

## PRESS RELEASE

Budapest, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2008

### POS bank card use rises faster than ATM withdrawals abroad

Erste Bank clients prefer Europe

**Budapest, 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2008 – Erste Bank Hungary clients withdraw an average HUF 30,000-35,000 [EUR 125-145] from ATMs when abroad, while the average value of purchases made abroad in the summer months with a bank card was HUF 15,000 [EUR 62]. In H1 2008 the number of foreign ATM transactions rose 13 per cent compared to the same period a year before, as against a 51 per cent increase in the number of bank card purchases in the same period.**

Erste Bank card division manager Zoltán Sipos said the number of bank cards issued by Erste Bank exceeded the 760,000 mark at the end of June. Mr Sipos said close to 10 per cent of all Erste cards were used in some manner of transaction abroad, in some 160 countries of the world. According to an Erste Bank survey, clients use their bank cards most in Europe – transactions in Europe accounted for 87 per cent of all foreign transactions with Erste cards. The UK, Austria and Germany lead the list of European countries where Erste cards were most used. Slovakia, Romania, Croatia, France, Spain and Italy were also high on the list.

Mr Sipos said the substantial rise in bank card use abroad was largely due to the introduction last May of uniform ATM charges of HUF 45 [EUR 0.2] plus 0.45 per cent commission for all transactions conducted on any of the international Erste Group's close to 4,000 ATMs in six countries of the CEE region. Mr Sipos said this was the same charge applied for transactions on Erste Bank Hungary's domestic ATM network. Foreign bank card purchases accounted for 7 per cent of the total. About half of this comes from charges debited through the phone, in writing or online. Here the UK and the US account for the majority of turnover as card holders frequently order purchases or services from these countries.

To those travelling abroad Erste recommends relief-printed cards, which are more often accepted. In case of transactions conducted abroad, the amount spent or withdrawn is converted by the international card operator into US dollars (VISA) or euros (MasterCard, Maestro). This amount is then converted into forints by the bank at the official exchange rate of the day. The forint amount is debited/credited to the client's account on the day after it is received, but dated on the day of receipt of the transaction from the international card operator.

Mr Sipos said Erste Bank now offers a MasterCard Forex Card, which, when used abroad to make a purchase in a currency that corresponds to the denomination of the account itself, means that no conversion is made, and thus the original amount is debited to the account.

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