

Troubleshooter for relocated personnel

RELOCATION: They are also called international nomads, the group of personnel constantly on the move from one country to another. Their numbers are growing rapidly, and so are the practical problems of country hopping. But now the whole area is becoming much more professional.

Every year around 14,000 foreigners in Denmark are involved in the international relocation process. A human challenge which continues to grow as globalisation increases. The swelling army of diplomats, international executives, researchers and operatives to whom the company is home regardless of whether it's located in Dubai, Houston or Copenhagen. Moving from country to country has become an increasingly common aspect of international business culture.

In Denmark the number of foreigners relocated with their job has more than tripled in the last 10 years. Provisional figures for 2003 indicate that up to 7,000 people will move to Denmark during the course of the year. And just as many will leave Denmark on working assignments abroad.

Although the relocation market is in explosive growth, the rate of problem solving associated with it has not kept pace. What may be easy to deal with in one country is an insurmountable problem in another. What is allowed in one place is forbidden in another.

"The first couple of times we participated in the moving circus,

I spent up to half my time dealing with administration concerning myself and my family," says an international employee at UNICEF in Copenhagen. "As the number of redeployments increase you become more experienced, more thick-skinned. You also learn to leave experience dossiers for your successors which will make it easier for them. But proper professionalism it isn't. A vast amount of resources gets wasted."

The relocation area is now being handled much more professionally, especially by the international private sector which has realised that it's better to leave relocation tasks to the experts. One such is All Denmark Relocation. The head of All Denmark Relocation, Annemette Krogh, is also the spokesperson for EuRA, the European association of relocation companies.

"When foreigners are relocated to Denmark we are ready with a tailored programme which helps them and their families to settle in Denmark as effortlessly as possible," says Annemette. "We cover everything including work and residence permits, civil registration, housing, banking, insurance, schools and leisure

time activities, familiarisation and shopping. I don't think there is a legal, technical or human challenge that we have not been confronted with – and solved. If anything it is divorce counselling due to the relocation. Otherwise I think we have been around most."

All Denmark Relocation is an integrated partner in the human resource area for a large number of international companies in Denmark.

"First and foremost because we function as a service agency for expatriates during their entire stay. We maintain continuous support until they move on again, because it is not just in the initial period where help is required. Often there are questions that arise later. Children grow and start attending school. Spouses begin an independent career or a course of study. And in the cultural and leisure time area we keep track of interesting activities on offer, which we then make our customers aware of."

Inexpensive education

Expatriation of staff is a necessary but expensive aspect of globalisation. Single employees are therefore more often redeployed rather than families.

"That's mainly because children's education represents an increasingly large part of expatriate budgets," says Annemette Krogh, the head of All Denmark Relocation. "That is one of the areas where Denmark is relatively strong because all teaching is essentially free. International schools charge fees in Denmark as they do elsewhere, but it surprises many foreigners to learn that teaching costs are generally 30% lower here than most places abroad."



International conference

Wonderful Copenhagen and All Denmark Relocation are jointly arranging the annual international relocation conference 2004 in Copenhagen. The conference takes place 4–5 March at Copenhagen Marriott Hotel. It is the 6th time that the European association of relocation companies EuRA has held the conference. The association currently has 236 members.

Annemette Krogh,
Head of All Denmark
Relocation, Copenhagen