



Book of Stories

**Ukrainian Association
of Women in Law Enforcement**

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Project manager Yulia Nikolaichuk

Texts by Olena Navrotska and Yevgeniy Zelenko

Arranged and edited by Kateryna Melnyk and Yevgeniy Zelenko

Translation by Syntagma Translations and Andriy Kurasov

Poems translated by Milena Melnyk

Designed by Mark Mironchuk

Photos by Mykyta Zavilinskyi

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Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement

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Introduction

The work on this project commenced in the midst of the pandemic, at a time when each of us required support and inspiration as never before; everyone was looking for an example of true leadership, valor and perseverance.

The stories in this publication are alike in a certain way: they are about the path to the dream encountering difficulties and challenges on the way, experiencing ups and downs, disappointments and rediscovering faith, support and hope.

At the same time, each story here is unique. Unique - like each person presented in the book, together with their own struggles, search for inner harmony, and difficult decisions taken. These stories depict everything: joy and despair, admiration and exhaustion, hope for change, and confidence that their work is meaningful. But it is mostly about love and humanity.

This book is about strong and amazing women and girls who have chosen one of the most difficult and honorable careers - to serve and protect. Day-to-day they reconfirm to everyone and for themselves that nothing is impossible regardless of whether you are a woman or a man. Apart from complex job assignments, they chose to stand up and fight against gender stereotypes and prejudices, serving as an example that proves that women in law enforcement are not to satisfy someone's whim, but it is an advantage.

We hope that these stories will buttress many during the initial steps of their career journey, inspire those who fell into despair, and remind everyone that a uniform, regardless of the badge and the stars on the shoulder marks, hides a kind but courageous human heart.

As Head of the EU Advisory Mission in Ukraine, I feel very proud today to sign this “Book of Stories” published by the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement (UAWLE).

I believe this publication is a remarkable initiative that honours and gives credit to the professional contribution of women in law enforcement agencies.

These are 30 strong stories of inspiring women who tried to change the game’s rules and decided to enrol in a sector where men predominantly occupy roles. They all chose to dedicate their work to serving and protecting their fellow Ukrainian citizens.

Gender equality is one of the founding values of the European Union. Today, all modern democracies recognise the principle of equality as a base for the fundamental rights of each individual, irrespective of factors such as skin colour, gender or sexual orientation. Our societies should not only respect these rights but also aim to protect and actively promote them.

In all sectors, communities, and societies, women have crucial contributions, and the Ukrainian civilian security sector is no exception. Since 2014, EUAM has worked closely with its Ukrainian counterparts to expedite a sustainable reform of law enforcement agencies, providing strategic advice and practical support. Women are key actors of this reform process, and the Mission is strongly committed to including them in the security work.

The Mission will keep on supporting the civilian security sector to develop and implement clear policies on preventing sexual and gender-based discrimination and mechanisms for equal career opportunities. These stories are crucial because they talk about professional journeys, equal opportunities and discrimination-free working environments. These 30 women stand together to raise women’s voices and address fundamental rights that we consider are the EU standards we wish to promote in Ukraine. I wish you an enjoyable reading.

Antti Hartikainen

Head of Mission
EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine

Women Called to Serve

Gender equality is the cross-cutting theme of the UNOPS' development efforts and its global priority, as a society can be fully functional only if women and men have equal rights and opportunities to fulfill their potential. As part of the organisational identity, we integrate gender equality in our workforce, project implementation and every other aspect of our daily work.

Together with our partners from the European Union, we are proud that our project "Support for Rule of Law Reforms in Ukraine - PRAVO Police" empowered and built the capacity of the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement, which is consisted of more than 400 law-enforcement professionals, promoting gender equality and women's leadership, at the same time focusing on prevention of discrimination and gender-based violence.

These women come from different backgrounds, but for the same purpose: they all decided to serve in Ukraine's law enforcement. They all became police officers with many virtues in common: dedication, commitment and duty of care. The qualities that come through in their stories shaped their characters and defined their lives.

The value of this book is that it allows us to look at different windows of contemporary women's lives, and they all contain

fragments of feelings, thoughts and situations in which all of us can recognise ourselves.

These women face challenging tasks daily: from responding to a domestic dispute, to recovering underwater victims and evidence of crime, chasing down and apprehending escaping suspects, preventing a group suicide pact. They have achieved the professional standards when there were no equal opportunities to access these professions, nor to training and promotions. These women demonstrate that it is possible to go beyond this, while hoping these obstacles will lessen in the future through stronger gender education and inclusive policies.

I would like to thank the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement (UAWLE) for fostering the careers of women engaged in law enforcement and for compiling these life stories that portray realities that will enhance our reflections and actions towards a more equal world.

Michela Telatin

Multi-Country Office Director of UNOPS in Serbia
UNOPS Representative to North Macedonia,
Montenegro, and Ukraine

Deputy Minister of Interior of Ukraine, Police Captain



Kateryna Pavlichenko



Kateryna Pavlichenko recalls a thought she once heard at a leadership workshop: “Move towards your goal confidently, but make sure you look around and offer a hand to those walking behind you.” Indeed, teamwork and support are pivotal for this strong woman.

"They say, name me those five around you, and I will tell everything about you. I was lucky as I had much more than five - motivated, dedicated, ambitious, and purposeful individuals. I source inspiration admiring them. These are my team and my friends who I can always count on. I am confident in them and I know that they will get my six," - says Kateryna Pavlichenko. Even though her colleagues are watching her back, Ms. Pavlichenko still has a great deal of challenges to tackle. Her schedule is full of meetings and events that never seem to end, even on weekends.

“When assuming this position, I had to reshape myself. Unlike the previous, more administrative jobs, this position is political, which was new to some extent for me. I realized I was now responsible for shaping policy and determining the approach to certain topics,” says Kateryna.

She recalls having adaptation issues and finding it difficult to come to terms with her new role. “It wasn’t a walk in the park at all, I even found myself missing the patrol police service. After all, they’re my second family, and I still identify as a police officer. Nonetheless, I thought it was important to accept the change, leave my comfort zone, take stock of the new surroundings, and achieve new results,” she says.

Before Ms. Pavlichenko was appointed Deputy Minister, she spent several years at the Patrol Police – first as a senior inspector of special assignments, then as Deputy Head of the Patrol Police Department. She had the chance to see the reform with her own eyes and take part in its implementation.

This was preceded by work in law. A certified lawyer, Kateryna had a successful career before joining the force. She says she would probably have stuck in that career path, if not for the changes that started in the country. The Revolution of Dignity affected many, and it seemed like the right time to start living anew. The same applied to the police reform. Kateryna had people among her friends who were following the reform and decided to join the new police force. She had the same ideas. When she discussed these with her manager, a female lawyer, the feedback was quite sceptical, along the lines of “Why swap a successful career for something different?” “This somehow spurred me on,” says Kateryna. “That’s how I decided to pursue a new career.”

This switch worked out well. Kateryna’s legal experience helped her as she joined the monitoring division of the Patrol Police in Kyiv. She first focused on internal reviews and other issues, which bore a great deal of resemblance to what she used to work with as a lawyer. But soon desk reviews were succeeded by duty travel around the country. These were the reform’s early days, which marked a true shift in police operations. “Originally, only Kyiv had Patrol Police detachment. Then they started opening around the country: in Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv... I remember being told I had to travel to Lviv to help set up all the units,” Kateryna recalls. “I was away from home



for almost a year. One trip was followed by another, and work just did not see to end. I delivered training for new recruits, a great deal of work focused on documentation (for instance, transferring traffic accident reports from the old Road Inspectorate to the police), all the while we kept recruiting new people. I think I held more interviews that year than ever since.”

This work was crucial, as the situation required good speed and coordination. The newly recruited police officers were meant to go on patrol very shortly, and they needed operational support – accountants, documentation management etc.

And so it was established, in every city where Patrol Police exist. Kateryna warmly recalls what followed next. “I will always remember the police officers’ first patrols. Each unit gets to experience this fresh start just once. The cadets finish training, receive their police uniform, badge, and guns. On Friday they line up on the square, swear the oath as laid down in the Law, and then the evening brings the most captivating part... They get in their cars for the first time, receive their first calls on their tablets, and set off on their first missions. This is unforgettable! I remember how nervous they all got: I would try to talk to each one of them, reassure them, let them calm down. And they were ready to go. The experience was very exciting for everyone involved,” says Kateryna.

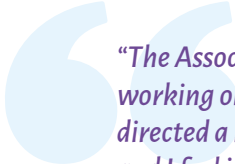
Pleasant memories aside, as deputy minister Ms. Pavlichenko has a new set of issues and challenges to tackle. She now oversees human rights issues, gender policy, human trafficking, and domestic violence prevention. She is also one of the founders and a

board chair of the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement (UAWLE), which bears a mention in the context of gender. The UAWLE now has nearly 400 members representing various law enforcement agencies. Women are the most numerous, but the Association also includes male members. They are all united by the idea of women empowerment in society, police, and in other law enforcement agencies.

“During my time with the police, we collaborated with the Embassy of Canada. In 2018, at one of our events, I was approached by two ladies, Tracy and Kristine, both former police officers. They told me about their experience with gender equality and support to girls and women in the police in Canada. The issue has a long history in Canada, as the organization that became a prototype for UAWLE has been in existence for more than a century over there. I have to be honest: me and my superiors were somewhat sceptical of the idea of setting up such an organisation. But then, having analysed the matter and held a few discussions, we thought we’d give it a go,” says Kateryna.

One of the more debatable issue was whether to make our female organisation open to men. After a bit of a discussion, we decided men would be allowed to join. We felt that “gender equality” wouldn’t fit well with this kind of limitation. This is why UAWLE also has male members. They make up about 10% of the total membership. In hindsight, this was the right decision. “Many of our male members hold managerial positions. Sharing our views on gender issues, they stand ready to support the women in their units or divisions,” says Kateryna.

UAWLE is also an affiliated member of the International Association of Women Police (IAWP) and strives to develop relations with similar organisations abroad. No wonder international exchange is among the Association’s key priorities.



“The Association is part of me. I’ve been working on it for three years now, I’ve directed a lot of effort to establishing it, and I feel it still takes up about 30% of my time now,” says Kateryna.

Nowadays, deputy minister Pavlichenko has little time for anything but work. The responsibility she shoulders obliges her to direct all energy into professional activity. She usually arrives at work at 9 in the morning and rarely leaves before 8 in the evening. Saturdays are workdays, too. “If I had more time, I would probably like to improve my English, visit the gym more often, go back to vocalism,” she says. The job, however, requires full immersion. When she has the time, Kateryna does household chores or visits her parents. A family event may see her sing and play bandura, a stringed Ukraine’s national instrument with her mother, who is a bandura player. Kateryna has been into singing ever since she was a child. It is worth mentioning that Kateryna’s father used to be a policeman, too, working in the homicide unit. She believes, though, this had little to do with her choice of profession. Her parents are now immensely proud of their daughter, with her becoming a deputy minister.

Deputy Head of the Communications Unit, National Police
in the City of Kyiv, Police Senior Lieutenant



Yulia Hirdvilis



At times, we lack motivation, some stimulus to make a change in our lives for the better, to make fateful decisions, to be brave enough to open up for change. Some may be making initial steps to understand themselves better to decide on the path to take. Reflecting on such things, Yulia once shared with her colleagues the idea of collecting inspirational stories about women in law enforcement.

“I think that every woman in UAWLE is so bright, brave, and purposeful. Everyone’s story can inspire those who lack determination. Plus, it would be great to learn more about each other,” says Yulia.

So, together with her colleague Olga Yuskevych, Yulia presented this idea to Kateryna Pavlichenko, the Chair of the Association. With no hesitation the idea was supported and it set the ball rolling.

And Yulia has also her own story. This story is about the strong will of a woman who knows what she wants and moves there with confidence. Pursuing a law enforcement career was a matter of conscious choice for Yulia. It was a well-thought-out decision, and it was her call of duty to some extent. It was not a decision to ‘try it out’, as you may hear from someone, in order to have a taste of it. You can taste the cake, but not career. “I knew that people call 102 when they face some problem. That’s why you have to be prepared, including mentally-prepared, for different cases.”

By the way, Yulia’s birthday is on 4 July, which is the Day of the National Police in Ukraine. She believes it’s sort of symbolic.

She started her career as a frontliner at the police station in the city of Lutsk. It was a true ‘boot camp’ for Yulia to practice her communication skills and preparedness for different situations. Shortly after, she was promoted to Deputy Company Commander and soon after to Company Commander. It was a huge responsibility considering the fact that she had to manage so many people! In fact, she was recommended for promotion by her instructors at the Academy, where she had her police training. They right away noticed her leadership skills and target-oriented approach. “I was the Company Commander for almost a year. I gained invaluable experience of communication when interacting both with colleagues and with people in the community since I myself had to often respond to calls,” says Yulia. This experience helped me realize that I need to make a step forward in my policing career. So she became a Senior Recruitment Inspector in the patrol police in the Volyn oblast.

At that time during her service, she met her future husband, also a police officer, and moved with him to Kyiv. In the capital, she was first appointed senior inspector at the Professional Training Unit of the HR department of Kyiv Police, and then senior inspector at the Communications Unit. Today Yulia is Deputy Head of the Communications Unit in the police of the city of Kyiv, where she is tasked to coordinate PR work to inform the public about the police work regarding crime prevention and combatting, ensuring safety of the community, creating a positive image of the police.

“I belong to those people who love their job. I am ready to sacrifice all my experience and skills for the benefit of my service. I like coming to the office early, to get the required



paperwork and documentation sort out, check emails, plan the day, and get myself ready for it,” says Yulia.

She is happy with her job and with the team she is working with as many of them are innovative and creative like-minded people. And when they face some workplace issues, Yulia believes, it teaches people to adapt to each other and build good and friendly working relationships.

She found friends among her colleagues and appreciates their support. She says that one of the most impressive things in her life was when she was climbing the mountains with her father who has physical disabilities. “These are my colleagues at work who helped me accomplish this dream. When I learned about an organization that gives people with disabilities such an experience - to climb mountains - I decided that I need to do it for my father. For the past twenty years, we haven’t had a trip together due to his disability. Hence I resolved to go for this adventure, and my colleagues have helped me in this. The experience and emotions were unbelievable! Standing on top of Mount Pikui in the Carpathians, my father and I had some 5-7 minutes of silence, looking at the beauty that opened up to us from the height. It was amazing! And I’m thrilled that I managed to do that. I know that he has this experience now and he will remember it,” says Yulia.

Yulia translates her emotions, concerns, and experience obtained at work into verses, which are so much enjoyed by her friends and colleagues. She has already published a collection of her poems and is looking forward to releasing the second one. She started this at the age of 7. The first poem was prompted by a funny story: she saw a little girl

and boy fighting over an unevenly divided orange. The text came to her right away. Since then, it has become a hobby for Yulia and a way to express herself.

“Writing poems switches me to another wavelength, allows me to express what is on my mind. I reflect on what I notice around. I observe people. Some poems are about social issues, or our daily routine, others are about feelings. There are also some about the war in eastern Ukraine because it hearts me,” says Yulia.

The girl is looking forward to reading the stories of other women who work in law enforcement. She notes that the role of women in this career has changed significantly for the better in recent years. She believes that UAWLE has a great role to play in this. These days the stereotypes are not that strong as before when a woman in law enforcement meant an accountant, and a person at a senior position was always a man. “Organizations that bring women together contribute to substantial changes with regard to the role of women in men-dominated institutions. This is a great progress for Ukraine,” she says.

In her free time, Julia and her husband like to cycle, especially they like long journeys - from the morning till dusk. “I also adore the Carpathians - this is our national wealth! Clean air, beauty, and inspiration. It’s great we have them,” says Yulia.

Mother. Difficult. Confusion.
Dreams are way too scary now.
Prayed so much for safe conclusion!
Prayed so much to God above.

So unusual and empty.
Life’s not happy anymore.
Maybe it’s historic records
That we’re living in a war.

Mommy, I believe in winning.
I am not afraid to die.
There’s no fear. I’m only thrilled to
Let my friend and brother fight.

It’s so painful. I’ve been crying.
Sometimes people can forget:
We are always faced with dying.
We’ve just talked! Now he is dead...

Mommy, I’ll be back, you know this.
They just need me a bit more.
I will bring the win, I promise!
Wait for us, we’ll soon be home.

I won’t stay and you can’t make me.
Just don’t cry for me now, please.
I am sorry for the waiting.
We will fight the enemies.

Mother. Difficult. Confusion.
Dreams are way too scary now.
Softly prayed for safe conclusion.
Softly prayed to God above.

In a small room there sits a master
and pieces up the broken hearts,
Surrounded by the smell of asters,
And there’s no ending to his art.

Out there he has the expectations–
What was awaited, yet unmet;

And right behind, taking five ledges,
Some one-way loves, and some regrets.

And then, right here, a little further,
These broke from being way too kind.
And these ones were so brave in order
To tell the truth. (That’s hard to find.)

Those hearts had suffered from hard feelings,
Accumulated into scars.
The wounds have been forever healing,
Still: can’t undo what has been done.

So many hearts that have sincerely
Treated all people just the same.
Who shared their warmth and loving freely...
Whose trust and hope have long been failed.

It’s great that there’s a workshop like this!
Repairing happens day and night.
Though work is constant, he is tireless.
The master’s name is simple–Time.

The strong are not easy to love.
They have something unusual in them.
They are tall, they are small, they are tough,
Yet each vulnerable, but not thin-skinned.

When the strong are around, you feel
peaceful.
They have learned to protect everyone.
When the strong are around, you can be cool.
When you’re with them, all worries are gone.

They have learned to be quiet, lie low now.
“What is happening?” They will not tell.
It is easy for them to start over,
Even when they are tired as hell.

It’s no easy feat being a strong one.
Not everyone’s suited to do it.
They are tall, they are small, they are loving,
They are vulnerable. They are human.

Inspector at platoon 1 company 1 battalion 1,
Kryvyi Rih Patrol Police, Police Lieutenant



Hanna Derkach



As a child, Hanna dreamed to join army or to be a police officer. She was the eldest in her large family, which was the reason for her to learn how to protect because she had to take care of her sisters and her brother. However, since she lived in an industrial city, Hanna chose to join a construction college, and then a metallurgical university. Her natural tough character and enormous energy have pre-determined her to work in what is considered traditionally “masculine” professions. Hanna was a construction worker, conveyor operator, and crane driver, just name it. She was not afraid of anything. But the desire to join the army or the police was still there. Therefore, at some point, when she already had her own family - her husband who worked at a steelworks, - and two sons, Hanna submitted her application to both join military service and to the then recently created police, which just started recruiting.

“I was accepted at both places! - says Hanna. - Although it was quite unexpected. I had to decide, and I chose the police. I am still there since 2016.”

Her family was not thrilled about this, but it did not stop her. “This is my life, and I want to live it as I see fit.” - she says.

It settled down at home after some time. Now the mother in the family is a police officer, the father works at the factory, and the teenage sons are promising hockey players. The eldest son, who is 14, already lives separately in Dnipro; he is in “Dynamo” hockey team. His one-year-younger brother lives with his parents

and plays for “Kryvbas” team. She is extremely proud of her sons because she played a large part in their sport ‘career’.

“From an early age, I took them to all sorts of organizations - dance club, stretching classes and many others so that they try as many activities as they can and find the best they like. And when the hockey rink was built in our city, I took my boys there. And they chose hockey. That fall, the elder one was invited to play in a professional team.”

Today, her life in the patrol police brings all sorts of situations, which, although quite typical, still bring something new every day. The woman likes this pace, and she enjoyed being part of her team. “Our squad is somewhat unusual. There are two girls and one man there. When on calls, we would normally pull over drunk drivers and issue them tickets. You have to be firm, strong, and confident. At the same time you need to find a balance and do not cross the line. When we respond to domestic violence calls, we often see the same case over and over again. It starts with a woman calling the police, but then she withdraws her statement. You ask her: do you want us to proceed on the case? She says no... And why did you call then? - “Frighten him so that he doesn’t beat me anymore,” she answers... I’ve seen a lot of this, every time the same. I never attempt to persuade them. A person cannot do anything instead of someone. It is that person made a decision her or himself, a conscious decision.”

Speaking of her job, Hanna says that she likes its dynamic nature and the chance to talk to different



people every day. Hanna says that she cannot imagine herself sitting in the office. Working with papers is not about her either. “I am tough, energetic, and strong by my nature. I think the career found me. No place for the weak here. They give up. I’ve seen them come, start working, become frustrated, upset with people, and soon they resign. That is why only those who have certain traits stay.”

