Press release

27.11.2025

Thomas Groß elected as VÖB President

- Erk Westermann-Lammers takes over as Vice President
- Eckhard Forst appointed honorary member in recognition of his highly committed service
- Thomas Groß: “VÖB is a powerful association with a high level of expertise in a wide range of topics. Member survey shows high satisfaction with the association's services.”

Berlin – The General Assembly of the Association of German Public Banks (VÖB) today unanimously elected the CEO of Helaba Landesbank Hessen-Thüringen, Thomas Groß, as the new VÖB President. The members of the association of public banks also unanimously elected Erk Westermann-Lammers, Chairman of the Board of Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH), as Vice President. During the General Assembly, the remaining members of the Executive Board were also elected for a three-year term.

Thomas Groß: *“I am very pleased to take on this responsible role. Public banks play a crucial role in Germany’s economic development. They are key financing partners in the transformation of the economy and society to make our country fit for the future. At the same time, they stand for stability, reliability, and responsibility. This applies to the Landesbanken, the development banks, and many of our other member institutions.”*

Successful reorganization of the association under Eckhard Forst

Thomas Groß succeeds the CEO of NRW.BANK, Eckhard Forst, who will retire at the end of January 2026. The Executive Board and the General Assembly of the VÖB thanked the outgoing President, who has held the position since 2019, for his many years of highly committed service to Germany’s public banks.

Under the presidency of Eckhard Forst, the association has been fundamentally modernized. Both the statutes and the contribution rules were revised. In addition, the association’s executive management was restructured both in terms of personnel and organization. In recognition of his extraordinary contributions to VÖB, the General Assembly appointed Eckhard Forst an honorary member upon the recommendation of the Executive Board. Until he leaves NRW.BANK, Forst will remain a member of the VÖB Executive Board. His designated successor as CEO of NRW.BANK, Gabriela Pantring, will then assume his mandate until the next General Assembly, in accordance with the statutes.

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Thomas Groß on the development of VÖB: “In recent years, under the leadership of Chief Executive Iris Bethge-Krauß, I have come to know VÖB as a highly effective association. It possesses deep expertise across a wide variety of subjects. VÖB’s different committees are extremely valuable for member institutions. VÖB also has a strong voice in Berlin and Brussels. This positive impression is not just my own—this year’s member survey confirms the high level of satisfaction with the association’s services. My sincere thanks therefore go not only to my predecessor, Eckhard Forst, but also to the team at the head office led by Iris Bethge-Krauß, from whom I am taking over such a well-positioned association. I very much look forward to working together.”

Rainer Neske hands his position over to Erk Westermann-Lammers

Erk Westermann-Lammers, CEO of Investitionsbank Schleswig-Holstein (IB.SH), succeeds Rainer Neske, CEO of LBBW, as Vice President. Neske had also assumed this role in 2019. As a member of the Executive Board and Chair of the Committee of Development Banks, Westermann-Lammers has been closely involved in VÖB’s work for many years. Erk Westermann-Lammers: “I greatly value the association’s high level of expertise and broad network, and I look forward to working with Thomas Groß and all members of the Executive Board in the coming years to advance the interests of public banks.”

The Executive Board and General Assembly thanked Rainer Neske for his many years of service to VÖB. As CEO of LBBW, he will remain closely connected to the association as a member of the newly elected Executive Board.

In addition to Thomas Groß (President) and Erk Westermann-Lammers (Vice President), the newly elected Executive Board includes: Eckhard Forst (NRW.BANK), Jörg Frischholz (NORD/LB), Rainer Neske (LBBW), Nikola Steinbock (Landwirtschaftliche Rentenbank), Dr. Georg Stocker (DekaBank), Dr. Jochen Sutor (SaarLB), Edith Weymayr (L-Bank), Stephan Winkelmeier (BayernLB), and Stefan Wintels (KfW). The President of the German Savings Banks Association (DSGV), Prof. Dr. Ulrich Reuter, is an ex officio member of the Executive Board.

High-resolution photos of the new VÖB President and Vice President are available free of charge on the VÖB website.

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The Association of German Public Sector Banks, VÖB, is an umbrella organization of the German banking industry. It represents the interests of 64 members, including the Landesbanken and the development banks of the federal and state governments. The member institutions of the VÖB have total assets of around 3,200 billion euros and therefore account for around a quarter of the German banking market. The public banks assume their responsibility for SMEs, companies, the public sector and private customers and are firmly rooted in their home regions in all parts of Germany. At 57 percent, the regular VÖB member banks are the market leaders in municipal financing and also provide around 22 percent of all corporate loans in Germany. The development banks in the VÖB provided loans totaling just under 60 billion euros in 2024. VÖB is the only banking association that acts as an employers' association for its member institutions. The collective bargaining tasks, in particular the conclusion of collective agreements, are carried out by the Tarifgemeinschaft Öffentlicher Banken. Around 65,000 employees of VÖB member institutions belong to this association. Further information can be found at www.voeb.de

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