

## Erste Bank equips customers for the economic crisis: Series of events on crisis and financial coaching as further stage of “Helping Hands”

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[Back](#)

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**As part of the s Österreich Initiative, the Erste Bank is helping people who, due to the difficult economic situation, are having difficulties or are simply worried about the future. Under the “Helping Hands” motto, affected persons will find open doors at the Erste Bank, and will be assisted by the bank during these hard times. Following the free account for the unemployed, the Erste Bank is now offering crisis and finance coaching. From 15 May, interested customers can learn the best way for them to deal with the changing conditions.**

The difficult economic situation is disconcerting for a lot of people. According to WIFO forecasts, bankruptcies are set to increase by 12%, and unemployment rates are set to climb to over 7%. People are increasingly being confronted with unemployment, declining income due to shortened work hours, and anxiety about the future. This situation has prompted the Erste Bank to shift its strategic focus from revenue to investment – investments in its customers. “Our strategic aim is to assist our customers in this difficult situation. We will not use the crisis to ditch difficult customers, but will instead do everything possible to guide the customers through these hard times, and get them back on their feet,” says Elisabeth Bleyleben-Koren, General Manager of the Erste Bank.

In addition to the free account for the unemployed, and the possibility of flexible credit repayments, the Erste Bank will now also offer events on the topic of “Dealing with the Crisis”, and finance coaching. From financial planning to household budgeting to practical savings tips and information on hedging and bridging options for financial shortfalls, these information sessions demonstrate specific tips for dealing with the current economic situation. As well as a well-known coaching expert and the manager of the Banking College, specially trained staff will also be available to the participants for a personal consultation after the event. The first session will be held at 6pm on 15 May in the Erste Bank Events Centre, Petersplatz 7/6th floor. Two other finance coaching sessions are planned for 29/5 and 5/6. Due to limited participant numbers, registration on 050100-50448, keyword “Geldleben” is essential.

For interested persons who cannot attend an event, a question & answer platform has been set up at [www.erstebank.at](http://www.erstebank.at) under „Fragen zur Finanzkrise“ (“Questions about the financial crisis”). Questions can be sent easily via an online form, and will be answered by a team of experts from the Erste Bank within one working day. You can also choose whether the question and corresponding answer is published or not.

However, Helping Hands is designed to be much more than just all these measures. The Erste Bank wants to assist its customers as a partner, using its accessibility, openness and simple, non-bureaucratic approaches. “We consider ourselves to be a local bank in the classic sense; we don’t close our doors if it’s stormy outside and someone is in trouble,” Bleyleben-Koren adds.

[Back](#)