

For Immediate Release

26 January 2001

## Erste Bank enters MSCI Standard Index and attains largest ATX weighting

Effective Monday 29 January 2001, the Erste Bank<sup>1</sup> share will join the MSCI<sup>2</sup> Standard Index. This step was announced by MSCI, a company majority owned by the investment bank Morgan Stanley Dean Witter.

With a market capitalisation of approximately EUR 2.7 billion (at 25 January 2001), Erste Bank will be the largest Austrian constituent in an MSCI index. Austria carries a weighting of 0.33% in the MSCI Europe Index and 0.11% in the MSCI World Index.

Also effective 29 January 2001, Erste Bank will gain a significantly increased weighting in the ATX (Austrian Traded Index), the leading index of major Austrian stocks. Erste Bank's weighting in the ATX will increase from around 11% to around 19%, giving it the largest weighting in the ATX.

Background information on Erste Bank is attached. For further information please contact:

### Erste Bank, Investor Relations

	Telephone	E-mail
Martin Wohlmuth	+ 431 53100 1987	Martin.Wohlmuth@erstebank.at
Gabriele Werzer	+ 431 53100 1286	Gabriele.Werzer@erstebank.at

### Erste Bank, Public Relations

	Telephone	E-mail
Michael Mauritz	+ 431 53100 9603	Michael.Mauritz@erstebank.at
Karin Hacker	+ 431 53100 7629	Karin.Hacker@erstebank.at

---

<sup>1</sup> Erste Bank der oesterreichischen Sparkassen AG Group

<sup>2</sup> Morgan Stanley Capital International

## Background Information on Erste Bank

### *Highlights*

Erste Bank is one of the ten largest European retail banks and the clear leader in Central European retail banking by number of customers. Erste Bank and its 66 partners in the Austrian savings bank sector together serve over 8 million customers in Central Europe.

### *Key financials*

The Erste Bank Group had total assets of EUR 73.1 billion at 30.9.2000<sup>3</sup>. Customer deposits reached over EUR 31.5 billion, while the credit volume stood at EUR 32.1 billion.

### *Customer and product focus*

The Erste Bank Group's customer focus is on the retail market as well as small to medium-sized enterprises. The product focus is moving increasingly towards higher margin commission-based business where Erste Bank has achieved particular success, including asset management, insurance and leasing.

### *Strategy*

Erste Bank has four basic strategic objectives:

- (i) to exploit its core business potential in Austria and focus on its key competencies,
- (ii) to build on its role as the lead bank of the Austrian savings banks sector and to seek increasingly close cooperation and coordination within the sector, with the sharing of resources and responsibilities, creating synergies for the parties in terms of cost reduction and revenue growth,
- (iii) to grow its business in an extended home market in Central Europe with a potential customer base of some 40 million people and maintain its position as the leading retail financial institution in that market, and
- (iv) to offer the premier on-line access to innovative products across its extended home market.

### *Recent achievements*

The pioneering partnership approach adopted in Austria has enabled Erste Bank to leverage its core competencies across the large distribution network offered by the Austrian savings banks, generating new sources of growth potential in a mature market.

Within only three years, Erste Bank has successfully implemented plans announced in 1997 of acquiring or establishing significant operations in the neighbouring markets of Central Europe. The largest acquisitions in the region were in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In January 2000 Erste Bank acquired a majority stake in Česká spořitelna, the leading Czech retail bank with 3.5 million customers. At the beginning of 2001 Erste Bank signed an agreement to acquire a majority stake in Slovenská sporiteľňa, the largest bank in the Slovak Republic with 1.8 million customers.

Through these and other recent acquisitions, Erste Bank has significantly enhanced its attractiveness as a distribution partner for the insurance industry and international mutual fund managers.

---

<sup>3</sup> Pro forma figure including the recently acquired Slovak bank Slovenská sporiteľňa, a.s.