

10 facts you did not know about International Financial Institutions

Overcoming today's global challenges, for instance poverty or inequality, increasingly calls for coordinated approaches within the international community. Due to their complexity, political sensitivity or the volume of financing required, such challenges exceed the capacity of bilateral cooperation. Multilateral institutions, such as international development banks, are in a position to deal with these issues in a broader manner. Learn more about these institutions and their career opportunities in this article.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are banking institutions with large memberships including developed donor countries as well as developing borrower countries. IFIs finance development projects in the latter around the world either through long-term loans at market rates – or in some cases below – or through grants. This approach distinguishes these institutions from donor-based methods applied by the UN, for instance, where projects are sponsored without recovery obligation.

The term IFIs includes the World Bank (WB), which was created at the Bretton Woods conference in 1944. It also includes the following four regional development banks which, among others, collaborate with the WB and operate with a local focus:

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- The African Development Bank (AfDB)
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)
- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

Seeing as Switzerland is a member State of all of them, Swiss nationals are eligible to apply to positions they offer. However, these institutions and their various career opportunities are not commonly known in Switzerland. For this reason, cinfo compiled the following list with 10 facts you probably did not know about IFIs.

1. The WB consists of two institutions, the WBG of five and is part of the UN system

The WB comprises two institutions managed by 188 member states which act as borrowers, lenders or donors and which collectively set out policies and oversee operations:

- [The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development \(IBRD\)](#)
- [The International Development Association \(IDA\)](#)

These institutions are part of a larger body known as the «World Bank Group» (WBG), consisting of five institutions in total:

- The IBRD
- The IDA
- [The International Finance Corporation \(IFC\)](#)
- [The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency \(MIGA\)](#)
- [The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes \(ICSID\)](#)

The WBG is part of the UN Economic and Social Council, which is one of the five principal UN organs. Within this organ the group belongs to the so-called «Specialised Agencies», which are all autonomous organisations collaborating with the UN and among each other. To get an overview have a look at the [UN System Organisational Chart](#).

2. The WBG is the world's largest funder of...¹

- ...education
- ...the fight against HIV/AIDS
- ...biodiversity projects
- ...water supply and sanitation projects

Additionally, the WBG is...

- ...a leader in the fight against corruption worldwide
- ...a strong supporter of debt relief

While the four regional Development banks have a local focus, they deal with a similar variety of thematic fields. This thematic variety further represents the considerable amount of career opportunities available within these institutions.

For more detailed facts and figures see «[A Guide to the World Bank: Third Edition](#)».

3. IFIs do not only employ economists and finance specialists

IFIs are continually looking for experienced professionals, generally with a minimum of five years' relevant experience and a graduate or post-graduate degree (Master or PhD). In order to respond to current and upcoming developments, employees of IFIs are highly multidisciplinary. The types of fields asked for in job vacancies can be as broad as public policy, education management, social sciences, environmental sciences or public health. Profiles in demand therefore include: specialists in renewable energy, security, water and sanitation, social development, natural resources, and infrastructure, but of course also management and corporate functions like HR or ICT. Interesting new types of profiles additionally include fiscal and municipal management specialists and environmental or social safeguards specialists. An upcoming and growing focus lies on fragile states and rural development. Hence, professionals with background and experience in disaster management, reconstruction, governance, as well as food and nutrition are attracted as well.

The respective career websites of the organisations provide more concise information about current profiles needed.

4. IFIs also take into account soft skills when selecting candidates

In addition to hard skills, applicants to an IFI will often be asked to demonstrate a range of soft skills. These include for example a strong commitment to development, leadership capabilities, project management skills, planning and organisational skills, the ability to work in a team and so on. Soft skills like these will often need to be demonstrated through work experience. For

¹ See [About the World Bank Group](#)

this reason the most common form of job interviews are «Competency-based Interviews». Find more information about this specific type of interviews [here](#).

5. Staff of IFIs work in the field²

The WB has over 100 offices across the world, spread over six regions: East Asia, South Asia, Europe and Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. The bank employs about 70% of its staff at its headquarters, with the other 30% working in regional offices across the world. Currently, all IFIs focus on decentralisation, meaning that an increasing number of offices will in the future be located in the field. This results in more career opportunities in local units around the globe and implies that working for an IFI increasingly means working abroad in positions spread across the world.

