

TATEM parents : a "very" long-term training course !

It can be difficult to be a parent and a TATEM trainer. Training means long trips abroad, away from husbands, wives and children, several times a year, often on short notice. How does their personal background influence the way they raise their children? How do they deal with the long absences, and how do their children deal with all this?*



Bandi Koeck with his two treasures.

Bandi Koeck, from Austria is the father two-and-a-half years-old Noah and three months old baby girl, Medea. He has been a EuroMed trainer from the past two years and has always used to long travels and long hours. Becoming a parent has changed his life.

His son Noah was born just as he was busier than ever in the training business. He mixed national and international training courses and several projects, like Erasmus, Networks and creating an NGO: "Now-a-day, since I have two kids, I think twice before participating in this conference or go to this seminar, traveling is not so easy since I always miss my family like crazy."

This kind of work obviously affects the way he brings up his children. So Bandi has set strict rules for himself and he may have found somewhat of an answer to be close to his children, at all times: "Of course my work affects how I raise my children, this is

why I stopped or had to stop being that active. I want to see my kids at least two days a week, at the weekend. Being a trainer and also project manager, you are traveling so much, you work night hours and at weekends, so it's very difficult. Perhaps this will change when my kids are older and I can take them with me or they can be participants themselves!"

Bandi knows he is made for this kind of job and that he was born for traveling. But it can become emotionally very difficult. Especially when you consider that a training course can last ten days or more: "I think this also affects our work, we lose motivation and will and also power as we feel bad or sorry. Just think how quickly a child changes, so if you don't see him or her for two weeks you might get back home and he/she has got the first tooth, or can sit or walk alone or says "Daddy"." Could a TATEM kindergarten be a solution?

Even though his children are used to see him leave, Bandi says they always suffer a lot from his absences: "Just try to imagine how slow time passes by for a kid and how eternally long those 10 days or two weeks might be for them!!!" However, as they will grow, his children will benefit greatly from his intercultural experience. When he goes away, like all EuroMed trainers, he brings back something very precious for his children – an "openness and respect towards other cultures, religions or traditions", which he says begins their own intercultural learning.

And for those who do not believe him, he had proof of this EuroMed influence on his

children's education! His son actually prefers playing with the EuroMed Training Bag than with his Lego toys! Perhaps he is ready to become a participant? ■

Yassine Isbouia, from Morocco, is the father of Malak, his 3-months-old little girl. He has been a trainer for the past year



Yassine's daughter : Malak

and says being a father helps him in transferring his own experience with children to the ones he teaches.

Yassine says his cultural background plays a part in how he educates his daughter: "Parents are little bit conservative and traditional in Morocco and that will affect me in some sides, but I believe in giving her a modern education and combining my culture and traditions." Malak is still too young to notice his voyages and the fact that he is out of the house sometimes, so for now, Yassine can only talk about how his work affects the way in which he raises her: "I firmly believe that my intercultural experience will reflect on my children and on their behaviour with others.

My professional experiences make me conscious about a lot of issues on education and that enables me to deal positively with children and youth - especially with my daughter who is at the centre of my mine and my wife's preoccupations." ■

■ Training and parenthood



Parenthood! Motherhood in my case! Well, I had a whole article ready about parenthood, and namely motherhood, to send for review and publishing. It highlighted the stress I go through as a mother, the sleepless nights, the differences in cultures between me, Lebanese, and my Dutch husband and a myriad of other aspects. I concluded it with a bright note though; that I love being a mother and a smile from that baby of mine is worth the world.

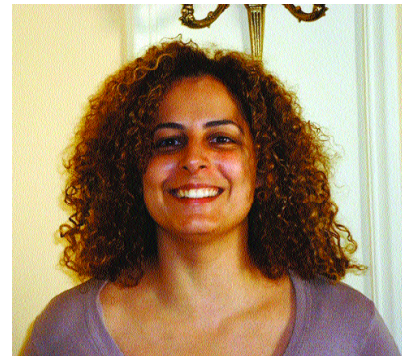
Then I went with my husband to the supermarket yesterday and took Dolfie with us. For once, we did not use the pram and we carried him around instead. As we approached the entrance of the supermarket, I saw our reflection in the sliding door, and I stopped. I looked at the reflection disappear as the door panels slid open and I wanted to reach out and hold it.

I loved that reflection. I wanted to freeze it in time. Me, holding that little human being, who in return was clinging to me with a very firm grasp, but also looking around, exploring, enjoying his newfound position. I never thought of myself as a mother, caring for the

needs and whims of a tiny little creature. But as Dolfie grows and starts to settle into his own personality, identity, life with him becomes more interesting and even challenging.

Dolfie was born into two cultures: a Mediterranean one that he got from me, Lebanese and a European culture that he got from his father Mathieu, Dutch. We live in Lebanon, close to my parents, and as you may know, families are closer on this side of the Mediterranean, so all family members are in each other's hairs all the time. At first, it was a nightmare, just trying to set the boundaries. Eventually it got better. We still have some skirmishes along these borders but nothing that can't be solved lovingly. Dolfie is also the first born in both families, so he is the favorite "attraction" for all times and for all members. He is totally spoilt I tell you!!! We still need to agree on how bad or not we should spoil him; in the meantime, he is always carried around and cuddled.

As for his language skills, I am sure that he will be able to all four languages that he hears already: Arabic, Dutch, English and French. Which language he will decide to adopt remains to be seen! We



Fabiola

still don't know how to handle this matter properly as Mathieu & I tend to fall into speaking to Dolfie in English as it is the language of our communication. Nonetheless, we both try hard to speak to him in our native language, and in one language only. Now, considering traveling and working as we both used to do before our marriage, this is really out of the question! We just came back from a trip to Canada with Dolfie and we spent it with doctors since he contracted stomach flu from someone at the airport. He is better but still shaken. We are unable to travel with him yet...one day maybe...! ■

**TATEM : Long-Term Training for Active Trainers in Euromed*



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