



2 Place Frédéric Mistral
34120 Pézenas
France
22. March 2014

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Dear Tine

In response to your document of the 1 March 2014.

Firstly, please note that we moved in March 2014, and our new address is:

2 Place Frédéric Mistral, 34120 Pézenas

Our telephone number remains unchanged: +33 467 186 205
My mobile phone and email address also remain unchanged.

REGARDING THE PROPOSED MEETING IN MAY/JUNE

It appears Maria Svane will be returning to Copenhagen a month earlier than anticipated, and is expected in early April. We have agreed that Tatjana and Sophia will visit us in Pézenas for the Easter period, from 11 – 20 April.

Maria, having flown Tatjana and Sophia unaccompanied to America at the start of their trip in October 2013, has agreed that henceforth the girls may fly unaccompanied to visit us. (Up until now, I have been flying to Denmark to bring the children back and forth for each visit to France, meaning 8 flights in total for me). This has been tiring, costly and time-consuming in the planning as well as in the execution. Maria's agreement that they travel to us as unaccompanied minors will make a positive difference.

However this means that I will not be visiting Denmark to fetch my daughters as previously. Thus to meet in Copenhagen would require a special trip.

Unfortunately, I cannot afford to fly to Copenhagen for the sole purpose of attending a meeting.

I am interested in any effort to provide clarity in our circumstance and appreciate the necessity of *Statsforvaltningen* making a ruling on compensatory access, as I had not received response or a commitment from Maria until I approached you.

I suggest alternatively that we could schedule a Skype meeting, and this could be held as soon as possible on Maria's return?

Currently the meeting has been requested for May/June prior to any decision being made. This timing prejudices my original request to negotiate meaningful compensatory

time with my daughters in April/May and over summer, and to facilitate the planning of our summer period together in a cost prudent way.

This year is the first we are to have three weeks together over summer, and to travel to South Africa together.

Without knowing whether we will be granted meaningful time to make up for the periods lost, we are unable to buy tickets or make realistic plans. We will face the difficult situation of having to purchase flights at premium rates, putting strain on us financially.

REGARDING COMPENSATORY ACCESS, AND WEEKEND TRAVEL TO COPENHAGEN

Despite Maria's representation in her letter, it remains that Tatjana and Sophia enjoy their time with our family, and visiting our home in France.

As previously stated, longer periods together, rather than dotted weekends as Maria prefers offering, are more stable, and visits to our home have proved the most beneficial for Tatjana and Sophia, in that :

- Tatjana and Sophia are part of our family, and this relationship is important to all of us. They have a good, close relationship with both Christine and Kayla, and miss them.
- Our home is their home too
- They have established a routine with us, our habits, pets and way of life
- We are all able to relax more in familiar surroundings. They know the area well, and enjoy the way of life here.
- We live in a small village, and the security and freedom that this affords the children in their everyday life is valuable
- The cost of living is lower where we stay, which enables us to engage in various activities together that are not affordable for us as a family in Copenhagen.

Maria is proposing that the time lost be made up in additional weekend visits. This is not an adequate and meaningful compensation for the weeks we would have had together, the Christmas we have lost. Weeks together work best, not dotted weekends.

Further, as previously stated, it is financially prejudicial to me for Maria to insist on weekend visits in lieu of concrete time with my family. Short weekend visits require my losing one, and sometimes two days of work to fit in with available flights, as well as the cost of travel, hotels etc.

I note that Maria keeps repeating the fact that I do not travel to Copenhagen every second weekend, despite my having clarified this matter several times previously. I again set out the reality of this :

- Flights to Copenhagen have become more scarce, and more expensive. Accommodation in Copenhagen is difficult to find, expensive and, while better than nothing, staying in hotels is not ideal for family visits.
- There is no longer a direct flight between Montpellier and Copenhagen. When we moved to Mèze, there were two airlines offering direct flights. This reduced over the years to direct flights only over promotional periods. Currently, there are no longer direct flights at all. We have found alternatives wherever possible, juggling times and days, and travelling via Marseille or Barcelona. But usually it is necessary to fly via Paris with Air France at premium rates, to fit in with agreed

pick-up and dropping-off times.

