

Press release

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10 Years of Erste Group Summer University Danubia: The Summer University without Borders – Students from Eight Nations Explore the CEE Region Together

It has been ten years since Erste Group started organizing jointly with the University of Economics of Vienna a unique summer university in the CEE region – The programme not only serves to deepen knowledge, but also supports cross-border exchange among students from the entire CEE region. Since the beginning of July, 56 students from eight countries (Austria, Croatia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Hungary and the Ukraine) of which five are in Eastern Europe have taken part. On 4 August 2010, the graduates celebrated the completion of this year's Erste Group Summer University Danubia at Erste Lounge in Vienna together with some 60 alumnae.

“Since ten years, Erste Group has been organizing the Summer University Danubia together with the University of Economics of Vienna. With this programme, we played the role of the avant-garde, because Erste Group has always believed in the future of the region. Today, Central and Eastern Europe is steadily converging – and our initiative is a contribution to this development,” said Ursula Kuntner-Schweickhardt, Head of HR Development & Recruiting at Erste Group. “The entire Erste Group profits from Danubia, because our managers work with the participants of the Summer University in joint workshops on topics relating to the financial market and personnel matters. Not only do students gain important knowledge that they can use later on in their careers, but our managers have an opportunity to learn from young talented people every year. This initiative is an absolute win-win-situation – for students, the partner universities, Erste Group as well as the entire region,” Mrs. Kuntner-Schweickhardt stated.

In a sophisticated selection process held at the beginning of the year, 56 students from eight countries were selected to take part in the tenth Erste Group Summer University Danubia. This summer university took the students throughout Central and Eastern Europe over a total of five weeks. The students took part in an intensive academic programme with seminars in “Financial Services” and “Human Resource Management” at the faculties of economics at the partner universities as well as in thematic workshops headed by experts of the local Erste Group subsidiaries. The Summer University also offered cultural evenings and excursions to get to know the capitals and culture of the host countries better.

In 2010, the participants of Erste Group Summer University Danubia visited five countries in Central and Eastern Europe: The first stop was the capital of Romania (Bucharest); afterwards, the students explored the Balkan region and visited Belgrade (Serbia) and Zagreb (Croatia). The next stop was Bratislava (Slovakia) before the students arrived at the final stop – like every year – Vienna. All in all, the Summer University lasted around five weeks (4th July to 4th August 2010); the students spent around one week in every country.

The Austrian students that participated were very enthusiastic about the Summer University: *“Taking part in Danubia is an experience that we will not forget for the rest of our lives. Not only did we learn a lot, but we also met students from eight countries – and this helped to eliminate any prejudices and – the unfortunately still prevailing – stereotyping.”* The students commented on the curricula as follows: *“Moreover, Danubia helped us to bridge the*

gap between theory and practice – the extensive programme offered case studies, projects and workshops designed to our specific wishes and needs. The direct contacts with the regional Erste Group managers – which gladly answered all of our questions – gave us a chance to look behind the scenes and see how a bank really works.”

Erste Group Summer University Danubia was initiated in 2000. For the past ten years, students from Central and Eastern Europe have been given an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and to get to know the CEE region better by participating in a one-month summer university. Just as Erste Group has grown over the past years, Danubia has also extended its programme to cover eight countries. Students from Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Serbia, Croatia, the Ukraine and Romania may apply for the Summer University every year. Annually, five of these countries are selected which are then visited for one week each, with the final stop always being Erste Group Headquarters in Vienna. Erste Group is not only highly interested in the further education of its own employees, but wants to contribute to the education of the “top managers” of tomorrow. In today’s society, intercultural and social skills play a key role for competitiveness – and it is precisely these values that are instilled at the Erste Group Summer University Danubia.

In 2011, students from the eight partner universities (University of Economics of Belgrade, Bratislava, Budapest, Bucharest, Kiev, Prague, Vienna and Zagreb) will have an opportunity to attend the Erste Group Summer University Danubia again. A requirement is advanced knowledge in the areas of personnel management or financial services.

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