Patience is also needed because on top of dangerous calls there are some absurd cases as well. Patrol police respond to different calls, including those from people with mental challenges. Or by those who do not fully understand the role of the police. One day, Hanna’s squad had to respond to a case when a UFO was reported “hidden” in the closet. Another call - a mother wanted the police to make peace between her teenage sons who were fighting over a gadget. The woman called the police so that the officers educate the boys.

But there are some cases when Hanna feels rewarded, which emphasizes the importance of her work. At such moments, she loves her job even more. They happen rarely, she confesses, but they are very memorable. “Once, while patrolling the city, they saw a taxi driver who ran out of the car. It was obvious that the man needed some help. We stopped our car nearby. It turned out that the passenger had a seizure. The taxi driver did not know what to do, called an ambulance, but what to do till that time when it arrives to save the person. So we transferred the passenger to our police car and headed to the emergency room. An ambulance met us on our way. They took the man and provided him with the necessary assistance. When the passenger

regained consciousness, he did not remember what had happened, but he was very grateful for the help. He admitted that he had a large sum of money with him, and who knows what could have happened if we had not intervened,” says Hanna.

The only thing a policewoman would like to change in her profession is quite big. Particularly, drawbacks of the legislation, which allows some to drive having scores of tickets for traffic rule violations. Another desired change is the attitude towards the police, which is not always fair. The woman would like to see people respecting the law enforcement system and the law. She believes that tiny steps are being taken so far.

“When we hear from our colleagues from Canada or the United States, who meet with us at the invitation of the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement, about their conditions and work life, we have nothing to do but to dream to have something similar one day. The same respect for cops, gender equality, and better working conditions. I believe that sooner or later we will come to this,” Hanna says.

Head of the Community Policing Unit,
Lviv Oblast Patrol Police, Police Senior Lieutenant



Tetyana Kapys



Life is unpredictable. And it is good when a person does not quit because of the difficulties faced, but he or she finds the strength to move on. After all, to live means to embrace life with all its twists and turns and overcome encountered challenges. Tetyana knows this from her own experience. In the past, she was a professional handball player with great potential, full of hopes for a successful future in sport. Life turned upside down abruptly for her. But such change was a blessing in disguise for her as the woman found a new self, although it took years. And who would have thought that the new Tetyana would be a policewoman.

“I’ve been playing handball since I was 9,” she says. - Once a handball coach came to my school and invited us to join his sports team. I decided to try it but then stayed there for years. At the age of 14, I was a member of the professional handball team “Ingul”. The team was named after the river that flows through Kropyvnytskyi. It was the place and time where my adult life began: I signed a contract then and was paid money for playing in the team.”

She lived then in her hometown, Kropyvnytskyi (still called Kirovohrad at that time). At the age of 15, she was invited to the reserve team of “Spartak”, the most famous handball team based in Kyiv. Tetyana began to play internationally, and when she turned 18 she was also a member of the national team of Ukraine. She had unblighted prospects ahead and nothing should have tarnished that, but at the age of 23 her sports career ended abruptly. It all started with the reorganization of the team, which resulted

in the disappearance of “Spartak”. The management divided the team players literally in half. Some remained to play, and the others were transferred together with the manager to the Halychanka team in Lviv. This was the beginning of the end: the girls wanted to grow and they were not ready to accept the crisis. Tetyana wanted to join another handball team in Poland and then in Serbia. However, it turned out that according to her contract to play in another team she had to be sold as an athlete.

“We signed those contracts when we were still children, so I did not pay attention to all those nuances, and could not imagine what would be if I leave the team. Now, as an adult, I understand the gross violations connected to us signing those bidding documents. But then no one was there to protect me. My mother raised me on her own, and it would be difficult for her to deal with such issues. I made a decision to quit sports,” says Tetyana.

In retrospect, when she has her husband and two daughters, she recalls that experience as her distant past, a story left behind. But bad feeling still remains. At that time, Tetyana was under stress, experiencing all those events for several months. Over the years, she realized that sport is still with her thanks to the skills she learned and developed in herself while playing handball. The qualities she learned were persistence, determination, courage, prompt actions, and being active. “From 2005 to 2015 there was a long time of finding myself. I tried then so many things. I practiced yoga for seven years, fully immersed in it; I developed a keen



interest in psychology. Perhaps, it was the reason that I managed to drag myself out. My mindset has changed, and I started to take life with positivity. I graduated from Ivan Franko Lviv University majoring in Organizational Management and later gained a degree in Practical Psychology. For some time I worked in the beauty industry. Got two children. Finally, I realized that I was always looking for an activity to realize myself and help others. I just wanted to help people,” says Tetyana.

Her husband was the one who helped her to start a new life after six years of maternity leave - he decided that his wife would perfectly fit the newly created police. And he came up with an idea for Tetyana to submit her application.

“When they approved my application, I had to pass a series of tests. Despite the fact that I was not truly expecting that, I scored higher points than I needed to pass. Physical fitness test was of course a piece of cake for me. The last stage was the most difficult - psychological screening. The test comprised 500 questions that provide a complete picture of a personality: what kind of person you are, what your temperament is, your strengths and weaknesses. Many have tried to outwit the system, but they failed. Many were not mentally ‘fit’ to work at the Patrol Police and had to be dispelled at this stage,” says Tetyana.

So it was her way to become a police officer. And although she liked working at the Patrol Police, after some time, due to scheduling reasons, she transferred to another police unit. Two night shifts in a row were difficult for a mother of two. In 2016, Lviv became one of the four pilot cities to embrace the community policing concept and the first School Resource Officer project was launched here. “Community policing is very common in other countries. The police have been successfully building the rapport with the community for more than twenty years over there. The work of police officers is visible to the public and respected. We are just beginning this journey. People are not aware of what we do, they are not interested or do not understand the nuances of the police work. From time to time we have to explain the specifics of particular police departments, their functions and responsibilities,” says Tetyana.

After relevant training, Tetyana was appointed as the Head of Community Policing Unit. The School Police Officers project was designed to raise awareness among parents, teachers, and students about the work of the police, as well as to highlight the role of each person in the community in building safety and security for everyone. “Our work in the unit is somewhat similar to the juvenile prevention. We kind of assist them in what they do.” We communicate with children, tell them about delinquency and legislation, about the importance of crime prevention. And we see the outcome of our work with children. Quite often we see that what we do is not in vain. For example, once children noticed one driver violating traffic rules and they called the 102 police emergency line, which

was a demonstration of a good citizenship position. There was a case when a 13-year-old boy prevented the suicide of an elderly man. Or the case when the girls helped the police identify and detain the abuser who was harassing them. We even issued Thank You letters to these children for their deeds,” says Tetyana.

Tetyana likes working with the community - it is easy to notice how people’s attitude to the police is changing. Or it is an opportunity to provide support and help. “We are often approached by people who failed to receive help elsewhere. We look into the issue and offer solutions. Sometimes we refer them to other agencies or we provide help ourselves. We work with businesses to help children in difficult life circumstances. We take care of children in day care centers. Different cases come our way and we try to provide support engaging various sources: we talk to local council members, local government officials, entrepreneurs - everyone who can be of help,” says Tetyana.

She is happy with her job at the moment. Among other things, this job taught her that children need attention. Including her own children, who also need attention. “I try to dedicate them every free minute I have. I like taking a walk on a weekend together with my kids. We have a mug of hot cocoa, talk to each other, have fun. It is very important not to lose touch with your children - I see this at work in the eyes of those children whom we call “socially vulnerable.” Every incident with kids is about the loss of rapport with their parents and the lack of attention.

Chief Inspector of the Mental Health Support Unit,
Zaporizhzhia Oblast Patrol Police, Police Major



**Svitlana
Ivanova**



Svetlana's story is about the support that everyone needs, regardless of their gender. And about passion for work. The woman, a professional psychologist, has been working in law enforcement for more than 20 years. Like in previous years, her job profile includes psychological support to the regional police unit and to the subordinated departments. This job is about making police officers resilient and capable of performing their tough service despite the many challenges.

“The work of police officers is full of stressful situations,” says Svetlana. - Eyes of the public are on each of them as well as the attention of the media. Therefore, it is a huge responsibility and, of course, pressure. My task is to recognize stress symptoms before the person is at the edge and about to burn out. If it happens, such a person needs some break - a few days off or vacation - or, sometimes, professional mental help is required.

Svetlana recalls how her career in law enforcement began. For some reason, she wanted this type of a job. During her last year in Zaporizhzhia National University, she saw an opening for a psychologist at a police station nearby. This job required special pre-training, so after being hired, the girl spent 5 and a half months studying police-specific disciplines - law, firearms training, etc. Later she also received a degree in law.

“There were very few women serving in the police then. My training team was unusual - 4 girls and 25 boys. It was quite difficult, but we knew what we were going for,” Svitlana recalls.

The first few months at work were the most memorable, because, as she says, it was like “a boot camp” for her .

Although Svetlana is a psychologist, she had to work at the frontline at first. The girl was tasked to patrol some streets in her city and she was also on duty during public events and gatherings. “I was at all football matches, but not as a spectator. And it was quite dangerous, because then we did not have any of the personal protection equipment that our colleagues use these days. No batons, weapons, nor pepper spray. But I am grateful to my boss then who was responsible for the coordination of safety measures during public events; I am grateful for the experience and for what he taught us. I started to understand my profession better. I was young, energetic, and passionate about work.

Such experience, of course, allowed me to have profound knowledge of the law enforcement service and of the situations they face - especially mental health issues. Maybe that's why Svitlana did not see herself in another role. While her other female colleagues transferred to the criminal investigation department, became investigators, Svitlana saw herself as a psychologist.

It was particularly beneficial in 2015 when the new police was inaugurated. “We had an objective to launch new police units and recruit new people within very tight deadlines. Patrol Police training school had one psychologist only. I was spending all my time there. I was supervising 7 out of 13 groups of cadets, and that's a lot of people,” says Svitlana.

Her task as a psychologist was to monitor and support the mental health of cadets and maintain their motivation. Motivation is perhaps the most important thing that was taken into account during the recruitment process. “Given the specifics of the Patrol Police, their level of motivation



was highly relevant. Without internal motivation, a person would not be able to work here, especially in difficult conditions. And 95% of the applications were young and motivated people. But not all of them understood how difficult it would be - both physically and psychologically. Therefore, only the strongest in the literal sense stayed. Someone could not go to the next recruitment stage, others failed exams, and some realized that this job was not for them.

In 2018, Svitlana received a certificate of an instructor and started teaching the basics of effective communication and stress resistance to her colleagues. She is involved in Peer-to-Peer Mental Health Support program. This is a pilot project at the national level, implemented by the National Police of Ukraine to reduce stress and improve resilience. Police officers learn from psychologists coping skills and then share them with their colleagues. The program is still in its initial stage. So Svitlana, as a psychologist, stands by to help with a piece of advice or a word of support when need be. She is often approached by young women for advice on raising children. After all, Svitlana is not only a psychologist, but she also has two daughters and a son. Men also come to see her. Some share their family issues, others need support after separation.

Routine may often hide if there is something is going with a person, but Svitlana can still see it. She would often spot mental health issues while studying personal files of the personnel, when conducting psychological testing with them. Often it is the case that newcomers have issues adapting to the team. And then it's time for Svitlana to take actions. "When a new recruit in the

team faces difficulties, you need to support him or her. Guidance from the colleagues and the supervisor are usually helpful. I always advise that a new person should be tasked with a simple assignment and while working on it he/she would slowly blend in. They would seek help, talk to someone - it always makes the workplace adaptation period better. Sports is a great activity as it can help improve self-esteem by testing and demonstrating our skills and achievements," says Svitlana.

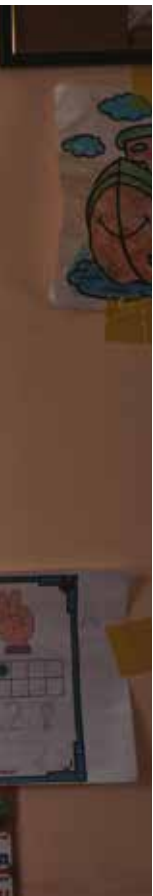
During the past 20 years of her work in law enforcement, she observed the evolution of the role women play in law enforcement. Whereas at the beginning of her career, there were very few women in the police, quite many female officers serve today. A woman in a leadership position is no longer a rare case.

"This is key progress in this field," says Svetlana. - Nowadays we have bright, well organized, and motivated women in the police. We had to break the stereotype that a woman means taking care of her family and doing chores, but a woman is not about learning and development. If a man always seemed fit for this job by default, a woman had to constantly prove her skills. Women continue experiencing this, balancing between family and work. However, I know from my own experience that the desire to grow and learn plays a beneficial role for us. I am positive about this, and I see this type of women around me. It is motivating, keeps you alive and helps you stay efficient," says Svetlana.

Chief Inspector of Policing Activities Sector 2,
Novhorod-Siverski Police Station in Chernihiv oblast,
Police Captain



Natalia Shynkarenko



"I dreamed to be a police officer since childhood," said 33-year-old Natalia Shynkarenko. Influenced by movies and TV shows, she wanted to be strong and just like the cops she saw on screen.

Her active and energetic nature was a contributing factor to make this dream happen: the girl did freestyle fighting, athletics, was a member of a drama class, played the piano. But the most she wanted to serve in law enforcement. So after high school, with no hesitation, she entered the law department at the Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs.

Now Natalia lives with her family in Chernihiv and takes care of her children - four-year-old Andriyko and two-year-old Vika. She says that the police work partially prepared her for motherhood. For almost 10 years, Natalia had been working in juvenile prevention and interacted a lot with children and adolescents, while trying to help them when they faced issues. "I noticed," says Natalia, "that the only thing a child needs is attention." The child wants to be heard. Even when the kid is still too young and cannot speak properly, he or she can still be heard or, better to say, felt. Sometimes parents buy time for themselves by making their own children busy with gadgets or giving them pocket money. But they still need attention, and when it is not received at home, they look for it elsewhere. One thing is when they turn to good people, but what if not..." So Natalia learned at work how to listen to and hear children, and now she successfully practices these techniques in her own family.

Natalia always was in touch with the children she worked with and she did that voluntarily and full-heartedly. Children could feel her candidness and enjoyed being with Natalia. In fact, she is still in touch with some of them, despite her busy schedule. They call her, share stories about their life, send greetings on the holiday season.

Is her job stressful? Everything has actually started with a stressful situation. The first call stuck in her memory forever. "I just did not expect to see something like this. We arrived at the scene and saw a woman who gave birth at home a week ago. She did not even call doctors. But you can't hide such news in a small community. The head of the local council called us. We arrived to talk to the woman so that she would go to the hospital, have a medical examination, do the paperwork for her child, and we discovered terrible conditions where she lived. The house had neither electricity nor water. Dirty and filth were everywhere. The baby was slipping wrapped in a curtain... The mother gave up the kid easily. This story touched me so much that I couldn't find a place for myself. I remember I was crying a lot. I would buy and ask friends for some basic stuff for this baby and bring it to the hospital. My mother said that you cannot work in the police if you continue reacting this way to everything. This is true. Later I learned how to switch attention. I accepted the fact that such things happen, and one should do help to the extent they can."


She also recalled a story of teenage girls who tried to commit suicide together because of rejected love. For them, it was a happy ending. The case was picked up



by the key media stations in the country. Natalia later met with these girls, had a talk with them, gave them an opportunity to speak up and be heard. Those girls have grown up already and have their own families and children. Until now they would call Natalia or keep in touch using social media.

Despite such memories and "scars" on the heart, the woman does not consider her work too stressful. On the contrary, she sees a lot of positive and good things there. "The most important is that I can see the result of my work, appreciation of those children. It's rewarding. Children are like this: they respond to you the way you treat them. You can always find a common language with them and understand each other. "

The woman in the police, according to Natalia, is not an odd thing. Women are professionals no less than men. Moreover, a woman would also be naturally more flexible, intuitive, etc. She is strong, but her strength can be mild, which is sometimes necessary to address a difficult situation or a conflict.



"I had cases when I faced gender stereotypes about women in law enforcement," says Natalia. "But I have successfully addressed them."

She recalls one story with a smile on her face. When she just joined the police, she had to be in a squad with her colleagues convoying a criminal. Natalia's task was to orient them in the locality because they were new there. Her male colleagues looked skeptically at her, a young skinny girl in uniform, and did not talk much. At some point, the criminal started escaping. Natalia ran after him. She was chasing him trying to be as fast as she could, and finally caught him in some field and the rest of the team came after. "Dead silence was in the car on the way back. The air was tense. Only later she learned from her boss what the guys told him about Natalia: when on a mission next time, we want to work with her only!"

Bohdan Khmelnytsky National Academy of State Border
Guard Service of Ukraine, Gender Advisor to Rector, Colonel



Olena Volobuieva



The seventh child in the family, Olena knew from childhood that everything in life can be earned with hard work. Her siblings and she was taught to work hard from an early age. Her father was an officer, and Olena, following his path, wanted to become an investigator. However, her keen interest and her natural aptitude for the English language brought her to Vinnytsia Teachers College to study linguistics. After graduation, she got married, spent some time on maternity leave, and then started a teaching job. In 1995, fate brought her to the only one in Ukraine National Academy of the State Border Guard Service, where she first taught English, and then after graduating from the border guard department she received her first military rank of lieutenant.

However, her passion was research. Today Olena Volobueva has PhD in Psychology and the rank of a professor. During her academic career, she has authored more than 150 research articles and books and developed her own scientific school of thought. Olena investigates aspects related to the professional growth of border officers, including such topics as equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the defence sector, studies the problems that women face in their careers. Therefore, it is natural that Olena was appointed to the position of Rector's Gender Advisor.

"Among all the nations, the first will be the one that leads in thought and science," - this quote is from the famous scientist Louis Pasteur. Olena recounts it every time when it comes to science. "Without science, there would be nothing. Because if there is

no scientific research, there will be no development. And life is development," says Olena.

After defending her doctoral dissertation, the woman was invited to work as the dean of the foreign languages department. It was the time when she started looking into gender aspects and collected initial observations.

"The more you help women, more confident they are. When they feel support, they achieve great results. So I decided to help those who need it. It is crucial to develop professionally and to have self-realization. Moreover, if you praise women a bit for what they do, they can move mountains," says Olena.

Olena has been always working on her professional development. In 2015, she moved to Kyiv following an invitation to chair an HR department at the HQ of the State Border Service of Ukraine. A year after she went back to Khmelnytsky and took the position of Vice Rector for Human Resources. In 2019, she became Vice Rector for Research, and a year after she was appointed as Gender Advisor to the Rector.

Her research activities paved the way for her to visit Great Britain, Austria, Spain, Sweden, Canada, and the United States for professional purposes. During her business trips to all these countries, she studied various gender aspects, gender mainstreaming in the security and defense sector, and the experience



of local women law enforcers. These were business trips, which each time gave a lot of impressions and new knowledge, exchange of experience in the implementation of gender policy in the world's leading countries.

Today, gender aspects are integrated into the educational process of her university at all levels in accordance with the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women. Peace. Security" to ensure gender equality. Five online courses – both for the students and for the faculty – have been designed to enhance gender competence.

“There are no restrictions on admission to the Academy - girls and boys have equal chances. Both male and female cadets study together at all our departments. There are girls even at the once purely male department of State Border Security,” says Olena.

In fact, her inspiration and motivation comes also from women: strong, purpose-driven, those that can be a role model.

The first one whom she recalls is her mother Maria Berlizova. The woman was an example to follow for her daughter in everything. Olena also names Major Valentyna Selikhova, who served in the Department of Internal Affairs in the Khmelnytskyi oblast in the 1990s.

"I want to be like her," I thought when I saw this amazing woman. I was impressed by her professional skills and approach: she was fit, intelligent, equally treating everyone, and always with good humor," Olena recalls.


These days Olena finds inspiration in her contemporary colleagues from Canada, such as Tracy Hardy, Angela Workman Stark, and Diana Harrison - who are former police officers and now share their expertise as international consultants. Olena says that the strength and motivation of these women evoke great respect and inspiration.

However, a person can be a role model regardless of his or her gender. Olena also mentions some men with respect and gratitude. In particular, her father - Fyodor Berlizov, a war veteran, had a happy family with his wife Maria, who raised together seven children and taught them to work hard, respect older people, and help those in need.

Olena recalls her handball coach Mykhailo Tymoshenko. She dedicated many years to this sport and played in the Khmelnytsky team. "Sports requires a lot of work. We would train then 6 hours a day. It was extremely exhausting. But the coach kept us motivated and supported us. He used to say: "You are a team, so you can do anything together!" I remembered that for my entire life: to succeed you need to cooperate. And, of course, you need to love sports," says Olena. She still dedicates time to exercising: she does it regularly, has a proper diet, and stays positive.

