

Sofiyska Voda builds world-class specialists

03 October, Interview for Capital Karieri

Our mission is to resource the world and combined with the use of the best practices to successfully manage water, energy and waste services, this makes us different.

Interview with Maria Petrova – HR and Administration Director at Sofiyska Voda, operated by Veolia.



Veolia is a global leader in the provision of WSS and energy services, as well as waste management services. In Bulgaria the Group carries out activities in the water, energy and construction sectors through the companies Sofiyska Voda, Veolia Energy Bulgaria and SADE Bulgaria.

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Maria Petrova joined the team of Sofiyska Voda in 2012. She has been running successfully the processes of human resources management at the company for 6 years now.

Her professional career started in Danone Bulgaria. Before joining the team of the biggest WSS operator in Bulgaria, she managed the human resources of the subsidiary of Groupama insurance company. Maria Petrova graduated from the University of National and World Economy, majoring in Business Administration. She has Master's Degrees in International Economic Relations and Human Resources Management.

1. What are the possibilities for professional development in Sofiyska voda?

The main challenge we are facing today is the need to cope with the correct management of natural resources. Water is rapidly becoming scarce and more precious as a result of urban development and climatic changes. Sofiyska Voda not only manages the water resources of Sofia, but it also supplies water with the highest quality characteristics to the citizens of Sofia. As such, we collect and treat the wastewater, so that it could be used again and returned safe to the environment. Our mission is to resource the world and use practices by which to successfully manage water, energy and waste. We implement the principles of environmentally-friendly and low-carbon production and the circular economy. This makes us different not only as a company, but also as an employer, because our activity requires a broad portfolio of specialists – from engineers and laboratory specialists, through plumbers, IT specialists and drivers, among others. Among our 1.180 employees, we are proud to have experts with over 170 different specialties and professions who are working in our company and contributing to achieve the goals of SV. Owing to their professionalism work, we provide efficient, sustainable and reliable WSS services to over 1,400,000 people on the territory of the Municipality of Sofia.

Regardless of the position held or the professional area, we strive to develop people's potential. One of our most important goals is to create such working conditions that our people can see long-term perspectives for their personal development in our company. Therefore, we are investing a lot of human, time and financial resources in all employees. Taking the opportunity offered by such a global company as Veolia, we can provide them valuable experience and knowledge, best practices and give them access to many projects and achievements worldwide. This allow them to foster their innovative skills and increase their potential of professional realization.

2. What type of specialists you will be needing in the next 6 months?

Above all, we need the scarce resource of specialists, such as, for example, rare professions such as plumbers, as well as highly qualified young people who have graduated from the universities with specific specialties such as biotechnology, biology, microbiology. Our water ranks among the best in terms of quality in Europe, but that would not be possible without our modern, certified potable and wastewater laboratory testing complex. We look for ambitious and devoted personalities in this field.

3. Do you have a trainee program? Could you tell us more about it?

Young talents are a priority for us. We strive to show them all the possibilities offered by career in Veolia in Bulgaria. Then why not opening as a first step for a potential experience further in Veolia business units in one of

our BU in the world . In that respect, our internship program is conducted annually, providing a wage to the intern for 3 months during the summer. It started in 2002 and I am proud that close to 1/3 of the university students remained to work for Sofiyska Voda. We take their educational background very seriously, and we provide them with the opportunity to work on real projects.

4. Traditionally Sofiyska Voda organizes competitions and scholarship programs for young professionals. What's next in this area over the next few months?

Sofiyska Voda cooperates with several universities and each year it accepts young professionals who gain at the company their pre-diploma experience or other practices related to their education.

Each year we select several candidates, who take part in the Veolia Summer School. The summer school is one of the social initiatives of the Group aimed at the development of young talents. The selection for the summer 2019 trainees will start next spring, as most of the information will be published on the websites of the companies through which Veolia is represented in Bulgaria, and campaigns will be also organized in the universities.

Our collaboration in the field of education is not limited to that. Indeed, in the meantime, our experts are involved on multiple occasions as mentors in high school and university projects in the area of the circular economy. We are also proud of the recent organization of the conference on Circular Economy held in the University of Sofia where we have worked closely with the teams of the Faculty of Biology to make of this event a real success.

