



Erste Bank to Offer its Own Gold and Platinum Credit Cards

The trend to non-cash payments remains strong, with card payments increasingly replacing cash. Card payments are a fast-growing business segment and one in which Erste Bank plans to expand its activities. In consideration of these two factors, Erste Bank will offer its customers credit cards of its own as of 17 July 2006.

Given that all the other banks in the Erste Bank Group already have their own credit card licences, Erste Bank in Austria has taken the step of acquiring a licence of its own from Visa Europe, enabling the bank to offer Visa cards which are flexible and tailored to meet the customer's individual requirements. Initially, three options will be offered:

First Card, the beginner's card in a variety of designs

Visa Gold Card the premium product with a flexible limit and insurance coverage

Visa Platinum Card the "special" card for the most demanding customers (higher insurance coverage, special conditions at selected hotels)

The Gold and Platinum Erste Bank VisaCards also offer an innovation in terms of insurance coverage: This will be extended to include family members of the card holder on all journeys away from their place of residence and will not depend on prior use of the card within a specific time period nor on the use of the card to pay for the journey.

With regard to the settling of accounts Erste Bank customers will be able to use netbanking to check their card transactions online before they receive their monthly invoice and then pay the balance electronically.

"We are pleased that this new product will enable us to offer our customers even better service and a more individualised product," said Klaus Mattes, head of product management at Erste Bank. "Later on, we will also introduce 'revolving credit,' i.e. we will offer customers flexible part-payment arrangements which can be individually agreed with their account manager," Mr. Mattes added. The plan is that customers will only have to pay 10 per cent of their monthly invoice (but at least EUR 100) at first; the out-standing residual amount can then be repaid flexibly.