

Media release

BERNEXPO GROUPE: major Bernese companies invest in Messepark Bern AG

Bern, 28 May 2020 – A group of four companies comprising Mobiliar, Visana Beteiligungen AG, the Securitas Group and HRS Real Estate Ltd. is investing in Messepark Bern AG. Together with the BERNEXPO GROUPE, which is remaining a minority shareholder, they are helping to strengthen and develop Bern as an economically important trade fair venue.

On 28 May 2020, the BERNEXPO GROUPE signed contracts with four companies that gave them an overall 45 per cent stake in the share capital of Messepark Bern AG. The new shareholders are three Bernese companies – Mobiliar, Visana Beteiligungen AG and the Securitas Group – and the real estate service provider HRS Real Estate Ltd. The public sector is still a shareholder in Messepark Bern AG with a 22.16 per cent stake (the canton of Bern with 8.95 per cent, the city of Bern with 3.16 per cent, the Burgergemeinde with 3.71 per cent, and the three municipalities of Köniz, Ostermundigen and Muri with 2.84 per cent, 1.89 per cent and 1.61 per cent respectively). “The BERNEXPO GROUPE is not ruling out other interested companies investing in Messepark Bern AG at a later date,” said Franziska von Weissenfluh, Chair of the Board of Directors of the BERNEXPO GROUPE.

With a 32.6 per cent stake in Messepark Bern AG, the BERNEXPO GROUPE will remain a minority shareholder and general tenant of the exhibition halls and outdoor areas. “Thanks to the new shareholder structure, the BERNEXPO GROUPE can concentrate fully as planned on strengthening its core business and developing its strategic areas,” states Franziska von Weissenfluh, Chair of the Board of Directors of the BERNEXPO GROUPE.

The BERNEXPO venue is owned by Messepark Bern AG and is one of the largest exhibition premises in Switzerland. In 1958 it was used for the first time to host the BEA. Eight exhibition halls across two building complexes offer around 41,000 m² of event floor space and 100,000 m² of exhibition space outdoors.

Neue Festhalle has a high economic and social benefit

One of Messepark Bern AG’s upcoming major projects is the replacement of the Festhalle which was constructed as a temporary solution some 67 years ago. Messepark Bern AG aims to close a significant gap in the market by building the Neue Festhalle. The capital city is currently unable to offer events, exhibitions or worlds of experiences for a capacity of up to 8,500 people. “The people of the city and region, as well as business owners and the tourism industry, have a great deal to gain from the Neue Festhalle and the enormous economic and social synergies resulting from it,” said Jürg Stöckli, Chair of the Board of Directors of Messepark Bern AG.

Markus Wyss, Head of Real Estate at Mobiliar, stresses: “Our involvement is a commitment to the region. Bern needs exhibition and trade fair halls. They enrich and complement the range of venues in the city of Bern, enhancing national and international appeal. This will benefit the entire region, economy and tourism.” Angelo Eggli, the CEO of Visana Beteiligungen AG, highlights this aspect: “Bern’s position as a trade fair venue gives a strong and sustainable value-generating

impetus to the whole region. Our involvement in Messepark Bern AG is a clear commitment to Bern as an economic location." Armin Berchtold, CEO of Securitas, adds: "As a security service provider, Securitas already plays a key role on the exhibition site in the areas of access control, security staff, guarding services, traffic control and visitor management. Our involvement is therefore a commitment to a viable and strong location." Martin and Rebecca Kull, the owners of HRS Real Estate Ltd., point out: "The site and locality are ideal for development: the trade fair venue has excellent transport links, is centrally located and offers a great deal of potential for additional uses with the Neue Festhalle." After investing in Messepark Bern AG, all four new shareholders intend to support and co-finance a suitable replacement for the old Festhalle.

Public contribution to an intact and contemporary infrastructure

In the autumn, the executive and parliament of the city and canton of Bern will make a decision on approving the loan. In spring 2021, the people of the city of Bern and Grand Council of the canton of Bern will decide on contributions of CHF 15 million each towards the Neue Festhalle's infrastructure costs: "We are confident of approval for these contributions to an intact and contemporary infrastructure of Bern as a trade fair venue which are in the interests and also within the responsibilities of the public sector," said Franziska von Weissenfluh.

Confidence despite coronavirus pandemic

The impact of the coronavirus pandemic has badly affected the BERNEXPO GROUPE, including the cancellation of the BEA which is one of Switzerland's largest events. "However, the company is on a healthy financial footing and has the professional tools required to overcome this difficult situation successfully," explains Franziska von Weissenfluh. Despite drastic measures, managers at the BERNEXPO GROUPE believe they will be able to stay on track and play a leading role again in Switzerland's trade fair and event sector once normality returns after the crisis situation.

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About the BERNEXPO GROUPE

Every year, the live marketing company BERNEXPO GROUPE stages more than 30 exhibitions and guest exhibitions, over 300 congresses, trade shows and other events of all sizes. Live communication enables the BERNEXPO GROUPE to deliver memorable moments, create spaces where people can come together and offer a wide variety of platforms. The BERNEXPO site is one of Switzerland's largest exhibition premises. Eight exhibition halls across two building complexes offer around 40,000 m² of event floor space and 100,000 m² of outdoor areas. The BERNEXPO GROUPE employs a team of around 140 people. Generating a gross added value of around CHF 260 million, it is a leading economic driving force for the city and region of Bern – with a nationwide impact.