Another example is the wastewater treatment plant near Kubratovo which welcomes over 50 student groups per year. Our goal is to show that treating the water is not only an essential process in the water cycle but it can be also an innovative place. Our treatment plant is a great example of a circular economy as we produce electricity from sludge, which fully covers our energy needs.

5. What are the opportunities for training and career development in the company?

As part of Veolia, our specialists have a constant access to top world technologies and innovations. They are working on large-scale projects in interdisciplinary engineering activities. Coming back to Kubratovo WWTP. This plant is among the best among the 3,000 WWTP operated by Veolia worldwide. This became possible not only owing to the new technologies but also with the constant increase in the expertise of our colleagues in which we invest constantly.

Apart from standard trainings, we also rely on innovative approaches. We created a workplace rotation program, which allows the acquisition of new competencies at an internal level. Rotation requires commitment by the employee and his/her mentor in terms of time and attention and the results could be extremely favorable for the participants and their departments. We also offer the exchange of knowledge and skills with colleagues from Veolia Group.

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One more aspect of our working environment is related to field work, which presents a large array of risks to health and safety. We have employees working in extreme conditions sometimes– they go down the sewers of Sofia or construct water mains and each day they have to act safely to avoid accidents or dangerous situations. That is why it is our priority to conduct trainings, information campaigns and safety initiatives at the workplaces. Also, from September 17 to 21, for another consecutive year, we will take part actively in the Veolia initiative “International Health and Safety at Work Week”. As every year during this special week, several events and trainings will be organized to raise awareness about health and safety which is the top priority of Veolia and to remind that it is a daily mission of each and any employee of the company.

6. Do you have any special initiatives or benefits for Sofiyska Voda employees?

Striving to ensure the best possible working conditions to our employees, as well as to be an attractive employer on the labor market, we constantly develop different social and motivational programs.

Sports are an important part of the company’s life and we have been having for more than 10 years an employee sports club, which allows free workouts in individual and group sports.

We organize clubs of interest, as well as various events where hired experts lecture on healthy lifestyle or stress management, for example.

Ralitsa Panova – Key Accounts Specialist



I started working in Sofiyska Voda 3 years ago as a Front Office Specialist after I majored in International Economic Relations. I had no work experience, but the company believed in me and gave me a chance. At that time, I did not even assume that I would like so much the work with customers and the constant communication with them. For a short period of time I had the opportunity to develop professionally and trust was placed in me to work with important institutions, ministries, kindergartens and schools, as well as big companies with numerous employees.

I recommend to young people, who are about to start their active professional life, not to be afraid of trying different professions to discover the field that inspires them to smile.

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Martin Iliev, Project Manager, Capital Works Delivery



I have been working in Sofiyska Voda for 4 years already. Before that, I was an intern in Sewer Services Department. I graduated as a WSS engineer from the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy. Now, I am Ph.D. student there. I want to share what I have learned with the younger colleagues and with those who chose to follow my career path. I enjoy the working dynamics and variety. I take part and manage different projects. Moreover, I am part of the sports club in the company.

My recommendation to the young specialists is to do their best and believe in their abilities – everyone who is motivated and willing to work will find their professional vocation.

Ivelina Stamatova – Laboratory Specialist – Biologist, Laboratory Testing Complex, Wastewater Sector



I have been working at Sofiyska Voda for 7 months. Last year I participated in a three-month internship program at the company and, happily, I was invited after that as a full member of the team.

It is unique that the company not only invests in my development, but also gives me the chance to continue my education in the Faculty of Biology, where I took my Bachelor's Degree in "Bio management and Sustainable Development" and now I am studying for a Master's Degree in "Environmental Biotechnology".

My work is very dynamic and each day I encounter new cases which motivate me to be more accurate and responsible. Me and the remaining part of the team realize that we have a social mission – to help people to be environmentally literate. Humanity continuously leaves its footprint on the environment, believing in the latter's self-treatment ability. Unfortunately, that is not possible. As a specialist in the area of wastewater I feel responsible and I am glad that I have the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of nature.