

STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

A CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

It demands a lot and requires a lot of planning. But Julia Shelkova doesn't regret applying for the Executive MBA program at Stockholm School of Economics. "You need to further your skills, even if it takes a lot of hard work," she says. **TEXT: HENRIK PERSSON**

Every day is a busy day for Julia Shelkova. The 35 year old Muscovite works in development of high speed railroads in western Russia. As if that wasn't enough, she's enrolled in the Executive MBA program at Stockholm School of Economics.



Julia Shelkova

"It's challenging but also really stimulating. I've gained a lot of practical skills that I'm able to use right here in the office. Subjects like financial analysis and management control was just the sort of knowledge that I needed,"

Shelkova says on a Skype connection from Moscow.

Although she studies in Stockholm, Shelkova still officially resides in Russia. One week per month she's on site, however, focusing entirely on her studies. It's tough combining work and school – not to mention raising her child – and Shelkova's schedule is always full.

"I tell people I'm always going somewhere. I'm kidding, but in a way it's true. I

don't have a lot of spare time. And since I'm not always at school, the collaborative work is a bit harder to manage."

"My classmates probably think it's tough being in my group, but I try my best to work it out over phone or email. The school provides us with a web portal, too," says Shelkova.

A native of Kazan in eastern Russia, Julia Shelkova studied economics at the state university, eventually ending up with a Ph. D. For several years, she worked for an affiliate to the Russian state railway company, focusing on development. Her move west was purely for professional reasons.

"The Kazan region is very conservative in a lot of ways. People have a lot of opinions about what women can and cannot do. Many people disapprove of female professionals altogether. You basically have a choice of either marrying or running away. I chose the latter," Shelkova says.

Shelkova's life continues to be influenced by a longing for learning and personal development. This is also the reason she applied to Stockholm School of Economics a year ago.

"I needed an intellectual boost. My boss had previously spent many years in Sweden and tipped me off about the school. Their schedule would make it possible to combine work and studies, so I applied. I guess they liked what they saw, because they called me up and here we are."

The students are predominantly male and the school is working on getting more women to apply. Julia Shelkova supports this and she's very impressed with her female co-students.

"I really am. They're really intellectual ladies. Really smart, critical thinkers. The school should work hard to attract others like them."

Shelkova works harder than most. If she had to advise other women on whether or not to apply to the Executive MBA program, she'd tell them not to think too much.

"Don't sit and analyse too much. I knew I'd have to struggle with this, but I did it anyway. If you sit around and think for too long, you'll never do anything. Turn your head off for awhile, and think with your heart." ♣