



# Working for International Financial Institutions

International Financial Institutions (IFIs) offer interesting career opportunities to both experienced and junior professionals in various areas, including finance, economics, or development. What does it mean working for an IFI; what are the profiles in demand, employment conditions and selection processes?

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# Introduction



The first International Financial Institutions (IFIs) were established after World War II, notably at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference, to help rebuild war-torn Europe and Japan and establish mechanisms for managing the global financial system. Several regional development banks were created in the following decades, aiming to foster economic growth and cooperation on their respective continents.

Today, the focus of IFIs is still on developing and transitioning countries. Beyond the key objectives of poverty reduction, social equality and sustainable economic growth, their outlook has expanded to numerous sectors, including education, governance and rule of law, private sector development, and environmental resource management. This wide range of fields offers exciting and challenging employment opportunities for qualified professionals with diverse backgrounds, skills and aspirations.

This publication provides an overview of employment opportunities at selected IFIs where the Swiss government has a particular interest in increasing the number of Swiss professionals, such as the World Bank (WB), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Switzerland is a member of each of these banks and Swiss nationals are welcome to apply for all available international positions.

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**«The Swiss government encourages Swiss professionals to start a career in IFIs.»**

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# IFIs: How they work and what they do

IFIs, also known as multilateral development banks, were collectively founded by groups of countries and are owned and managed by national governments acting as borrowers, lenders or donors. Members collectively set out policies and oversee operations.

## Membership

Membership consists of both developing borrower countries and developed donor countries. The IDB, for example, has 26 borrowing members out of a total membership of 48. The borrowing member states hold 50% of the voting power on the IDB's board. The EBRD has 62 shareholders, including the countries of operation, all EU countries, the European Commission, and the European Investment Bank.

## Mission

The mission of an IFI is to promote the investment of public and private capital into projects and programmes that will contribute to economic development in its countries of operation. To this end, IFIs finance projects run either by governments or the private sector through long-term, low-interest loans, credits, and grants. IFIs operate through shareholdings, trade services and bank shares, and provide technical advice to governments, private enterprises and civil society. In addition, development banks offer policy advice and conduct research and analysis. Many IFIs also engage in advocating regional cooperation and dialogue on development issues, notably by organising donor conferences and international policy forums. Many IFIs extend debt relief to their poorest member countries.

## Objectives

These and other measures aim to achieve the main goals of ending extreme poverty, eliminating social inequality, and improving living conditions in developing and transitioning countries. The EBRD is specifically focused on the latter. It was established in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with an emphasis on supporting market reforms that strengthen democracy. In contrast to the other IFIs, therefore, the EBRD has a political mandate and assists only countries that apply the principles of multi-party democracy and pluralism.

IFIs operate on the premise that income growth, particularly amongst those most affected by poverty, leads to the development of society as a whole, and benefits fragile states. The recent emphasis on environmental sustainability has simultaneously given rise to a new focus on projects that promote renewable energy and respond to climate change. The ADB has a particularly strong interest in environmental sustainability and projects in various fields integrate this aspect as one of its transversal themes. Other «cross-cutting solutions areas» (in the World Bank Group's terminology) common to many IFIs are gender, public-private partnerships, and anti-corruption.

Although IFIs were originally created with the aim of assisting governments, today a considerable amount of their operations also target the private sector, which is considered a crucial vector of development. In the 1950s, the IFC was founded as a new entity to explicitly foster private enterprise. Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development and promoting foreign direct investment have meanwhile become important IFI activities.



**IFIs promote the investment of public and private capital into projects and programmes that contribute to the economic development of a country.**

## Sectors of work

IFIs finance programmes and projects in extremely diverse thematic areas. The WB is the world's largest external education funder, but it also supports biodiversity projects, to name but two areas. IFIs are involved in energy and transport infrastructure; agriculture and fisheries projects address food security; IFIs fund public health, water and sanitation programmes; and information and communication as well as industry and trade promotion are further areas of interest. Finally, IFIs work on improving governance and the rule of law, for example through judicial reform.

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«IFIs seek to reduce poverty and to support sustainable growth.»

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## Examples of projects

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### ADB

**Clean energy in China:** Application of new technologies to capture methane gas from coal mines and convert it into clean electricity.

**Food safety in Mongolia:** Creation of a food stamp programme targeting the poorest 5% of the population, thus enabling the systematic identification of poor families for future social welfare programmes.

**Private sector development in Pacific Island countries:** Implementation of policy reforms to simplify and modernise business laws, making it easier to start and operate a business.

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### IDB

**Labour market in Honduras:** Financing of an employment promotion programme for young people, aimed at reducing youth unemployment.

**Sustainable tourism in the Dominican Republic:** Promotion of coral gardening as a resort-supported profession and establishment of coral gardening destinations, thus transforming coral reef restoration and conservation into revenue streams and raising environmental awareness in the tourism industry and associated communities.

