

## **The ambassador of the financial world**

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I almost push off the poor purple-jersey girl at the IMF's secretariat – I say sorry but I have to rush as in two minutes I will have a meeting with the Resident Representative of the high-prestigious IMF Iryna Ivaschenko. I would not like to be late in any case. Fortunately, I am waiting for her in their meeting room two minutes later. Then she steps in.

I mean the purple-jersey girl, Iryna. She introduces herself, while I am so surprised that I almost forget my name.

What I already know is that she is pretty and quite reserved. The media was able to figure out how old she is (37) only through a thorough investigation.

- *What is the correct pronunciation of your name? Ivashenko or is there a typical Russian sound sch in your name? Believe it or not: hundreds of readers were trying to find out which is the correct version in an internet forum.*
- One should use the latter version (sch) which is unknown in the Western languages but there are enough other things which has to be corrected (not just formally) in the business and private life, thus I decided not to pain people with this.
- *You have been living here for almost two years. I guess you already have some friends and you know Budapest relatively well. Do you have favorite places?*
- There are many nice people whom I know – I got to know them mainly through my work, but the most active organizer of my private life is my daughter. I get into touch with most people through Daria – mainly with the parents of her friends, as I work full-time at the IMF which means that tough timetable and organizing ability is required for the second shift in which I am the car-driver of my daughter – I try to respect her interests and to fit this challenge, that is to bring her to the tennis and swimming classes in time and that she does not miss any of her programs because of me. As regards to friendship, I treat this word and the confidential relationship that this word covers quite seriously, thus I can say only of a few people that they are my friends – others are just nice people whom I know. I got to like Budapest quite quickly – partly because it is friendly, well-livable city with rich cultural life. I am mainly interested in music – the supply is quite rich in this. I especially like classical music but I am up-to-date in pop music as well thanks to my daughter: the favorite singer is now Shakira but she also often listens to Lady Gaga, however, we missed her recent concert in Budapest. I spend the little free time I have outdoors if possible – I thirst for fresh air. One sure place for us is Libego but we are also regular guests at the Millenaris.
- *You protect your private life legendarily. You avoid questions regarding your private life and asked me as well not to ask such questions. Is this because of a bad experience or you would like to avoid any bad “experience”?*

- No. I just think that it does not behove to anybody.
- *Experts say that if something happens at the IMF, you can still work as a model: your body (set-up) suggests a promising success as a model – although there is only a few pictures of you available, “insiders” said that camera loves your face. Based on your bio, you had a small “flirt” with fashion as you worked as designer during your university studies.*
- It was quite far time ago. It can really be interpreted as a young-age “adventure”.
- *Which style is the closest to your personality?*
- I like the classical and feminine style the most.
- *Fortunately – I guess you have to wear such clothes each day in the office and in the negotiations.*
- Moreover I wear dresses during my free time. I simply love skirts, trousers are not my cup of tea. My favourite is that certain “small black dress” for ever, I don’t consider it could go out of fashion for decades.
- *A determined young lady, sometimes committed to discipline politicians, statesmen, otherwise able to be a covergirl in fascinating feminine dresses –it’s a pretty exciting combination. Aren’t you afraid of that your male audience can’t hear what you’re saying, since they look at your lips or feet?*
- I strongly hope that my professional message is more important than the “tool” I’m saying it with. But – besides kidding – I believe that by being professional and very well prepared a woman can achieve that she is taken seriously.
- *I ask it another way: haven’t you ever felt during your job that a man thinks: “here’s this beautiful, smart, young lady who wants to make decisions in determinative questions of finances, economy and life – that puts the lid on it”!*
- Smart men have always known it in the year one that women make the decisions in most important questions of life. Not only because they’ve equal rights but because they’ve more empathy, they stand on ground with both feet, they make a hundred responsible decisions every single day, moreover they have future in their hands by raising children and running a household
- *It comes into my mind from a front page: the IMF has been on it for months and it’d be a lie to state that its name is mentioned in prayers. Your task is encourage politicians to cut expenditure, curb social costs and force restrictions from them. Don’t you feel that your task is too unpopular?*

- It's a basic mistake to believe that the IMF gives or could give any dictation to independent, sovereign nations, furthermore it doesn't make sense that the IMF is an institution to screw countries. The countries ask us for assistance if they run into financial difficulties, and we are here to help with financial and technical resources, to support policies that will pull the country out of crisis and put it back on a sustainable growth path. So it's not complicated to acknowledge: its activity is just of opposite sign. The more efficient a country utilizes its resources, it can do the more to increase its population's standard of living. So, I can't even understand the question...
- *The last weeks of the year are about peace, cosy holidays, family. Where are you at home?*
- I'm at home where I can celebrate with my daughter.
- *Where do you spend Christmas and New Year's Eve this year?*
- Would you be surprised if I say I don't know?
- *Well, pretty much...*
- Really I don't know yet. Much depends on future weeks, since there are several important tasks ahead our institution. But I know that we'll have two Christmas holidays. A regular Christmas of Western type on December 24, mostly due to my daughter. But we also celebrate orthodox Christmas, as every year and it's me who sticks to it. I'm a believer. Not that bigoted kind who regularly goes to church and keeps all prescriptions of liturgy – I could hardly have possibility for that – but I consider it significant that besides our hectic lifestyle – being here & there – we'd have fixed and holy ceremonies. This happens twice a year: at Easter and Christmas to take care of and carry on related traditions. I even bake poppy seed cake and a traditional Ukrainian Easter cake these times