



The Top 5 European Financial Centers

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Finding the best finance jobs today doesn't necessarily mean relocating to the hotbeds of financial activity. However, understanding where those hotbeds are can help you plan your career path — whether relocation, telecommuting or just a visit to see how business is done by the big boys is part of your future.

Since March, 2007, the Z/Yen Group has published the Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI). The twice-yearly report is a veritable “who’s who” (or “where’s where,” rather) of the cities across the world that are considered at the time of the report to be the most significant players in the industry. [Key finance and banking jobs with moneyjobs](#) in these metropolises can help sway economic tides.

The GFCI, per its report, uses two types of data to conclude its rankings and ratings: instrumental factors and a survey. The survey is an online questionnaire completed by international financial professionals.

The “instrumental factors” compose a much more complicated equation. The evaluators divide these factors into five broad categories: Business Environment, Financial Sector Development, Infrastructure, Human Capital and Reputational Factors. They then scour a range of information and multiple external measures to determine a given center’s performance in each factor.

It is no simple feat. In total, 102 factors fit into the five broad categories to help determine a city’s ranking. The most recent report, the GFCI 14, was published in September, 2013. It ranks the top 80 centers for finance around the world.

The top five European centers it lists are: London (ranked #1), Zurich (#6), Geneva (#8), Frankfurt (#9) and Luxembourg (#13).

While lists and official rankings can be called authoritative by some, they are by no means the be-all, end-all of opinions. It certainly stands to notice that London is consistently given then #1

spot on the GFCI, but experts in finance and finance jobs differ on which other European cities come after it.

We spoke to working professionals and had them give some of their thoughts on why London is number one, and what other European cities should be in the top five.

London

“It is, and has been, the center of the financial universe for all European, Middle Eastern, and North African financial decision making,” says Roy Cohen, career coach and author of “The Wall Street Professional’s Survival Guide” (Financial Times Press, 2010). “Some would argue that London is even more important than [New York City]. It has the benefits of proximity and language which offer significant versatility.”

John Boyd, principal at the Boyd Company, a location consulting services firm that has worked for over 35 years with clients such as PNC Bank, Visa International, and JP Morgan Chase, puts it a little more simply: “Virtually all of the large international banks and brokerage firms maintain a significant presence in London,” he says

Finally, Bethel University’s MBA Program Director and Associate Professor of Business Duncan J. Campbell adds that London is number one because of its “close linkage to US financial markets; light regulation; [and] strong reach into Asian markets as a consequence of Empire.”

Paris

Though the GFCI ranked Paris number 29 — between Jersey, England, and Osaka, Japan — others feel the contribution of Paris’ finance jobs warrant a higher spot. “There are a large number of global financial institutions with headquarters based in Paris,” says Cohen.

Boyd offers an interesting prediction for the City of Lights. “I expect France to rebound with a Sarkozy comeback and more pro-growth policies. Our clients in France are weary of Hollande and his policies,” he says, referring to the current and former Presidents.

Madrid

Though the GFCI ranked it number 54 most recently, Spanish-speaking applicants seeking new finance jobs might find an upcoming hotspot in Madrid, at least according to one pro. “Historically,” shares Cohen, “a number of Spanish financial institutions have made it to the list of the top 20 global banks. With the meltdown in the economy and the financial crisis there, banks remain both a problem and an opportunity.”

Brussels

The seat of the European Union, this city ranked only 60th on the index. Still, Boyd refers to it as a “significant power center” and Cohen highlights it as the “the center of global political activity and thought leadership.”

No doubt many banks and financial institutions have offices in Brussels, even if they are not headquartered there. Boyd predicts it will become more significant as new policies are made regarding the debt crisis that will affect EU member nations.



About Robert Farrington

Robert Farrington is the founder and editor of [The College Investor](#), a personal finance site dedicated to young adult and college student finances.