**Water and sanitation in Nicaragua:** Rehabilitation, expansion and optimisation of the potable water and sewerage system in Managua.

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### EBRD

**Agribusiness in Serbia:** Introduction of a geographical indication scheme for sour cherry producers, thus enabling farmers to protect local production and market their produce more effectively.

**Energy efficiency in Moldova:** Funding, through local banks, of energy-saving measures in residential buildings.

**Transport infrastructure in Armenia:** Rehabilitation and upgrade of the Yerevan metro in order to improve transport safety and relieve traffic congestion in the city.

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Source: Websites of ADB, IDB, and EBRD

# About a career in IFIs

IFIs offer intriguing work opportunities in different thematic areas. What does the workforce of IFIs look like, what are the sought profiles, entry possibilities and employment conditions?

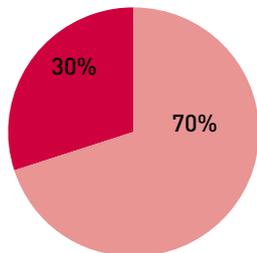
## IFI staff and Swiss representation

The WB and the IFC are both part of the World Bank Group<sup>1</sup> and employ respectively 11,000 and 4,000 staff members. The regional development banks have between 1,500 and 3,000 staff members, who are all nationals of member states. Swiss staff are generally underrepresented: in 2014 only five were working at the ADB, and seven at both the IDB and the EBRD. The WB Group employed a total of 48 Swiss nationals, 17 at the IFC.<sup>2</sup>

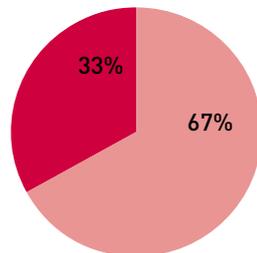
## Percentages of HQ and field staff

IFI positions are largely based at headquarters, and between 30 and 50 per cent in regional or country offices.

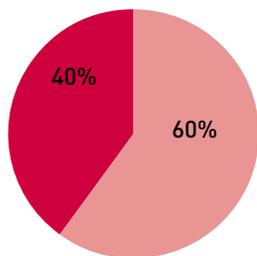
WB:



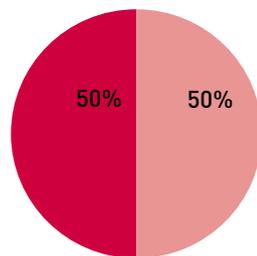
IDB and EBRD:



ADB and AfDB:



IFC:



■ Staff in field offices ■ Staff at headquarters

cinfo

Source: Survey with Human Resources of WBG, ADB, AfDB, IDB, EBRD

<sup>1</sup> The World Bank (WB) comprises the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA). Together with the IFC and two other institutions, they make up the World Bank Group.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Survey with Human Resources of WBG, ADB, AfDB, IDB, EBRD

## Testimonial

Robert Pantzer  
IDB in Bogotá



«Being posted in a field office allows you to feel the everyday impact of your work more directly than at headquarters. It allows you to engage in direct dialogue with the government and to follow the changes taking place.»

Read the full testimonial on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

The graph to the left shows that international IFI staff work predominantly at headquarters. Postings in regional or country offices are however a possibility, also for external candidates, and are specified in job announcements. Some IFIs set limits to field appointments: at ADB, there is a limit of five years, after which staff are required to return to Manila headquarters.

Swiss professionals can apply for any international appointment, including locally recruited positions. IFIs such as the WB acquire a part of their international staff, who may hold any nationality, through local recruitment. Locally recruited employees often enjoy the same conditions as internationally recruited staff in terms of salary scale, but are paid in the local currency.

In addition to international appointments, most IFIs have national positions reserved for citizens of the country of operation. The ratio of international to national staff differs greatly from one IFI to another. The IDB's workforce, for example, consists of 80 per cent internationals. The ADB employs a majority of national citizens and international staff comprises 36 per cent. The AfDB is distinctive in that much of its international workforce is African. Qualified Swiss candidates are nevertheless in demand and thus strongly encouraged to apply.

IFIs engage in efforts to increase diversity in gender, nationality and ethnic background in the work place. Therefore, applications from qualified women are sought for.

IFIs do not employ economists or finance specialists only.



## Profiles and requirements

The varied work of IFIs has led to a multidisciplinary workforce. Contrary to popular belief, IFIs do not employ only economists or finance specialists.

