

UN Internship- Styliani Ntoukaki

Styliani discusses the internship she obtained as a result of studying on the MSc in Taxation.

I was studying at the law library, when I received an invitation to apply for an international tax law internship position with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City.



I know these internships are highly competitive; with more than five hundred applications for each position. However, I decided to take my chances and apply. After I drafted a five thousand word application, I thought it would be useful to attend a Careers Service appointment in order to ameliorate my application. The advisor helped me with the sections of my application that were not the strongest. I successfully passed all the initial stages and I only had the final interview stage left. My nerves are my biggest enemy. Therefore, I went to the Careers Service again to prepare for my final interview. The preparation was very effective as I was asked very similar questions in my official interview and I was ready to answer them with confidence.

My application was successful and I received funding in order to support my stay in NYC from St Hugh's College. From the first day I was heavily involved in significant tasks. My days were always full and I was enjoying my involvement in high profile international discussions. During my first meeting with the team, I participated in discussions with global tech giants, CEOs, CFOs and country leaders who were seeking advice from our department. The more I was proving my expertise and myself, the more responsibility I received from my supervisors.

My second project was my participation in the platform of collaboration between the tax departments of the UN, the IMF, the OECD and the World Bank. At the platform, I was allowed to express my opinion in regards to global tax policy making. My final challenge was to write a paper on the tax challenges on the digital economy. My supervisor was very supportive of my ideas and after minor editing he agreed to publish my article on the UN website which can be found here: http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/15STM_CRP22_Digital-Economy.pdf My paper was also translated into Russian, Arabic, Spanish, Chinese and French in order to allow most of the Financial Authorities around the world to have access to my analysis. One week before I left NYC, I was asked to attend the 15th Session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters in Geneva and present my paper to the Committee members and the observers.

When, I arrived in Geneva, I was presenting in one of the largest conference rooms in the UN. The room was full of the heads of the tax legal teams from the IMF, OECD, European Commission and World Bank; leading academics, barristers and leading people from the industry; as well as ministers, heads of Financial Authorities and the Brexit negotiators. Furthermore, my paper was opening the discussion on the substantive issues of the new Committee.

When I was walking to address the floor of the UN, my legs were shaking, I was not only representing myself, I was also representing my University and my country. There was live translation in five languages whilst I was speaking and live streaming from the UN website. It was very hard to stay focused as the crowd was very large and I was not used to that many people whispering comments to each other during my proposals.

My main suggestion was to introduce a subcommittee specialized to deal with taxation issues in the digital economy. The Committee Members unanimously accepted my proposal; therefore I believe my mission was successful.

During my week in Geneva, two recruiters approached me asking me if I would be interested to work with them because they found my paper thought provoking. My final day as an intern closed with a generous reception kindly hosted by the Swiss Government at a spectacular venue, meeting all the Members of the Committee and most of the observers.

I believe that an internship at the United Nations is an opportunity that is very advantageous because it provides students with skills, which will fully equip us for any legal career. More specifically, the international tax law internship helped me network with leaders in my field and has provided me with a competitive advantage.