20220728326

Årsredovisning

för

Universum Communications Sweden AB

556587-5993

Räkenskapsåret

2021

Fastställelseintyg

Undertecknad styrelseledamot i Universum Communications Sweden AB intygar att resultaträkningen och balansräkningen i årsredovisningen har fastställts på årsstämma. Årsstämman beslutade att godkänna styrelsens förslag till resultatdisposition.

Jag intygar också att innehållet i årsredovisningen och revisionsberättelsen stämmer överens med originalen.

Stockholm 2022-03-30

Mats Röjdmark

20220728328327

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Styrelsen och verkställande direktören för Universum Communications Sweden AB avger följande årsredovisning för räkenskapsåret 2021.

Årsredovisningen är upprättad i svenska kronor, SEK. Om inte annat särskilt anges, redovisas alla belopp i tusentals kronor (Tkr). Uppgifter inom parentes avser föregående år.

Förvaltningsberättelse

Information om verksamheten

Universum Communications Sweden AB är världsledande inom området Employer Branding. Verksamheten syftar till att bistå företag i att öka sin attraktivitet på den alltmer konkurrensutsatta marknaden för kvalificerad arbetskraft. Bolaget bedriver verksamhet i ett flertal länder. Universum Communications Sweden AB samverkar där med övriga bolag i den koncern i vilket bolaget ingår.

Bolagets verksamhet bedrivs främst inom produktområdena Research, som utför attitydundersökningar och genomför skräddarsydda utredningar och analyser inom ovan nämnda grupper, Media som producerar och publicerar tidskrifter och tidningsbilagor samt utvecklar kommunikation via internet, och Consulting, som genomför rådgivningsuppdrag år kunder inom Employer Branding.

Bolaget är ett dotterbolag och helägt av Stepstone GmbH (DE249166292) med säte i Tyskland.

Företaget har sitt säte i Stockholm.

Väsentliga händelser under räkenskapsåret

Även om året varit fortsatt påverkat av den rådande pandemin, Covid 19, kom försäljningen i gång efter sommaren och nådde tidigare bra nivåer.

Under året har vi inte sett pausade projekt som vi gjorde under 2020 vilket tyder på att företag igen är åter måna om att rusta sin attraktivitet som arbetsgivare. Bolaget har inte dragit ner på några satsningar utan fortsatt måna om att stå starka när pandemin är över.

Väsentliga händelser efter räkenskapsårets slut

Inga väsentliga händelser har skett efter balansdagen.

Förväntad framtida utveckling samt väsentliga risker och osäkerhetsfaktorer

År 2022 har påbörjats väl. Tecken på att den globala marknaden såväl som den svenska håller på att återhämta sig,och att förväntningen på år 2022 är att återta tillväxtplanen.

Försäljningen har kommit i gång väl och ser ut att följa plan och budget.

Utländska filialer

Universum Communications Sweden AB innehar en filial i Finland. Den finländska filialen ingår i de redovisade beloppen för Universum Communications AB.

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Flerårsöversikt (Tkr)	**2021**	**2020**	**2019**	**2018**	**2017**
Nettoomsättning	157 067	135 061	191 628	183 102	173 194
Resultat efter finansiella poster	-29 745	-63 990	-13 769	-7 424	-9 699
Soliditet (%)	30,2	12,0	24,1	28,5	22,4

Förslag till vinstdisposition
Styrelsen föreslår att till förfogande stående vinstmedel (kronor):

balanserad vinst	94 203 235
årets förlust	-29 775 023
	64 428 212
disponeras så att	
i ny räkning överföres	64 428 212

Företagets resultat och ställning i övrigt framgår av efterföljande resultat- och balansräkning samt kassaflödesanalys med noter.