### Profiles in demand

Sought-after academic and professional backgrounds range from social protection, natural resource management, and law, to human resources, public health or engineering. Experience in transversal themes such as gender, climate change, or public-private partnerships is also in demand. The IFC and the EBRD focus on the financial sector and have more of a need for candidates with a background in finance or economics. Investment analysts or business consultants are welcome, as are legal advisors, ICT and other professionals from the corporate world. Indeed, many IFIs value private sector experience. The IFC in particular recruits largely from the non-public sector, and almost half of current WB employees have worked in the business world. At the IDB, 25–30 per cent of recent hires have private sector experience.

### Requirements

All external vacancies are advertised on IFIs' career websites with clear indications of the different requirements, which can be very specific to each job description.

#### Minimum requirements (excluding junior programmes)

- Master's degree or PhD
- At least 4–5 years of relevant work experience, but many externally advertised positions require 8–10 years
- International experience
- Proficiency in English; French, Spanish or Portuguese required depending on the IFI and duty station. Arabic, Chinese or Russian may be necessary for many WB positions.
- Volunteer work, internships and academic research can be important assets if relevant for the position in question.

#### Soft skills

- Commitment to and understanding of development issues
- Team work
- Client engagement and communication
- Leadership and problem-solving skills
- Initiative and creativity
- Competencies in project management, planning and organisation
- Writing and presentation skills

Source: Survey with Human Resources of WBG, ADB, AfDB, IDB, EBRD

## Conditions of employment

IFIs have two broad appointment categories: staff and consultants.

### Staff positions

In all IFIs, except the EBRD, initial positions are subject to fixed-term contracts, many of which can be renewed or converted into permanent (open-ended) appointments after a few years. The WB Group and the AfDB, which no longer offer permanent contracts, are the exception.

### Consultancies

Consultants are not regular staff, so do not benefit from IFIs' career management schemes. A consultancy, however, is

#### Testimonial

**Pia Schneider**  
WB in Washington DC

«Many young people start as consultants and eventually get hired as staff.»



Read the full testimonial on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

## Contract types for staff members and consultants

IFI	Staff contracts	Duration	Consultant contracts	Duration
<b>WB Group</b>	Short Term	Max. 150 days in the course of a year	Short Term	Max. 150 days in the course of a year
	Extended Term	1 yr, renewable once	Extended Term	1 yr, renewable once
	Term	1–5 yrs		
<b>ADB</b>	Fixed Term	3 yrs, renewable	Various	Various
	Permanent	Only after a fixed term contract		
<b>AfDB</b>	Fixed Term	Max. 3 yrs renewable	Various	Various
<b>IDB</b>	Fixed Term	Max. 3 yrs renewable	Temporary Term	Max. 1.5 yrs
			Defined Term	1.5–4 yrs
			Research Fellow	1–3 yrs
			Associate Professional Officer	1–3 yrs
	Permanent	Only after a fixed term contract		
<b>EBRD</b>	Short Term	A few weeks up to 2 yrs	Various	Various
	Fixed Term	Min. 2 yrs		
	Permanent	Possible also for initial positions		

Source: Survey with Human Resources of WBG, ADB, AfDB, IDB, EBRD

an excellent way to enter and become acquainted with an organisation, to prove oneself and to create an internal network. A consultancy often leads to a subsequent staff position or can at least provide a comparative advantage when applying for a regular position. At the IDB, for example, there are slightly less than 2,000 staff members and more than 2,000 consultants.

### Salaries

IFIs' remuneration policies seek to be competitive with the private sector and other international organisations. International salaries are set in reference to the global market equivalent, denominated in US dollars and generally tax-exempt. In most IFIs, different job grades accompany a fixed salary scale that is adjusted annually. The salary scale of the WB Group is presented below. While every IFI has its own index, they remain

within similar ranges. The salary scales of other IFIs can be found on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch).

### Benefits

Once a job has been offered, the employer will assist the candidate with obtaining a work visa and finding housing, although this may depend on the type of contract. Staff members (but not consultants) receive the usual benefits, including medical insurance for themselves and dependents, life and disability insurance, annual leave, and a pension scheme. In addition, staff members receive compensation and support in matters related to international postings, such as full relocation and installation allowance, housing assistance, children's education grants and other support.

### WB Group net salary scale as per July 1, 2014 in USD

Grade	Representative positions	Minimum	Midpoint	Maximum
GB	Team Assistant; Information Technician	30,100	43,000	55,900
GC	Programme Assistant; Information Assistant	37,200	53,100	69,000
GD	Senior Programme Assistant; Information Specialist	43,900	62,700	81,500
GE	Analyst	58,900	84,200	109,500
GF	Professional	78,300	111,900	145,500
GG	Senior Professional	105,700	151,000	196,300
GH	Manager; Lead Professional	144,000	205,700	267,400
GI	Director; Senior Advisor	220,800	276,000	331,200
GJ	Vice-President	266,600	313,700	360,800
GK	Managing Director; Executive Vice-President	296,500	348,800	401,100

Source: WBG Human Resources

## Possibilities for young professionals

IFIs have a strong interest in promoting young talent, and an excellent entry point for young professionals is through one of the many career programmes on offer.

