

CHINA WTO ACCESSION INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME ALUMNI STORY

Jelena, please tell us...

Where are you from, and what have you studied before joining the China Programme?

I am from Serbia. Prior to joining the China Programme, I completed an LLM in International Law at Cambridge, with one of the courses being the Law of the WTO. I am also a graduate of the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Master 2 in Arbitration and International Commercial Law) and the University of Belgrade (Bachelor of Laws) with a year abroad at the University of Deusto in Spain.



Why did you apply?

I applied because I wanted to assist my country's process of accession to the WTO. Being one of very few countries in Europe that are not WTO Members, I thought my recently acquired knowledge in WTO law and understanding of the Serbian legal, political and economic system could be of help for the Accessions Division preparatory work for Working Party meetings.

What kind of work were you assigned to during your internship?

I worked closely with the Secretaries of the Working Parties for the accession of a couple of acceding countries (most notably with Anna and Dimitar 😊). My work mostly involved conducting legal research, drafting parts of different reports, briefing notes, and speeches, as well as attending meetings, and taking minutes. I worked on the preparation of different events, including the Second Regional Dialogue on WTO Accessions that took place in Djibouti. At the time of my internship, the "Trade for Peace" initiative was also conceptualised and we worked on organising its first events and setting up the visual identity of the initiative.

Looking back, what do you think of your work experience at the WTO, and as participant of the China Programme?

The experience allowed me to understand the practical steps a country has to undertake in order to become a WTO Member. I was also lucky to meet many WTO officials with great institutional knowledge and learn from them, as well as to observe how diplomacy is conducted at the WTO.

I generally think the China Programme is an exceptional idea that adequately addresses the issue of discrimination in accessing opportunities within the framework of international organisations. Had it not been for the allowance I received through it, I would not have been able to conduct the internship in a city as expensive as Geneva. I believe many other WTO Members should follow the lead and establish their own sponsorship for internship programmes. Interning for international organisations should not be a matter of privilege.

What have you done since?

Since I completed my 10-month internship through China Programme, I became a qualified attorney-at-law in Serbia, completed another master's degree in Paris, and became an associate at a Parisian law firm, Bredin Prat, practicing in the International Arbitration department.

Thank you, Jelena!