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Resultaträkning
Tkr

	Not	2021-01-01 -2021-12-31	2020-01-01 -2020-12-31
Rörelsens intäkter			
Nettoomsättning	2, 3	157 067	135 061
Övriga rörelseintäkter	4	30 951	32 290
Summa rörelseintäkter		**188 018**	**167 351**
Rörelsens kostnader			
Handelsvaror		-79 495	-78 786
Övriga externa kostnader	5, 6	-36 109	-37 100
Personalkostnader	7	-86 930	-93 397
Avskrivningar av materiella och immateriella anläggningstillgångar		-9 201	-7 132
Övriga rörelsekostnader		-12 721	-11 592
Summa rörelsekostnader		**-224 456**	**-228 007**
Rörelseresultat		**-36 438**	**-60 656**
Resultat från finansiella poster			
Resultat från andelar i koncernföretag	8	4 731	17 309
Nedskrivning av finansiella anläggningstillgångar		0	-16 900
Övriga ränteintäkter och liknande resultatposter	9	7 818	9 430
Räntekostnader och liknande resultatposter	10	-5 856	-13 173
Summa finansiella poster		**6 693**	**-3 334**
Resultat efter finansiella poster		**-29 745**	**-63 990**
Resultat före skatt			
Skatt på årets resultat	11	-30	0
Årets resultat		**-29 775**	**-63 990**

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Balansräkning

Tkr

	Not	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
TILLGÅNGAR			
Anläggningstillgångar			
Immateriella anläggningstillgångar			
Balanserade utgifter för utvecklingsarbeten	12	11 930	8 678
Summa immateriella anläggningstillgångar		**11 930**	**8 678**
Materiella anläggningstillgångar			
Inventarier, verktyg och installationer	13	560	572
Förbättringsutgifter på annans fastighet	14	403	539
Summa materiella anläggningstillgångar		**963**	**1 111**
Finansiella anläggningstillgångar			
Andelar i koncernföretag	15, 16	90 162	90 162
Andra långfristiga fordringar		50	50
Summa finansiella anläggningstillgångar		**90 212**	**90 212**
Summa anläggningstillgångar		**103 105**	**100 001**
Omsättningstillgångar			
Kortfristiga fordringar			
Kundfordringar		38 270	34 502
Fordringar hos koncernföretag		75 496	100 065
Övriga fordringar		3 773	3 001
Förutbetalda kostnader & upplupna intäkter	17	9 751	9 045
Upparbetade intäkter i projekt	18	18 170	20 226
Summa kortfristiga fordringar		**145 460**	**166 839**
Kassa och bank	19	10 601	8 568
Summa omsättningstillgångar		**156 061**	**175 407**
SUMMA TILLGÅNGAR		**259 166**	**275 408**

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Balansräkning
Tkr

	Not	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
EGET KAPITAL OCH SKULDER			
Eget kapital	20		
Bundet eget kapital			
Aktiekapital		500	500
Reservfond		7 008	7 008
Fond för utvecklingsutgifter		6 456	0
Summa bundet eget kapital		**13 964**	**7 508**
Fritt eget kapital			
Balanserad vinst eller förlust		94 203	88 239
Årets resultat		-29 775	-63 990
Summa fritt eget kapital		**64 428**	**24 249**
Summa eget kapital		**78 392**	**31 757**
Avsättningar	21		
Övriga avsättningar		6 900	6 900
Summa avsättningar		**6 900**	**6 900**
Långfristiga skulder			
Övriga skulder		3 753	0
Summa långfristiga skulder		**3 753**	**0**
Kortfristiga skulder			
Förskott från kunder	18	26 277	24 484
Leverantörsskulder		8 453	3 948
Skulder till koncernföretag		109 981	178 534
Övriga skulder		8 736	11 987
Upplupna kostnader och förutbetalda intäkter	22	16 674	17 798
Summa kortfristiga skulder		**170 121**	**236 751**
SUMMA EGET KAPITAL OCH SKULDER		**259 166**	**275 408**

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Kassaflödesanalys

Tkr

	Not	2021-01-01 -2021-12-31	2020-01-01 -2020-12-31
Den löpande verksamheten			
Resultat efter finansiella poster		-29 745	-63 990
Justeringar för poster som inte ingår i kassaflödet		8 339	24 033
Betald skatt		-2 027	-892
Kassaflöde från den löpande verksamheten före förändring av rörelsekapital		**-23 433**	**-40 849**
Kassaflöde från förändring av rörelsekapitalet			
Förändring av kundfordringar		-3 768	15 892
Förändring av kortfristiga fordringar		-823	-14 572
Förändring av kortfristiga skulder		-1 156	25 243
Förändring av leverantörsskulder		4 501	-6 568
Kassaflöde från den löpande verksamheten		**-24 679**	**-20 854**
Investeringsverksamheten			
Investeringar i immateriella anläggningstillgångar		-7 968	-5 788
Investeringar i materiella anläggningstillgångar		-582	-68
Försäljning av materiella anläggningstillgångar		127	0
Investeringar i dotterbolag		0	-2 500
Kassaflöde från investeringsverksamheten		**-8 423**	**-8 356**
Finansieringsverksamheten			
Förändring koncernmellanhavanden		-41 276	-23 968
Erhållna aktieägartillskott		76 410	50 135
Kassaflöde från finansieringsverksamheten		**35 134**	**26 167**
Årets kassaflöde		**2 032**	**-3 043**
Likvida medel vid årets början		8 569	11 612
Likvida medel vid årets slut		**10 601**	**8 569**