### Programmes for young professionals

These programmes have different eligibility requirements and hence offer different working conditions. Some require enrolment in a study programme, and others several years of work experience. Some programmes may lead to a regular staff contract; others foresee the continuation of studies or a six-month absence from the institution before a regular position can be taken up. Some junior programmes are advertised throughout the year, while others have annual intake periods with long application procedures.

What is common to all junior programmes is their competitive nature: speaking several languages; field work and professional experience; and knowledge of both the public and private sectors are all important assets that IFIs look out for. In addition, applications should clearly demonstrate a commitment to development work, leadership qualities, and team skills.

The following table presents important commonalities of the different programmes and positions on offer and are summaries intended to give an overview only. Exact conditions and eligibility criteria for individual programmes are best found directly on each IFI's website.

## General overview of programmes and positions

IFI	Programmes or positions
<b>WB Group (incl. WB and IFC)</b>	Young Professionals Programme (YPP)
	Analyst Programme
	Internships
<b>ADB</b>	YPP
	Internship Programme
<b>AfDB</b>	YPP
	Junior Consultants
	Internship Programme
<b>IDB</b>	YPP
	Research Fellows Programme
	Internship Programme
<b>EBRD</b>	International Professionals Programme (IPP)
	Internships

Source: Survey with Human Resources of WBG, ADB, AfDB, IDB, EBRD

«Junior Professional Officer positions financed by the Swiss government are attractive entry possibilities as their selection process is open to Swiss nationals only, and hence less competitive.»

## Description of programmes and positions

	YPP/IPP	Internships	Others
<b>Description</b>	YPs/IPs are full-time staff members intending to pursue a career at that IFI. Programmes involve interdepartmental rotation – incl. to field offices – and combine project work with training and coaching. Job grade F	Graduate or undergraduate students who undertake substantial project support during a study break. Some IFIs accept recent graduates (max. one year past graduation).	<b>WBG Analyst Programme:</b> Similar to the YPP, but recruits younger professionals who work on a lower job grade (E) <b>AfDB Junior Consultants:</b> Young professionals with a consultant contract who conduct research and/or assist Senior Consultants <b>IDB Research Fellows Programme:</b> Under a consultant contract, RFs perform research or other activities enabling them to expand their managerial, administrative and technical skills.
<b>Duration</b>	2 or 3 years	Between 1 and 6 months; extendable up to one year at EBRD	<b>WBG Analyst Programme:</b> 3 years <b>AfDB Junior Consultants:</b> 6 months <b>IDB Research Fellows:</b> max. 3 years
<b>Age limit for applicants</b>	Between 31 and 33; no age limit at EBRD	30 (AfDB, IDB) or none (WBG, ADB, EBRD)	Between 28 and 32
<b>Academic background</b>	At least a Master's degree	Enrolled or recently graduated, usually to Master's level	<b>WBG Analyst Programme:</b> Master's or Bachelor's degree <b>AfDB Junior Consultants:</b> Master's degree <b>IDB Research Fellows:</b> Enrolled or recently graduated (at least Bachelor's)
<b>Previous work experience (incl. internships and volunteer work)</b>	At least 2 or 3 years in an area relevant to the IFI; 1–3 years at EBRD	Some experience is beneficial	Between 3 and 5 years max. in specific areas designated by the Bank
<b>Language requirements</b>	Proficiency in English. Other IFI working languages are required or at least advantageous, depending on the IFI.	Proficiency in English. Requirements regarding other IFI languages are less stringent, but these remain advantageous.	Same as for YPP/IPP
<b>Recruitment</b>	Yearly application period	2 or 3 application periods per year; continuous advertisement at EBRD	<b>WBG Analyst Programme:</b> Yearly application period <b>Others:</b> continuous advertisement
<b>Number of positions annually</b>	WBG 30–40; ADB 5–6; AfDB 15–20; IDB 10; EBRD 5 or 10	WBG 150–200; ADB 25 max.; AfDB 65; IDB 40; EBRD 65	
<b>Compensation</b>	Professional staff salary according to education and experience, plus benefits	Stipend or hourly salary; travel allowance from some IFIs	<b>WBG Analyst Programme:</b> Professional staff salary plus benefits <b>Others:</b> Consultant salary, no benefits but occasional travel allowance

Source: Survey with Human Resources of WBG, ADB, AfDB, IDB, EBRD



**A majority of young professionals are retained at the end of a junior programme.**

### **Junior Professional Officer (JPO) positions**

In addition, several IFIs employ Junior Professional Officers. Sponsored by their respective governments, JPOs are integrated into a special IFI-internal career development and mentoring programme. Given the relatively small number of applicants, the chances of being selected in one's own country are considerably higher than for young professional programmes, which are open to all nationals of member states and therefore highly competitive. In Switzerland, all JPO candidates are recruited by cinfo in collaboration with the funding government agency State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and the IFI. The different recruitments taking place throughout the year are announced on cinfo's website, together with accompanying information.

