

Media release

BERNEXPO AG: business performance dominated by the coronavirus pandemic

Bern, 18 September 2020 – BERNEXPO AG expects a loss in the low double-digit millions for the current financial year. Due to the dramatic situation on the trade fair and event market, the company has only been able to generate sales revenues from ad hoc events. However, these are not sufficient to make up for the enormous losses in the core business. BERNEXPO AG will therefore cut its costs even further, optimise its processes and structures and accelerate the process of digital transformation.

BERNEXPO AG was hit hard by the consequences of the coronavirus pandemic. Following the Federal Council's ban on large events, all of BERNEXPO AG's own events and all guest events since March 2020 – including the BEA spring trade fair and the Suisse Public specialist trade fair – have had to be cancelled or postponed until the coming years. Important guest events such as the SwissSkills Championships and the Agrama specialist trade fair for agricultural and forestry technology will only be held in 2021 and 2022, respectively. BERNEXPO AG therefore expects a total loss for the 2020 financial year in the low double-digit millions.

“Through reduced working hours, the suspension of all non-critical projects and further cost-cutting measures, we were able to make significant savings and safeguard our liquidity,” says Franziska von Weissenfluh, Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of BERNEXPO AG.

There were also a few isolated positives for the company. Despite the drastic coronavirus-related restrictions in the trade fair and event market, sales revenue of around CHF 7 million was generated through additional business. Moreover, the Swiss Caravan Salon (22 to 26 October 2020) and the BAM trade fair for employment and vocational training (30 October to 2 November 2020) are scheduled to take place at the BERNEXPO site. The eSports, gaming and cosplay festival HeroFest (3 to 11 October 2020) will be held as a hybrid event. “However, the savings we have made and the revenues from the additional and planned events are nowhere near sufficient to make up for the losses in the core business,” says Franziska von Weissenfluh.

Consistent implementation of the strategy

BERNEXPO AG's business performance will continue to be strongly affected by the pandemic over the coming months. “In this extraordinary situation, the Board of Directors and the Management Board are doing everything they can to intensify the measures taken,” von Weissenfluh says.

The number-one priority is stabilising the core business. Costs will also be reduced substantially over the coming year, the company's processes and structures will be optimised and its agility

levels increased and the digital transformation process will be accelerated. In the future, digital and hybrid formats will play an even greater role in the running of events.

Despite the challenging and uncertain times, BERNEXPO AG will continue to further develop the company as the leading live communications company in Switzerland and leave a lasting mark on the trade fair and event sector. The BERNEXPO GROUPE is well capitalised and has a healthy balance sheet. In 2019, the consolidated equity ratio was 50.4%.

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About the BERNEXPO GROUPE

Every year, live communications company BERNEXPO GROUPE plans, realises and holds more than 30 exhibitions and guest exhibitions and over 300 congresses, trade shows and other events of all sizes. Live communication allows 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 around 130 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.