



Media release

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virt-x to Launch Market for Exchange Traded Funds

virt-x plc, the operator of the virt-x pan-European cross-border exchange, announced today that it will launch a new market segment for Exchange Traded Funds ("ETFs") on 6 May 2002.

The market will initially support trading in 23 ETFs comprising:

- 4 FRESCO funds issued by UBS AG
- 15 LDRS issued by Merrill Lynch International and
- 4 iShares issued by Barclays Capital

The new market segment is being launched to meet the demand from virt-x members for access to the rapidly expanding European ETF market.

Trading these ETF products on virt-x will ensure that investors benefit from virt-x's flexible and integrated trading and settlement model as well as providing issuers with access to a pan-European pool of liquidity.

The launch will be made in collaboration with SWX Swiss Exchange, building on SWX's expertise in the rapidly developing European ETF market and virt-x's existing pan-European infrastructure. Since the collaboration falls under the definition of a related party transaction under the AIM rules, full details will be announced separately upon completion of the collaboration agreement.

Commenting on the launch of this new market segment, Antoinette Hunziker-Ebnetter, CEO of virt-x plc, said:

"The introduction of ETFs on virt-x will give our members access to this exciting new equity class. It also strengthens our position as the only truly pan-European stock exchange and offers virt-x an additional revenue stream. Developing a market for ETF products in conjunction with SWX not only gives the market place immediate critical mass, it also gives the issuers of these products access to a pan-European pool of liquidity."

"The European market for Exchange Traded Funds is in its infancy, however we fully expect the demand for these products to grow rapidly and mirror the success of ETFs in North America, where they account for a significant proportion of daily traded volume."

Note to Editors:

- An ETF is a basket of stocks that tracks the performance of an index

- The European market for ETFs has grown rapidly during the last 2 years. At the start of 2001 there were six European ETFs with EUR 760m under management, there are currently over 70 with 91 different listings with assets under management of EUR 7.5bn

For further information please see www.virt-x.com.

About virt-x

virt-x Exchange Limited, a part of the SWX Group, is a Recognised Investment Exchange supervised by the Financial Services Authority. virt-x is the home market for the Swiss Market Index securities and also offers direct, real-time access to trading in the constituents of all the major pan-European blue chip indices, facilitating sector and index trading. virt-x has an integrated trading, clearing and settlement model which simplifies the process of trading pan-European blue chips and provides scope for significant reduction in cross border transaction costs.

www.virt-x.com