### **Subsequent employment and career perspectives**

Programmes for young professionals are ideal opportunities for highly qualified, dedicated and energetic people to start a career at an IFI. These programmes are intended to acquire and train talent for long-term employment, giving participants the chance to subsequently obtain consultant or even regular international staff contracts. Indeed, the majority of JPOs working for IFIs are retained at the end of their tenure. Some IFIs, such as the IDB, may even invite a young professional to fill a regular staff position before the end of the programme; at the ADB, participants become eligible for regular appointments in their second rotational year. There is nevertheless no guarantee of subsequent employment. For a young professional on an appointment it is therefore crucial to take initiative, keep notes about project involvement and, most importantly build a network within the IFI. Professional performance and personal competencies are naturally the primary prerequisites for success.

## Attractiveness and challenges of IFI employment

By working for an IFI, one contributes directly to the efforts of the international community in promoting economic and social development, reducing poverty and preserving the environment for future generations. Dedicating one's knowledge, energy and time to these goals can provide a new outlook and add meaning to a career.

### Thematic and interdisciplinary expertise

IFI employees get to work in a multicultural team, live in a foreign country, and gain exposure to an institutional environment that may be very different to their habitual one in Switzerland. They are able to expand their expertise on a specific region and on developing and transitioning countries, while working with a diverse group of people in competitive international conditions.

### Mobility

IFIs employees have the opportunity to move within and between sectors of the organisation as well as between different locations. This mobility allows employees to acquire experience and new skills in diverse areas and environments – although transfer possibilities are always dependent on internal needs and requirements of the respective departments. Employees may be able to initiate their own move or may be required to be flexible in situations where the employer requests a transfer of expertise to another unit or duty station.

### Living conditions and family

As described above, IFI employees may find themselves based in the field at some point in their career. Up to half of all IFI staff work in country offices, many of which are in developing countries. Apart from possibly lower living standards, these postings may place security-related restrictions on staff and their families. In most duty stations, partners and families can accompany employees. In certain countries, mainly in Africa, this may not be possible due to security constraints. The AfDB listed eight countries as non-family duty stations in early 2015. Situations do change, however, and the number of employees working in such locations is at any rate quite small. The desires and aspirations of staff members are taken into consideration in any mobility-related decisions. Whether you are based at headquarters or in the field, frequent travel is a feature of many IFI positions and this can take its toll in the long term.

### Length of assignment

In most IFIs, initial appointments are on a fixed-term basis only. Some, but not all, are later converted into a permanent position. Employees are therefore required to look for a subsequent position if they wish to continue working for the institution. A technically broad profile, with good personal competencies and solid performance results will increase the chances of a contract extension or internal transfer.

## Flexible work arrangements

IFIs generally demand a constant office presence and part-time work is usually not possible. Some employees may find it a challenge to be able to manage family and private life. Most IFIs do allow an arrangement for variable or compressed work schedules, but while work from home may be approved in individual cases, it is not yet often applied.

### Testimonial

Laurent Corthay  
WB Group in Nairobi

«Working with the WB opens many doors. You gain access to knowledge and resources that may otherwise be hard to obtain. You can call on leading policymakers, businessmen and academics and usually they will respond. If you use these resources in the right way, they can help to achieve really big things.»



Read the full testimonial on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

# Recruitment and career development

IFIs' recruitment processes differ from those applied in corporate firms, and often require a bit of patience. Once one is on board, there are many possibilities for long-term career development.

## Application and selection process

IFIs have detailed career websites where different types of employment are described and open vacancies are listed. The entire application is completed through an online procedure. IFIs generally advertise jobs externally only if internal candidates cannot immediately fill them. However, external postings still remain open to internal competition.

## Recruitment process

The selection process usually starts once the deadline closes, but may begin earlier. Once the application has been submitted through the online system, it is screened by the human resources department, which then sends a longlist of candidates to the operational unit. The operational unit decides on a shortlist of candidates, who are invited for interviews. Interviews are conducted either by telephone, Skype or face-to-face and sometimes include a case study. Several rounds of talks and assessments may follow.

Candidates are generally able to monitor the status of their application on the IFI's career website. They should be prepared for a long recruitment process: it may take between 50 and 75 days from the application deadline until the final offer of employment, but longer waits are not uncommon, particularly in special cases. Due to the large number of applications, IFIs usually do not notify candidates who have not been selected for the shortlist. This should not discourage interested candidates: not being considered for one position does not mean one is an unsuitable candidate for that or other IFIs. It is recommended to keep applying: there is no limit to the number of applications one is allowed to submit.

