

Ilyana Skalli, student in the Master in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action

Ilyana Skalli is a student in the Master in Human Rights and Humanitarian Action with concentrations in European Studies and Diplomacy. She completed her third semester internship with the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs in the department of United Nations, International Organizations, Human Rights and Francophonie.

How did you secure this role?

I first created an account on the platform "PASS", where all internship offers are advertised and where candidates can upload their CVs and cover letters. I remember logging onto the platform every day or every two days in the first months of the second semester, and what a great idea that was! My internship offer was open for applications only for a 24 hours period, which means that I would have probably missed this opportunity if I had not logged in that day. I was called in for an interview a couple of weeks after I sent my application. The interview was not a classic questions & answers type of interview, but rather a discussion about choices I had made so far in terms of studies and working/volunteering experiences, and how this internship would be an additional milestone to achieve my objectives.

What was your role and main responsibilities?

It was my first internship in a public administration so every procedure was new to me. My team was very understanding and supportive and always ready to answer any question I might have. During the first three months, I mostly worked on preparing the President of the French Republic and the Minister for Foreign Affairs visits to the United Nations for the High-Level Week of the General Assembly. That meant working on their programs and being in permanent contact with their diplomatic advisors. That was a great and intense starting point and also very fulfilling from the outset! I also wrote notes for our diplomatic posts, attended meetings bringing various actors together, and prepared visits of diplomatic delegations to Paris.

What was the most fascinating and/or surprising aspect at your role?

Every day was different since tasks mostly depended on the Security Council's programme of work, solicitations of the French Permanent Representations to the UN and on the demands of the authorities. This made every day exciting and far from being monotonous.

How did your PSIA experience help you with the role?

Taking classes taught by practitioners and former diplomats and the methodology used in writing concise, operational policy briefs and notes were of great help. I also think that the very nature of the program I chose at PSIA made my profile quite original but complete and fitting the role. Human Rights promotion and protection is indeed at the heart of France's foreign policy priorities.

What advice would you give to others?

Be reactive. An offer can be advertised online for 24 hours, which means you need to put what you are doing aside and focus on your application. Put all chances on your side. Of course, what you are studying and doing currently matters but what you did before also tells a lot about your personality. Don't hesitate to highlight this during the interview even if it is not directly related to the internship you are applying for. They want to know who you are and that is always a good idea to show that you have a wide range of interests. Don't hesitate to rely on second-year students who experienced this internship hunt, on your friends and your academic advisors, they are here to help you and tell you that you will be fine, which is sometimes all we need to hear. Finally, try not to take the first rejections – because this can happen – personally. See them as a redirection and focus on what is to come.

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