

Sberbank Wants MICEX Share Sale

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Performers celebrating the opening of a new Sberbank branch in the North Caucasus city of Stavropol in May. **Eduard Korniyenko**

The partial privatization of Sberbank shares will most likely go through MICEX, the bank's chief executive German Gref said.

"Privatization will be carried out through public offering, and it's proposed that MICEX will be the base platform," Gref said Friday.

Russia's largest lender Sberbank is planning to sell up to 7.6 percent of its shares and is looking into a possible share buyback to support share prices and increase the value of the stake up for sale, currently worth about \$6 billion.

"The Central Bank, as a Sberbank shareholder, has the same interests as other shareholders. We are not going to sell shares for cheap," Central Bank Chairman Sergei Ignatyev said during Sberbank's annual shareholders meeting Friday.

Ignatyev was re-elected as chairman of Sberbank's supervisory board Friday, while Gref's term at the helm of the lender was extended for the next four years.

Sberbank, which accounts for about half the deposits in the Russian banking system, is one of the main assets in the state privatization drive. In February, the government sold 10 percent in the country's No. 2 lender VTB.

Russia, which decided to reduce its holdings in key economic assets to raise more than 1 trillion rubles (\$36 billion) over three years to plug its deficit, earned \$3.3 billion from the VTB sale.

Demand for VTB was boosted by a fall of 13 percent in its share price since the end of January, though that also wiped \$500 million off the value of the stake.

On Friday, Gref promised shareholders that the VTB scenario of losing value ahead of privatization wouldn't be repeated.

"We will use all opportunities to support our share price. We will announce all the measures that could be taken to avoid a repeat of the negative experiences of other companies," he said, without elaborating.

He added that Sberbank may gradually reduce the amount of Sberbank's privileged shares, pushing the stocks up 7 percent.

To expand its investor base, Sberbank plans to turn up to 25 percent of its shares into depositary receipts, which will be traded on London and Frankfurt exchanges.

Sberbank will pay out 12 percent of last year's net profit, or 0.92 ruble per ordinary share and 1.15 rubles for each preferred one.

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Sberbank chief executive German Gref said he doesn't see a "big chance" for the bank to acquire Kazakhstan's BTA Bank, Bloomberg reported Friday. Sberbank completed due diligence on the Almaty-based lender at the end of last year. BTA was Kazakhstan's biggest lender before its nationalization and default two years ago.

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