## Internal rosters

IFIs do not accept unsolicited applications, which are hindered by the obligatory online application system. However, some IFIs maintain internal rosters. The WB Group, for example, keeps a database of candidates with profiles deemed potentially suitable for future positions. These candidates may have been identified through career fairs and other events, or had previously applied for a vacancy but were not shortlisted for that specific job. The ADB offers an interesting option by publishing a list of anticipated vacancies on its website. Applicants appraised as interesting are included in an internal ADB database, and may be contacted if they fit a specific profile sought at a later stage. Candidates may not necessarily be informed that they have been put on a roster. These examples show that it makes sense for interested professionals to apply for anticipated vacancies. They should also go to job fairs, pass their CV to IFI representatives, and keep informed on how to optimise their profile and application.

### Testimonial

Urs Stauffer  
IFC in Washington DC

«If you are not contacted for the position you applied for, do not give up. This does not mean that your profile is not interesting.»



Read the full testimonial on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

### Testimonial

Martin Bühler  
IFC in Washington DC

«Everything can change within a few months and then you can go on for two, three, four years until you want to do something else. On the other hand, if you choose to become one of the best in your profession, you can stay in your position and go as deep as you want to.»



Read the full testimonial on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

## Career development

In the past, most IFIs took responsibility for managing their staff's professional development, but today this is generally considered to be the individual's task. If staff members want to advance their career within an IFI, it is often up to them to apply for a new position at the end of a contract.

### Promotion and career development

IFIs do provide support through organisational staff management frameworks that define transparent guidelines, policies and procedures regarding promotions and career development. Each position is graded according to different levels and defined, expected outputs. Employees therefore have a certain degree of clarity about what is possible and required to advance within the IFI, and are encouraged to define a direction, create a personal development plan, and consult with managers on performance, aspirations and compensation. Given the broad range of thematic areas and functions, sectoral and geographical mobility is valued and offers several options. Staff members may decide to specialise in an area of expertise

or move across different sectors and duty stations. Possibilities for advancement depend on vacancies becoming available and presuppose a certain degree of stability. Staff members are usually expected to stay in the same post or job level for at least two to four years before applying for or being promoted to a new position. Taking the initiative is more advisable than waiting for the employer to make an offer.

The graph below shows possible career paths at the IDB. Other IFIs have similar frameworks for professional advancement. In general, career schemes apply to staff members only and do not include consultants, interns, etc.

In the IDB, as in other IFIs, career advancement takes place either through promotion based on performance, length of time in the position, and business needs, or through competition for an open vacancy. Although IFIs do not guarantee further employment at the end of a contract, they are nevertheless relatively job-secure for regular staff. Accordingly, staff turnover is generally low (under 5 per cent at the IDB).

## Career Management Framework at the IDB

Support		Technical		Managerial	
				Country Representative	R
		1	Principal Tech. Leader/Pr. Advisor	Division Chief	1
		2	Principal Specialist/Sr. Advisor	Unit Chief	2
		3	Lead Specialist/Advisor	Section/Area Chief	3
		4	Senior Specialist		
		5	Specialist		
		6	Senior Associate		
		7	Associate		
8	Sr. Administrative Coordinator	8	Senior Analyst		
9	Administrative Coordinator	9	Analyst		
10	Senior Assistant				
11	Assistant				
12	Administrative Support				

Source: IDB Human Resources

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# Switzerland and IFIs

## «Swiss staff bring in views on topics where Switzerland has a proven track record»

**Interview with Daniel Birchmeier, Head of Multilateral Cooperation at the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO**

### **Info: What is the significance of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) for Switzerland?**

**Daniel Birchmeier:** Overcoming today's global development challenges requires coordinated approaches. IFIs are uniquely positioned to address these challenges both at the global and regional levels. They can facilitate the dialogue among states, create a space for exchange of best practices, and disseminate innovative solutions that are relevant for dealing with global challenges. IFIs play an important role in identifying the most promising financial and policy instruments that can incentivize sustainable and productive private sector engagement and support governments in increasing their domestic resource mobilization. Switzerland has itself a strong track record in many areas of interest to IFIs and the benefiting poorer countries, and is collaborating closely with IFIs such as the World Bank and regional development banks. Therefore, these organisations occupy an important place in Switzerland's international cooperation and are among the key partners in its bilateral projects. Switzerland is also represented in the decision-making bodies of the IFIs, thereby contributing to shaping the strategic and operational orientation of the institutions.