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Noter
Tkr

Not 1 Redovisnings- och värderingsprinciper

Allmänna upplysningar
Årsredovisningen är upprättad i enlighet med årsredovisningslagen och BFNAR 2012:1 Årsredovisning och koncernredovisning (K3).

Företagets redovisningsvaluta är svenska kronor (SEK). Vid varje balansdag räknas monetära poster i utländsk valuta om till balansdagens kurs.

Icke-monetära poster, som värderas till historiskt anskaffningsvärde i en utländsk valuta, räknas inte om. Valutakursdifferenser redovisas i rörelseresultatet eller som finansiell post utifrån den underliggande affärshändelsen, i den period de uppstår.

Redovisningsprinciperna är oförändrade jämfört med föregående år.

Universum Communications Sweden AB med organisationsnummer 556587-5993 är ett aktiebolag registrerat i Sverige med säte i Stockholm. Adressen till huvudkontoret är Jakobsbergsgatan 22. Universum Communications Sweden AB och dess dotterföretag ("koncernen") är världsledande inom området Employer Branding. Verksamheten syftar till att bistå företag i att öka sin attraktivitet på den alltmer konkurrensutsatta marknaden för kvalificerad arbetskraft. Bolaget bedriver verksamhet i ett flertal länder.

Universum Communications Sweden AB ägs till 100% av Stepstone GmbH, org.nr. DE249166292, med säte i Düsseldorf som i sin ägs till 100 % av koncernen Axel Springer SE, HRB154517B med säte i Berlin.

Koncernförhållanden
Företaget är moderföretag med hänvisning till undantagsreglerna i årsredovisningslagen 7 kap 2 § upprättas ingen koncernredovisning. Detta med anledning av att företaget med samtliga sina dotterbolag omfattas av koncernredovisning i det överordnade moderföretaget Axel Springer SE, Orgnr. HRB154517B, med säte i Berlin, Tyskland. Detta företag upprättar sin koncernredovisning enligt tyska redovisningsregler. Årsredovisningen är tillgänglig på Axel Springers hemsida www.axelspringer.com

Intäktsredovisning
Intäkter har tagits upp till verkligt värde av vad som erhållits eller kommer att erhållas, med avdrag för mervärdesskatt, rabatter, returer och liknande avdrag.

Företagets intäkter består i huvudsak av intäkter från försäljning av tjänster inom Employer Branding och verksamhetsgrenarna media, research, consulting och övrig försäljning.

Försäljning sker till fast pris och löpande räkning. Intäkterna från försäljning av tjänster på löpande räkning redovisas som intäkt i den period arbetet utförts och material levereras eller förbrukas. Intäkter från försäljning av tjänster till fast pris redovisas, i de fall det ekonomiska utfallet kan beräknas på ett tillförlitligt sätt, med tillämpning av s.k. succesiv vinstavräkning. Det innebär att intäkter och kostnader redovisas i förhållande till uppdragets färdigställandegrad på balansdagen.

Färdigställandegraden fastställs genom en beräkning av förhållandet mellan nedlagda uppdragsutgifter för utfört arbete på balansdagen och beräknade totala uppdragsutgifter.

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Intäkter från försäljning av tjänster till fast pris redovisas, i de fall det ekonomiska utfallet inte kan beräknas på ett tillförlitligt sätt, med belopp som motsvarar uppkomna uppdragsutgifter som sannolikt kommer att ersättas av beställaren. Inom verksamhetsgrenarna media och research vilka säljs till fast pris tas intäkten vid publiceringstillfället respektive vid leverans av rapport, vilket enligt ovan är det tillfälle då alla risker och rättigheter övergått till köparen.

