

## **Strong interest in employee share ownership plan**

### **- Erste Bank issues 1.7m new shares**

Since the plan's launch in 2002, Erste Bank has continued to expand its employee share ownership through its options programme. As approved by the AGM, shares purchased under the scheme are provided by a capital increase.

"Our goal has always been to have our employees identify as closely as possible with the company and its success," said Andreas Treichl, CEO of Erste Bank. "We therefore believe it is crucial to continually increase the number of employees who are also shareholders in the company." Treichl also welcomed the fact that a very high number of employees had purchased shares during this year's programme.

Under the management options programme (MSOP), which was launched in 2002, 1,408,068 shares were purchased between 1<sup>st</sup> and 29th April 2005. The exercise price, which takes account of the 1:4 stock split in July 2004, was EUR 16.50 per share. As part of the Employee Stock Option Programme (ESOP) 2005, another 332,640 shares - the highest yet for this type of employee stock ownership drive - were purchased between 2nd and 13th May 2005. The exercise price was EUR 31.50, or 20% below the average share price in April 2005. Shares purchased under both programmes must be held for a minimum of one year.

Employees and management of Erste Bank currently hold just under 2% of the shares in the company.

The related capital increase, from contingent capital, involved in total the issuance of 1,740,708 new shares. The equity capital of Erste Bank has therefore now increased by EUR 3,481,416.- to EUR 486,367,200.- and the number of shares rose from 241,442,892 to 243,183,600 shares. Trading in the new shares commenced on 30 June 2005 in Vienna and Prague.

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