

Media release

## **Challenging second year of the coronavirus crisis overcome**

**Bern, April 27, 2022 - BERNEXPO GROUPE's business activities were severely impacted by the coronavirus crisis for the second year in a row. Despite structural adjustments, short-time working and strict cost management, the live communications company only broke even for the year at group level thanks to hardship payments from the federal government and the canton. BERNEXPO GROUPE is confident in relation to 2022. In particular, the opening of the upcoming BEA is eagerly anticipated.**

Due to the coronavirus crisis and regulatory requirements, BERNEXPO GROUPE had to cancel or postpone all physical own and guest events in the first half of 2021. This included the traditional BEA spring trade fair, which thus could not take place for the second time in a row. At least with Suisse Public SMART and INNOTEQ.DIGITAL, two purely digital formats could be realised. In the second half of the year, it was fortunately possible to successfully hold the leading order and community platform ORNARIS, the leading trade fair for industrial automation SINDEXT, the job and educational fair BAM, the educational industry platform Swisssdidac and the Suisse Caravan Salon. The most important camping and caravanning event in Switzerland even recorded a higher number of visitors than in 2019.

### **Adapted organisational form and structures**

In the course of the past financial year, further cost-saving measures were implemented and structures and processes adjusted accordingly. Peter Stähli, Chairman of the Board of Directors of BERNEXPO GROUPE, explains: "We used the crisis to examine our company for optimisation potential, to adapt the organisational form and to trim all processes for greater efficiency and higher profitability. Together with our above-average service quality, we are thus creating real added value for our customers and are emerging stronger from this challenging phase."

### **Difficult second pandemic year**

Due to the fact that digital formats but no physical trade fairs and events could be implemented in the first half of 2021, turnover was around 50% below normal earnings, as in the previous year. The consolidated turnover of BERNEXPO GROUPE for the 2021 financial year amounted to CHF 22.8 million (previous year CHF 24.4 million). EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation) amounted to CHF -10.8 million (previous year: CHF -10.9 million) and the consolidated annual result was CHF 0.5 million (previous year: CHF -16.1 million). Due to the receipt of state support in the form of hardship payments, the company will not pay any dividends this year either.

### **Bright spots: Return of the BEA spring trade fair**

After two difficult years due to the pandemic, the Board of Directors and Executive Board look to the future with confidence. In particular, the BEA spring trade fair, which is able to take place again on the BERNEXPO site from April 29 to May 8 after a two-year hiatus, is eagerly anticipated. For the coming winter, BERNEXPO GROUPE still expects the pandemic to have some impact on business, but with less severe restrictions than in the last two years. The focus is once again on high agility and the ability to quickly adapt to current trends. Tom Winter, CEO of BERNEXPO GROUPE, says: "Radical dynamisation of the company is key for us in order to be able to react continuously to the ever-changing market needs. The BERNEXPO site allows

us to quickly adapt our formats like no other. Valuable experience, such as we gained in 2021 with the successful launch of the BAM.CONNECT digital platform, will be built upon in the new financial year on a newly-gained solid foundation."

The timetable for the Neue Festhalle has become more concrete and the originally communicated start of construction in spring 2022 has been delayed by one year. The focus for the opening of the new multifunctional hall in Minergie standard and with one of the highest levels of digitalisation in Switzerland is thus set for 2025. The Neue Festhalle is opening up new possibilities for BERNEXPO GROUPE in the area of cultural events, sporting events and conventions - a mixture of congress and exhibition.

**In the event of questions, please contact:**

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**About BERNEXPO GROUPE**

BERNEXPO GROUPE, a live marketing company, stages more than 30 proprietary and guest exhibitions, over 300 congresses and specialist events, as well as event engagements of all sizes every year. BERNEXPO GROUPE's live communication approach produces eventful moments, creates space for encounters and offers diverse platforms. The BERNEXPO site is one of the largest exhibition premises in Switzerland: Eight exhibition halls in two building complexes have a total of around 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> of event space and 100,000 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor areas. BERNEXPO GROUPE has a staff of around 100 employees. It achieves gross added value of around CHF 260 million, making the company an important economic driver for the city and region of Bern, as well as a familiar name throughout Switzerland.