

Monetary transactions to become audible for the blind and visually impaired

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Barrier-free monetary transactions through aural instructions at around 300 Erste Bank und Sparkassen self-service machines throughout Austria

Extension of the free conversion period for the Braille ATM card

Erste Bank und Sparkassen are starting to equip self-service machines with audio instructions for the blind and visually impaired. At least one self-service machine per foyer at the Erste Bank will be fitted with a headphone jack and labelled keyboard by the end of 2011 – a total of 246 self-service machines in 140 foyers. The Sparkassen will follow suit with around 60 machines in 2012. "We will be the first bank to offer barrier-free self-service machines across the country", says a pleased Klaus Mattes, head of card transactions at Erste Bank Austria. The pilot phase will start on 14 October. The "blind ATM" has been designed in co-operation with experts from the Austrian Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ÖBSV-Landesgruppe) for Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland, and optimised in several test phases.

More than 318,000 people in Austria live with a vision-related disability which cannot be rectified through surgery, glasses or contact lenses. This means that, until now, more than 318,000 people in Austria could not use ATMs unaided. Now, blind and visually impaired persons can perform monetary transactions themselves thanks to the audio response function on the Erste Bank und Sparkassen self-service machines. Operation is easy: The customer inserts his/her headphones into the tactile 3.5-mm jack (standard headphone socket) beneath the card slot on the self-service machine, which activates the visually impaired mode. The audio instructions allow customers to choose from up to four accounts, request their account balance or withdraw money. The keypad has labels to simplify the interaction and adjust the volume. ATM cards from other banks can also be used to access the Erste Bank foyers and use the blind ATM.

The Braille ATM card has been another very successful aid. The "EBS label on the bottom right-hand corner of the card makes it easy to identify among other plastic cards, and shows the holder which way to insert it. The period for converting existing normal bank cards to blind ATM cards for free has been extended until the end of 2011.

The Austrian Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired invites people to come and test out the ATMs for the blind and visually impaired between 2.30pm and 3.30pm on 15 October 2011, White Cane Day, at the Erste Bank branch at Hütteldorfer Straße 293.



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