"I adore reading. There are many books which I come back to from time to time and find answers to questions that bug me. Honor, dignity, integrity, hard work are part of success in life," Olena believes.

Together with her husband, Navy Reserve Colonel Volodymyr Volobuev, they raised their son Vladyslav, whom they are proud of. He is today a major of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.

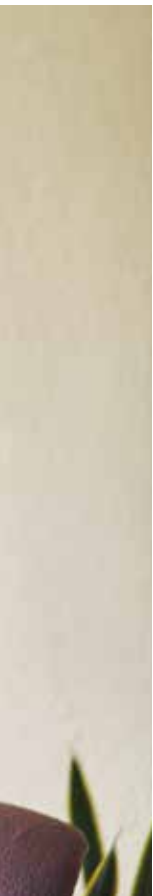


"I take everything positively whatever happens in life. I learned from the time I played handball (I was a line player): if you get the ball, you must score a goal. The same thing about life: bring every thing you started to an end," says Olena.

Inspector of the Monitoring Unit, Luhansk Oblast
National Police, Police Captain



Victoria Ponomarova



As a child, Victoria Ponomareva dreamed of being a singer, not a police officer. In fact, she had some thoughts about working in law enforcement considering that her brother was serving in the police. His work seemed interesting, inspiring, and somewhat romantic. Her brother was a good example of an officer to follow. However, Victoria did not take this career path seriously; the girl dreamed of the stage.

But her future - both professional and, as it later turned out, personal - was determined by her father. It happened, Victoria says, almost by accident. "It was like a brain fog," she says. After her graduation from high school, Victoria and her father was on their way to the largest city in their region, Luhansk, to submit the documents in person to the university. Our final destination was the Institute of Culture.

"On our way to Luhansk we had to travel through a small town called Yuvileyne, which hosts Didorenko University of Internal Affairs," says Victoria. - And my father said: why not stop here and have a look. You can check it out yourself and then decide if you like. Ok? And when we visited the campus, I was impressed. Green territory, everything was blossoming, incredible place. Young people were wearing uniform. I still don't know how it happened. I was like stupefied with the beauty there and decided to apply to that university."

As a student, Victoria met her future husband - also a cadet of the same university. He was from the town of Svatove, where she works now. He wanted Victoria to follow him and live in his hometown after graduation. However, Victoria intended to stay in Luhansk - a much bigger city. She was almost to get a job there. This

dilemma was also cleared by her father. He suggested that since the expected job in Luhansk was still not confirmed I should follow my husband. After a few years went by, Victoria understood her father's intention - it was to save the family that was still too young at that time. After all, Victoria's career ambitions, she believes, could have ruined it.

"I am grateful to my father for everything. Speaking of the police work, I know that he saw strength in me. He would tell me often: yes, you can do it! Probably that's why I'm very self-confident now," says Victoria.

Victoria has no regrets about those decisions in the past. Now the girl lives and works in a small town - the district center Svatove in Luhansk oblast. At first she worked at the local Marriage Registration Centre. But when an opening at the police station appeared, Victoria immediately filed her application. Training at the police school opened the door for many opportunities in law enforcement. Victoria chose to be an investigator. The work was very demanding and complex both physically and psychologically. Therefore, when Victoria had a child, she decided to look for a position in the police that would not be so stressful.

The woman is now an inspector in the monitoring unit, and she is also a PR person in the police station. There is no dedicated position or a specific department that would be responsible for public relations at the police in Svatove. However, we still need a person who would do this job, respond to inquiries from the media, share the



news with the press to keep the public informed. That's what Victoria does. The girl likes her job because it is not even close to routine, and she can even be creative in some way there. "I have been performing the duties of a press officer for three and a half years already. It was interesting to me from day one, though it is still not an easy job. I am not a linguist or a journalist by profession, so I had to learn to write press releases and posts on my own. I read and studied a lot to improve the quality of my work. Now I am very knowledgeable in the field," says Victoria.

She even produces videos! Not too long, but based on intriguing plot, which comes to her as inspiration. For this purpose, she has to be a director, camera person, and journalist at the same time. "Creativity can be applied everywhere, even when we record our routine patrols to monitor the fulfillment of the restrictions imposed due to the quarantine. You need to identify people to be in the video. You need to persuade them that the video materials are important, encourage them, guide them on what to do when filmed. For example, you need to show how to wear a face mask properly, use an antiseptic, to set an example for others. We say to our 'actors' that these videos will be aired on our social media so that everyone would know how to do certain things properly and follow suit. And it is where my creativity starts striving to make such videos interesting and appealing."

And the love to singing still remains in her heart. Sometimes Victoria can sing for her colleagues on some holidays. But the greatest pleasure is just to come home during the lunch break, and while no one is there, turn on the music and sing loudly. For Victoria, this is a way to relax and unwind.

"I am happy with what I have - both in my personal life and at work. Speaking of the career of a singer, who knows, maybe our son will follow this path. One day at some family event, he surprised us all. The boy was not even seven, but he came and asked for a microphone and sang so well that no one expected it. I'll try to develop these skills in him later. Meanwhile, I will encourage him to play sports and be always active. We like biking and running around together.

Victoria and her husband are almost done with building their own house, and they soon will move in there. She says she doesn't like planning much in advance - she just wants it to be good today. She enjoys her job a lot.

"I want to change the stereotype that only men can lead and be a manager, the stereotype that men are stronger, and so on. Women of the 21st century are not inferior in anything. We see this when a woman - a mother and a housewife - becomes a great leader or an excellent expert in her field. In my police station we have 86 men and 29 women. And although there are still fewer women than men, we can still see the change regarding the attitude towards women in the police; it is evolving and women roles are changing, too. There are more and more women in senior positions. Women now are in the positions that were previously open to men only. It inspires and empowers," says Victoria.

Inspector of the Firearms Unit,
Sumy Oblast Patrol Police, Police Senior Lieutenant



Tetyana Prykhodchenko



Women and weaponry is not a common combination for our society. It is a vivid example of stereotyping when it comes to what "fits" or "does not fit" to women. Tetyana, a former athlete and now a policewoman, has been proving this stereotype wrong since her childhood. The girl joined a biathlon club when she was 6. It is an Olympic sport that combines cross country skiing and shooting. Passion for biathlon led to Tetyana fell in love with weapons, and as a result, she wanted to become a police officer.

"I was a high energy child. To burn off my energy in a healthy way, my mother enrolled me in swimming classes. But they ended soon, and my coach, seeing my aptitude for sports, suggested that I join a local biathlon kids' team. So, it was my start there. At first I didn't understand what it was about. I started this sport in the summer, which was not the best time for skiing. Very soon my interest grew and I practiced it for many years," says Tetyana.

She won her first medal at the contest a month after she started practicing. This victory had a very positive effect on the girl: she wanted to do more and do it better; she aimed to max out at every training. Then there were many competitions of different levels, from local ones to the World Cup. Tetyana became the Champion of Ukraine and was a member for the national biathlon team of Ukraine. Predictably, she eventually ended up at the Institute of Physical Culture, a university for athletes and sports industry professionals. She was spending all her time for pre-season training: summer training followed winter training and so on. No free time for anything else. While studying at the university,

Tetyana started to considering her professional future. She wanted to have a job to leverage her sports background and do something new and exciting for herself. After graduation in 2016, she learned about the recruitment campaign to the recently created Patrol Police. And she realized that it was the place where her sports experience could come in handy.

"As soon as I saw the details of the selection process, I immediately decided that it was my chance to realize and find myself. So, without further ado, I submitted my application and was hired," says Tetyana.

Her parents were very supportive: both her mother, who actually was the one who brought her to sports, and her father, who was for Tetyana to join the police service. Her job started with patrolling the streets of Sumy. Tetyana spent a year and a half on the line. She was not afraid to experience something new. More so, she wanted to enrich her experience with due patience. There were cases when offenders did not take her seriously because she is a woman, and yet she was always up to the procedures set in the law. "From the very beginning, after I was sworn in, it was a common case that a woman officer frustrated men offenders because of gender. You look at him - he appears physically more advanced, taller, trying to demonstrate his "superiority". In such cases, I was doing what I had to according to the law. Patiently and with confidence I would explain the offense and what the respective law says. And his "superiority" vanishes," says Tetyana.



While working as a frontliner, Tetyana did not lose her passion for weapons and passed firearm training. Later, as an instructor, she was sent to a police training center for three months to teach recently recruited police officers. It was an interesting experience. The biggest challenge was to engage the audience which comprised different people, men and women, sometimes much older than Tetyana.”

“At first, I was very nervous because I was younger than those who I had to teach, and I didn't have enough experience to impress. However, in a week or two the stage fright passed: I was well received, and I got used to my new role. I saw that the trainees were motivated and wanted to learn. They were attentive to what I was sharing with them in class. So I said to myself, it doesn't matter how old they are or that I'm too young for them. The main thing is that I am able to pass on my knowledge and expertise to them,” says Tetyana.

After that teaching experience, the woman became an inspector of the armaments unit in her police station. And it was again a job dealing with weapons, which brings her so much enjoyment. So far, she is the only woman among her male colleagues. Work in the armaments unit is not monotonous. You need to do some paperwork,

but there is also a practice part in it. Tetyana's unit is to assess the skills of newly hired patrol police officers particularly in terms of meeting shooting standards. “Newcomers often worry that they may lose some skills after studying at the police academy in terms of handling weapons. That's why we help them to recall everything. They can practice wit

Officers with experience also come here: to advance their shooting skills. We use Kalashnikov assault rifles, pistols, etc. Open-air training is her favorite because it reminds her the biathlon. “I share the nuances of handling guns, demonstrate how to hold it correctly. The most important thing is to be emotionless when shooting. You need to turn them off. Otherwise, you can do something beyond control, and you do not want to do that when you have a gun in your hands,” explains Tetyana.

And although she abandoned professional sports, she still exercises. Tetyana takes part in the sports contests representing as part of the Summy police team. Her team won the first prize at the shooting championship between all the law enforcement agencies. The special units were there, the National Police team, even the military, but the award was given to the Patrol Police of Summy Oblast. She regularly exercises, but not as much as she had done that before. It is mostly gym training now for her pleasure. “Sport brought confidence to my life, added strength and perseverance to my character. Thanks to sports, I got used to work hard and achieving the set goals,” says Tetyana.

Assistant to the Chief of the National Police
in the city of Kyiv, Police Captain



Olha Yuskevych



As a young girl Olha already felt a calling to stand up for justice, protect those who needed it. Noticing that someone had been hurt, she looked for offenders and tried to do something. The girl was a fighter by nature, not scared by difficulties, brave and determined. However, she never thought about serving in the police. It was only later, when Olha met her husband, that she decided to give it a try at the new police.

“You still keep saving everyone, and this way you will do it “officially,” he told his wife. These words served as an impetus that brought the woman to the police.

“Before the service, I lived my whole life in downtown Kharkiv. I saw with my own eyes how homeless people were getting frostbites right in the yard in winter. Some even died of hypothermia. Nobody took note of them, people passed by indifferently. I was 13 years old and called the police, demanded a response. They came, I talked to them, argued...” says Olha.

This made her different from the rest of her family, except for her grandmother. A native of Belgorod, her grandmother witnessed the war, concentration camps, Siberia, and all the misadventures of that epoch. She stood out with the strength of her spirit and character. She worked until the end of her life, did not shun any work, took things in stride and with good humor. For Olha, she was an example of an “iron lady,” and the girl took her as a role model.

“I was very unlike my mother in this respect. My mom is gentle, sometimes she couldn’t stand up for herself at all. Once I learned from a neighbor by chance that my mom’s wallet had been stolen. Occasionally, my mother helped an old lady to fill out utility bills. Every member of that

household was drinking hard all the time. Once, on leaving their apartment, my mom noticed her purse with a large sum of money was missing. On learning of this, I ran to sort things out. My sister tried to stop me at first, but we agreed to call the police, “if anything.” I fought with the neighbors for my mother, got our purse back, and returned home. My mother started crying when I gave her that purse,” Olha recalls.

The girl’s choice of her future occupation (Olha got a master’s degree in ecology) was based on the principle of affordability. Due to the family’s modest income, she did not expect to study at a prestigious university, so she enrolled in whichever college they could afford. She did not even dream of Yaroslav Mudryi Law Academy, a well-known Kharkiv university. Olha was able to enroll there for a second higher degree only later, when she was already working and making money.

Back then, after graduation, the girl got a job at a large organization that prepared documentation for obtaining environment permits for factories throughout Ukraine. By following the principle of “keep on knocking and the door will be opened to you,” I grilled everyone looking for a job after graduating from the Law Academy. And I found it. I worked as a drafter of environmental authorizations. I communicated a lot, learned new stuff about anything you can think of. I had visits to small and large enterprises: some made rubber, others spices, still others some accessories. I wanted to learn how they operate, to expand my horizons,” says Olha.

It is through work that she met her husband. The company he ran got a fine. And Olha came to “rescue” him by properly drafting documents to avoid sanctions in the future. Their



work together ended up in their marriage. Her husband gives Olha the support every woman needs, even a strong one.

At that time, she was studying for a second degree, in law. With her own earnings and ambitions, she was able to pay for tuition and planned to work in the environmental prosecutor's office after the Academy. Because her first degree was in the technical field and the second one in law, she had to take the full program, 4.5 years. Olha was persistently perusing her textbooks while raising her daughter, who was born just before the exams. And to her friends' jokes about her never-ending learning and restlessness, she replied, "Don't stop me from going towards my dream!"

But she never got the job of her dream: while Olha was completing her studies, the environmental prosecutor's office was reorganized and ceased to exist as such.

The 2014 events deeply unsettled Olha. Kharkiv was dominated by pro-Russian sentiment, and she was sincerely pro-Ukraine. So she went looking for ways to help, assist, do good things for her country. "I come from a mixed family – my father was born in Ternopil oblast, and my mother came from Belgorod. I always went on vacation to my granny in western Ukraine. This shaped my personality, my patriotism," says Olha.

So in the context of these events, when the new police emerged in 2015, Olha filed her forms. Her husband urged her to do this, confident that his wife would have both strength and character to do this job well. He also lent her absolute support. And she needed it very soon: after two months of line service at the patrol police, Olha was appointed to a senior position.

“I didn’t want to be a leader, but these proposals just found their way to me,” she says. At first she was invited to go to the monitoring department of the Kyiv Patrol Police, followed by a whirlwind as she had to set up patrol police units in Odesa, then in Kharkiv... Since her daughter was young, her husband was following her to look after their daughter during long business trips. Her husband helped as much as he could, looking after their child almost entirely by himself. In the end, everything worked out. Olha became the first woman to lead the Patrol Police in the city of Kharkiv, supervising a 1,200-person team.

“Of course, it was scary. Especially when you know that they count on you, expect you to act properly. But I had no experience in the law enforcement system as such. I always have the feeling I don’t know something, have to learn something, don’t meet some criteria... But I go for it – that’s my nature. Because those who don’t go don’t learn,” says Olha.

Olha served at Kharkiv Patrol Police for eighteen months. It was a challenging period. “We got everything: pressure from the media, the public, our surroundings. Those who do not support idea itself find things to complain about and criticize. Even if you do a lot of good deeds, something you do imperfectly can draw a lot of criticism,” says Olha.

She was hurt by the resignation of Khatia Dekanoidze, a woman who was her role model in the police and led the way. Struck by despair, Olha moved from Kharkiv to the capital, where she was invited to work at the position of Assistant Chief of the Headquarters of the National Police

in Kyiv. It was her boss, Andriy Kryshchenko, who became the person who believed in Olha’s potential and supported her. Her new position saved her from possible depression, and the woman kept going.

“When the world seems to be collapsing, you either stay as you are or keep going. I went forward since I had all the support I needed,” she says.

In her position, Olha is still involved in project management by implementing new projects that contribute to a better operation of the police, improve their reputation in society. Olha is working to introduce new forms and methods in the modern police by generating ideas and developing “road maps” for them.

“One of such projects was implemented in the Holosiivskyi district police in the city of Kyiv. We have overhauled approaches to providing services, greatly changed working conditions, conducted high-quality recruitment, opened a reception and the e-cabinet of the district police officer. Our projects are designed to provide high-quality services to people who need them. I once heard an American peer say: “The crucial thing is that when a person goes to the police, he or she should not feel re-victimized.” That is, the person must not be denied help. They have already survived a bad experience and they count on the help of the police. The person should not feel that everyone around is indifferent towards their problem. We make our projects to achieve this,” says Olha.

In this position, she feels professionally fulfilled but, of course, does not see it as a peak of her occupation. She likes what she is doing today and attempts to do it well.

Head of the Community Policing Unit, Vinnytsia Oblast
Patrol Police, Police Senior Lieutenant



Olena Votiakova



Olena was among military people since her childhood. Two generations of her family served their country. So, on finishing school, the girl really wanted to enter the military academy and continue the dynasty. However, her father said it was no business for women. She had to give up her desire and opt for an occupation that was more “suitable” for a woman. Since Olena graduated from the Physics and Mathematics Specialized School and was good at drawing, she had no difficulty enrolling in an architecture university. The girl got a degree in design and engineering from Odesa State Academy of Civil Engineering and Architecture.

However, she didn’t work in her field, but still borrowed much of related skills for her future service at the police. “When working on projects, I feel like building a house. To create a whole thing, you first set up the foundation, lay a brick after a brick, putting up the walls. It works for both projects and situations in real life. That’s how I see every case I start,” Olena explains.

Six years did not make her desire to fulfill herself in the service to society vanish, but instead it strengthened further. Seeing this, Olena's father changed his mind and became the key supporter for her to submit the application and face the enormous competition of about 3.5 thousand candidates who wanted to join patrol police. After a course at the police training center, Olena learned that she was recommended to serve in the monitoring sector. On her first night of duty after the oath, she and her police partners went to patrol the streets and respond to calls. And she still had doubts about her future post. Olena was wondering whether to join this unit.



“At first, I didn’t want to join the monitoring unit: it seemed like “bad guys” served there only to control and punish their peers. But on realizing that the work was about different stuff, I accepted the offer. In fact, the main objective of monitoring is to help and support patrol officers on the line, to increase their efficiency and prevent abuse,” says Olena.

Her work in the monitoring sector was fun in its own way, she had to work with patrol officers on the line and go on missions. Olena remembers the day she set her own “record.” During the holiday season, patrol officers from Vinnytsia were dispatched to Odesa, and only a few patrol units stayed in Vinnytsia. So, when patrolling the city, Olena and her partner responded to 22 calls in one shift.

Sometimes she had incidents at work: while responding to a complaint, they got a note of gratitude instead. “It’s all about proper communication, when you try to find out all the details of the situation, to understand what really happened. You will come in response to a complaint, but the person claims the police have acted incorrectly. You talk, ask, explain the law, and hear in response: “Well, it appears they did everything properly.” Then you ask: “So, the patrol officers did a good job? Maybe, you want to file a note of gratitude, not a complaint?” “Well, I could go with a “thank you;” says Olena.



Once Olena had the idea of giving lectures on traffic regulations at the school she had gone to. Her supervisor did not object, but noted that it should not intervene with her regular duties. But that didn't stop the girl, and she started doing it on weekends as a volunteer. "At that time, I did not know that other regions were pursuing a similar initiative as a separate project called the School Resource Officer. I was doing it on bare enthusiasm. My colleagues joined me, and we set schools for each of us to cover. But this work was exhausting: a shift at work, then classes with kids at school, a few hours of sleep, and the night shift comes. The next day, I am to attend two lectures at my university followed by a blood drive event. That was exhausting," says Olena.

However, soon the School Resource Officer project was launched officially, and Olena's boss chose her to do the job. Over time, new functions were added, other social projects appeared. Gradually, we have embraced community policing initiatives. In 2017, initiated by activists, the Neighborhood Watch project was launched together with the police.

"In this project, people helped their neighbors and liaised with the police at the same time. We addressed problems that citizens were concerned about. For example, we received repeated calls from a house that young people were drinking alcohol under its windows and making noise. Together with the local authorities, we set up a large street lamp in this spot, and the police did some awareness-raising work with the students of a nearby dormitory. We got no more calls from that house. In general, neighbors got to know each other and kept an eye on the dwelling of one another when someone was away. "They selected

‘watchmen’ to check if everything was fine in the backyard, there were no strangers, cars were OK. All these things were done jointly with the patrol police officers,” says Olena.

In 2017, a disaster struck Vinnytsia oblast, getting Ukraine-wide coverage: explosions at a military training ground in Kalynivka. Exploding shells literally shook the ground underfoot for several days.

