

Erste Group committed to climate protection



With the objective of reducing the operational CO₂ emissions by 15 per cent within the next three years, Erste Group Bank AG (Erste Group) and Erste Bank der oesterreichischen Sparkassen AG (Erste Bank Oesterreich) have joined the corporate platform WWF CLIMATE GROUP. "Dealing responsibly with the natural resources of the region in which we are active in as savings bank, should not be just lip service," said Andreas Treichl, CEO of Erste Group. "Therefore, we want to take concrete measures and have become members of the WWF CLIMATE GROUP. By joining, we have committed ourselves to the reduction of our ecological footprint, which is a measurable contribution to a more climate-friendly future."

A green roadmap for a sustainable future

Together with WWF, Erste Group is designing annual action plans for Austria that cover the areas of ongoing operations, facilities management, product portfolio and communication. The measures include activities such as the phase-wise changeover of the company vehicle fleet to "low-CO₂-emission" vehicles with less than 120g/km or a greater share of renewable energy sources. The reduction of paper consumption and the purchase of paper products from sustainable forest management are further components of the action plan. However, at the heart of most efforts are the employees. Environmental protection starts in the minds of people. Therefore, employees need to be informed of the contribution each and every one can make to the sustainable stewardship of natural resources. A step in this direction has already been implemented at the company cafeteria by featuring more regional and organic foods on the daily menu. Another important goal is to reduce the CO₂ emissions generated by business trips, by using, for example, new technologies such as videoconferencing.

Erste Group organisational unit to raise awareness throughout the region

To establish both, climate protection as well as the conservation of natural resources throughout Erste Group, the new organisational unit "Group Environmental Management" has been created. "Only when it becomes feasible to combine economic and ecological interests will environmental sustainability be achieved, and this has been part of the business model of Sparkassen and Erste Bank for the past 200 years," said Klaus Bergmann, Head of the unit about the Group-wide efforts.

Green options for climate-friendly business

The objective of the WWF CLIMATE GROUP is to achieve the implementation of far-reaching climate protection measures in Austria. This requires measures at each of the member companies internally, but, above all, the inclusion of as many Austrian citizens as possible. "Erste Group is an important partner for us in our efforts to achieve climate-friendly business operations in Austria," stressed Hildegard Aichberger, Managing Director of WWF Austria. "By including climate protection aspects in lending practices and sustainable investment fund products, we will attain enormous changes among consumers and in the business sector."

WWF CLIMATE GROUP: Working side-by-side with businesses

The WWF CLIMATE GROUP, which was founded in 2007, has advanced to the largest climate protection initiative in Austria. With its present seven members – apart from Erste Group, these include the furniture store IKEA, the insurance company Allianz, the telecommunications company A1 Telekom Austria, the beverages company Pfanner, the international technology group FRONIUS and the Austrian drugstore chain DM – the WWF CLIMATE GROUP covers nearly all areas of life. The companies have committed themselves to the reduction of their own CO₂ emissions by 15% within three years. The aim is also to raise awareness among customers and employees for greater energy efficiency and sustainable stewardship of natural resources by offering climate-friendly alternatives and activities. Further information under

www.climategroup.at

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