

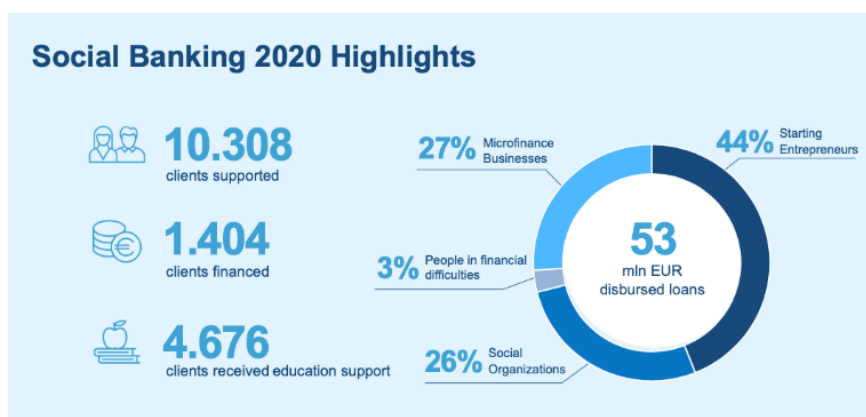
Erste Group's Social Banking invested 53 million euros to support its clients in the pandemic year 2020

2020 was a challenging year, with the Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately hitting the most vulnerable people in our society – not only in terms of their health, but also financially, due to job loss or lower income. However, the recently published Annual Report by Erste Group's Social Banking demonstrates that also in these uncertain times, the banking group was able to successfully support its clients across the CEE region and help them to get through the crisis.

"Social Banking is one of the clearest ways in which we at Erste live up to our founding purpose and it has become one of the cornerstones of our ESG strategy. But our commitment doesn't stop at words: we provided over 50 million euros to Social Banking clients in 2020 and also helped thousands of them expand their business and financial knowledge through trainings. Our Social Banking activities aren't charity – they're part of a viable social business approach that ensures we can make a long-term sustainable contribution to the wellbeing of people in our region," emphasizes Bernd Spalt, CEO of Erste Group.

Highlights of 2020

Last year, Erste Group's Social Banking provided a total of EUR 53 million in loans to starting entrepreneurs, microfinance businesses and social organizations, as well as to people in financial difficulties across CEE. Social Banking financed more than 1,400 clients and helped another 4,600 clients to improve their financial literacy by offering them business trainings and education support. In total, Social Banking supported more than 10,000 clients in 2020.



"In 2020, we proved that we stand by our clients with financing and advisory also in the uneasy times. We will definitely continue supporting the people in our region as they deal with the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis, such as increasing unemployment, the growing risk of poverty, as well as challenges connected with affordable housing," says Peter Surek, Head of Social Banking Development at Erste Group.

Serving society and driving social development in CEE

Social Banking units in all seven of Erste Group's banking markets support people at risk of poverty by fostering job creation via the financing of starting and micro entrepreneurs and by empowering social organizations to help more beneficiaries. Social Banking's programs for people in financial difficulties provide special advisory and financial solutions to distressed individuals and families and help guide them out of over-indebtedness. Furthermore, Social Banking's pilot projects in the area of social

housing test innovative approaches to facilitate access to affordable and decent housing for marginalized communities.

Since its foundation, Erste Group's Social Banking invested nearly EUR 400 million in loans into the social development in the CEE region, serving a total of 36,000 clients across the region, creating more than 15,000 jobs and preserving more than 30,000 of them. With its initiatives and projects, Social Banking also makes a valuable contribution to the fulfillment of 9 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the United Nations' member states have set for themselves by 2030.

Further information on Erste Group's Social Banking can be found [here](#).

Erste Group media contacts:

Peter N. Thier

Tel: +43 50100 – 17247

E-Mail: peter.thier@erstegroup.com

Peter Klopf

Tel: +43 50100 – 11676

E-Mail: peter.klopf@erstegroup.com

Martin Sonn-Wende

Tel: +43 50100 – 11680

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

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