“Knowing how active I am, my mother called me and asked, ‘I hope you’re not in Kalynivka?!’ I reassured her saying I was ‘at the base’ so that she would not worry. Meanwhile, I was already there, evacuating people together with other volunteers,” says Olena.

On learning about the explosions, Olena directly asked her senior’s permission to go to the evacuation site. She was calm and collected in the field, acted resolutely and quickly. Meanwhile, my mother asked to help a person she knew to take a bedridden patient out of the village. So Olena and other volunteers found the man and arranged for him to be evacuated.

“When working in Kalynivka, I was given a helmet. At first I did not understand why. But when a blast wave sent fragments flying all around, they literally pelted our heads. We persuaded people to leave their homes. The fact that I was a woman must have played a role, because it was easier for them to trust me. I finally managed to get people to run away. They took some stuff, cats, dogs, and got into evacuation vehicles,” says Olena.

Of course, Olena was scared in Kalynivka. There are no absolutely fearless people, but there are those that take their purpose above fear, and there is nothing else left but to overcome that fear. “There was also an understanding that I am not just an outsider. I am a police officer, and it is my duty to help,” says Olena.

Her volunteer mission in Kalynivka was followed by many important and interesting things such as a study trip to America, where the girl was among 5 participating women from Ukraine, a victory in the “Woman of Vinnytsia oblast” competition in the category “Security. Life,” and volunteering in families that were in dire straits.

“When asked why I went to the police, I answer: you may not believe it, but to help people. I believe that, in a wrong situation, the right person can help others find the right path or way out. And even a “little” person can change the big world with her daily contribution. It all starts with each of us. I am grateful to the police for the opportunity for self-fulfillment. And for my extraordinary friends, who are the best,” says Olena.

Deputy Director, Kryvyi Rih Patrol Police Academy,
Police Senior Lieutenant



Yulia Malakhova



As a child, Yulia was fond of football and basketball, and seems to have tried her hand at nearly every sport that required active involvement. However, she settled on Kyokushin Karate. Aged only 18, she had a black belt and coached others, both small children and older adults. The girl's parents were entrepreneurs fully involved in their business, so she spent most of her time with her grandparents. Her grandfather, the commander of a reconnaissance unit during the war, showed Yulia by his own model how important it is to be disciplined, look after one's health, and be sparing about one's resources.

“So morning exercises at 6 am, jogging, jumping over a chair were a must. My grandfather taught me to spend energy wisely. Even when it came to cleaning, he explained that it would be hard to carry a large bucket of water around, and I should find other ways to organize myself without wasting extra effort,” says Yulia.

Unsurprisingly, this laid the foundation of the girl's character and came in handy in her future occupation. She needed the strength, endurance, and analytical skills later, when she joined the Patrol Police. Before that, the girl graduated from the European University and, just like her parents, became a sole proprietor. A war broke out in the country a few years later, causing great changes.

“These events started changing my mindset. I saw many of my fellow sole proprietors going to the east of Ukraine, some to join volunteer battalions, others as volunteers. But they left their families here. People felt unsafe and insecure. When the police reform began in 2015, it became clear that this could be the protection

people and the country needed. I applied and passed the selection with 8 candidates per vacancy,” Yulia recalls.

Moreover, she was selected commander of the group at the training center, where she was the only cadet girl at that time. Her experience as a karate coach, athletic background, and powerful character contributed to her being respected as a commander. She performed this role scrupulously and, unlike other groups where cadets occasionally dropped out, her group managed to graduate in full.

For the first two years, Yulia led a company of police officers in Kryvyi Rih Patrol Police, first as a deputy company commander, and then as a commander. After the Kryvyi Rih Patrol Police were reorganized into a regiment, Yulia was appointed deputy commander of the company. In fact, it was a promotion because she had to manage twice the size of the team, which now numbered 100 officers.

The woman had no fears or concerns about her work. The only thing she was worried about was that everything should be fine with the personnel. “A person who holds a senior position at the police is primarily concerned about their subordinates. To keep them safe and secure, free of injuries or incidents as they discharge their duty. While in service, you often have to use weapons, face uncommon situations, so it's a big responsibility. When in a uniform, I am a role model that does not drink coffee somewhere at a gas station because I am “tired,” but serves diligently throughout the 12-hour shift so that your own family and other people's families are safe,” says Yulia.



During their first two months of service under Yulia's leadership, Kryvyi Rih patrol officers detained a man suspected of brutal murder. However, Yulia remembers this situation with a smile because an incident was involved. "The duty officer forgot to take down an intercept plan (time-limited) that was no longer relevant at that time. But we were not advised, so we staged a frantic pursuit around and beyond the city, trying to catch up with the suspect. We created conditions that forced him to stop, and arrested him. My peers and I did the detaining. It was pure adrenaline: we spent 16 hours on the road, but were not exhausted. We were inspired by the awareness that the person had committed a crime and would face punishment with our help, the police, who did their job well," says Yulia.

Over time, police service has made Yulia a tougher leader, at least in decision-making. Because there are so-called "unpopular" decisions to be made: they may be disliked by the majority, but are necessary or justified. Due to higher theft rates in the summer, patrol officers do not need to take a police car, because during a walk, patrol officers have a chance to see more and observe better. The car is more comfortable, but is it about comfort? Take another situation – getting a weapon. The company led by Yulia entered the facility with a military step, in formation," one by one. On the one hand, there may have been no need for such a "formalized" event, which is commonplace with the police. "My peers even took offense at me. But I did this to avoid them playing tricks or having fun. Getting a weapon is a serious matter, and, unfortunately, it can fire occasionally when it is received or handed over due to careless handling. Even when I was reassigned, the guys thanked me, although

they didn't understand at first why I was organizing these drills for them," says Yulia.

That experience made her realize a simple truth: there are no right or wrong decisions. There are those you make, and others will not always like them.

After serving in the patrol police for three years, Yulia applied for a vacancy at Kryvyi Rih Patrol Police Academy, which was just being launched. First, to work there as a cycle leader, combining this service and teaching. She delivered lectures on different subjects and tried to support everything with real life stories, situations. During the graduation ceremony of the first graduates of the Academy, she was awarded the title of "The Best Teacher."

"Whoever thinks that a teacher's job is just lecturing is wrong. Every time you face a different audience, different learners. And every time you have to convey information, process it together. You just keep developing all the time," says Yulia.

It was very difficult for her at first to adapt to the new environment: line service and administrative work are very different. It was difficult to move to standard work hours which were new to her. Because when you are used to working for 2 days followed by 2 nights, your body is at a loss as to how to sleep now. "I felt for the non-existent handgun on my thigh for a long time, because as a police officer you do it subconsciously. And I couldn't take off my tactical purse for a long time because I got used to needing it," Yulia recalls.

However, she got quickly accustomed and today feels she's in the right place. She knows everything about the Academy, the educational process, the learners' challenges. Now the Academy is under reorganization, soon to become a licensed educational institution in accordance with amendments to laws. She was starting her work here when many vacancies were unfilled. Today it is an educational institution that can instruct more than 450 students at a time. The Academy has a modern dormitory with everything required for a comfortable stay (but strict discipline is still enforced!). International partners helped arrange an interactive crossing at the facility, where future police officers have practical classes staging a traffic accident involving real cars so that they do not get lost in a real service situation, and act in a clear and coordinated manner.

Yulia spends her free time with the man she loves, also a policeman. They share a hobby – motorcycles. For Yulia, her motorcycle and the road is a time all to herself, to dream, to think. She also likes to repair the vehicle herself: the dirtier her hands, the better. "They knew about me back in the patrol police: if a thing got broken or needs to be fastened, call Malakhova if she is on shift. At first they were surprised to see a girl with a screwdriver, but then developed trust," says Yulia.

Today, Yulia's parents are extremely proud of their daughter. Fully sharing this idea, her mother supported her from the start. Her father voiced his support after some time, on seeing Yulia's achievements and changes in her life. When they got a thank you letter from Yevhen Zhukov, the head of the Patrol Police Department, their pride for their daughter knew no bounds.

Senior Diver at Special Operations Emergency Rescue
Detachment, State Emergency Service in the city of Kyiv,
Civil Defense Service Sergeant



Oksana Chekhmestrenko



Everyone must have heard about the first female astronaut. And Oksana Chekhmestrenko is the first female diver. She officially became the first woman in this occupation in Ukraine and even got an award from the Head of the State Emergency Service.

She herself wonders how it all happened. After all, Oksana's life, both professional and personal, was eventful and full of challenges, but she did not plan to have anything to do with water, let alone going under water. "Except for scuba diving, which my husband and I were just setting aside some money to try it someday, maybe," says Oksana. One's fate can really take unexpected twists and turns. And she believes it must have been fate that took her steps to this job.

Born in western Ukraine, with her childhood spent in the eastern part of the country until the graduation from the high school, she has been living for many years now in Kyiv. "I am from Krychka, a very small village in Ivano-Frankivsk oblast. There were no jobs there, so men and women went to work to Hungary. But my mother decided to work as a milkmaid. That's why we moved to Stanytsia Luhanska [eastern Ukraine-transl.]. My mother and stepfather had a large farm with dozens of cows, pigs, poultry. I managed all of this, too. I remember it was so hard and unbearable that one day I just felt dead tired. We were stacking hay and, on coming home to unload it, I just fainted. I slept for a long time after that, getting back my strength. They thought I would be really bad, but I recovered."

This situation made Oksana clearly see that she did not want to live in the countryside. The girl decided

to go to the city and lead a different lifestyle. Then she studied at Luhansk College of Economics and Commerce and went to Kyiv for a day after graduation. One day was enough to understand it was her city. So, she soon moved to the capital for good.

She got married and had a daughter, Masha, who is already thirteen. After four years of marriage, she and her husband divorced. He did not go to work and played computer games. And after a case of domestic violence, Oksana finally decided to divorce. This is when her employment "adventure" began.

"There isn't a job I didn't do to survive in Kyiv. I worked as an accountant, office manager, barista at a coffee shop, – says Oksana. – During one period I worked at a company on weekdays and as a saleswoman at the market on weekends. Realizing that I was making more in a day on the market than in a week at the company, I quit it. It is in the market that I met my second husband. We later had two sons."

On maternity leave, Oksana was bored and looked for things to do. She made soap, did the embroidering, tried different hobbies. Then she decided to jog and started training. In 2017 she took part in races. The events were charitable and charged an entry fee, but it did not stop her. On the contrary, she liked it. At one of these events, Oksana had a fateful encounter. It was a team competition, and a men's team lacked a female member. They offered this role to Oksana. "I was invited by Volodymyr Skovorodka, a rescuer and diver at SES [State Emergency Service - transl.]. The team had 4 firefighters, a diver, and me, an ordinary girl,"



Oksana laughs. Volodymyr promised to keep the girl on the team if they won the competition. And so it happened. Oksana became one of the gang. When they together took the third place for Kyiv at the next prestigious competition, Volodymyr said: “Wow, you are strong! You can be hired.” Sure, it was a joke, because you can’t become a diver just like that. Especially for a woman: at that time there was a law in effect in Ukraine that barred women from certain occupations. But Oksana related to something in that joke, especially when Volodymyr advised her to take a diver’s training by saying: “This law must be repealed someday.”

And Oksana studied for a month at Kyiv Maritime School as a diver. Once she ended up on Volodymyr’s ship and heard a number of job stories. “Well, I am extremely stress-resistant and, when listening to them, I got even more convinced: I’m drawn to this.”


And a miracle finally happened: Volodymyr called me saying that the ban on women had finally been lifted, “so fill out the job application form.”

This is how the woman became a diver. At first, her workdays were full of training, briefing, adaptation followed by real work. The team that Oksana joined works on the Dnipro and Kyiv lakes. Their main responsibility is to practice diving skills, clean the bottom of the water area, lift vehicles out of the water, rescue and search for the drowned. Unfortunately, you cannot always rescue people,

sometimes you just lack time. A human drowns in a matter of minutes, and though rescuers take the call as quickly as possible, they often face obstacles along the way, such as traffic jams or other people unwilling to let the rescue car pass. All this steals precious time. “In this line of duty, I am shocked not so much by the fact that we get drowned people out of the water, but by negligence that gets them killed. We witness it every time we go on a mission. It would seem there is so much information about the dangers of swimming while intoxicated, so many warnings, calls. But people keep drinking, going into the water, and drowning,” says Oksana.

The woman is also struck by the lack of action of those witnessing people in need. Some are unaware that a person is really drowning. Others are just filming this on the phone. Instead, they have to call rescuers urgently. “Once we were getting a drowned man out. And a man happened to start drowning 300 meters away from us. And the girls on the banks just watched and shot videos. And there is nothing we can do – he is too far. Even the lifeguards took some time to notice him. The man was rescued by medics on our team, who resuscitated him before the ambulance arrived.

But despite all these circumstances, Oksana loves her job. She says she is trying to be on a par with men, not to lag behind them in anything. If necessary, she even chops firewood for heating. She got a license to operate a 24-meter vessel and operates it, although she is afraid to drive a car in the city.



“If I want this, why should I stop?! It doesn't matter that I am a woman and that this occupation is considered non-female by our society. What if I do this job better than any man? It doesn't matter if it's about diving or any other trade. Great that the law no longer limits women in their choice,” says Oksana.

At first, Oksana's husband was incredibly proud of his wife. Then he wanted her to leave the job because he realized how difficult and dangerous it was. Now he is used to it and only says every time his wife goes on duty: “Take care of yourself.”

Added by the author:

in January 2018, the Ministry of Health revoked the document that professionally discriminated against women – Order No. 256 of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine dated December 29, 1993).

The list of jobs from which women were barred was in force in the country for almost 25 years.

Head of the Gender and Domestic Violence Unit,
Human Rights Division of the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine,
Police Captain



Olena Dashutina



In the warm season, Olena's peers see her riding a motorcycle. That's how she gets to work because it's convenient or, maybe, because her father once said it wasn't what a woman would do. It was two years ago only that Olena finished her driving course, got a license and overcame her fears to get on a motorcycle. She says that she was spurred by the circumstances: the bridge she had to pass on her way to work was closed for repairs, and the trip was taking almost three hours. She looked through the bus window at those driving their own cars and thought how convenient it was.

She has liked the motorcycle since childhood. "When I was a little girl, we had a motorcycle with a sidecar. My father would put me in front of him, near the gas tank, and we'd go on a ride. When I grew older, I asked him to teach me to ride. But he did not think a woman was meant to. He wanted me to learn to cook borscht and do a variety of household chores. But I loved to read and draw and had no intention to learn to cook or clean. My father asked, "How are you going to live and find a man who will choose you?" Olena remembers.

And the man who "chose" her shared her views. They started a family early, when Olena was 18 only. They had a son. She had no time to get a higher degree, but her family members weren't concerned, convinced that the woman's "mission" was fulfilled". After her first maternity leave, Olena still got a higher degree, in economics. She worked in commerce, as a manager, etc. Later, they had a daughter, and at the husband's request, the couple agreed that the husband would now work, and the wife would raise the kids.

However, it did not last long: when her daughter grew up, Olena decided to go to work. Her decision to apply to the police was deliberate and independent. Olena's husband wasn't very happy about this idea, but when her application was admitted to the next stage, he accepted her decision. Police service and the woman's world outlook are still occasionally subject to debate and controversy in their family. However, the couple has learned to find common ground, to reach compromises over the years.

"The police were specifically inviting women. Being in a pretty good shape, I submitted my application. It seems I had no doubt or fear – I just kept going forward," says Olena.

After passing all the stages of selection and completing training, Olena joined line service. The square assigned to her patrol unit included the historic center of Kyiv – Podil, Kontraktova Square. Tourists, overcrowded restaurants and, as a result, many incidents involving public order crimes or hooliganism. Olena took her service quite realistically, without undue expectations and with a sober risk assessment. "Was I afraid of anything? No. Above all, it was interesting. When you get a mission on your tablet, you never know who you will have to deal with when you respond to a call. You should always be prepared inside that a talk to a seemingly calm driver can develop signs of danger, evolve into danger. When getting near an apartment on a call related to domestic violence, you don't know what is there behind the door, either. But I wasn't afraid.



I wanted to understand how other people live. Each of us is in a kind of information vacuum, a comfortable bubble, where we only know our own environment. Situations that I discovered during my patrol service showed that, it turns out, they can happen, people live like this, too. I did not condemn anyone, I just stated the facts,” says Olena.

This service produced an observation she shared with her older son: whatever you do in life, good things or bad, you will always find like-minded people. “We often scare kids that they will be alone if they behave badly. I told my son instead that even if someone decides to live in a box, someone else will settle down next to them. So, you will never be alone, you will have like-minded people in any situation. It’s just vital to understand your values and choose your way of life based on them,” Olena explains.

Olena’s son is now studying to become a programmer in Warsaw. They have a friendly and warm relationship; her son is proud of his motorcyclist mother. And her ten-year-old daughter is proud of her police officer mother. “She even seeks my advice as a police officer about some situations at school,” says Olena.

While serving on the line, Olena often visited schools to tell children about patrol officers. So she soon moved on to the School Resource Officer pilot project. In fact, it was a Public Relations job. As time passed, the woman shifted her focus to domestic violence. “I got gradually involved with the Polina pilot project, helping to select future members of response teams. I ended up here due to my previous experience with schoolchildren. After

all, working with kids, we often learned about cases of domestic violence,” says Olena.

In 2019, the woman was offered a post at the Human Rights Observance Directorate of the National Police. Gender equality issues naturally continued her work on domestic violence, as it is a gender-based phenomenon. Victims of domestic violence keep contacting Olena even now with complaints from the public and NGOs that the police have not responded adequately to certain situations or acted improperly. The department led by Olena conducts official inquiries into police actions for human rights violations.

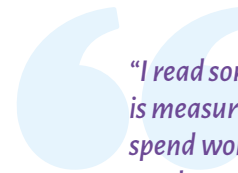
“Human rights violations do occur, and we need to check the facts we have. Unfortunately, our peers sometimes ignore the law to complete their job tasks. A police officer can be biased by their own judgments about raising children. For example, if he finds corporal punishment acceptable (which happens), he or she may arrive on a call but fail to take the situation seriously, interpreting it at their own discretion,” says Olena.

Of course, the special nature of her work creates a certain tension in communication with peers from other units. Who likes being checked to show signs of wrongdoing at work? However, the law lays down some things about human rights, and there must be monitoring. To a greater extent, her unit’s operations are still preventive, aiming to explain and warn so that there are fewer violations.

Olena easily adapts to all changes in her life, because she has a special view of them. “I just go with my life. Things that some may find tough or difficult just make

up a path for me,” she says. This is why, the questions of life challenges, the ups and downs in her case are irrelevant: for her life is a path with all its steps.

“Besides, I realized that you can choose a new job at any age,” says Olena. Looking at her, some friends get inspired and change their field of activity by taking the risk, stepping out of the comfort zone, but still deciding to do a new thing.



“I read somewhere that our professionalism is measured by the number of hours you spend working. To achieve mastery, you need 10,000 hours of practice. My own experience makes me agree with this. This was the case with the motorcycle and with my police service. I remember that it can be both scary and uncomfortable at first. But you just have to do your job, and you become professional as time goes by,” she adds.

Chief Inspector of the Press Service Unit, Luhansk Oblast
Patrol Police, Police Senior Lieutenant



Kateryna Lystopad



Nothing foretold Kateryna would serve at the police. She lived in Perevalsk, a town in Luhansk oblast. She got a degree from an Alchevsk university in finance, but was unexpectedly hired by a local municipal newspaper. She started off as a proofreader, only to write articles, take photos, and do the typesetting later.

“It always seemed to me that I had the mathematical turn, but it turned out I am pretty good with words and texts,” says Kateryna.

This might have gone on like this...

In 2014, it was too risky to stay in the town due to the situation in the country and hostilities. The newspaper’s editorial office ceased operations. Kateryna and her husband went to Kyiv as they had a place to stay in the capital and wait a while.

“It was in Kyiv that I saw the first patrol police officers. They were so beautiful, inspired. They exuded change, evoked a special mood. I also wanted to get involved in change. It seems that if I had the chance to join the army, I’d go there, too. But I decided to get recruited by the police and submitted my application,” says Kateryna.

However, I wanted to serve (if hired!) closer to my home. This is why I first chose Donetsk oblast because Luhansk oblast had no vacancies. But later they came up in three cities, Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, and

Rubizhne at once. These are the three satellite cities situated closest to her home town of Perevalsk. She never hesitated to submit her forms there.