Consulting tjänster säljs till fast pris eller löpande räkning och intäkten redovisas i takt med färdigställandegraden respektive i den period arbetet utförs.

Övrig försäljning innefattar events m.m. där uppdragen säljs till fast pris. Intäkten tas vid genomförandet, vilket enligt ovan är det tillfälle då alla risker och rättigheter övergått till köparen. En befarad förlust på ett tjänsteuppdrag redovisas omedelbart som en kostnad.

När utfallet av ett tjänsteuppdrag inte kan beräknas på ett tillförlitligt sätt sker intäktsredovisningen endast med belopp som motsvarar uppkomna uppdragsutgifter som sannolikt kommer att ersättas av beställaren. Uppdragsutgifter redovisas som kostnader i den period då de uppkommer.

Utdelning och ränteintäkter
Utdelningsintäkter redovisas när ägarens rätt att erhålla betalningen har fastställts.

Immateriella tillgångar

Anskaffning genom separata förvärv
Immateriella tillgångar som förvärvats separat redovisas till anskaffningsvärde med avdrag för ackumulerade avskrivningar och eventuella ackumulerade nedskrivningar. Avskrivning sker linjärt över tillgångens uppskattade nyttjandeperiod, vilken uppskattas till 5 år.
Bedömda nyttjandeperioder och avskrivningsmetoder omprövas om det finns en indikation på att dessa har förändrats jämfört med uppskattningen vid föregående balansdag. Effekten av eventuella ändringar i uppskattningar och bedömningar redovisas framåtriktat. Avskrivning påbörjas när tillgången kan användas.

Anskaffning genom intern upparbetning.
Samtliga utgifter för utveckling av en immateriell tillgång redovisas som en tillgång om samtliga följande villkor är uppfyllda:
• det är tekniskt möjligt att färdigställa den immateriella anläggningstillgången så att den kan användas eller säljas,
• företaget avsikt är att färdigställa den immateriella anläggningstillgången och att använda eller sälja den,
• det finns förutsättningar för att använda eller sälja den immateriella anläggningstillgången,
• det är sannolikt att den immateriella anläggningstillgången kommer att generera framtida ekonomiska fördelar,
• det finns erforderliga och adekvata tekniska, ekonomiska och andra resurser för att fullfölja utvecklingen och för att använda eller sälja den immateriella anläggningstillgången, och
• de utgifter som är hänförliga till den immateriella anläggningstillgången under dess utveckling kan beräknas tillförlitligt.

Efter första redovisningstillfället redovisas internt upparbetade immateriella anläggningstillgångar till anskaffningsvärde efter avdrag för ackumulerade avskrivningar och eventuella ackumulerade nedskrivningar. Avskrivning påbörjas när tillgången kan användas. Aktiverade utgifter för den internt upparbetade tillgången skrivs av linjärt över en bedömd nyttjandeperiod om 5 år.

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Borttagande från balansräkningen
En immateriell anläggningstillgång tas bort från balansräkningen vid utrangering eller avyttring eller när inte några framtida ekonomiska fördelar väntas från användning eller utrangering/avyttring av tillgången. Den vinst eller förlust som uppkommer när en immateriell anläggningstillgång tas bort från balansräkningen är skillnaden mellan vad som eventuellt erhålls, efter avdrag för direkta försäljningskostnader, och tillgångens redovisade värde. Detta redovisas i resultaträkningen som en övrig rörelseintäkt eller övrig rörelsekostnad.

Nedskrivningar av materiella anläggningstillgångar och immateriella tillgångar exklusive goodwill
Vid varje balansdag analyserar koncernen de redovisade värdena för materiella anläggningstillgångar och immateriella tillgångar för att fastställa om det finns någon indikation på att dessa tillgångar har minskat i värde. Om så är fallet, beräknas tillgångens återvinningsvärde för att kunna fastställa värdet av en eventuell nedskrivning. Där det inte är möjligt att beräkna återvinningsvärdet för en enskild tillgång, beräknar koncernen återvinningsvärdet för den kassagenererande enhet till vilken tillgången hör.

Likvida medel
Likvida medel inkluderar kassamedel och disponibla tillgodohavanden hos banker och andra kreditinstitut samt andra kortfristiga likvida placeringar som lätt kan omvandlas till kontanter och är föremål för en obetydlig risk för värdefluktuationer. För att klassificeras som likvida medel får löptiden inte överskrida tre månader från tidpunkten för förvärvet.