### **Why does the Swiss government want to increase the number of its nationals working for IFIs?**

I believe that diversity of staff is a key asset for any institution working in development cooperation – diversity in academic backgrounds, gender, ethnicities but also languages is essential for the professionalism and quality of an IFI's work. International bodies can therefore only benefit from

having people from many different countries, bringing in their views on a variety of topics. Switzerland is among the countries which have many years of experience in economic development, poverty reduction, and in tackling global challenges such as climate change, energy and water related issues, or fragility. The multilateral development banks play a key role in these fields. However, Swiss representation within IFIs is relatively low. Bringing in our views on specific topics where Switzerland has a proven track record, in order to influence the strategic and operational orientation of IFIs, is of mutual benefit. And it helps to increase the visibility of Switzerland in these institutions.

### **What makes Swiss expertise unique for an IFI?**

I believe that working as Swiss for a multilateral organization is an effective way to promote the values attributed to our culture – including quality. The Swiss education system is one of the best worldwide, and Swiss professionals have unique experiences in important fields such as finance, cooperation



**Swiss employees find it rewarding to support the international community in addressing global challenges.**

or environment that make them attractive candidates for IFIs. Swiss professionals are usually fluent in at least three languages, which is one of the prerequisites to compete with the brightest, most talented individuals worldwide.

### **How does the government benefit from Swiss staff at IFIs?**

Swiss staff working at IFIs have formally no link to Switzerland and are therefore not asked to bring us any direct benefit. However, our past experiences have shown that it is somewhat easier to have informal contacts with the banks through a network of Swiss nationals working in these institutions. Swiss who work for IFIs will deepen their understanding of international development cooperation. Some will bring it back one day to other fields of cooperation or work.

The IFIs are very attractive employers for well-educated staff and internationally mobile talents. The international diversity of their staff is one of the assets of the IFIs. We believe that being «Swiss» is an advantage, meaning to be well educated, dedicated, impartial and diplomatic, in the sense of being a bridge builder. These characteristics can help when working on complex problems in very diverse teams.

### **Are IFIs attractive employers for Swiss professionals coming from the private sector?**

The IFIs have one common objective that is different from the private sector: reducing poverty and helping developing countries to achieve sustainable growth. While the private sector's main goal is to maximize profit, IFIs want to maximize development impact and change people's lives to the better. IFIs can offer an enriching experience in a technically, culturally and geographically diverse environment. For Swiss professionals working for the private sector, IFIs may provide a unique opportunity to use their past experiences within an international organization dedicated to development. The link between the public and the private sectors is all the more important when we look at finance for development. The private sector is crucial to bridging the current gaps in financing sustainable development. IFIs are looking for people from the private sector to come up with constructive engagement and partnerships between the public and the private sectors. Therefore, experience in private-public partnerships are certainly a value added. All IFIs have different entry points for professionals; for those who already have between 5 and 15 years of professional experience, IFIs could represent a next step towards a higher managerial position within an international organization. Young professionals, on the other hand, may find a chance to start a professional career in the IFI world.

### **Does working for an IFI increase one's career prospects after returning to Switzerland?**

Working for an IFI is certainly a particular experience and makes professionals attractive upon their return, whether in the public sector, in a consultancy firm or in an industrial company. I would definitely look very carefully at the CV of an applicant who has worked with an IFI. This experience is also very important because the private sector is increasingly engaged in the development debate. It certainly increases one's career prospects in Switzerland, as many Swiss companies are operating in emerging markets, where the IFIs intervene most.

### **What are the challenges and opportunities of a career in IFIs for Swiss professionals?**

IFIs employees come from a diverse range of educational and professional backgrounds and speak a number of languages. Well educated and highly motivated Swiss professionals have to compete with other highly talented people worldwide. Moreover, they must have the willingness to work overseas and in sometimes challenging environments. On the other hand, IFIs offer very appealing compensation packages for their employees and their respective partners and families, as well as ample opportunities to develop an interesting career. IFIs are thus very attractive employers. Finally, Swiss professionals may find it highly rewarding to work in an international environment and support the international community in addressing global challenges.

cinfo thanks Daniel Birchmeier for this interview.

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Information: [www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch](http://www.seco-cooperation.admin.ch)

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**«Working for an IFI makes professionals attractive upon their return – in the public sector, a consultancy firm or an industrial company.»**

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# Support to Swiss professionals

cinfo offers a range of services to experienced and young Swiss professionals aiming to find employment at an International Financial Institution (IFI).