In doing so, she did not even tell her husband about her plans. He only found out when Kateryna was selected and had to leave to take training. Aware that this event would change their whole life, he made a row. Their family was still at a crossroads back then, living occasionally in Kyiv and at home in Perevalsk. They did not dare to give up their home for good with all their property, possessions, and the house itself. The decision to move forever was a tough one, but Kateryna’s future work urged her to take this step.

“At first, my husband could not put up with having to leave his own house and move. But we weighed things up, packed our stuff, and moved in one day, taking as much as our car could fit in. We also brought our dog, who now lives with us,” says Kateryna.

She went to study to Kharkiv, where the University of Internal Affairs delivered a 4-month course to future patrol officers. This experience was new for both cadets and instructors because this was the first year. Kateryna says she really enjoyed the training because it was interactive. “I knew it was easy for me to learn new things. Even difficult or somewhat boring subjects were fun to attend. Ongoing discussion, case studies and examples, practical assignments. There was a lot of tactical training such as recognizing danger,



approaching a car, managing aggressive people, etc. I understood and memorized everything with ease,” Kateryna recalls.

Physical training was more difficult. Before the course, she once tried to push up at home, but was only strong enough to do it once. “My husband laughed: the police won’t hire such “pushers-up.” So he started prepping me. I am very grateful to him for coaching me without concessions, instructing me on the right technique. After that, things looked up,” she said.

However, physical training was still a challenge as her first muscle fever lasted about two weeks, it was even difficult to move.

In May 2016, Kateryna went on duty for the first time and served for about six months. “This is a lively and dynamic job. You are always at the center of operations, having to respond to challenges, help people. And you often see your result almost right away, which I really liked.”

On becoming a police officer, she felt she had to meet this status, to represent the law. And the greatest initial difficulty was to punish the offenders. “At first it was difficult for me to levy fines. You seem to understand that they have not done anything really bad, just a minor offense. You turn some excuses over in your head, put yourself in their shoes, try to understand why they did it. I couldn’t get over it in my first few episodes. We only went

as far as giving verbal warnings and released people without a penalty. However, it quickly became clear that the Law exists to be followed by everyone without exception. And you cannot break the rules that have been created for everyone, because everyone else will start doing the same, just like others. Conversely, by seeing that the law works, people will try to abide by it. This insight helped me to get rid of doubts and feel like a representative of the Law,” says Kateryna.

After some time, the woman was invited to join the Press Service of the Regional Patrol Police Headquarters, which was based in Lysychansk. She did not know whether to take this step – this looked like an extremely responsible position. This turned out to be within Kateryna’s power, too: she has been a press officer for several years.

“This work has certain dynamics. I can see how patrol officers serve almost through their eyes as I watch the recordings of their body cameras. I create materials about their service – texts, videos, photo reports. I communicate with the press, run the local police social media,” she says.

In addition, through her work, Kateryna tells others how hard the patrol officers work. Often much harder than required by their responsibilities. “In Lysychansk, there was a situation once where patrol officers rescued

a girl by pulling her out of the river. It was winter, severe frosts. The patrol car was stopped by a confused boy. He had just got a call from a girl who said she was standing on a bridge and was going to jump. Despite patrolling another area, the officers let the boy into their car and immediately went to the bridge, which is outside the city. The patrol officers wanted to talk the girl out of her plan, but she jumped as soon as she saw them. They had to follow her into the water. She was literally pulled out by the hood, the only thing they could see in the water. Everyone involved in this incident got hospitalized, including the rescuing officer, who went down with pneumonia,” says Kateryna.

Such stories are numerous, clearly showing that being humane is the quality that real police officers should possess. The crew could have pretended not to notice the boy, could have refused to stop or, better still, to leave their patrol area. Technically, this would not be a violation.

“Such stories are inspiring. And they build people’s trust in the new police,” says Kateryna.

Kateryna feels confident in her position and has the support of her peers from other regions. According to her, press officers are a big friendly team whose members help each other. “I only wish the press service at the police was more than just one or two people, who work almost separately. I want my career to evolve in this line of duty, to fulfill my ambitions within my own unit. I hope it will happen someday,” she said.

Platoon 3 Police Officer at Melitopol rural policing section,
Zaporizhzhia oblast National Police, Police Corporal



Natalia Bilykh



Natalia's story is a story of her dream. A dream that was subconscious during her life, but surfaced in adulthood.

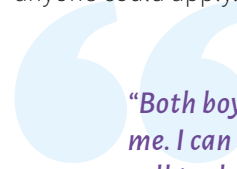
By trade, Natalia is an accountant. She worked at a variety of companies, had a quiet life with her husband and teenage daughter. "Something indeed must be happening to us as we approach 40. It may be soul searching or the midlife crisis that you hear a lot about," she says. But at this turning point, her life really changed drastically. She became a police officer. After putting on her uniform and getting a combat weapon, she felt at the right place, she was needed, and she still feels this way every day.

But all of this took more than one day. The decision to become a police officer came after a series of special events and hard work by Natalia, which became her daily routine. According to her, it may have started with a passion for jogging, which she developed at the age of 37. "I had never jogged before, I had never done sports seriously. But I got interested and started training. And when I got my first results like the second place among 80 participants in the 21.95 km race, it greatly boosted my spirit and confidence," says Natalia.

The Ekiden-2018 half marathon, which was held in Melitopol, is still one of the sweetest memories of her own achievements. In fact, this was the first in a series of future victories that led to serious changes in the woman's life.

As a member of a non-governmental organization, Natalia attended an event that included a speech by a

representative of the National Police. He talked about ongoing recruitment by the new police and said that anyone could apply.



"Both boys and girls," he said, and it hit me. I can enroll too, right? It was like a call to challenge myself - can I do it? Yes, I can!" says Natalia.

The woman did not hesitate long to put together her documents and submit her application. That was the easiest part. It was followed by 7 tough selection stages, including tests on law, Ukrainian, and other subjects, physical examination, a fitness test, and an interview. Step by step Natalia went through all the stages, and her fairly good shape and confidence built during the half marathon helped her to pass the physical fitness test.

But the most difficult thing was to leave her family for six months and go to Kyiv to study at the Patrol Police Academy. Unlike her husband and daughter, who let Natalia go, her mother has not accepted her daughter's choice (to this day). It was very challenging. The place where girls and boys of different ages lived and studied had limited access, with strict rules of discipline. This was difficult in itself, so family support was essential. "My husband has always supported me in everything. And he did so in this situation too, even though it wasn't easy for him. Natalia's family members tried to get her back home on a few occasions during the first months of schooling. "We can't make it alone," said my husband in despair. And my mother accused me



of leaving my own child behind. It hurts to hear that, especially since it was partially true. Especially when your training takes great physical and mental exertion. Once during a talk, my loved ones boasted they could cook borscht, and I realized they could make it all right, everything would be fine,” says Natalia.

However, she was uncertain about her next steps. The nearest she could get a job was in Zaporizhzhia, which is far from home. And when Natalia was told there was a vacancy in her home city of Melitopol, she seized this opportunity with all her might. But it meant a new thorny road to success since the vacancy was at the National Police, rather than patrol police.

“It was easier this time, because Kryvyi Rih, the city I had to do my training, was closer than Kyiv,” Natalia smiles.

During her study, she was the group commander. It was also emotionally exhausting, because being responsible for the team required ongoing discipline, clear and resolute action. However, she does not recall any moment when she was ready to quit or give up in despair. Some did not like Natalia’s serious attitude, so there were even conflicts. But by gaining this experience, she came out of the Academy strong and confident.

After six very tough, painful but so meaningful months of learning, Natalia returned to Melitopol, just to face a new challenge: 7 more people applied for this single desired vacancy. “I am especially proud that I was able to win the selection, coming ahead of seven men,” says Natalia.

So, by getting the job, the woman finally realized her dream and became a police officer. She is now a police corporal, wears a uniform and a handgun. “And they say I look great with them,” says Natalia happily.

Of course her parents, especially her mother, worry a lot about their daughter because of her dangerous work. At first it was even difficult to communicate with the parents. Her mother keeps asking her to be ‘a normal woman,’ like she used to be before. Because the police service brings high risks. Nonetheless, Natalia tries to understand her mother’s concerns.



***“That’s her mindset, her values. She simply believes in the woman’s traditional role – taking care of her family, baking cakes, and so on. And I believe there are no occupations that are only for men or only for women, which means gender equality.*”**

Natalia has recently successfully passed entry exams to the law enforcement department of Donetsk Law Institute of the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine. It is important to find what you enjoy doing and she recalls a moment that preceded her police career. Once her husband gave her a sewing machine as a present so that she could find her place in this creative business. “After making bedclothes for my daughter, I realized that this was probably for the first and only time. Sewing is not my cup of tea. I like the PM [Makarov handgun] and uniform much more.”

Head of Criminal Policing Sector, Khmelnytskyi Oblast
National Police, Police Major



Olena Kozytska

Olena has been serving in a men-dominated environment for more than 15 years. Her job is to solve crimes, including graves ones. Traditionally, there have always been few women here, because this work is physically and emotionally stressful. Irregular work hours and the number of assignments are physically exhausting. The events that have to be witnessed, cruelty, murder, are emotionally exhausting. However, Olena's choice of this occupation was deliberate. Her mother, a forensic expert, serves in a related field. It was her mother's example that clearly showed that a woman can do any job, both challenging and uncharacteristic, and one that is considered "men's" by society. So Olena got an education at Kyiv University of Internal Affairs and the Academy of Management at the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and started serving at the criminal investigation unit in Khmelnytskyi oblast.

"I started my service at the criminal investigation unit, where I was then the only girl, a certified staff member, among men. But I felt they only had a positive attitude to me," says Olena.

As time went by, assignments became increasingly more challenging and difficult, and the girl was gaining new experience. For a period, she served at a unit now called juvenile prevention and looked for children who had gone missing or run away from home. There were different situations: sometimes a child would just get lost in the park on a walk because of her parents' negligence; sometimes a teenager would deliberately run away from home and hitchhike the country with truckers. This line of service

requires one to act quickly to avoid the consequences and locate the child as soon as possible. You still worry about every child you are looking for. "Once a lightly dressed girl ran away from home barefoot in cold weather. We acted as quickly as possible, but the search took three days. We were afraid that bad things might happen to her, because she was not dressed for the weather at all. Children often act impulsively and run away from home after a row with their parents. Everything ended well for that girl, as she was found and returned home," says Olena.

What she also liked about service at this unit was the preventive component: lectures, meetings with children and teenagers, their teachers and parents. This is an opportunity to inform them about the risks, to prevent potential "fugitive" children from action and from crimes in the future.

Later, Olena returned to and is still doing operative service. Sometimes her job titles change, but not the nature: resolving crimes. So, three years ago, Olena became head of the first and only detective project in her region. Although officially Ukraine has no positions that involve detective work, it was named this way all the same. Essentially, this was to adopt foreign experience by creating a unit where ten people were autonomous in investigating and solving crimes. The project was innovative by combining two steps, investigation and clearance. Olena was responsible for solving crimes. "A lot depends on having a well-built team. The best people were selected for this project, and they hit it off. In three years, we have cleared a large number of crimes, including especially brutal and high-profile ones. The work was not easy, but fun and eventful," says Olena.



The work of a “detective” takes a balance of analytical skills and properly structured communication, which should contribute to a trusting relationship.

“When investigating a crime, we need to find out all links, identify and interview people, obtain information for clearance. Of course, this is quite a subtle job. Competent communication is crucial, so that you do not scare off a person, you can feel how to get information out of them, build trust, avoid a potential conflict, etc.”
Olena explains.

This is how they solved a high-profile traffic accident that killed two young people. It is detectives led by Olena who investigated and cleared the crime. Under the influence of narcotic drugs, a taxi driver ran down two people at a crosswalk and escaped. A series of actions revealed a link between the man and the person who had recently contacted the taxi driver. Olena and her peers worked tactfully and subtly to unearth vital facts about the taxi driver. The girl hesitated for a long time, without saying anything. However, arguments were ultimately found, convincing her to help the investigation. As a result, the whereabouts of the criminal were established. The crime was cleared.

“Most importantly, we had to choose such arguments that would urge her to agree to provide the information we needed. That was my job – to convince her,” says Olena.

The project is now over, but the effort to solve crimes persists. Olena says she is not tired of work because she likes it. “What is being tired? When you are physically tired, you sleep it off, have a break, and fatigue passes. While being tired of work means you don’t like it. I think you can only work as long as you like what you do,” says Olena. Her four cats help her cope with negative emotions. It is her source of heightened mood.

In addition to her full time job, Olena defended her candidacy thesis on crime titled Investigation of Mobile Phone Theft. In her research paper, she blended theory with her own practical experience.

Besides, she does the embroidering. Unlike beadwork, which is purely technical, cross-stitching is an opportunity to “reboot.” “There are times when you think about something, hesitate about a decision to make, and so on. Cross-stitch puts my thoughts in order. It helps me to conceive ideas, make decisions,” says Olena.

Iryna Zelena

Head of Unit 6, Organizational and Informational Support
to the MOI Leadership, Ministry of Interior of Ukraine,
Police Major





Iryna Zelena started her career in law enforcement 13 years ago in a district police department. Today she works on a wide range of areas in the administration of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Looking back, she confesses that each subsequent position up the career ladder was a big step in terms of challenges and functions while the tasks became more and more varied.

“I really love multitasking. I guess it is part of my personality. When the world slows down, my spirits go down as well. There are certain tasks which require extra effort or motivation. However, when I hesitate because of fear or nervousness, I take it as a signal to spring into action”, says Iryna.

Without doubt, the habit of standing up to challenges and scoring victories was a big contributing factor in Iryna’s illustrious career in law enforcement. Having started as an inspector in a domestic violence prevention unit of Svyatoshyn District police HQ in Kyiv, Iryna has made it onto the team tasked with development of nationwide gender policies and collaboration on projects aimed at preventing and combating domestic violence, ensuring gender equality and monitoring human rights compliance. She also has a degree in law after defending her Candidate’s dissertation in 2015. Now that the dust has settled she calls it one of the most difficult periods in her life.

“Working on my dissertation was a special period in my life which stretched me to my limits. I juggled writing it with my duties at the district police department, and it was truly exhausting. You spend a day at the office

and come home in the evening to work some more. This lasted for four long years. Yet, it was an interesting experience and, in all modesty, a big achievement. It wasn’t easy, but I made it – mission accomplished! My degree in law later helped building my career: when you are facing fierce competition, everything counts, and a candidate’s degree can be a decisive factor. Doing research also changes your mindset. Theory has to be backed up with practice,” shares Iryna.

She did not hesitate much while choosing her future career: as she puts it, “it was kind of a classic story”. This kind of commitment runs in the family. Her mother, a pediatrician who has been in charge of a medical institution for many years, is in love with her job and her father, who has made a career in the military, teaches at a military department. With such role models the choice came naturally. “As a child I spent most of the time with my mom while father was not able to see me very often because of his military duty. One day he came to the kindergarten to take me home. He was dressed in a military uniform with shiny golden buttons. A badge was glistening on his cap. I clearly remember how all the children stared at him in admiration, and how proud I felt that it was my father. I still cherish this childhood memory. No doubt that it was among other things that defined my desire to join the law enforcement”, says Iryna.

Iryna also has many memories of the police reform. The tremendous effort that she put into the development of new patrol police makes her feel as part of the ‘big family of the patrol police’. These activities take up a sizable part of her CV. Having worked as a district police



department officer for four years, Iryna was invited to join the Patrol Police Department. “I was invited to take part in the competitive selection for the position of police officer instructor. After passing it, I spend some time teaching “Administrative responsibility and administrative offense case proceedings” to the new patrol police officers. This is how I linked my fate with the patrol police. At the beginning of summer 2015 following the graduation of the first year of patrol police offers I returned to my duties at the district headquarters. But very soon in August that year I was invited to join the Patrol Police Department team, provided I succeed in the selection process. There was no hesitation. “I was highly inspired by the motivation of the police officers who had just graduated after our training”, says Iryna.

We went through a multi-tier selection process which included five or six interviews. Still, her talent and skills were duly appreciated, and she was appointed to join the professional development section of the Patrol Police Department. Later on she was promoted to head of the administrative practice section. The experience gained in this position, she recalls, shaped her management style and cemented her reputation. The new job was quite a challenge for Iryna since she was entrusted with managing a closely-knit team of professionals. In order to be successful she had to earn their trust and build her authority. According to Iryna, being a good listener really helped.

“Weighing various opinions leads to good decisions. I always approach my team’s ideas and their criticisms with an open mind. It was this kind of interaction that forged our team. They taught me to be a leader. By the way, no matter the position, I try to see the best in the people around me, and in the end they prove to be the best”, says Iryna.

She dedicated two years to serving with the Patrol Police Department. It was during that time that the Patrol Police Academy was being created. Iryna was offered to take charge of the process. Building a government institution from scratch proved to be an extremely exciting experience.

“Everything was happening very quickly. First the key team members were hired: accountants, administrators, lawyers, methodology experts etc. This was followed by the competition for the director’s position, and the successful candidate still runs the institution. The efforts of the Patrol Police Department team and the support of the National Police, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and our international partners resulted in shaping an ambitious idea into a highly capable Academy. Today this constantly evolving institution provides professional training to the officers of the patrol police force and other police units. It is extremely pleasing to see how something you started grows and evolves”, says Iryna.

When she received an invitation to join the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Iryna was ready to take on much more

intensive tasks and challenges. Today she manages a section tasked with organization and information support of MIA executives. The lengthy name reflects a broad range of project management tasks of her unit. The section implements a wide range of projects. For example, one of the recent projects involved the development and launch of #ActAgainstViolence virtual assistant app, a tool which provides a variety of information on combating domestic violence, which was implemented in collaboration with the National Police and Kharkiv National Institute of Internal Affairs. The team also implemented a series of events held throughout Ukraine which were part to the global initiative “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence”. The job is highly dynamic and requires a considerable intellectual and physical effort. Still, Iryna enjoys it a lot as she applies her profound experience to navigate these waters. “My job requires handling all sorts of things, and it is inspiring,” says Iryna.

Iryna Zelena was also instrumental in the creation of the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement. “The decision to establish the association proved to be quite successful. We have already managed to build a network of talented female and male law enforcement officers who have so much experience to share. Perhaps, it is difficult to understand how a law enforcement officer feels if you are not one. The professionals who work on the front lines are constantly stressed. They keep it under control, but it grows with time. Comparing the work in law enforcement and other jobs you come to realize that it is your colleagues that can fully understand what it is like. We, UAWLE members, understand each other like no others”, says Iryna.

Deputy Company Commander, Sumy Oblast Patrol Police,
Police Senior Lieutenant



Anna Lemeshko

Remembering her first day on duty brings a smile to Anna's face, who now serves as deputy company commander and has more than 50 police officers under her command. "We felt like little children, really. My partner and I grabbed a large backpack as we were about to go on patrol. You could think we were going to school! It was filled with legal codes, acts and regulations, in case we needed to look something up," she says.

Almost five years have passed since. Now Anna is an example of confidence and will, a true leader for her subordinates. When the company commander is travelling or on leave, it is Anna who takes up the mantle and watches over the men and women (just five women for now) of the company. When performing her main duties on patrol and reacting to calls, she also coordinates the other officers. When extraordinary calls are received – be they dangerous or unusual – she joins the patrol officers to help and monitor. The job involves a great deal of responsibility, and everything needs to be kept under control.

"I guess people might have treated me a little light-heartedly at first, because I am a woman," says Anna. 'But I wouldn't let that bring me down. We all have a job to do. I don't cling on to conflicts, I try to leave them behind and move on.

When newcomers make mistakes, they know they're in for a post-shift debrief. It's important to talk about things that happen and analyze situations right off the bat. If mistakes go uncorrected, and if people don't get taught the proper ways of doing their job, they're going to find it a lot harder down the road. When we get together off duty and enjoy

a bit of time, say, outdoors, I sometimes get to hear what people thought of me. They say things like "I used to be cross with Ms. Lemeshko for going hard on me, but now I see it was worth it." This isn't about being liked by people. We bear a great deal of responsibility, and that means we have to meet high standards," says Anna.

A certain shade of stiffness was always there in Anna's personality, but it was truly uncovered as she joined the force, though it took some time. After each shocking event on duty, she came closer to understanding that she needed to keep a certain psychological distance. She was also getting a better grasp of her social role as a police officer. All sorts of things have happened over the years. Anna has helped people evacuate during a fire, dealt with a drunkard running around his house with an axe and come across all the typical manifestations of domestic violence.

