

# Net Expat Newsletter

Expats Coaching • Dual Career Solutions • Expats Assessment

Offices throughout America, Europe and Asia-Pacific



## Corporate vision

### Maurice Sutter

Director of Executives Management, St Gobain Group



### Céline L'Héritier

International Mobility Manager at St Gobain High Performance Materials - HPM Paris, France



**Alain Verstandig:** *What role does international mobility play in Saint Gobain?*

**Maurice Sutter:** Of the 220,000 people currently on the Saint Gobain Group's payroll, 550 are expats representing 50 nationalities active in 43 countries. We recorded our first expatriates... more than a century ago! Which is another way of saying that international mobility is an integral feature of the company's operations.

**Céline L'Héritier:** We are very well represented around the world, but currently Eastern Europe, Russia, China, India, Thailand and the UAE are growing fast. The profile of our expats in the HPM sector is 27% managers, 25% marketing and sales, 9% R&D, with the majority 35 to 45 years old. Nationality is 63% French (as

## The challenges of international mobility at Saint Gobain

against 77% only a year ago!), 10% American, 6% Brazilian, 6% Italian, 5% German, 3% Indian, 2% British.

contracts are by definition all linked to the host country, but the problem is that they are negotiated locally. >>>p4.

### "Local +" contracts are one of our biggest headaches

**AV:** *what are the main challenges today?*

**CL:** "Local +" contracts are one of our biggest headaches: it has to be admitted that the subject is a complex one and that these contracts involve problems related to labor law as much as company law.

**MS:** We currently have more than 800 foreign employees under local contract in the company, in addition to expatriates and secondees. These "local +"

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## Editorial

### Alain Verstandig

Managing Director, NET EXPAT



## Global, cost-minded, and rapidly growing

When you ask HR directors of international corporations how they view their international mobility department, you often get something very close to: "I see it as global, cost-minded and rapidly growing to adapt to our business needs." Fair wishes, fair answer.

Being "cost-minded" is indeed something service providers cannot afford to ignore. If they do, I'll send them the contact details of some of the best procurement departments I know :-)

"Rapidly growing"? Our colleagues in corporate HR have been forced to evolve enormously in servicing internal business units. Most of them have done a great job.

"Global" for sure. Distances between cities are shrinking, some names which were unknown to most of us not long ago, like Chennai or Wrocław, are now spelt correctly on Post-Its around most HR offices. But global does not mean "evenly spread": if APAC has exploded, if mobility to and from America and Europe is as good as it could

be, what about Africa?

Well, I'm afraid that Africa could be the leftover of the post-9/11 world. Despite its beauty and the friendliness of its people, it is a challenging place to send expats to. Structuring consistent expat programs poses an even greater challenge! ■



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## Testimonial

### Alexander Decoster

General Manager of Puratos Greece



### Christodoulos Volonasis

Program Director NET EXPAT Greece



## From Samba to Sirtaki

**Alain Verstandig:** Alex, you have been appointed as the new General Manager of Puratos Greece, coming from Puratos Brazil, and Tolis was your NET EXPAT coach in Athens during the transition. How was the change?

**Alexander Decoster (Alex):** Honestly, being transferred to Greece was not so much of a shock for me: the 20 years I spent in Latin America trained me perfectly in facing up philosophically to the challenges of bureaucracy. My biggest surprises were more on the personal side: I had forgotten how interesting it is to change! All this transfer got me out of my routine, made me more alert, and opened my mind...

### *I needed coaching as a new General Manager in transition to Athens*

The Greek mentality is a very cheerful one: they are happy people, they like to share things, and any contacts, professional or private, are easy to make. The language can be a barrier, but happily a lot of people speak English.

**Christodoulos Volonasis (Tolis):** Alex showed an excellent attitude from the outset, and cheerfully expected the unexpected. He has indeed been well prepared for this expatriation to Athens by his earlier experience abroad.

**AV:** So, was Alex's coaching really needed or was it a luxury?

**Alex:** Yes, the coaching was essential. As this was my second expatriation, I had a good feeling for what to expect from the usual kind of culture shock, but I needed coaching as a new General Manager in transition to Athens. The company I left in Brazil had started up only a couple of years before I arrived, while the structure I'm joining in Athens has been in existence for more than 20 years. Most of my colleagues here have had 10 to 15 years experience in the company. So my needs were more subtle, and Tolis was excellent in spotting them.

**Tolis:** When Alex arrived in Athens, he was still 'dancing samba' in front of his Greek team. Things were still fast-moving for him, flashing by in his active mind, driven by the way business is run in Latin America. The first step in his coaching was to be aware of the change in pace, to understand it and feel it in his body: Greece is a more mature market, we are more conservative, more structured. We take time to analyze how things are done.

**Alex:** Tolis encouraged me to put myself in my subordinates' shoes, and I soon discovered the 'rhythm of sirtaki': I abandoned my Latin American focus and realized what my Greek colleagues were thinking and why, and this inspired some of my problem-solving approaches.

