

Erste Bank wraps up 1,000 “Gruft winter packages” for the homeless

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50,000 Euros given to Caritas director Michael Landau

The Erste Bank is donating 50,000 Euros in support of the “Gruft winter package”, the latest campaign run by the Caritas for the homeless. This will provide 1,000 homeless people with an emergency aid package consisting of a winter-proof sleeping bag and a hot meal. “It’s our social responsibility to help those who are struggling. With the Caritas, we have a partner whose constant task is to help the needy. That’s why we have been supporting it for many years with great conviction,” says Thomas Uher, spokesperson for Erste Bank’s executive board.

“No one should have to freeze to death on the streets,” says Caritas director Michael Landau. “Thanks to the generous support from the Erste Bank, we can offer quick, non-bureaucratic assistance to people who have lost everything.” A lot has been achieved with the Wiener Wohnungslosenhilfe (Vienna’s aid for the homeless) in recent years with the support of the City of Vienna. Apart from the public authorities, however, socially responsible companies like the Erste Bank are also needed to maintain and develop the aid services. The Erste Bank has also become an important partner of the Caritas: It supports the charity with its task of helping people on the margins of society, e.g. as a sponsor for the domestic help campaign and numerous other projects.

About the Gruft

The Gruft has been a safe haven for the homeless for more than 20 years. They are given hot food here, are able to stay here, and are not cast out. There is also a 24-hour-stay service, a sleeping area, clothes distribution, washing and showering facilities, advisory services and support from social workers, as well as medical and therapeutic aid. There are many different reasons why people come to the Gruft: Many homeless people have had bad experiences or are mentally ill. Three nights a week, Caritas street workers visit places in Vienna where the homeless sleep in the open air despite the cold. “One thing is clear: No one voluntarily lives on the streets”, emphasises Gruft director Judith Hartweger. „We distribute the warm sleeping bags and try to slowly build up their trust. It’s often a long time before people are prepared to accept help.” According to the street workers’ estimates, several hundred homeless people are currently sleeping in the open air, in run-down buildings, toilet facilities or on the Danube Island in Vienna.

The Gruft’s aid services are more important than ever. The number of men and women who have sought help and advice from the social workers in order to start over again has trebled in recent years to approx. 1300 in 2009. Last year, around 82,690 meals were provided to the needy in the rooms beneath Vienna’s Barnabitenkirche – more than ever before. According to predictions, another increase to approx. 86,000 meals is expected for 2010. The Gruft is financed equally by donations and aid from the Fonds Soziales Wien (Social Vienna Fund).

Charity donation account

Erste Bank 012-34560, bank code 20111
Password: „Gruft Winterpaket“.

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Caritas director Michael Landau,
Erste Bank executive board
Thomas Uher

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