"One thing really sticks out in my memory: me and my colleagues went to an advanced training course in Kharkiv. We used to take the trolleybus back to our place. Something horrible happened on one of the days. As the trolleybus was leaving the stop, the driver failed to notice a woman had her leg stuck in the door, and he started driving off, dragging her along. People started screaming, the trolleybus stopped, and the woman has her leg chopped off. Me and the girls, my colleagues, rushed to help. My hands paced ahead of my mind at the time. We all took off our belts and started applying a makeshift tourniquet, as we had nothing else available. We made sure to talk to keep the lady conscious. She lost a lot of blood. That was the first time I saw a naked human bone. When the ambulance arrived and took her away, I finally regained composure. That's when I realized I'd been acting automatically. I honestly don't know how I would have acted had I not been a police officer," says Anna.



This event seemed to have impacted her profoundly. Shocking events would not impact her anymore, and she has been able to keep her cool ever since. The only thing she still really struggles with are fatal car crashes. One more thing Anna abhors is seeing children or elderly people being mistreated by their relatives.

She recalls the story of a boy who had to be rescued from a locked dormitory room: his mother left the child alone at two o'clock in the afternoon and did not show up anymore. The child was all fatigued of crying when the neighbours called the police. The rescue service had to be called in to unlock the door. "I never thought this would provoke this sort of reaction in me, seeing children or the elderly being treated that way," says Anna, struggling to hold back her tears.

Despite all the struggles, she does love her job – it is this specific word she uses to describe her feelings towards the police force. Before she became a police officer, Anna was moving nicely in her career in catering – she had started out as a waiter, before becoming a nightclub administrator, and then a fast-food restaurant manager. She earned well at the time, but she had felt the urge to become a police officer ever since she was a child. That was one of the reasons she chose to study law. When the reform was initiated and the police announced a major recruitment wave, she realized this was her chance.

"The stress is real, and all sorts of situations occur, but I do love my job. Even when I'm on vacation abroad, I always tend to observe police officers very closely if I happen to see them: what they're wearing and what

they're doing. Whenever I hear a police siren, I always become alert and wonder what the emergency is.

I never talk much about work when I'm at home. I see no point, really. Our work comes with a great deal of risk. Even the most unremarkable call might turn out in an unexpected way. Still, I know very well just how crucial us patrol officers are as a service. We are often the first responders on the scene, and a lot depends on what we do. It is often us who can prevent the worst from happening and defuse a situation. We have to be able to make split-second decisions and stay on our toes at all times. I am perfectly aware of the responsibility, and I want all other patrol officers to have it on their minds. I want us to work like a well-oiled mechanism," says Anna.

With her demanding job and responsible position, Anna is still a woman. For three years already, she has been in pole dancing. It is a type of fitness that blends dancing and acrobatics on a pole. This sport builds up patience, resilience, and perseverance. It also helps Anna to stay in shape.

Anna also adores her pet cat. "My cat came as a gift from the boys in our company. I was on vacation at the time. They rescued him from a tree after he got stuck. I received a call from the commander who said: "We're bringing you a cat." I said I didn't want it, but his word was that I just didn't know I wanted him yet. That's how he ended up living with me," says Anna. We made sure to put up an announcement on Facebook, see if anyone comes looking for him. But after a few days it became clear the cat belonged with me. And so he stayed," Anna recalls.

Project Manager, Council of Europe Office in Ukraine



Olga Derkach



While choosing her future profession Olha was absolutely confident that it would be related to languages or translation. When she was dreaming big and bold, she even imagined herself a diplomat. However, the future held something else for Olha. Despite a gold medal and academic aptitude she did not manage to get a place on the course in the coveted major. Due to certain changes in legislation there were only two or three budget-financed openings that year in all higher educational establishments in the country, and the competition was fierce. Since Olha's parents were not able to finance the tuition and rent accommodation in Kyiv, the family decided that the girl would become a border guard. The chances to join the National Border Guard Academy in the home city of Khmelnytskyi were high since the admission for girls did not start until early September.

Four years later Olha had an honors degree and a first job: she was assigned to "Mamalyha" border crossing point in Chernivtsi oblast. This job marked the start of her 18-year career with State Border Guard Service of Ukraine.

"It was my very first work experience: handling passports, identifying fake IDs, and managing the transit of people and vehicles across the national border. I was soon promoted to shift supervisor. There were about 20 people on the shift – most of them men who were older than me. During the training at the academy I saw all passports of the world, but my colleagues had so much practical experience that they could literally sense fakes. Still, I quickly adapted to the new role and learned from the best, and they were eager to share their knowledge as I was genuinely interested in making progress", shares Olha.

She does not regret about the twist of fate that brought her to the State Border Guard Service. All the places where she

served, all the jobs that she did, and all the people she dealt with in her line of duty contributed to her experience which was actually quite close to the coveted diplomatic service.

"About a year into the service I was transferred to the Polish border. I was assigned to a joint Ukrainian-Polish unit at "Krakovets" border crossing. It was an advisory unit whose main task was to solve non-standard or conflict situations. The border crossing was used by numerous tourists, so in addition to her direct responsibilities specific to conflict management, she had a great chance to practice her English. "And it was not just English – I spoke a lot of Polish to my colleagues", adds Olha.

In addition to English and Polish she later learned French and German. However, it was her command of English – the language of international communication – that defined her career. Her strong English skills brought her to Boryspil international airport where Olha met her future manager then in charge of the Department of International Cooperation.

But this was preceded by a spell of very repetitive work in Belhorod-Dnistrovsky. Although Olha did not complain, she clearly realized that position was a dead end. She dreamed about Kyiv, but did not see how she could make her way there. When the first five-year contract came to an end, Olha nearly gave up on her dreams. She even toyed with the idea of resigning from the State Border Guard Service. Still, she decided to do a post-graduate course first and write a candidate's dissertation. When she failed in the competition being the only reject out 14 candidates, she got nearly desperate.

"They had accepted 13 out 14 candidates, and I was the only one who was rejected. I didn't know why. When I saw



the list without my name on it, I headed down the corridor and bumped into the Head of Human Resources. I was so desperate and so angry that I unloaded everything I had on my chest saying something like “You publicly invite people of new formation, I responded to your call, but you still rejected me!” Oddly, I got his attention. He told me to wait and left. And a few months later I was offered a job at Boryspil airport”, shares Olha.

This job at the airport brought Olha extremely close to her dream as Kyiv was just a few miles away. Numerous international delegations passing through the airport often needed assistance which often included interpreter’s services. On one occasion the Head of the Department of International Cooperation required an interpreter while seeing off a German general. It was Olha who was called to assist. The head of department was so pleased with her work and her ability to deliver the message across, build a friendly atmosphere and retain the original humor that he offered her a permanent job in his department.

For the following ten years Olha worked at the Department of International Cooperation. This job provided her with a wealth of experience that was very similar to diplomatic service. “Having started as an interpreter, I was soon transferred to the protocol section and then to the section tasked with cooperation with international organizations. The work was very exciting: I boosted my diplomacy-related skills and learned to moderate and mediate important international negotiations. Although we were in fact part of the State Border Guard Service, it was pure diplomacy. To succeed in the job, you have to know the etiquette and how to build a productive conversation, understand ‘red lines’ – the subjects to be avoided during negotiations, and also be an expert on border issues.

I will never forget the work in the section which was dealt with CIS countries – Moldova, Belarus, and later the Russian Federation. Working with representatives of the Russian Federation was a bumpy road since the relations grew tense amid the events of 2013-2014. That is why diplomatic awareness and professionalism were essential to do the job properly.

Olha still fondly remembers the meeting with President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan when some 50 foreign delegations were invited to his official residence.

After 10 years at the Department of International Cooperation Olha realized it was time to move on. “When you dedicate yourself to the fullest for so long, but there is only one employment record – the State Border Guard Service – on your resume, you realize there are still so many opportunities to be explored”, admits Olha.

Having worked closely with international partners and gained insight into the activities of international organizations, the woman decided to set a new course for her career. She now manages the project of the Council of Europe – a leading international organization which upholds human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.

“This job offer was preceded by numerous interviews at various organizations. The demanding competitive selection was a new experience for me. After the years I can safely say that my experience in the public sector, the work in the department of international cooperation and my research on state management all contributed to my success in this job. I know the intricacies of our legislative process, how our public sector works, and what obstacles or bureaucratic barriers exist. All this is really helpful in my current job”, says Olha.

Today she manages the joint project run by the Council of Europe and the European Union and the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine. This multi-level work is aimed at raising awareness of the state of upholding human rights in the country, bringing the national legislation into compliance with the standards of the Council of Europe and implementing many other components.

In addition to that Olha is a member of the Board of the Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement (UAWLE). “I am very pleased to be among the few who stood up to the task of implementing best international practices and creating such a capable organization. I draw inspiration from the talented women and men who I am honored to call colleagues. They all have a host of interesting stories to tell and loads of motivation to share”, concludes Olha.

Today she is ready to become one of the mentors in a mentoring program to be implemented by the UAWLE. This program is to enable experienced and motivated professionals to become mentors for those who need experience and inspiration to succeed.

“I was among the first officers of the State Border Guard Service (SBGS) to work on gender equality issues. I even advised the Head of the SBGS on gender policies. So it is no wonder that I continue to support these policies while being a UAWLE member. I am extremely grateful to the State Border Guard Service which forged my character. Despite the ups and downs, I learned an important lesson from the experience: sometimes it takes a one step back to go two steps forward”, says Olha.

Chief Inspector of Special Assignments, Anticorruption Unit
of the Patrol Police Department, Police Senior Lieutenant



Nina Lavruk



Nina has dreamed of becoming a law-enforcement officer since she was little – and not just any officer, but an investigator. However, these dreams never came true due to the family's dire financial situation. Since the parents could not afford the tuition fees at Odessa University of Internal Affairs, Nina entered Uman State Pedagogical University. After graduating from the university she worked as a teacher for three years. The girl enjoyed the work a lot. Still, after a while her childhood dream finally came true and Nina joined the police force.

She still recalls her work at school with fondness. Nina taught geography and organized activities and events. It is in this part of the job that her talents truly shined. She came up with all sorts of contests and competitions which were highly appreciated by both pupils and teachers. They were both interesting and fun. While studying at university to become a future geography teacher Nina traveled throughout much of Ukraine. Having seen so many picturesque places and drew inspiration from the beauty of various regions and areas and converted it into her activities at school. Nina is still remembered at the school for her tourist competitions for the teachers. “During those three-day events I took my colleagues camping in the woods. We slept in tents, cooked on a open fire, and held all kinds of competitions – for example, went on a treasure hunt and did many other exciting things”, recalls Nina.

Although Nina was very happy as a school teacher, her heart skipped a beat when she heard about open vacancies in the patrol police. This is it! My childhood dream is finally coming true! She did not hesitate to

submit her application and eventually went through all the competitive selection steps to be accepted to the ranks of Mykolayiv Patrol Police.

“Our instructors at the training center provided a lot of theoretical knowledge, but we had little idea how it could be applied in the street. The first days and months in the new job were an eye-opening experience for me. Sometimes things got really dangerous. One day we received a call reporting “a suspect carrying an object which resembled a handgun”. Two unit were sent to respond. Upon arrival we encountered a man with a firearm. He ignored our warnings and fired injuring my colleague. This situation made me reconsider many things. I thought about the fleeting nature of life, its risks and threats, and how I should appreciate every moment of it. That event was a bonding moment for my colleagues and I: we started to pay more attention and look after each other better”, says Nina.

The girl served as a patrol office for three years. Nobody knew how good she was with papers, electronic files and computers thanks to her experience at school. But when they did find out, the deputy company commander offered her a transfer to the monitoring department. This was an easy task for Nina. Thanks to her responsibility and attention to detail she was



assigned to check suspected incidents of police officers falling outside the scope of their job. “I was tasked with identifying facts which needed internal investigation. Monitoring social networks and media for critical posts which undermine the police authority was the most interesting task for me”, says Nina.

After a year in this job the girl was transferred to a similar position at the Patrol Police Department in Kyiv. She continued fulfilling her duties until she was re-assigned to the newly established corruption prevention division. Her duties in this job are similar to those in her previous position. The main task of the division is to combat corruption in police work as well as building and maintaining a positive image of the police force within the society.

***“In my opinion, what makes this work so important is the patrol police image component. We must foster trust to the police among members of public since trust-based interaction with the community was among the key principles of creating the new police. Manifestations of corruption tarnish our image, and that is why we ought to identify them and respond adequately.*”**

The girl considers serving in the police force a life challenge and a path to be walked with dignity. “The Patrol Police has become a big part of my life and shaped me into a person I am – thanks to the events I took part in, the knowledge I learned, the experience I gained, and the people I met over the years”, says Nina.

Not only was it Nina, but it was also her father who dreamed about her becoming a police officer. Unfortunately, he failed to witness her dreams come true having died 13 years ago. Still, the girl knows that he would have been proud of her. She is also deeply grateful to her mother for all the love and support in everything.

“Although mother does not have any influence or connections and knows nothing about the law enforcement system, she has always been very supportive to me. This may be a good thing after all as I am proud of achieving everything without anybody else’s help”, – concludes Nina.

The appointment to a position with the Patrol Police Department felt like a real victory. So far Nina has no far-reaching career plans – she is simply enjoying her work. She studies a lot and soaks in new experience. Striving for professional improvement, she takes part in all kinds of events and training courses whenever possible. And her organizer’s talent is still there. If necessary, she will gladly hold any competition among police officers.

Head of HR Unit, Vinnytsia Oblast Patrol Police, Police Major



Anna Manina



Today Anna Manina is a manager, a highly respected woman in charge of HR policies in the police in the Vinnytsia oblast. But she started out as a rank-and-file militia officer nearly 17 years ago. As she gained experience and several higher education diplomas along the way, she grew as an expert and moved up in the hierarchy. Now, after being the acting head of the HR department at the regional office, she has been appointed to the position permanently.

Anna today is an authoritative person both at work and at home. Her family is heavily male dominated, as she lives with her husband and two sons, 8 and 12.

Anna finds it funny to recall that she failed at her first attempts to enrol in the Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University. At first, she did not make the cut because of her weight, which she “lacked”. The next year, as she tried again, she failed at one of the exams. Not to waste time, Anna applied to the Vinnytsia business college and obtained an undergraduate degree. Her desire to serve in law enforcement did not become weaker, though. Even as she was a child, she used to tell her friends she would work in the police. When asked why, she replied she wanted to change the world. This desire was so strong and clear that Anna later decided to challenge herself and become a police officer no matter what. She was also spurred on by the scepticism of her boyfriend at the time. He used to say: “Don’t you realise you need connections to enter the system?”

“His attitude really got me,” says Anna. “I genuinely didn’t know anyone in the force. My parents couldn’t help me either. To be honest, they were quite shocked

with my choice of profession, but they accepted it, for which I am incredibly grateful. I wanted to prove it to myself, to my boyfriend, to everyone, really, that I had it in me to become a police officer.”

The third attempt finally worked out. Anna started working in the MoIA system as a contractor in 2001, and then swore in two years later. She soon met her future husband. When they were considering marriage, she had a frank conversation with her fiancé: she needed to know if he accepted her job. Was he ready to marry a police officer? Did he realise the challenges lying ahead?

“My husband reassured me he was aware of the risk and would support me no matter what. And he has stayed true to his word, for all these years. My sons are also great supporters. I recall coming back home all tired one day. My son warmed up the dinner for me, and I asked him about his homework. He then tells me: “First have dinner, mum, relax, and then we have a look at the homework.””

The men in Anna’s family do their best not to stress her out. It is quite a crucial thing – making sure stress does not carry over from work. “Before the 2015 reform, I seriously considered whether I should stay in the force or leave. Perhaps this had to do with cumulative burnout or general disappointment (this was another MoIA reform that generated little enthusiasm). I talked about this with my older son, shared some of my doubts. He was just 8 at the time, but a lot wiser than you’d expect. I



remember him saying: “Follow your heart’s desire”. This helped me decide. I chose to stay.”

Anna believes working in the MoIA system is quite stressful. This is the kind of job that will not fit anyone. “Now that I manage the HR department, I get to talk to a lot of people. You sometimes need a mere few minutes before you can tell if a person is going to last or not. This has nothing to do with gender. You need to understand the nature of the job well, be aware of the strict rules to be followed. There’s no such thing here as a male-only task. If someone needs to work through the night or spend a whole day patrolling a polling station, it simply has to be done. Those who can handle it, stay in the profession for a long time.”

Anna speaks from experience. During her time with the patrol police, she has to respond to multiple night-time calls. She also had colleagues pick her up from home in the middle of the night, where she would only have a few minutes to prepare. “Sure, it’s stressful: one moment you’re sleeping, and the other your husband’s telling you there’s a car waiting. Say they called, but you missed it. It doesn’t matter anymore, you’ve got to go immediately.”

The only thing Anna is concerned with when it comes to gender disparities at work is the issue of uniforms and body armour. They are currently manufactured with no regard for female bodies. Women have to take time to fit the uniforms for themselves. The extremely heavy bulletproof vests do not fit curvier women. The police force hopes to see these issues settled in legislation.

Despite the stress and the pressure, Anna wants to keep going. She says she feels a personal connection to her

job. For her it is about the contribution she is making to the entire system's development, to the country's safety and security.

"I have this story that I tell everyone undergoing recruitment. I remember it warmly. Early on in my career I used to work as a receptionist for a general, a strict and prominent person. This was a great honour and a huge responsibility. For people in the force, respecting the chain of command is fundamental. So, once I had the general's deputy and a rank-and-file police officer arrive to see the general at the same time. As chain of command dictates, I reported to the general over the phone that he had his deputy waiting to see him as well as private such-and-such. And then he says: come over here! I walk over to his office, and he asks me: do you realize what you've just done?! I honestly had no idea. Then he tells me, and I remember those words like I heard them yesterday: "Look, my deputy comes here all the time, that's no big deal. But why would a private come to see the general himself?! This must be something extraordinary! Have the deputy wait." Then he ordered to have the private come in."

Anna says this incident taught her the importance of being humane no matter the position you are in.

"It is my firm belief that women should work in the system. Men become more restrained with us around, I think we may also inspire them. I don't mean to say that women need to demonstrate weakness here. There can be no gender privileges. If you're a woman working in the police

force, you must be aware of your role, of the parameters of the job. It makes no difference if it's a man or a woman is, say, going on duty for 24 hours at a polling station. There can be no excuses here, no mentioning children or families. I am a wife myself, I gave birth, my children needed attention when they were sick. This must not prevent you from fulfilling your professional duties," Anna believes.

She does acknowledge that she has felt like the stress was overwhelming her. This happened when the latest reform was launched. Anna says this was the fourth reform she got to witness, and very few thought it would be successful. Disenchanted and exhausted, she handed in her resignation notice.

"Both physically and emotionally, the most exhausting period was when we recruited people for the new police service – I endured nearly three months with no rest. But management turned my notice down, they tore it into pieces. We ultimately came out well, though the process itself was gruelling."

Being able to distract yourself from the stress is crucial. Anna says she finds solace in learning something new. It motivates her and fills her with energy to take on new challenges. She usually rests with a book in her hand: she enjoys poetry by Marina Tsvetaeva, popular psychology books and fiction.

Gender Advisor to the Rector, Donetsk Law Institute
of the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine



Olha Svetlichna



Olha's career in law enforcement started when she was 23, and her first job was quite a leap ahead. Her law degree and determination helped her outrun other candidates in the competitive selection for the Commissioner for Human Rights of the National Police of Ukraine.

"I was born in Mariupol, but spent most of my life in Zaporizhia. When the war started, when rockets fell on Mariupol, when I saw our soldiers die in the battlefield, I felt that my native city needed me. I sensed that it was my calling to protect people. Hence, without any hesitation I decided to move back to Mariupol. I started with providing pro bono services, and later I was hired to the police I longed for," recalls Olha.

However, the initial excitement that I felt on the way to Mariupol quickly changed to despair. The mostly male team gave her a cold shower of a reception and made her feel like she did not belong there. Young and inexperienced though highly ambitious and zealous, the girl found herself among much older men – officers who had been through thick and thin together. "My position provided for a certain degree of autonomy. While working in the headquarters, I only reported to the Head of the National Police of Ukraine. That is why I felt like an outsider – in a way. Perhaps, the locals considered me some sort of an external threat thinking that I had been sent there to monitor them and report on their mistakes", says Olha.

They just could not grasp the importance of some abstract human rights that the newcomer was supposed to uphold. That was the very start of work in this area according to the plan that was set in motion with the police reform. Olha clearly remembers the day when she was officially introduced to the colleagues and how she felt. The ceremony was held in a large conference hall and was attended by the entire staff of the local police department, my future colleagues. I could not see a single woman in the crowd – it was a wall of male faces. Olha was invited to deliver a welcoming speech, but as soon as she started, she felt condescension and incomprehension.