As an example, we faced some challenging moments as a team in March of this year. I was personally in the process of discovering what expatriation shock means. My team and I were speaking English all the time, and I discovered that a certain level of misunderstanding appeared within the team and between individuals. So what I did is encourage them to speak Greek amongst themselves even when I was part of the discussion in order to avoid any misunderstanding. Now, our 2012 strategy is nicely in place, and understood and accepted by all the management team.

### *Alex was still 'dancing samba' in front of his Greek team*

Coaching techniques are great, but a lot depends on the relationship with your coach. Tolis is excellent, and the chemistry between us was immediate. Later, as Tolis continued his work with team-building workshops, I realized that most of his comments were well accepted because he is Greek.

Tolis worked well as facilitator to get us all dancing to the same rhythm! ■



## Corporate Strategy

### Valérie Urbain

Managing Director, Head of Human Resources at Euroclear, Brussels, Belgium.



**Alain Verstandig:** What are the origins of Euroclear?

**Valérie Urbain:** Euroclear is the world's largest provider of domestic and cross-border settlement and related services for bond, equity and fund transactions. The total value of securities transactions settled by Euroclear group is in excess of EUR 450 trillion per annum, while assets held for clients are valued at more than EUR 18 trillion. Euroclear is rated AA+ by Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings.

Euroclear has grown through acquisition, with its world headquarters based in Brussels. It is a very international organization, with employees from 77 nationalities.

**AV:** How important is international mobility to Euroclear?

**VU:** Some 20 years ago, we started expanding internationally through a constellation of little representative offices, with the aim of getting closer to our international customers and speaking their language. Locations included Sao Paolo, New York, Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo and London. The international mobility of our employees was relatively limited at the time.

Since 2000, our international coverage has evolved, with much larger and independent international offices. Major locations include London, Paris, Amsterdam and Hong Kong. As a result of this development, Euroclear is now able to offer its employees more opportunities for expatriation that are closer to home and, therefore, more attractive.

One of Euroclear's objectives today is to create a genuine



# Newsletter

## Building a culture of mobility

culture of mobility, in the interests of developing talents and testing them in different working environments. In this connection, we have established a "Cross Entity Assignments" program which sponsors a number of short-term (three-month) opportunities across the Euroclear organization. The first year of this program saw a lot of our Brussels HQ employees move out to international locations while, the year following, people moved between the international offices.

*Going abroad with a partner and children, even to another Euroclear office, is still too easily viewed as the same thing as changing employer!*

The response to this program has been very enthusiastic. Having seen "the other side of the picture" at another end of the Euroclear world, our people have come back extremely positive, open-minded and enriched with a new outlook on life: they handle their international conference calls differently, really involving all the people at the other end of the line, and their daily contacts with their colleagues in the various countries are now much easier.

**AV:** *What are Euroclear's challenges today in international mobility?*

**VU:** One of the problems we face today is the reluctance of some of our people to consider expatriation. Even when they work very openly with one another, and are quite happy to accept assignments of up to a year, in the form of business trips or

commuting, we still have difficulties in motivating our employees to accept expatriation for more than a year.

One of the reasons is a fear of finding themselves in a less familiar environment, even when it's just a question of moving from Euroclear France to Euroclear in Belgium. Each local Euroclear entity (except from London) is, for the majority of its employees, the only employer they have ever known. So they have never had to take charge of their career and manage a professional change. Going abroad with a partner and children, even to another Euroclear office, is still too easily viewed as the same thing as changing employer!

But, if we can create greater mobility, we can resolve these initial fears and reluctance. In this connection we have established a series of international support programs with NET EXPAT, including in particular the use of the ExpAdviser test which helps employees to determine their "expatriability" and prepare for "successful landings". We also offer intercultural training and personal coaching for both the expats and their partners.

It has to be said that these kinds of preparatory support need to be explained clearly: they sometimes seem odd to prospective expats "before the event", who only come to appreciate their real value later. Expatriation exposes every employee and his or her family to challenges that will only become evident once they are abroad.

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But the opportunities that Euroclear offers today on the international scene are a powerful incentive, something that should certainly not be overlooked in the current "war for talent". There will be even greater opportunities in future – it must be evident to every employee that no career with Euroclear will be complete without a period on the international scene – and we are there to help them succeed! ■



### Some Clients

3M  
ACNielsen  
Airbus  
Alstom  
AMIS  
Apple  
AUDI  
AVIVA  
AXA GMST  
BD Biosciences Europe  
Borealis  
BP  
Brady  
Bristol-Myers Squibb  
Bull  
Cadbury Schweppes  
Cargill  
Caterpillar  
Colgate Palmolive  
Cordis  
Corus Group plc  
Credit Suisse  
Danisco  
Delhaize Group  
Dexia  
Diageo  
DuPont de Nemours  
Electrabel  
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Euroclear Bank  
ExxonMobil  
Gemplus  
General Motors Belgium  
Givaudan  
GlaxoSmithKline Biologicals  
Goodyear  
Guidant Europe  
Honeywell  
ING  
Insead  
International Paper  
Itopf  
Janssen Pharmaceutica  
Johnson & Johnson  
Jungheinrich  
Kraft Foods  
L'Oréal  
La Poste  
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