

Erste Group believes in esports and encourages young gamers to believe in themselves

Leading CEE banking group now an official Finals Main Partner for the League of Legends European Championship Playoffs.

Erste Group Bank AG ("Erste Group") is working together with the game developer and esports tournament organizer Riot Games to support the growth of esports in the banking group's core markets in Central and Eastern Europe. Erste Group is taking an official Finals Main Partner role for the LEC Playoffs, the top European league play for Riot Games' first title League of Legends. Erste Group will accompany the start of their sponsorship with a visually stunning image film showing how a young gamer overcomes initial doubts to succeed in esports.

The Summer Split of the LEC Playoffs will be held at the end of August. These playoffs also serve as a stepping stone for the participating teams to advance to "Worlds", the world championship for League of Legends. The title stands at the very pinnacle of the esports sector, with over 100 million players each month.

Encouraging esports players and fans to believe in themselves

Erste Group is one of the first major brands focused on Central and Eastern Europe to recognize the growing popularity of esports. With its commitment to more strongly establishing esports in CEE via its role as a main partner of the LEC Playoffs, the banking group wants to help make the potential of this new sport more accessible to people throughout the region.

"We see esports as an ecosystem of a new generation and want to sustainably support its growth. Erste wants to encourage this young and growing community to believe in itself – and we want to do our part to help that community share its convictions and self-confidence with a broader public. In doing so, we want to leverage esports' supra-regional potential, assist its communities in networking even more closely across national borders especially in such challenging times, and help strengthen the framework in which this new movement can continue to grow," explains Peter Bosek, Chief Retail Officer of Erste Group.

The Vienna-headquartered banking group, which is present in seven markets across the CEE region, seeks to generate a large number of activations across all channels through its role as a sponsor of the LEC Playoffs. The starting point is an emotional image film that translates the Erste's #believeinyourself claim into the esports sphere in a brand-appropriate way. The video introduces viewers to the doubters and critics that esports faces as a young sport and illustrates the emotional hurdles that confront young esports professionals. At the same time, the film underlines Erste Group's belief in esports and encourages the rising generation of gamers to believe in themselves.

Erste Group will also provide an additional edutainment offering whose social media-based content is geared primarily to esports fans, but also seeks to bring the broader public into contact with esports by providing background information. The sports marketing agency Jung von Matt/SPORTS is providing Erste Group with strategic consulting

on its esports commitment and is responsible for conceiving and implementing all activations related to the banking group's Finals Main Partner role for the LEC Playoffs.

The partnership between Erste Group and Riot Games was actually already launched with the Spring Split of the LEC Playoffs, but the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic led to a shift in sponsorship communications and activities to the upcoming playoffs. *"Of course, we had initially imagined a very different start for our sponsorship. Esports is not just some additional advertising space for us, but rather a platform for real partnerships. That's why it was clear to us that we'd stick to the sponsorship with the LEC Playoffs – and why we're all the more pleased that we can now move from a soft to a really big launch,"* points out Martin Radjaby-Rasset, Head of Brand Strategy and Communications at Erste Group.

"With Erste Group as the most innovative banking group in Austria and the CEE region, we have brought a great partner on board who wants to strengthen and anchor esports in the region together with us - not only through advertising, but also as a strong infrastructure partner," says Alban Dechelotte, Head of Partnerships and Business Development EMEA at Riot Games.

Erste Group joins leading global brands in esports

The popularity of esports has increased massively in recent years. Professional teams, leagues, structures, media, and completely new economic sectors have developed around esports. The total audience for esports now encompasses over 490 million fans worldwide (with a growth rate of 11.7% YoY in 2020), with over 50 million in Europe alone. Contrary to popular misconceptions, the largest single age group among esports fans are people between 21 and 35, who account for 38% of esports' overall audience. In addition, nearly 40% of the esports audience are women. The diverse and attractive demographics of the millions of fans following esports in live streams and stadiums has also led to growing sponsorship interest on the part of international brands like McDonald's, BMW, Mercedes-Benz or Louis Vuitton.

Erste Group External Communication

Carmen Staicu

Peter Klopff

Martin Sonn-Wende

Tel: +43 50100 – 11681

Tel. +43 50100 – 11676

Tel- +43-50100 – 11680

E-Mail: carmen.staicu@erstegroup.com

E-Mail: peter.klopff@erstegroup.com

E-Mail: martin.sonn-wende@erstegroup.com

This press release is also available at: www.erstegroup.com/pressrelease

Erste Group is the leading financial services provider in the eastern part of the EU. Its ca. 47,000 employees serve over 16 million customers in more than 2,350 branches in 7 countries (Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia). As per Q1 2020, Erste Group had EUR 263 billion in total assets, posted a net profit of EUR 235 million and had a common equity tier 1 ratio (CRR final) of 13.1%.

About LEC: The League of Legends European Championship (LEC) launched in January 2019 and became the most viewed esport league in Europe. Comprising ten teams that compete on a weekly basis in two 12 week long seasons, the LEC culminates each season in a live Finals in arenas across Europe, including Rotterdam and Athens. The LEC has signed mainstream sponsors including KIA, Pringles, Beko, KitKat, Logitech, Alienware, Red Bull, ERSTE Bank, and Warner Music. As of Spring 2020 the LEC's Average Minute Audience, which is fans watching at the same time, is consistently over 200,000 across seven languages.

About Riot Games: Riot Games was founded in 2006 to develop, publish, and support the most player-focused games in the world. In 2009, Riot released its debut title, League of Legends, to worldwide acclaim. League has gone on to be the most-played PC game in the world and a

key driver of the explosive growth of esports. As League enters its second decade, Riot continues to evolve the game while delivering new experiences to players with games including Legends of Runeterra, VALORANT, League of Legends: Wild Rift, and multiple work-in-progress titles; bringing its popular Teamfight Tactics game mode to mobile platforms; and exploring the world of Runeterra through multimedia projects across TV, music, comic books, and more. Founded by Brandon Beck and Marc Merrill, Riot is headquartered in Los Angeles, California, and has 2,500+ Rioters in 20+ offices worldwide. Riot has been featured on numerous lists including Fortune's "100 Best Companies to Work For," "25 Best Companies to Work in Technology," "100 Best Workplaces for Millennials," and "50 Best Workplaces for Flexibility."

About Jung von Matt/SPORTS: Jung von Matt/SPORTS is Europe's most awarded sports marketing agency and works for associations, clubs, athletes, companies and media houses - as an independent and integrated player of the international JvM group. With over 100 specialized employees, the agency combines creative and consulting excellence, sports expertise and a global network through seven connected units: strategy, creation, accounting, social media, sponsoring, eSports and public relations. Our client base includes a.o. adidas, FIFA, McDonalds, DFB, Tipico, ESL, Intersport, FC St. Pauli, Vodafone, Mercedes-Benz, DFL, mousesports and Hamburg Marketing.

Image and video material for free use (© Erste Group Bank) can be found here: <https://cloudnine.jvm.de/s/4cDA8tZ6apQzW7c>

Link to the film on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/L40ZyhmNyQc>