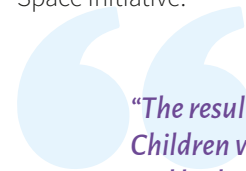
"There I was, facing combat officers who had seen death and destruction, and they were smiling skeptically. I was speaking about human rights and their importance, but they were listening as if I was telling them about pink unicorns. I could see that they were not taking me seriously – some did not even bother to hide a smirk. But it was there and then that I realized with crystal clarity that I had to speak out loudly and act confidently. I will earn their respect. I am here to make a change. "My work is important because living in peace is impossible without respecting human rights", says Olha.

From day one the girl started to play hardball. That earned the respect of the few and, in Olha's own words,



the hate of the majority. “While they hated me, I loved each single man and woman, every one of them. This love gave me the reason to get up and go to work.

It was the meeting with a newly appointed general that boosted Olha’s confidence in her decisions. There are some people who we look up to and whose motivation makes us stronger. The general was able to see past her age and appreciated her decisiveness that could serve the big cause. This is why he supported all her ideas. And it was with his support that Olha successfully implemented dozens of international projects on human rights. The most memorable projects included building the first police station that was accessible to people with disabilities. «This project was a special one - it was chaired by the chief of the local police, which meant that the number of people inspired by the work to advance human rights became much wider. I was heard!» - Olha recalls. She also talked with pleasure about the School Safety Space initiative.



“The results were simply unbelievable. Children who grew up in Donbas and had recently seen people resolve conflicts by exercising power or using weapons were taught to do it in a different way – peacefully”, shares Olha.

And there was the landmark project dedicated to women, which holds a special place in Olha’s heart. It was the last she did in that position.

“Like most our projects, this one called “Women Police Officers for Peace” was implemented with the assistance of UNDP. We collected stories of Donbas women in law enforcement for 6 months to publish them in one book and make it available to other women. It was intended as a source of strength for all of us. We wanted to inspire and motivate through our own experience. We also created a variety of branded products and souvenirs to broaden the coverage of the campaign and stimulate interest”, says Olha.

Having left the office, Olha worked with UNDP on developing a strategy for the collaboration of the police with civil society organizations. This guideline is officially used today.

“When the rector of Donetsk Law Institute of MIA of Ukraine Serhii Vitvitskiy invited me to become his Gender Advisor. I accepted the offer without any hesitation. I was already full of confidence and energy to motivate others. In addition, I knew from my experience that Mr. Vitvitskiy was an officer an honor to work with. I felt that it was my calling”, confesses Olha.

The institute has become the place to make Olha’s dreams about the time when gender equality comes true, and there will be a new generation of gender sensitive leaders. Every day she sees motivated young people who are receptive of her ideas and willing to put them into practice. And when she remembers her first day in the police force, when she did not see a single female face in the audience, Olha proudly shares about numerous success stories of empowered women professionals. More and more women are filling various positions – from low-level jobs to executive ones – from faraway regions to the capital city. And when a criminal police division has a woman deputy head, which could never happen before, isn’t that a victory?

“I have always been decisive and bold. The only thing that scared me as a child was darkness. But my grandfather, who was my spiritual mentor, once opened a window and said: “Do you see the lights of the city? The city loves you. There is nothing to be afraid of”. He supported and taught me sharing his wisdom and values. It was my grandfather that taught me to wear the family name Svetlichna, which was a family name of her grandfather, a dedicated officer who served in the then called militia. That is why I think that my grandfather would have been proud of what I do”, – concludes Olha.

Chief Inspector of Special Assignments of the Human Rights
Observance Monitoring Unit, Human Rights Division of the
National Police of Ukraine, Police Senior Lieutenant



Tetyana Shcherba



When Tetyana, then a rank-and-file patrol police officer, was offered to join the Human Rights Compliance Division, she hardly imagined what the job was about. She also had no idea that this job would be about defending not just other people's rights, but her own, too. However, before that, back in 2015, Tetyana decided to join the Patrol Police and put her legal degree to good use.

"I was clearly aware of injustice around me, and I wanted to help and be useful to others. At the same time I doubted that one could join the police without bribes and connections in high places. Still, I managed to do it. Since I did it without taking any shortcuts, when somebody would later say that someone paid to get the job, I got really upset", recalls Tetyana.

The blue uniform filled her with pride, and the new job changed her world and her character. Tetyana became more decisive and committed, and her intolerance to injustice grew even stronger.

She was really enjoying working in the streets. That is why her superior officer's recommendation for a job with the Human Rights Compliance Division was totally unexpected. Tetyana did not want to leave her job and tried to turn down the offer, but that did not really work. She was sent to Kyiv on a one-month training course and, upon completion, promoted to Chief Special Inspector of the Human Rights Division. This job was different from her previous working experience as a patrolwoman because, among other things, she had to deal with complaints against fellow police officers. As one would expect, she did not make friends with the colleagues that were under internal investigations.

"We investigated how people were treated during arrests, if the defense counsel was called in due time, if the arrested were read their rights. All these facts were to be reported to the superiors. At the first meeting where I was reporting on the results of my work I noticed that I was the only woman in the room. So I start to speak and then suddenly the head of my police department interrupts me. And I immediately shoot back: "Why are you interrupting my report? I am not your subordinate, am I? I am here on the orders of the Chief of the National Police of Ukraine, and I am reporting on the results of my work. At first, everybody froze, but after that incident no one ever interrupted me again", says Tetyana.

She admits that it was not easy to overcome the hostility of her colleagues. She got really upset by the negative comments they left under her Facebook posts covering the activities of her division. They just did not understand the nature of her work and the profound meaning of human rights.

"Police officers must act in strict accordance with the current legislation and respect human rights. Every official complaint filed by citizens is followed by an internal investigation. Once I came across a Facebook post where a woman was complaining against police officers' wrongdoings. She claimed that her apartment had been robbed which caused her to go to the police.



The officers said that an investigation had been initiated and asked for the keys to the apartment to set up an ambush. Later on the woman suspected foul play and wanted her keys back. When she returned to her place, she realized that everything had been stolen: faucets from the bathroom, home appliances – everything! The investigation of this incident revealed that the police officers had not even bothered to institute criminal proceedings in connection with theft. Their actions were illegal indeed. The findings of checks and internal investigations resulted in charges against 9 people – from the duty officer who took the call to the head of department whose subordinates committed such illegal actions”, says Tetyana.

Naturally, such work takes its toll on friendships with colleagues from other divisions – especially after bringing charges in connection with exceeding official authority or human rights violations. This is why her work always involves certain stress which is part of her special role. Understanding the importance of her work fuels her motivation to do the right thing. Everything has to be by the book.

Her professional background and experience helped her restore justice when her own rights were violated. “You either work or look after the children” – such a discriminatory remark was thrown at Tetyana by one of the heads of department when she failed to show up at a meeting because both her children were ill. “My childcare sick leave form was rejected four times. I had to redo it again and again to address new comments and objections. I finally sent the sick leave form by registered mail, and that time it had all the seals and signatures required. There was simply no way they could reject it. The document was accepted, but a grudge was borne”, recalls Tetyana.

At the end of 2019 the division where she worked was reorganized. Due to the change of official name all the employees had to pass certification to keep their position, be downsized or take a junior position. Some people got unlucky and were made redundant. Tetyana was also to meet the same fate. When she stood before the attestation board in February 2020, she was once again reminded: you either serve or stay home with the children.

“There were 8 or 9 heads of department there, all male. They told me straight away that 26 internal investigations conducted during 5 years is a not sufficient number to hire me back. I responded that the number related to only less than a year period since I spent four months on maternity leave. Then the salary question was raised. They remarked that I did not work hard enough. And when I told the board that I wanted to keep my job and not be reassigned elsewhere, they promised to do whatever it takes not to let it happen”, remembers Tetyana.

This was followed by a period of extreme emotional stress. Tetyana was pressed upon – directly, through her colleagues and her husband. Still, she was firmly committed to fight for her rights. They were her legal rights. A woman who looks after children is entitled to sick leave and has the right to retain her job for the time of the maternity leave until the child grows 3 years old. This is what the law says, so she was not going to give up. The emotional stress was nasty. Still, it only made her stronger than before. According to Tetyana, this situation also made people show their true colors in terms of their

relationships. When she was in the sights of the board to get axed, some colleagues did not even say ‘hello’. In the end Tetyana managed to defend her right to retain her job and was hired to the re-established division.

The situation that she had to go through boosted her self-confidence and made her truly realize that nobody is above the law. In addition to human rights work Tetyana is also engaged in activities aimed at combating domestic violence. These include preventative activities, cooperation with civic organizations, thematic events etc. Tetyana also has much to share in this regard as she is a living proof of the fact that domestic violence must not be tolerated. She left her first husband who had treated her to all kinds of domestic violence: physical emotional and economic. She now knows what to say to women who feel victimized. When giving the interview, she was no longer ashamed to admit having come through all that.

“I used to hesitate if I should even talk about it, but now I know for sure that I mustn't keep silent! Such traumatic experience does not make a woman weak – on the contrary, it forges her character. You ought to find the strength to break the circle of violence. You ought to take responsibility for yourself as it is you and only you who can truly control your life”, says Tetyana.

Today the policewoman actively works in her current role, takes part in thematic events, and her door is always open to those who need help.

Head of the Methodology Development Section,
Patrol Police Academy (Kyiv), Police Lieutenant Colonel



Svitlana Shutenko

Svitlana has two degrees – in teaching and law. After graduating from State Pedagogical Institute named after M.P. Drahomanov where she majored in Ukrainian Philology, she was expected to spend the first 5 years of her career working as a Ukrainian teacher at a secondary school. However, life brought its own changes to the plan. The school she had been assigned to was closed for renovation. This is how Svitlana ended up at specialized school No. 92 named after Ivan Franko. “That experience was unforgettable! I worked in a team of friendly and supportive colleagues whose advice I still remember dearly. My first students were 11th graders. We both studied and matured together”, recalls Svitlana.

Once she was offered to hold a class on business Ukrainian and rhetoric for the cadets of the National Academy of Internal Affairs. Perhaps, it was that moment that turned her career around setting its course toward law enforcement. Still, she did not get to wear the blue uniform until two years later.

“I still remember the day I was awarded my first rank. I received the shoulder boards of Militia Senior Lieutenant from a truly unique person – Internal Service Brigadier General Petro Mikhaylenko, a renowned scholar and professor,” says Svitlana.

She dedicated 23 years to the National Academy of Internal Affairs. After teaching legal document management Svitlana was promoted to deputy head

of law lyceum named after Yaroslav Kondratyev with the National Academy of Internal Affairs. This was her coming of age both as a teacher and an officer. “For me teaching is not just about presentation – it heavily relies on mentoring and sharing knowledge. This is much more than a monologue addressed to an audience of students – it is fostering knowledge. Svitlana worked with a variety of audiences: pupils who attended pre-entry courses, lyceum pupils, cadets, experienced law enforcement officers, and even foreign students who studied at the Academy. “The experience was truly fascinating!”, recalls Svitlana.

While working at the Academy she studied for her second major “Law” as being among future law enforcement officers required her to become a legal expert. There are unfinished projects, though, such as the unfinished dissertation which stands between her and a scientific degree. Still, Svitlana remains optimistic about her future.

For a while everything seemed going according to plan: a fantastic team, respect of colleagues and cadets, stability and confidence in the future. However, when 2017 came, Svitlana received an expected offer from the Chief of the National Police of Ukraine to join efforts in creating a new government institution – the Patrol Police Academy.

“At first I had doubts. It was a bit scary to come out of the safe bubble of the system where I had spent many years. I had no idea what the new job would be like. What if I fall short of the high expectations?



My colleagues, family and friends met the news with mixed response ranging from “Great news!” to “This is dead end!” and “Forget it!”

However, the desire to obtain new experience outweighed the uncertainty. Svitlana became one of the five people who laid the foundations of the Academy. The new job sucked her in like a whirlpool. The Academy opening deadline was very tight, so the new team had to adjust and improvise while building a new educational establishment from scratch. Everybody was under tremendous pressure of responsibility. The team was responsible for recruitment of staff, preparing organizational documents, drafting work plans and syllabuses, and preparing course materials. And all that was to be done without a dedicated space, assistants or methodological aids.

“The exchange of knowledge, experience, working approaches and energy was almost magical”, shares Svitlana.

Today the Academy is a state-of-the-art innovative institution for training future police officers which doubles as a platform for professional development and acquiring new knowledge and experience. Being in charge of the methodology department of the Academy, Svitlana is also responsible for gender equality compliance. This work includes multiple aspects such as continuing institutional development of the Academy, ensuring gender equality, delivering

training courses for the students and the faculty, holding meetings with foreign colleagues, and introducing the gender component into training programs.

“Gender equality is much more than keeping an eye on the proportion of girls and boys at the Academy. It is about educating on the equality of rights and responsibilities of men and women which provides them access to any profession or specialization. Enjoying equal opportunities and equal rights is an essential need that must be addressed at the state level. We have a lot of work to do in order to change the opinion on gender issues in our society”, admits Svitlana.

She says that she is lucky to have people who were and are willing to teach, help, inspire to move forward, hold back, advise and support in the times of trying and share both happy and sad moments. Once again she speaks with great respect and gratitude of her parents, friends, teachers, mentors and colleagues. “Do what drives you today and you will have nothing to regret in the future” is Svitlana’s motto.

She hopes and her daughter Vladislava or her son Nazar will want to follow in her footsteps. At least, their mother is a living example of a woman who has made a successful career in law enforcement.

Operations Officer of the Crime Analysis and Information Support, Donetsk Border Detachment, Senior Lieutenant



Victoria Ploshenko



Victoria Ploshenko is a border guard who works in Mariupol. Although she is only 24, Victoria has already been awarded an officer rank – Senior Lieutenant. The path to this coveted status was thorny to say the least. Just imagine a girl who never left her parents deciding to join the border guards on a whim and going 700 kilometers away from home – from Dnipro to Khmelnytskyi.

“It all started when I was in the 11th grade”, recalls Victoria. “One day some border guard recruitment officers came to our school. I was really fascinated by their stories and I set my mind on entering the only Border Guard Academy in Ukraine. That is why just after New Year’s day, still a few months away from the graduation, I started to collect the necessary papers and prepare for the entrance exams”, says Victoria.

She recalls that all her family, especially her mom, were shocked, and they even tried to talk her out of pursuing such an ‘unfeminine’ profession. However, Victoria was committed to go to the end. She wanted to be like her elder brother who was a policeman, so her motivation was as strong as ever. “It was nothing like a childhood dream. I just saw the results of my brother’s work, and how my parents responded to them. They were very proud of him. Perhaps, that is why I decided to follow a similar path. It was also my way of saying ‘thanks’. My parents brought me up and taught me to be a good person – perhaps, it was time I showed them I had become an adult and could live my own life”, she says.

Yet, it was only her father that supported Victoria at that time: not only did he understand her desire, but he was also a powerful source of encouragement. He trusted his daughter’s choice while all the other family members

were deeply concerned about Victoria’s desire to pursue a career in the State Border Guard. So her father’s support was a powerful motivating factor indeed.

In addition to submitting a heap of documents applicants were also subjected to a number of medical checks, psychological evaluations and other tests. Although Victoria was in a good physical shape, she started intensive training to increase her strength and resilience. In summer 2013 she successfully entered the Academy having been chosen over 9 other candidates.

“I am not sure why my parents called me Victoria”, she grins, “but I did pass and enter the Academy”. Just a few months later the events in the country sent my mother into panic. She was extremely scared that we, cadets, would be sent to the ATO zone [the military conflict zone in eastern Ukraine - transl.]. However, that never happened, and I spent the next 4 years at the Academy studying”.

This period was full of challenges, but today the girl remembers the time with tears in her eyes. The load was exhausting: the training started with a roll call and warm-up exercise and did not finish until 7 in the evening. During the day cadets attended classes on various subjects and did target practice. Tactical exercises were never canceled because of bad weather, so we had our share of rain and snow. Although I still remember how tough those days were, they were the best part of my training. “It was like putting you to a test – taking on a challenge and coming out on top. I really miss those days. The thing is that my groupmates and I were put in a stressful situation that heightened our senses, and it brought us together as a team. I really enjoyed the camaraderie – the ‘one for all



and all for one' thing. We shared one snack bar and covered each other's backs when somebody got in trouble with the superiors", recalls Victoria.

After graduating from the Academy in 2017 the girl was assigned to Ivano-Frankivsk where she did not have any friends' friends not to mention the friends of her own. She had to find accommodation and pay the rent. The new place also needed adaptation. At first she got quite confused about her tasks. A few months later she managed to adapt, and things went on much more smoothly.

Later on she got a transfer to Chernivtsi. She still recalls that period in her career as a real stress test as she was working in a region with intensive smuggling activity. She had to deal with illegal migrants as well as contraband goods, cigarettes, and drugs. "After that there was nothing left to fear", chuckles Victoria.

As soon as she saw a vacancy in Mariupol, she decided to give it a try. The main idea was to move closer to her parents. Although Victoria boldly explored various opportunities, deep inside she still remained her parents' girl who wanted to see them more often. "It was during my Academy studies that I felt really homesick and missed my family a lot. I rarely visited my parents – only once in a few months. These moments left the most emotional memories of my parents' hugs and Mother's tenderness. Starting my first job hardly changed anything: now I can only visit them twice a year splitting the 30 days of my holiday", explains Victoria.

At the moment Victoria works in the Joint Forces Operation zone which also includes Mariupol. She is not at the liberty to discuss her work due to its classified nature. All there is to

say is that her office job requires good memory, attention and analytical skills. Although Victoria is interested in building a career in the State Border Guard Service, she is confident that there are many possibilities to consider. She believes in all-round development. Being a creative person, she writes songs, sings and plays the guitar. She also has an interest in the beauty industry and dreams of becoming a trichologist. "I really love hair. I like the look and feel of healthy hair that is looked after well. I dream of becoming an expert in trichology so that I could first and foremost help my family and friends look after their hair", says Victoria.

Of course, at the moment this is only a hobby pursued in her free time. The young border guard admits that military service takes up a lot of time and energy. However, it should not turn into an only focus as girls should always be girls. "Bad planning leads to wasted time. Yes, the service is time-consuming, but people should always balance their personal and professional lives. That is what I try to do: unlock my creative talent and look after myself while succeeding at work", says Victoria.

Although at the moment the number of women and men among her colleagues is more or less balanced, she still notices a few stereotypes related to women. Both men and women have strong potential, but women's potential is especially unique and powerful.

"There are lots of women around me who are highly successful both at work and in their personal lives, and their example provides great inspiration for others", she concludes.

Chief Specialist of Unit 6, Organizational and Informational
Support to the MOI Leadership, Ministry of Interior of Ukraine



Kateryna Lyshnevskya



Kateryna Lyshnevskya begins by admitting that before she joined the police, she had never considered herself a disciplined person or becoming a member of a formal structure. She was rather a creative soul that strived for freedom in self-expression.

She enjoyed working in journalism and doing Muay Thai, and found these two things fitting her personality. Although sport requires discipline, her Muay Thai trainer often got annoyed by her mischief at the training sessions and punished her and her partner with fist planks. The problem was that although the girls did do their best, they could not resist joking and laughing which distracted the others.

A few years later the girl was amazed to discover that she was quite receptive to discipline and was able to follow a strict schedule. At present Kateryna works in a team for the strategic areas in the Ministry of Interior. Before that she spent a few years with the Patrol Police which gave her a lot of interesting experience. Curiously, the job at the police was not exactly planned. As she recalls today, she submitted her application to test if an outsider with no prior experience in the system could join the police – and if everything was as transparent as advertised.

In fact, her entire journey to Kyiv was anything but planned. In 2014 Luhansk turned into war zone, and she had to leave quickly and without preparation. “I went to Kyiv to sit out the turmoil, but did not expect it to last. When autumn came, I realized that the only warm thing I had was a thin cardigan with buttons. I realized I ought to do something about it”, recalls Kateryna.

Thanks to her experience in journalism she was able to

find freelance jobs. She produced copy for various employers. The work provided enough money, so the idea to apply to the patrol police was not about trying to find a better job or improve the level of income. A friend of mine and I applied simultaneously. It was really curious to see if I could make it without any connections. That was really hard to believe. I did pass (although my friend did not), and initially I was driven solely by curiosity. However, the interview stage convinced me that the selection was indeed extremely transparent”, says Kateryna.

