

## Barrier-free Hearing at the Advisory Center of Erste Bank's Graben Branch

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**Together with hearing aid specialist “Hörwelt”, Erste Bank starts the pilot project “barrier-free hearing” at the advisory center at the Graben branch in Vienna. With that the bank makes it possible for its hearing-impaired customers to hear better and more clearly. The modern audio induction loop system in the branch suppresses unwanted noise and ensures an intelligible and confidential conversation with the banking advisor.**

For hearing-impaired people a confidential conversation cannot be taken for granted: in a noisome environment, even a brief conversation can become a challenge. Acoustic misunderstandings may occur, and the consultation may have to be conducted at above average loudness. The new pilot project by Erste Bank and “Hörwelt” is aimed at counteracting this problem and ensuring discrete, confidential banking consultations for hearing-impaired people. “In conversations related to banking it is especially important to understand everything. There must not be any barriers”, explains Rupert Rieder, regional director of Erste Bank. “With the help of the inductive hearing-loop system, the consultation process for hearing-impaired people is made considerably easier”.

In the information area by the entrance, as well as at two counters of the bank branch, wearers of hearing aids and cochlear implants can receive the voice of their conversation partner directly in their hearing aid systems at individually adjustable volume. Hearing-impaired people require a hearing aid equipped with a telecoil for this purpose (switched to 'T' or 'MT'). In addition, people who don't have a hearing aid will be issued with a special inductive stethoset receiver on demand, which amplifies sound. A pictogram identifies the areas where barrier-free hearing with the aid of an induction loop system is offered. With that, financial consultations with hearing-impaired customers of Erste Bank can be conducted at the same level of discretion as conversations with people with normal hearing; misunderstandings due to acoustic problems can be virtually ruled out. This is also confirmed by Elisabeth Barina from the umbrella organization of the Austrian Association of the Hard of Hearing, ÖSB: “On occasion of our test visit, the inductive loop hearing system was in operation at every counter. We were delighted by the result! My colleague Hana Adam from the Center for the Hard of Hearing in Vienna, a cochlear implant wearer, and I myself as a hearing aid wearer, were quite taken with the sound and rendering of the voice of our advisor and were positively surprised.”



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Erste Bank's technology partner and partner for barrier-free audio induction loop systems is Hörwelt GmbH, based in Oberndorf near Salzburg. With its division “hörwelt barrier-free hearing” the company has specialized in consulting, planning and technical implementation of acoustic accessibility. “The pilot project has confirmed the correctness of Erste Bank's business strategy”, declares Tanja Reichl, head of sales and marketing for barrier-free hearing at Hörwelt. “With the introduction of barrier-free hearing, Erste Bank sets a powerful example for consistent customer focus. Of course this results in a considerable image boost as well”, says the specialist for acoustic accessibility.



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