- Flight schedules are being reduced across airlines. For example, to have the whole of Saturday together, I am obliged to fly on Friday, thereby losing a day's work. There is also no longer an evening flight on Sundays from Copenhagen through to Montpellier. This reduces the time that we can spend together in Denmark over a weekend, or else necessitates me staying over Sunday night, with the added costs of accommodation, and the loss of another day's work to fly on Monday.

REGARDING KOLONI

I refer to my email of 5 August 2012, addressing this issue; I am aware that Tatjana enjoys spending time at her *koloni* every year. However, she is one of a very few number of children who stay for three weeks, and she can attend the *koloni* for a shorter time.

Our family time together should be the more important priority.

REGARDING SOPHIA TRAVELLING WITHOUT TATJANA

Maria haphazardly asserts that Sophia should only spend time with us if her big sister is with her. This is surprising as Sophia has spent time with us alone several times with Maria's sanction, including a week during her Autumn holiday in 2012.

Sophia is now well-travelled, and she always has a good time together with us. Despite speaking primarily Danish, she has forged strong bonds with Christine, Kayla and I. She has on several occasions asked about the possibility of living with us.

During this long trip away with Maria, Sophia expressed numerous times over the phone to me her fatigue at its length and how much she missed us all, and how she looked forward to her return with us. Further, despite Christine and Kayla still not being allowed to speak with Tatjana and Sophia on the phone, Sophia frequently requests to speak with them, as has Tatjana.

REGARDING CO-OPERATION AND THE FUTURE

Over the past six years it must be evident that I remain a steadfast, loving, interested father to my daughters. Our family has been through much to preserve and nourish our relationship with Tatjana and Sophia - we are their extended family, as is natural.

Further, it is evident that none of Maria's predictions have proven true. And instead, she has been the one to transgress agreements. She has also travelled to South Africa several times, a country she professed to revile and denounced as "too dangerous" in her previous presentations to prevent me travelling there with my daughters to visit our family.

However, I appreciate that Maria has allowed the children to visit us over several September holidays that weren't scheduled, and her agreement to take the children to the airport for the unaccompanied flights is a very positive step forward, and much appreciated.

Thus for the future, it is necessary to address the continued treatment of me as a hostile party by Maria, rather than as the natural father, and co-parent of Tatjana and Sophia. I would like to see progress in these areas:

- I would very much like that Maria stops treating me as someone to "protect" the children from, and rather as I have proved to be; a co-parent to them, regardless of her personal ongoing feelings of hostility.
- I need there to be a shift from Maria's default negative reaction when asked for more equivalent access to the girls. Every small gain in access granted over the last six years has had to be argued against strong objection by Maria, and she has on occasion resorted to defying the rulings of *Statsforvaltningen* itself when judgement has not gone in her favour (as happened in July 2011, when she refused to hand over the girls' passports, and then disappeared).
- Maria's actions taking the girls away for six months, while technically in accordance with the law, is not in the spirit of co-operation and co-parenting of the children. It is not normal to make Tatjana lie to us to disguise the nature of the trip, or to inform us only after the fact. It is also not normal to refuse to let us know where the children are, where they are going, or when we can see them again, indeed to refuse to discuss this. This has caused much unnecessary heartache and worry.
- It is also not normal to vehemently argue a loss of a school day here and there to facilitate flights for me, then to take the children out of school for six months, regardless of what schooling arrangements are claimed. While Maria asserts this wasn't a holiday, in fact, this is exactly what's she told us it was, a "trip". However, we are in agreement that travel itself is one of the greatest educators, and heartily approve of it. But we should have the same privilege! Further, it is totally unnecessary to have proceeded in this negative, bullying manner. Maria did not even try to talk about it with me beforehand.

For the future, I hope for more equitable relations regarding my daughters, and fair rulings governing my relationship with them and our family, rulings that recognise the true nature of our relationship. I love them, we love them, and they us, regardless that the marriage between Maria and I did not work. I remain their father, and should not always be in the bizarre position of having to negotiate that which is taken for granted by any other family.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JA' with a stylized flourish.

Jason Armstrong