→ [More about decentralisation in general](#)

6. IFIs offer compensation just as appealing as in the private sector

The IFIs' remuneration policies seek to be competitive with the private sector, as well as similar institutions. Depending on the respective organisation, salaries are complemented by benefits that may include:

- contributions to pension plan
- paid annual leave (as well as additional maternity/paternity leave)
- medical, life and disability insurance
- resettlement relocation and expatriate benefits

Senior staff at the IFC point out that the overall package, also including mobility allowance, in combination with a comparatively stable working environment makes remuneration of IFIs interesting and competitive.³ Find more information about the specific arrangements regarding remuneration and benefits on the respective career websites.

7. IFIs provide an attractive range of career opportunities to students and young professionals

Internship Programmes

With exception of the EBRD⁴ every IFI runs an Internship Programme which aims at providing students with an opportunity to acquire professional and practical experience and the bank itself with a pool of potential candidates for future recruitment purposes. To be eligible, candidates need to be enrolled in a Master's- or – in some cases – a PhD-level-programme. Internships are paid and are of four weeks up to six months in duration. The recruitment is normally carried out in several batches over the year.

² See [About the World Bank](#)

³ Read more about it in the following interview: [From the corporate private sector to an international finance institution](#)

⁴ Although it does not offer a formal internship programme, the EBRD still offers internships on an ad hoc basis.

Note: The WB's Internship Programme is not a programme per se but rather a database where candidates can register and which will be scanned whenever an intern is needed. Therefore, personal contacts and a network at the bank are indispensable in order to stand out from the large amount of applicants. Furthermore, the WB and EBRD offer a donor funded Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme. Read more about it below or on cinfo's website.

Young Professionals Programmes (YPP)

All IFIs offer a Young Professionals Programme (YPP) which aims at attracting highly qualified young professionals with leadership potential from their member countries. Candidates need to show commitment to development, have demonstrated outstanding academic and professional achievement, as well as effective team work. To be eligible, candidates in most cases need to be below 32 years of age and have a minimum of three years of relevant work experience. YPPs normally offer two- to three-year appointments including several rotational assignments within the organisation.

Note: EBRD's corresponding programme is called International Professionals Programme (IPP).

8. IFIs also offer entry opportunities for recent graduates with a strong academic background

In addition to the Internship and the YP Programmes two other entry-level programmes are offered by the IDB and the WBG, which aim at attracting recent graduates with superior academic achievements and strong research abilities:

- The IDB's Research Fellows Programme. Job vacancies for this programme are published on a regular basis throughout the year and assignments are of some months up to three years in duration.
- The World Bank Group's Analyst Programme. Formerly the Junior Professional Associates (JPA) Programme, the Analyst Programme is similar to the YPP in terms of mentoring and training, but recruits younger professionals who work on a lower job grade than the YPP.

9. IFIs offer donor funded working opportunities for mid-career professional

Such donor funded positions, also called secondments, are agreements in the form of contracts between a particular (private sector) institution or government agency and the IFI's hosting unit. A secondment enables employees to leave their permanent positions in their home countries for a limited time period to fulfil specific activities and tasks that fit the overall mandate and objectives of the hosting agency. These placements give mid-term professionals the opportunity of acquiring new skills whilst continuing their employment with the same organisation.

For instance, within the framework of the WB's Donor Funded Staffing Programme (DFSP), donor countries are in charge of the advertisement of open positions as well as of the salaries and benefits. For this reason donor funded positions are restricted to donor's nationals.

10. IFIs offer a range of consulting and temporary appointments

All IFIs offer a considerable amount of consulting and temporary opportunities in various forms, requiring different levels of professional experience. For instance, the AfDB regularly advertises vacancies for Junior Consultants and most IFIs distinguish between Long / Extended Term Consultancies and Short Term Consultancies. As regular career opportunities, consultancies are offered both in a nearly unlimited range of thematic fields and are located at headquarters as well as in field offices. More concise information and current vacancies can be found on the respective websites:

- [The African Development Bank \(AfDB\)](#)
- [The Asian Development Bank \(ADB\)](#)
- [The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development \(EBRD\)](#)
- [The Inter-American Development Bank \(IDB\)](#)
- [The World Bank \(WB\)](#)

Note: Short Term Consultancies are not always publicly advertised but often given to personal contacts. For this reason it is important for any prospective candidate to establish a network within the respective institution in order to increase chances to become a Short Term Consultant.

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