

## Erste Group wins “CEE’s Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility” award from *Euromoney*

- Award honours Erste Group’s innovative Social Banking programme for “[becoming] a lifeline for many in the region”
- Erste has disbursed over EUR 140 mn in loans to starting entrepreneurs, rural farmers, and social organizations
- *Euromoney* also praises Erste Group as a “champion for diversity and inclusion”

Erste Group Bank AG (Erste Group) has been recognized as “Central and Eastern Europe’s Best Bank for Corporate Responsibility” by *Euromoney*, one of the leading financial sector publications. In its 2018 Awards for Excellence, *Euromoney* honoured Erste Group for its region-wide implementation of a social banking programme that seeks to empower and finance social enterprises and addresses the needs of traditionally unbanked or underbanked groups in the CEE region. “*The bank has become a lifeline for many in the region,*” *Euromoney* points out, and references Erste Group’s “*commitment to its communities*” as the basis for selecting it for the Corporate Responsibility award. The publication also lauds Erste Group as a “*champion for diversity and inclusion, both in the institution and among its clients and communities.*”

“*Winning this Euromoney award is a welcome recognition of the efforts that we have put into developing social banking in CEE,*” said Peter Surek, head of Social Banking at Erste Group. “*Our understanding of social banking goes beyond CSR, it roots in our founding history and it involves integrating these efforts into our broader focus on promoting prosperity and encouraging entrepreneurship in the region.*”

Since officially launching its social banking programme in 2016, Erste Group has financed around 2,000 starting entrepreneurs and almost 400 non-profits and social entrepreneurs focused on creating a social impact. In addition, the banking group has disbursed via its microfinance subsidiary good.bee credit in Romania nearly 10,000 micro-loans to mostly rural farmers amounting to more than EUR 70 million. As a result of these social banking efforts, more than 4,000 jobs have been created across the region.

Erste Group also works together with international financial institutions to offer the best possible conditions for the social banking clients. Most recently, the European Investment Fund (EIF) and all seven Erste Group subsidiary banks signed a Social Entrepreneurship Guarantee Agreement to provide funding to social organisations under the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI). This guarantee agreement allows the local banks of Erste Group to grant loans totalling EUR 50 million to more than 500 social organisations in their markets.

More generally, as a strongly retail banking-focused bank with 16 million customers across seven CEE markets, Erste Group has supported its home region’s long-term development and sustainable growth by extending more than EUR 60 billion in customer loans to retail clients, entrepreneurs, business and public sector institutions.

In addition to promoting prosperity in its home region, Erste Group recognizes the benefits of diversity and inclusion and actively supports these principles, both internally and for society as a whole. To that end, the banking group has, among other things, committed itself to further growing the share of women in management positions, launched Erste Women in IT to encourage more women to pursue IT careers, and instituted flexible working hours and work-from-home options.

### **Euromoney Awards for Excellence**

Decisions about the awarding of Euromoney's Awards for Excellence decisions are made by a committee of the publication's senior journalists on the basis of detailed submissions from market participants and extensive year-round research into the banking and capital markets in the region. The Awards for Excellence cover global categories, best-in-class awards in all regions and the best banks in close to 100 countries around the world.

===

Erste Group has over 47,000 employees who service more than 16 million customers in Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, and Serbia. As one of the leading financial providers in the Central and Eastern Europe, Erste Group seeks to support a more inclusive growth in the region. The Group's Social Banking programme addresses traditionally underbanked groups: low-income individuals, starting entrepreneurs and social organisations offering them fair access to basic financial products and sound money advice.