



Language and cultural exchange at DLA Piper: Olga's experience

In the spring of 2024, our Helsinki office welcomed a colleague from Ukraine, **Olga Artemova**. Olga had fled to Finland in 2022 with her two children due to the war in Ukraine. At DLA Piper Helsinki office she participated in a three-week language training, designed to enhance non-native speakers' Finnish language proficiency within a professional setting. The training was facilitated by **Taitotalo**, Finland's premier adult vocational training organization. As an accomplished lawyer, Olga also seized the opportunity to familiarize herself with the operations of a global law firm and our professional community. We had the pleasure of discussing Olga's experiences, and here's what she shared.

Olga possesses an impressive academic and professional background, holding two university degrees. She graduated with a Master's in International Economy and Management from **Kyiv National Economic University**, followed by doctoral studies in a program focusing on the European stock market. After dedicating time to family, she pursued legal studies, working within the agricultural sector during and after her law education. In March 2022, Olga fled to Finland with her two children when the war had started in Ukraine. The small **Kristiinankaupunki** community as well as the local **Red Cross** provided the refugees with support and material assistance of which Olga is very grateful. She initially worked in education roles in kindergarten and preschool, which aligned with her love for children. However, Olga's interest in law and international business remained undiminished and she explored professional avenues in Helsinki. Her journey included enrolling in Taitotalo's intensive Finnish language program, aiming to achieve a proficiency level higher than basic level. Her engagement in this program led to an introduction to DLA Piper partner, **Nina Aganimov**.

Experience at DLA Piper

Olga's introduction to the Helsinki office was marked by warm welcomes and a comprehensive orientation. She found the open layout of office premises both innovative and inspiring, providing dynamic city views and a variety of workspaces. As for the office atmosphere, Olga describes it as characterised by a collaborative spirit, with weekly cross-departmental meetings fostering a lively exchange of ideas. This setting enhanced her sense of security and belonging among like-minded professionals. She felt welcomed not only as a foreigner, but also

as a member of the legal community. A safe, welcoming professional environment is a standard Olga wishes for everyone. Throughout her stay, Olga participated in key meetings and educational sessions, enriching her legal vocabulary in Finnish and deepening her understanding of the firm's operations.

Future aspirations

Looking ahead, Olga is dedicated to utilizing her skills and experiences to contribute to Ukraine's reconstruction and to advance her legal career. Having experienced immense challenges and uncertainty, she values the sense of community and safety she has found in Finland.

In Olga's words: *"I wish to extend my appreciation towards the Finnish government policy and authorities that have made it possible for me to become part of the Finnish community, and my gratitude towards the Finnish people for their openness and hospitality. I was honoured to have this small but important experience in learning legal Finnish among DLA Piper professionals. I am very thankful to Nina Aganimov for the opportunity to complete a language training at DLA Piper. I would also like to recognize my tutor Katja Kanerva who took care of me and helped me in everything during my language training period with the company. I would also like to thank Marianna Schmandt for her patience and kindness while learning Finnish."*

We are equally thankful for Olga's contributions to our office and look forward to her continued professional journey.