

Italian Banca Etica chooses Ethibel Pioneer Fortis and Petercam also opt for sustainable investment with higher return

Brussels, 17 January 2005

Following their meeting today, Banca Etica and Ethibel announced a further co-operation for Ethibel Pioneer. The Italian Banca Etica is Italy's first and only ethical and ecological bank. Ethibel Pioneer is the new name of the established Ethibel label, which exists since 1993. Only pioneering companies with outstanding performance in terms of social and environmental sustainability are included in the Pioneer label. The Pioneer label currently counts a total of 200 companies and investments in Ethibel-labelled funds amount to more than one billion euros.

Banca Etica has launched three SRI (Socially Responsible Investment) funds in 2003, based exclusively on companies included in Ethibel's sustainability register and controlled by an independent Ethical Committee. "In two years we have become the third largest player in the Italian SRI market. Both our private and institutional investors are motivated to invest consistently with their values and beliefs. The Ethibel Pioneer label is a guarantee for us that we are investing in companies that are actually pioneering the sustainability sector. For our clients this is an essential quality label and we are still the only licensee for the Ethibel label in Italy", commented Luca Mattiazzi, CEO of Etica.

Better performance

The Ethibel Pioneer Index was first launched in June 2002. According to calculations made by Standard & Poor's, the Ethibel Index has shown excellent results over these past two years. During this period, the Ethibel Pioneer Global has outperformed the S&P Global 1200 as well as the DJ 1800. This is confirmed by Jan Leroy, Manager PAM Equities Europe Ethical at Petercam. "The most convincing argument in favour of ethical and sustainable investment is the better long-term performance of these companies compared to conventional stock indices that apply no particular ethical criteria. Choosing the Pioneer universe and its strict criteria has therefore been an obvious choice for us."

Strict requirements

Only if companies conform to Ethibel's strict research and evaluation methods, will they be considered for the Ethibel Pioneer label. An international team of analysts evaluates companies for a total of 106 different criteria. Assessments are tested against the accounts of labour unions, environmental and human rights organisations, among others. Wilfried Remans of Fortis Bank said: "Fortis Bank has made a conscious choice for the Ethibel Pioneer label for its sustainable investment fund, AlterVision Balance Europe. It proves the commitment of AlterVision Europe Balance to the highest possible criteria when selecting companies and evaluating their performance in terms of sustainability."

The Ethibel label, the quality label for sustainable investment

Ethibel, the European quality label for sustainable investment funds, is a registered collective label, recognised by all countries of the European Union. It is a guarantee for investors that investment funds are composed exclusively of companies selected on the basis of Ethibel's comprehensive evaluation model. Funds are limited to those shares and bonds included in Ethibel's investment register.

About Ethibel

The not-for-profit organisation Ethibel is an independent research agency and consultancy for socially and environmentally responsible investments. Its main activities consist in the social, environmental and ethical screening of companies and in the promotion of ethical financial products to the general public.

Ethibel advises banks and brokers offering social-ethical and "green" financial products and accredits "sustainable investment funds" with its own label.