Dear Members of the Dual Career ~ Spouse Network

Fall is here! The season that is loved by some, but hated by others. However, don’t worry - fall in Copenhagen can be absolutely stunning, when the leaves on the trees in the city turn orange and wraps the city in the most beautiful blanket of leaves. The weather changes every five minutes, so be prepared to experience all four seasons in the month of September. Some years you can still swim in the ocean in the beginning of the month, other years you have to find your warmest jacket because of the cold temperatures.

This doesn’t mean that there is nothing to do in the city, though. For example, the annual Copenhagen Half Marathon is happening on September 18th. You can still sign up to participate or simply show up as a spectator. It is always a popular run in the centre of Copenhagen. International Citizen Days are also happening this September. On the 23rd and 24th, public authorities, private organisations and local communities will gather to host all sorts of events, aimed at international citizens here in Denmark. We highly recommend that you consider joining, as it is the perfect place to expand your international network here in Copenhagen, while also learning more about life in Denmark. The events take place at Børsen (the Royal Exchange) and DGI-byen, respectively.

Fall and cosiness simply goes hand-in-hand. Therefore, September is also the perfect month to try out some of the famous bakeries in Copenhagen. If you haven’t tried an “Onsdagssnegl” yet, maybe it is time for it now! We will bring you a guide to where you should go and what you should try, if you would like to explore the diversity of bakeries in Copenhagen. Some places are simply out of this world and definitely worth stopping by, if you have the time.

Lastly, we would like to tell you about our event in Dyrehaven this month. On the 25th of September, we host a guided tour in Dyrehaven, where you will have the chance to explore and learn about the wild life in Denmark. We will keep you updated on this, once we are closer!

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

“Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall.”

– F. Scott Fitzgerald
How long have you been living in DK and which jobs have you had so far?
It has been 2.5 years since I moved to Denmark. In this time span, I have had one job and a volunteer internship before obtaining the current position at DTU.

What has been most challenging about your job search and changing of jobs?
During the job search, the most challenging was to meet the right person at the right time.

What is your best advice to someone who is not yet living in DK, but looking for a job here?
My personal opinion is to establish a network by contacting people (the contacts mostly provided at the end of the job ad), either by phone or email. Following up is one of the most important things, which I learnt much later and slowly. It establishes a report and expresses your zeal to be here in DK.

What is your best advice to someone going for a job interview?
Be yourself. Always, be yourself. In my first interview, I was scared but wanted to seem confident, which wasn’t working and I was getting anxious because of it. Then, I told the interviewers I was scared and asked for a glass of water. The moment I put the fear on the table and accepted it; I relaxed and was able to be back in the moment.

What kept you going – your motivation, when things didn’t always turn out the way you expected?
My biggest support has been my wife, who has always pushed me forward and accepted me for who I am, when the disappointing emails of rejection would hit my inbox.

What are you most excited about doing in your new job?
My current job is exciting, as I have a new project to work upon from scratch and it feels good to design the experiments and implement them. This will be beneficial to the field of immunology in the long run thereby giving me a sense of contribution to the society. I enjoy lab work and being back in the lab makes me feel at home.

Reflecting back on your job seeking process and experiences in DK, what advice do you have to give to other spouses?
Job search in Denmark has been one of my life’s toughest projects. Today when I look back, I realize that it is the tough times that help us grow, but at that moment, when I was disappointed, it felt like I wasn’t enough. It was very important for me to establish that the rejections aren’t a reflection of my skills but merely telling me to try a different way or seek another person.
How long did it take for you to find a job in DK?
It took approximately 7 months in total. I started looking for jobs since before I came to Denmark. Of course, I was initially unaware of the culture and it was quite disappointing in the beginning. Slowly, I got acquainted with the Danish job market and from that point on, I was invited to several interviews. Due to Covid restrictions and the winter break, it took me 1 month to make it through the 3-phase interview of the job that interested me the most and finally get the job offer.

What has been most challenging about your job search?
Weirdly, it was realising what I actually wanted. Transitioning from academia to industry, I found job titles very confusing. To help me out, I spoke to several people and asked what different roles entail so that I could tune into what I liked.

What is your best advice to someone who is not living in DK, but looking for a job there?
Don't be in a hurry, the Danes have their process of seeing if you fit the job role and workplace culture. Reach out with scheduled video calls so that they see the face and voice behind the emails, and be 100% yourself!

What kept you going – your motivation, when things didn’t always turn out the way you expected? Where did you find support?
My motivation is that I do have a genuine curiosity for insights that can be gleaned from data. However, it is normal to feel disheartened. My family (parents, sisters and husband), as well as the IDCN team, helped me focus my energy in the right direction.

How has IDCN helped you?
It is through IDCN that I understood the significance of networking and how to do it effectively. I got coaching for my CV and cover letter, which made me understand why things were not working before and how they should be altered. I benefited from counselling and relevant materials to prepare for interviews but most importantly, I got support, encouragement and a confidence boost throughout the entire process.

What surprised you the most about the Danish job interview?
They ask personal questions! My understanding is that they want to know the complete you.

What are you most excited about doing in your new job?
As I mentioned, I am transiting to a new industry, so I am looking forward to practically everything in this new world. New challenges, opportunities to learn and develop further and the innovation associated with financial technologies are all very exciting.

Reflecting back on your job seeking process and experiences in DK, what advice do you have to give to other spouses?
Don’t shy away from calling companies to clarify something - at the very least, you practice how to talk to people in the company and obtain some preliminary knowledge on how they are structured.