

My job in international cooperation

Pascal Egloff



Age

29

Position

Junior professional officer within the Swiss JPO Programme, EBRD, London, United Kingdom

Education

Master in International Management, St. Gallen, Switzerland

Most significant jobs to date

Worked as analyst and credit specialist at Credit Suisse, Switzerland and UK

My motivation

Working in international cooperation has been a dream since I was seventeen. At the Career Orientation Centre, I found both diplomacy and international financial institutions (IFIs) fascinating. However, I took a different path for a while, until about a year ago, when I stumbled across cinfo's advertisement for the JPO position at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). At first, I was motivated by a desire for adventure, to see something else: a different city, a different culture, etc. But as it became more concrete, I was increasingly attracted by the fact that the EBRD is more than just a bank; its highest goal is to achieve transition and development.

«There was a different career feeling.»

My career path

It is difficult to say where I will be heading, since I am still young and there is still a year of my contract at EBRD to go. I hope that my career will evolve in this field. I could also well imagine moving to diplomacy at one point. In general I have a strong interest in working in the public sector. There might also be some interesting opportunities to move between departments, and switch positions in the bank itself. For the time being, I honestly like the fact that I do not need to know what is going to happen in two years. It is part of the adventure, and as long as you do not have a family it works perfectly this way.

My duties

I work in the power and energy sector, so we basically finance mostly renewable energy projects (wind farms, solar power plants, etc.). A typical working day does not really exist: It depends on the size of the project, the people you work with, the countries, the contacts, etc. The smaller the project, the more responsibility I get, and vice-versa. The most interesting part of the job is certainly the interaction with clients. For example, once I was in Kiev and took part at final negotiations and once I was in Hungary for monitoring purposes. It is very interesting, but it can also get exhausting: the rest of the work is still waiting for you on your desk, and nobody is going to do that for you!

The pros and cons

I appreciate the multicultural side of the bank, but it can also be very difficult, and I somehow underestimated it at first. It is hard to explain what the problem is: even small things, like humour, can become difficult. Have you ever tried making a joke when you have people of 15 countries around you? Nobody gets it! Another challenge is the political aspect of all the bank's processes: even though I made my apprenticeship within a local administration in Switzerland, I still underestimated it. The EBRD is much more politically oriented than I had imagined, and the various checks and balances slow the processes down by times.

What I've learnt

The longer I am here, the more I learn. You have to earn respect through good performance, but as long as your comments are good, they will always be taken into consideration. In this regard, it helps to never give up and be prepared to laugh about oneself sometimes. I realized that humor is fundamental when working in a new environment (as in many other life situations). Last but not least, being humble seems to be deep in the Swiss cultural heritage. However in a multinational environment I really had to practice to be proud on my achievements and also to sell myself in the correct light.

Life in London

London is very busy compared to the cities in Switzerland, but the area where I live is very quiet and I can walk/bike to work. Initially I missed the mountains and nature, so I started a new hobby. Looking for something 'British', I decided to start sailing. I enjoy it: it makes me relax, and takes my mind off of everything else. It is not always easy to find time for yourself in this bustling city, so I think it is important to take the weekends to switch off.

My advice to those wishing to start their professional life with an IFI

First of all, I would tell them that the JPO programme is a great opportunity to get a foot into international financial institutions. Once you are in this 'IFI bubble', it is much easier to move

between the various institutions, or maybe even to come back to Switzerland and work in a governmental finance position. Moreover, as a JPO, you have a bit of freedom to explore the organisation, which really helps to get the most out of the experience.

Another piece of advice would be that if you have the chance to work for an IFI, do it, it is an excellent opportunity. You will benefit from learning from other cultures, from living abroad, from seeing different organisations and their structures. You will broaden your horizons, physically, but also mentally. Consider yourself privileged that you have the chance to do something like that.

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