I was really inspired by the speeches of the then-current deputy minister Eka Zguladze. Kateryna says the woman was a natural-born leader. The interest in the new profession was also stimulated by the training: there were many interactive activities and the teachers were really passionate about sharing their knowledge while the future police officers were equally eager to learn. This was like energy exchange, and the girl who used to dislike discipline, went with the flow which was taking her to uncharted waters.

“I remember the first day I went on patrol after taking the oath. People would approach us and say: “Have a good day and good luck! This was so moving. We felt that the people were happy and very hopeful. We could not fail them”, says Kateryna.

While patrolling the streets she often witnessed situations which, however sad, gave her a sense of purpose and required soft skills. These moments clearly



demonstrated the importance of not letting anyone in their misery.

After six months on the beat Kateryna was assigned to HR unit and starting 2017 she was transferred to the recruitment department. This work involved considerable emphasis on professional orientation which required attending vacancy fairs, reading lectures to students and other similar activities. The next step in Kateryna's career was the position of Chief Specialist of Section 6 of the Division for Organization and Information Support of MIA Executives, which remains her current job.

“My female body weighing only 46 kilos and being 161 centimeters tall was often the subject of skeptical remarks and condescending facial expressions on behalf of my male colleagues. I remember the time when I was assigned to a new company, we lined up, and one of the guys heard that his partner would be a woman and blurted aloud: “No way do I go on patrol with a chick! That remark did hurt my feelings – how can you say something like that in front of others when you don’t know the person? About two years later the guy came to me and apologized having seen me in action. I quickly proved to my colleagues that despite my nimble physique I can act confidently and can do things that others struggle with.”

My experience in journalism became useful while talking to witnesses or victims of crimes and traffic accidents. In such situations people are often mixed-up or in a state of shock, so it takes some skill to ask the right questions and reflect the answers in the statement”, says Kateryna.

According to Kateryna, today the perception of women in law enforcement by the society is changing. This is largely the result of the reform. UAWLE also plays an important part.

“The Association enables us to exchange experience with colleagues from other countries and regions. Informal communication can make certain job-related tasks easier since you already know the person from the Association. And besides, I can hardly imagine chatting with the Canadian ambassador without UAWLE. A casual chat throws light upon some simple things which say a big deal about the life path of the person. This is absolutely priceless. Or what are the chances of attending the annual conference of the International Association of Women in Law Enforcement? I will never forget our

business trip to Canada. For the first time ever Ukrainian delegates took part in the march of women police officers from across the world. What a sight! Just imagine a column of women where every delegation is wearing the police uniform of its country walking the streets being greeted by the crowd. I was very happy to represent Ukraine at the event!”, recalls Kateryna.

That is why, in Kateryna’s opinion, we ought to change the perception of women in law enforcement and other stereotypically male professions. Big changes happen in small steps. Such steps may go unnoticed at first glance. But if you later compare them against the starting point, the difference will be immediately noticeable.

“When I did Muay Thai, I had a lot trouble with low kicks. One training session, two sessions, three sessions – still no progress at all. Then, upon noticing my despair, one of the fellow athletes told me something which I still remember: “You just do not notice small changes. With each training session you progress at least 5 mm. Today or tomorrow these changes will be too small to notice, but in six months’ time this will be half a meter. Indeed, when we do certain work, the changes are hard to notice at first. However, they are still there – you just have to look harder”, concludes Kateryna.

Adjunct, National Academy of Internal Affairs,
Police Captain



**Natalia
Bilevych**



Natalia has nearly 23 years of experience in the military and public service, she worked in both the pre-reform militsia and the police. She is now a postgraduate, doing research at the National Academy of Internal Affairs. Natalia is working on a gender-related PhD thesis. Her aim is to research how a woman can successfully fulfil herself professionally. The official title of the thesis is “The psychological aspects of successful self-fulfilment in the professional activity of female police officers”. It is no surprise that Natalia’s choice of topic is based on her own rich experience. She draws ideas from her own observations of the things that can be changed to resolve gender issues in Ukraine.

“It was two years ago that I realized I was experienced enough to tackle this, that I had my own perspective, that I tried enough myself and knew some of the existing bottlenecks. I had a PhD on my mind for a while. Finally, I decided I would manage to comprehensively analyse my own knowledge and some foreign experience, treat it from a scientific point of view and develop a few recommendations,” says Natalia.

Natalia first joined the military back in 1999. She made the decision on her own, seeing it as a bit of a challenge. While she was studying at school, she dreamt of becoming a doctor. Having graduated from medical college with honours and received a nurse qualification, she realised medicine was not where her heart lay.

“I used to dream of becoming a doctor, joining a UN mission, working in remote locations. That’s why I went to medical college. As I was studying, though, I learned I was afraid of seeing blood and ultimately came to think this wasn’t exactly my thing. I decided I had to come up with something different, something I’m comfortable with,” says Natalia.

Her choice fell on a related field, psychology. She received her qualification at the Mechnykov Odesa National University, and her medical college education allowed her to master both the general and clinical psychology specialisations. When she graduated, she felt the urge to challenge herself, come up against unusual circumstances. Thus, she applied for a job at a military base. This was the time when staff psychologists were being recruited for the army.

“The job was quite new for most military personnel, they didn’t quite know what to make of it. The psychology service was at the early stages of development. I came to “ask” for the job, and they didn’t really want to take me: I was young, inexperienced, literally small – I’m 1.56 m tall. But I almost begged, so they agreed in the end,” says Natalia.

Her contract with the 28 brigade A 0666 of the Odesa garrison originally had a duration of 3 years. But Natalia stayed with the unit for a whole decade. At the time, she was the only woman in an entirely male team: all the officers and conscripts were men.



The conscripts were quite nice to her, while the officers treated her rather sternly.

“That’s when I realised that the way a male team treats a woman may have two manifestations. On the one hand, there’s the clearly negative treatment: people might be aggressive, rude, all that stuff. They’re communicating that they don’t see you as an expert and a peer. There’s also the other option: people might be too kind, giving you a lot of slack. The only reason for that is your being a woman.

“No need to be at the firing range at 6 in the morning”, “It’s sports day, so feel free to leave early,” – when you hear that, you might think you’re being treated nicely. I used to take it like that. Then I saw how it works: as soon as you insist on being treated like the others, as soon as you choose to stay at work or be at the firing range in the morning, you start facing the first kind of treatment. The aggression come out again,” says Natalia.

The first months in service were all about establishing herself in the male team. It took Natalia about a year to get to grips with all of her duties and develop her own strategy to deal and communicate with the officers. “I think they were surprised to see me fit in so well without whining and complaining,” she says.

Having spent ten years in the military, Natalia grew a great deal as a professional. She gained a lot of

experience working directly with soldiers: holding individual sessions, developing personality profiles, managing team relations, helping risk groups etc. As layoffs were approaching (with the political landscape at the time, psychologists were no longer seen as required in the military), Natalia chose to leave the army and became a public officer, working for a social institution. She provided services free of charge to socially vulnerable youth – children raised in orphanages, young people returning from prisons. The issues she dealt with were quite similar to those she had come across in the army: the young people were puzzled and anxious about entering “adult” life, they found it difficult to cope with their fears.

This job also got her in touch with lots of new people, including NGO activists and public officers. She was able to broaden her perspective and develop new ideas. After a while, Natalia moved to work with the militia at the time, soon to become the reformed police. Her experience in psychology came in hand here as well, although her job had more to do with HR rather than psychology. She got to meet more women working in a male-dominated space and witnessed the difficulties they faced because of gender bias. It was here that she developed her own understanding of what a woman needs to be able to achieve self-fulfilment as a police officer. And so Natalia became a postgraduate in 2018, starting her PhD research into this topic.

Her research is close to being finished, and Natalia is ready to share some of her main ideas. “As a

woman progresses through her career, she will come across challenges and crises. It is important that she meets them with readiness and keeps her wits about. It is, of course, crucial to stay focused on the job and achieve your goals as well as develop certain character traits, such as determination and optimism. A woman needs to negotiate the key crises of working in law enforcement. The first one comes at the very outset – she must not be scared of not knowing things, because everyone learns fast. The second crisis sets in after she has settled in and gained a bit of confidence. The choice arises of whether to pursue her career or become a mother. Women are often scared of maternity leave, because they might drop out of their team, lose some of their skills. But these are all just fears. You shouldn't be afraid. Positive relations with colleagues will surely come in hand: when a woman comes back from her maternity leave, she can always count on some peer support. One more crisis is possible: that's when a woman suddenly realises she's interested in something different. There's no need to feel guilty, and it's perhaps best to follow your desires,” says Natalia.

Following in the footsteps of her mother, a confident self-fulfilled woman in a male profession, Natalia's daughter is studying at the National Academy of Internal Affairs. She is in her third year and is working to become an investigator. Her husband is an investigator, too, just like his father. Natalia is proud of her daughter and jokingly says that they are a police dynasty in the making.

Chief Inspector of the Community Policing Unit,
Khmelnitsk Oblast Patrol Police, Police Senior Lieutenant



Ilona Tabenska



When Ilona Tabenska's son was just a baby and did not know that his mother is a police officer, he would still choose toy police cars and things related to the police for his games. Today the boy is four. He is growing in the family of a police officer and a border guard and takes pride in the fact. "When our son says that he wants to become a firefighter, my husband and I can't help laughing because this would turn us into a dynasty of public servants", – jokes Ilona.

The girl could have become a dancer or a choreographer as she dedicated many years to ballroom dancing had her fair share of performances, competitions and beautiful costumes. However, one night changed everything. Although that event still evokes painful memories, the girl believes it was one of those fateful things that define your future. Ilona's godfather – a young militia officer with a whole life in front of him and big ambitions to reach the rank of major – was killed in the line of duty. "He christened me when he was only 14. When I grew up, we became close friends. He was very special to me. It was him who showed me round Kyiv, took me to a McDonald's for a meal... Such simple things – yet unforgettable", shares Ilona.

That night when her mother came home in tears, Ilona realized immediately that something bad had happened. Her godfather, who had responded to a call, got into something known among police officers as car crash after a car crash. A driver fell asleep at the wheel, lost control of the vehicle and crashed into at the roadside. Ilona's godfather was badly injured. After 15 days in the intensive care unit he died leaving his family and two-year old son.

This dramatic event made a huge impact on the life of creative Ilona and sent her in a new direction. She promised to him – and herself – to continue his life's work and become a police officer in honor of her late godfather.

It has been five years since Ilona started work at the regional headquarters of the patrol police. For almost a year she has been working as chief inspector of the public relations department. This is the result of many years' efforts: first at school with extensive learning of law and then at the National Aviation University. When the new police started hiring, Ilona, who was in her fourth year at the university, applied without hesitation. However, she was skeptical of her chances because of the dominant stereotype of the time that in order to join the law enforcement you must be either a genius or somebody with the right connections.

"When I got the news that I had been accepted, I jumped so high that I hit my finger against the chandelier and injured it", laughs Ilona. "It was both painful and funny. I was overwhelmed with joy as I was really anxious to get the news!"

Two and half months' training culminated in Ilona's first patrol assignment. The job proved very stressful from day one. She had to deal with unpleasant situations such as road accidents, drunk driving and domestic violence on a daily basis. "I guess every police officer has such dark memories from their



work days on the beat. Luckily, we learned not to take them to heart. First responders also have families and children of their own. You shouldn't bring these things home and unload them onto your loved ones. We do our best to leave those emotions and impressions at work", explains Ilona.

After some time of patrolling the streets in a squad car Ilona got a transfer to another job. The work in the public relations department is not as stressful and brings many positive impressions. The girl and her colleagues spend a lot of time talking to the media, civic organizations and members of the general public who need information. Being preventative in nature, this work is aimed at reducing the number of crimes. Police officers hold meetings and give lectures at educational establishments and driving schools. They even go to kindergartens to the children's delight. "Seeing people's response to your communication and their gratefulness is extremely inspiring. This is especially true about children. They respond with fascination to our talks, our uniforms, our cars, they enjoy sitting behind the wheel. When we went to speak at a kindergarten celebration one day, a boy came up and gave me a Valentine's day card. I was so moved", smiles Ilona.

The girl admits that her job requires a lot of energy to constantly meet new people in new places. There isn't much time for sadness. Some of her colleagues became close friends. They are highly motivated and inspired people who share the same values and interests. That is why daily communication at work gives her the simple joy of human interaction which is essential for every person. One of the colleagues even christened her son.

How different would Ilona's life be if she had chosen choreography? Does she sometimes regret her decision to become a police officer? The girl says that her life unraveled in the best possible way.

"I believe fate gives you signs on which turn to take. I am proud of my late godfather who was a militia officer and myself who took after him. Perhaps, I might have had my regrets if I had chosen to be a choreographer. And besides, there is a lot of space for creativity in policing. I know it from the tasks my colleagues and I have to perform. You have to build a connection with every audience you meet depending on the place. You have to know how to get their attention and generate interest".

And lastly, Ilona did not quit dancing. These days she does it for fun – her current hobby is dancesport. She keeps in touch with the club she used to dance in. They recently celebrated their 20th anniversary, and there was a grand concert on the occasion.

"A woman can do anything – whatever she wants. She can successfully combine parenting with work or creative activities with serious tasks. I know it from personal experience. Everything is possible if you are motivated and you love what you do", concludes Ilona.

Inspect at the Crime Investigation Division,
Zaporizhzhia Oblast National Police, Police Lieutenant



**Svitlana
Petryna**



One of the youngest UAWLE members, 21-year old Svitlana Petryna relives her experience of patrolling the streets and shares her memories. When she was nineteen and still studying in her third year at university, Svitlana got a unique opportunity of swapping one academic year for a year in law enforcement. “I clearly remember how it all started. I was in my second year, and it was winter. The management informed us, cadets of Dnipropetrovsk State University of Internal Affairs, about the opportunity of taking part in the 2+1 program. The program enabled cadets to swap the third academic year for one year with the patrol police. When I heard the news, I knew I had to do it! I thought it would be extremely interesting to find out what the actual work was like while still being a cadet”, recalls Svitlana.

The program that Svitlana and most of her fellow cadets enrolled on was among many projects made possible through the police reform. It was for the first time ever that cadets were offered not just long-term traineeships, but actual jobs alongside active duty officers. Svitlana signed a one-year contract and was sent to work at Berdyansk police.

“When I first rode as the third person in a squad car, I couldn’t help noticing that the officers were taking extra precautions because of my lack of field experience. Sometimes I was told not to leave the car unless allowed to. I understood that the job involved a certain degree of danger. I watched a lot and learned from my colleagues”, says Svitlana.

After the first three months of on-the-job training she was allowed to take part in the actual patrol work. It was time to start talking to people. The 2+1 team responded to all sorts of situations including domestic violence, drunk

driving, and neighbor conflicts. However, none of them scared Svitlana. On the contrary, this experience confirmed her faith in the chosen career path. She also demonstrated good communication skills – she describes her own style as delicate and sensitive.

“It was a unique chance to see why it is important to have women alongside male police officers. I saw with my own eyes how aggressive drunk men changed their whole demeanor as soon as a policewoman showed up at the scene. I also realized that women are generally trusted better. This is especially true for situations with women and children are present at the scene”, says Svitlana.

In her opinion, a modern police officer must act respectfully and tactfully, show good manners and speak politely while doing his or her job in a professional manner. Such was the aim for the new police after the reform. Svitlana recalls a situation when her colleagues and she helped neighbors resolve a conflict. “We were called by an elderly woman who got caught in an argument with the neighbors which she was not able to settle on her own. When the patrol unit showed up at the scene, the women observed the police officers talk while resolving the situation politely, delicately and tactfully. Soon the conflict was settled, and the claimant was extremely satisfied. When you see such situations or the face of a single grateful citizen, your spirits get sky-high.

Over the year the girl gained loads of invaluable experience and professional skills. However, it was the boost in self-



confidence that she considers her biggest achievement. When she first started the job, she felt that she lacked experience. However, at the end of the year she already started to understand her place in the law enforcement system, the potential areas of interest and professional ambitions.

After graduation Svitlana went to Zaporizhzhia – the city which she absolutely loves – and got an inspector’s job at Zaporizhzhia district police. This job is slightly different from the previous one in terms of scope and responsibilities because it is mostly office-based. Svitlana does paperwork related to human rights compliance and constantly learns something new. She is very grateful for the experience she gained in the patrol police. “That year was fantastic! I learned a lot from working with patrol police officers – first and foremost, how to communicate properly and effectively. This skill is extremely important for every police officer. Our district department receives visitors every day. And they treat me like any other professional law enforcement officer on the premises. I am a police officer first, and, therefore, I must walk the walk if I talk the talk. This provides a lot of motivation”, says Svitlana.

Despite her natural-born tenderness and delicate manners, the girl is clearly aware of her priorities and has many interests. They range from the political situation in the country, the global response to the pandemic, gender issues, and, of course, the police reform progress. She watches the news and in-depth analyses, and reads a lot. Svitlana never hesitated to join UAWLE to keep abreast of all the latest gender-related trends and take part in the events arranged by the Association.

“I am convinced that the government’s efforts towards increasing the number of women in law enforcement definitely pay off. Many situations encountered in the line of duty specifically require female experience. Despite the popular thought among police officers that natural female softness only gets in the way, in some situations it does help a lot. Depending on the situation, a woman can be tough and play hard. However, if the situation requires soft skills, both men and women should be able to demonstrate them – for example, be sensitive and compassionate”, says Svitlana.

The investigator’s job is one of the many possibilities for Svitlana’s career development. So far the girl is enjoying the job. She is not afraid of its grim aspects as she has already seen various kinds of investigative work up close. This is why she is confident about finding a specialization that best fits her personality.

In the free time Svitlana enjoys self-education and poetry. She actively takes part in various conferences and training courses whereas writing verse is a way of unloading her emotions without disturbing her family. “Reading your poems at a later time makes you realize the progress you have made while the emotions remain in the past”, says Svitlana. She is very grateful to her parents and her grandparents, and particularly to her grandmother, who is a linguist, for shaping her unique personality. “I’m lucky to have so much support from my family!” she adds.

To the soldier

My heart is shot through now with pain.
He marches the plato of death
And smiles to the stars every day.
He’s feeling the war’s deadly breath.

My soldier, he always protects
The country, despite roar of guns.
And for reunited Ukraine
He’s taking the gun in his arms.

I’m praying for him and I know
That heaven is hearing my speech.
My whisper is louder than storm.
He’ll come back alive with my preach.

Take care now, young soldier, take care.
I’m praying the fire restrains,
For war is a lethal affair...
I hope that the foe goes away.

You’re shielding us all with yourself,
With everything frightful – you cope.
Providing us all with a shell,
My charity, faith, and my hope.

There is no such thing as summer for a poet.
He is always in the autumn state of mind.
Soaking is the notebook of his sonnets,
Waterworn under the weeping skies.

Don’t prepare the Sun for him for Christmas,
That’s a present that he won’t accept.
Clouds above will make him soaring, fearless,
Or, alternatively, failure he will get.

You can hide the roses you had bought him,
He won’t see their beauty and their grace.
He collected leaves when it was storming,
Now examining with joy their yellow veins.

You should leave the poet with his autumn,
The most precious thing that he adores.
Let his failures and his soarings blossom
In the midst of grey and yellow words.

I’ll be there like autumnal maple leaves.
I’ll be there like the droplets of the rain.
I’ll always be with you although between
Us there’s a wall, which hasn’t broken yet.

I’ll be there in the snowy winter storms,
A little snowflake falling to your arms
Becoming water, though was ice before;
The bitter truth, a thousandth time we part.

I’ll be the snowdrop on the edge of spring,
I’ll melt the ice if you will be my sun.
We’re tied with an invisible red string.
You feel? I’m near. I’m standing right behind.

The words have all been woven. Now they wait,
Like petals of a rose, for you to see
The mastery with which their choice was made
By that in love – the poet is a she.

Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement

brings together women and men from various law enforcement agencies and institutions of higher education under the Ministry of Interior of Ukraine. Our goal is the implementation of gender equality and equal rights and opportunities for women and men in law enforcement agencies. One of UAWLE main functions is to create a network of law enforcement representatives throughout Ukraine for establishing a dialogue and sharing ideas.

The Association's objective is to strengthen the voice of women in law enforcement agencies, to promote their credibility and increase confidence in their capabilities. Higher visibility and involvement of women in the security and defense sector contributes to the development of stronger law enforcement institutions and increases public trust.

EUAM Ukraine

The European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine is a non-executive mission of the European Union. EUAM

Ukraine aims to assist the Ukrainian authorities towards a sustainable reform of the civilian security sector through strategic advice and hands-on support for specific reform measures based on EU standards and international principles of good governance and human rights.

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BOOK OF STORIES

Ukrainian Association of Women in Law Enforcement

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