in Copenhagen, make sure to visit the beautiful parks, while they are in full bloom!

Spring can always make you feel a sense of relief and hopefulness. Looking back just one year, Denmark was starting to lift restrictions after the second lockdown and the vaccine program was slowly being enrolled. Normality started to return step by step.

This May we are almost back to life as it was before Covid-19. Facemasks are long gone, and restrictions on gatherings no longer exist. This means that we have a chance to finally attend the concerts we have been longing for since 2020. It also means that we, here at ISM, now finally have a chance to host events again. A few months ago we started hosting the in-house events at International House again, but now we have the chance to invite you back to some of the events happening in and around Copenhagen. You might have already attended the latest event in April, where we went to the art project “The Six Forgotten Giants” located west of Copenhagen. This was a big success! If you would like to participate in our next event, there is still time to sign up. This time we are visiting The Herimitage, a beautiful castle located north of Copenhagen, for a guided tour. The Herimitage is a 1700’s baroque palace located in the lovely Deer Park. We can ensure you that it will be an extraordinary experience.

Lastly, remember how far we have come since last year. A lot has happened and many good things have begun once again. We often desire to move forward quickly and to experience as much as possible, but maybe we experience just as much by taking a step back and look at our surroundings? Nonetheless, we wish that you all have the chance to enjoy May in Copenhagen to its fullest and use some of the city’s many opportunities.

Mary K. Kobia, Mark de Vos & Katrine Sandahl Mortensen
ISM Dual Career Team – University of Copenhagen

"Spring adds new life and beauty to all that is"
- Jessica Harrelsson
Anna Kim
Swedish and Russian
Biocompatibility Specialist at BK Medical

How long did it take for you to find a job in DK?
I arrived in Denmark in February, where I was working remotely for a Swedish University. Therefore, I did not start looking immediately, but began a more active search in June. I received my job offer at the end of September, so I looked for about four months.

What has been most challenging about your job search?
I was fortunate that I could continue working remotely, but I did find it challenging to balance the different activities between my current job, looking for a new job, and studying the Danish language. I found the stress of the unknown difficult to handle and I wish I would have had more time to dedicate to establish social and professional networks.

What is your best advice to someone who is not living in DK, but looking for a job there?
I would suggest to speak with people familiar with the job market in Denmark, including the Dual Career Service, and to try to understand what the expectations are in terms of job application and interviews.

What surprised you the most about the Danish job interview?
It surprised me how quickly things moved at the interview stage – the second interview was only a few days later.

What is your best advice to someone going for a job interview?
I would recommend to go through common interview questions and prepare responses on how you would fit into the organization, as well as examples of how you handled different situations. I would also recommend practicing, if possible, with different people as this will create a more realistic and dynamic situation.

What kept you going – your motivation, when things didn’t always turn out the way you expected? Where did you find support?
There are so many unknowns and looking for a new job can be a very stressful time. I am happy that I had the support of the Dual Career Service – Mary is positive and encouraging, and it helped me to not be alone in this process.

What are you most excited about doing in your new job?
I will be transitioning to the Biomedical device industry and I am excited to learn how projects are handled across departments in a larger organization.

Reflecting back on your job seeking process and experiences in DK, what advice do you have to give to other internationals?
Reach out to the Dual Career Service early. They have a ton of experience, helpful advice, and super supportive and encouraging team.
What has been most challenging about your job search?

A story about getting the job after receiving the initial rejection email from HR. That time was tough, not just in terms of career, but also socially without friends and family. While learning Danish and getting to know the culture with no virtually professional network, I tried to squeeze myself into Denmark.

How long did it take for you to find a job in DK?

Within a month of arrival to one of the happiest countries, I wasn’t happy anymore. The real struggle of getting a job, or at least a job interview, had started. Job after job and still the same thank you rejection email. I was not learning from my mistakes. I kept using the same CV/ cover letters for different jobs and applying for more than 3 jobs a day, which meant a very low quality of application letters, and no research on the company or the position. And reading more rejections didn’t help at all. It took 6 months to get to the stage of the interview, but it didn't go as planned either. I was surprised by how simple and personal Danish job interviews were. Rather than asking about the position, the interviewer wanted to verify, if I could fit into their team or organisation.

How has IDCN helped you?

Failures taught me a lot. Then I joined the IDCN network with the objective of both learning and doing volunteer work while growing my network. I met with a number of professionals from different work backgrounds, who were mentors of IDCN and who all gave me a lot of motivation and asked me to learn the language. So, I also started the Danish language courses and started a part-time job as a food courier partner.

I meet HR professionals and availed personalized paid services and slowly things started coming together. I got more interviews, but no company called me for the second interview until 1 year and 3 months later. I got a job at a start-up company in a sales position.

What is your best advice to someone going for a job interview?

Now my passion was to get back into the banking industry in Denmark. I started applying again, but this time with a lot of research, calling the hiring manager, asking them about the position and leaving some unique things that they would remember when they saw my CV.

Then I applied for a job but got a rejection on it. Among all the banking positions I had applied for, this was the closest to my prior experience and in an area in which I have a huge passion for. So even after the rejection, I called the hiring manager and asked for feedback. I talked to him in Danish, he seemed very busy, so he asked me to come the next day and gave me 15 minutes for my feedback.

15 minutes turned into a 2-hour interview, in which, surprisingly, I didn't speak a single word of English (as the hiring manager said he preferred someone who could speak fluent Danish). WOW. What an achievement. I thought irrespective of what happens, I have made myself proud. But the story didn't end here. The hiring manager was pleased and said he would revert his rejection decision and start my process again. So then, I had three more formal interviews, a test, and finally got my dream job.

What kept you going – Where did you find support?

Among the professionals that helped me, I would like to name Mary from IDCN personally who corrected and then recorrected and then recorrected my job applications, and when I finally got to the interview stages, she gave me an 1 hour-long session on a very short notice. Had I not done IDCN volunteer work, I would have never met her.