## cinfo's services

- cinfo helps you analyse your career opportunities and review your professional suitability for IFI employment during individual **career counselling sessions with a job market expert**.
- cinfo offers a **skills assessment and coaching**. If you are considering changing your career in a meaningful way, a skills assessment may help you to identify how to present your skills to IFIs.
- cinfo organises **information and networking events and webinars**, where you can meet and exchange with IFI representatives, discuss your profile and establish useful contacts.
- cinfo offers individual **support in the application process**, including a review and advice on drafting CVs and motivation letters. At the different stages of the application process cinfo can provide you with technical, strategic and networking support to proceed successfully.
- cinfo provides **support and follow-up on your application**. For example, after you have applied for an IFI position, cinfo can actively support your application and directly follow up on the selection process. Please do inform cinfo of your application!
- cinfo assists you with specialised **interview training and preparation**. If you have been invited for an interview with an IFI and need help in preparing for the applicable competency-based interview, you can benefit from a personalised coaching session.

**Information:** [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

**Contact:** [io@cinfo.ch](mailto:io@cinfo.ch)

## Testimonial

Jan Mumenthaler  
IFC in Washington DC

«The IFC is by far the largest organisation that does business on a global scale, with a focus on emerging markets, so it enables you to acquire skills that are really very much in demand, particularly in Switzerland.»



Read the full testimonial on [www.cinfo.ch](http://www.cinfo.ch)

## Advice to interested candidates

- Assess your qualifications carefully against the requirements of the specific position you are applying for. Make sure that they match.
- Be explicit about your soft skills and where you acquired them, both in your application and during the interview. Underline the skills mentioned as particular assets in the job description.
- Accept temporary assignments such as consultancies. They can be valuable entry points and may eventually lead to a regular appointment, or at least give you a competitive advantage for a later staff position.
- Make use of social media networks such as LinkedIn. These have become very popular, not only among jobseekers, but also among recruiters. Even if you are not active on these networks, make sure to keep your profile complete and up-to-date.
- If you are on an internship or a junior programme, build your network and stay in contact with your colleagues. Social media can be a useful tool for this purpose as well.

## FAQs

### **How can I make the most of the online application system?**

The importance of the motivation letter or statement of interest should not be underestimated. To stand out, it should be concise (one to two paragraphs) and demonstrate how your competencies match the terms of reference. Moreover, invest time in carefully completing the online application. Do not assume that you can leave out information because it is in your CV. If the recruiters do not find certain information in the online application, they may not necessarily take the time to look for it elsewhere.

### **How many applicants are there per vacancy?**

This depends on the position, the location and the years of experience required. The competition decreases the more senior a job's grade becomes. The WB, for example, receives an average of 500 applications for positions requiring seven years of work experience, whereas positions asking for up to 15 years of experience may 'only' get around 200 applications. At regional development banks such as the IDB, there may be between 45 and 300 applications for a single position. The situation is similar with regard to junior programmes. At the WB approximately 8,000 applicants have competed for 30–40 YPP positions in recent years, and the EBRD's IPP gets an average of 3,500 applications for between five and ten positions. Bear in mind, however, that not all applications meet the minimum requirements. If your application makes it to the longlist, there will be far less competition, especially when requested profiles are very specific.

### **Am I allowed to apply for several positions at the same time?**

This is of course permitted and might not be noticed in large organisational structures. However, it is important to be consistent and to apply only for positions that match your qualifications. Recruiters will become suspicious if there is no consistency in applications from the same person. For example, you should not apply for an environmental specialist vacancy and for a support position at the same time.

### **Can my spouse or partner and I work at the same bank?**

IFIs have strict regulations concerning employing family members. At the AfDB, the IDB and the EBRD, spouses or domestic partners of employees are not eligible to apply. This is not the case at the WB, the IFC and the ADB, which means that at these organisations, joint postings in the same duty station are possible in principle, although they may be difficult to arrange. However, no IFIs employ close relatives (children, parents and siblings) of staff members. Whether the exclusion extends to cousins, nieces or nephews, aunts or uncles, grandchildren, grandparents and in-laws, depends on each bank. This information is specified on their websites or directly in the job announcement.

### **Is it difficult to return to the private sector after having worked at an IFI for several years?**

In IFIs, the possibilities for interdepartmental and geographical transfers allow employees to build a wide range of skills that are easily transferable to the private sector. The IFC and other IFIs focus many activities on private sector development, which may enable you to acquire specialised expertise. IFI experience is usually highly valued by Swiss employers and may well open up new doors for people returning to Switzerland and to the private sector.

### **What particular areas will IFIs be focusing on in the near future?**

The thematic range of IFIs will not decrease in the years to come, but the focus shifts constantly. At the WB Group there will be a strong concentration on fragile states and rural development, meaning that professionals with backgrounds and experience in disaster management, reconstruction, governance, or food and nutrition will be in particular demand. Other currently relevant issues include education, land reform, renewable energy, and water resources.

**At information and networking events, cinfo brings together IFI recruiters and interested professionals.**



cinfo – the Centre for Information, Counselling and Training for Professions relating to International Cooperation (IC) – is a specialised service provider and the network platform for professionals and organisations involved in the IC job market and for persons who wish to become active in this field.



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