Materiella anläggningstillgångar
Materiella anläggningstillgångar redovisas till anskaffningsvärde efter avdrag för ackumulerade avskrivningar och eventuella nedskrivningar.

Anskaffningsvärdet består av inköpspriset, utgifter som är direkt hänförliga till förvärvet för att bringa den på plats och i skick att användas samt uppskattade utgifter för nedmontering och bortforsling av tillgången och återställande av plats där den finns. Tillkommande utgifter inkluderas endast i tillgången eller redovisas som en separat tillgång, när det är sannolikt att framtida ekonomiska fördelar som är förknippade med posten kommer att tillfalla koncernen och att anskaffningsvärdet för densamma kan mätas på ett tillförlitligt sätt. Alla övriga kostnader för reparationer och underhåll samt tillkommande utgifter redovisas i resultaträkningen i den period då de uppkommer.

Avskrivningar på materiella anläggningstillgångar kostnadsförs så att tillgångens anskaffningsvärde, eventuellt minskat med beräknat restvärde vid nyttjandeperiodens slut, skrivs av linjärt över dess bedömda nyttjandeperiod. Om en tillgång har delats upp på olika komponenter skrivs respektive komponent av separat över dess nyttjandeperiod. Avskrivning påbörjas när den materiella anläggningstillgången kan tas i bruk.

Materiella anläggningstillgångars nyttjandeperioder uppskattas till:
Maskiner och andra tekniska anläggningar:

Datorer 3 år
Inventarier 5 år

Bedömda nyttjandeperioder och avskrivningsmetoder omprövas om det finns indikationer på att förväntad förbrukning har förändrats väsentligt jämfört med uppskattningen vid föregående balansdag. Då företaget ändrar bedömning av nyttjandeperioder, omprövas även tillgångens eventuella restvärde. Effekten av dessa ändringar redovisas framåtriktat.

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Borttagande från balansräkningen
Det redovisade värdet för en materiell anläggningstillgång tas bort från balansräkningen vid utrangering eller avyttring, eller när inte några framtida ekonomiska fördelar väntas från användning eller utrangering/avyttring av tillgången eller komponenten. Den vinst eller förlust som uppkommer när en materiell anläggningstillgång eller en komponent tas bort från balansräkningen är skillnaden mellan vad som eventuellt erhålls, efter avdrag för direkta försäljningskostnader, och tillgångens redovisade värde. Den realisationsvinst eller realisationsförlust som uppkommer när en materiell anläggningstillgång eller en komponent tas bort från balansräkningen redovisas i resultaträkningen som en övrig rörelseintäkt eller övrig rörelsekostnad.

Låneutgifter
De låneutgifter som uppkommer då företaget lånar kapital kostnadsförs i resultaträkningen i den period de uppstår.

Leasingavtal
Leasingavgifter vid operationella leasingavtal kostnadsförs linjärt över leasingperioden, såvida inte ett annat systematiskt sätt bättre återspeglar användarens ekonomiska nytta över tiden.

Inkomstskatter
Total skatt utgörs av aktuell skatt och uppskjuten skatt. Skatter redovisas i resultaträkningen, utom då underliggande transaktion redovisas direkt mot eget kapital varvid tillhörande skatteeffekter redovisas i eget kapital.

Aktuell skatt
Aktuell skatt avser inkomstskatt för innevarande räkenskapsår samt den del av tidigare räkenskapsårs inkomstskatt som ännu inte redovisats. Aktuell skatt beräknas utifrån den skattesats som gäller per balansdagen.

Avsättningar
Avsättningar redovisas när bolaget har en formell eller informell förpliktelse som en följd av tidigare händelser och det är sannolikt att ett utflöde av resurser kommer att krävas för att reglera förpliktelsen. Avsättningar värderas till den bästa uppskattningen av det belopp som krävs för att reglera förpliktelsen. Om effekten av tid när betalning sker är väsentlig nuvärdesberäknas förpliktelsen.

Ersättningar till anställda
Ersättningar till anställda avser alla former av ersättningar som företaget lämnar till de anställda. Kortfristiga ersättningar utgörs av bland annat löner, betald semester, betald frånvaro, bonus och ersättning efter avslutad anställning (pension). Kortfristiga ersättningar redovisas som kostnad och en skuld då det finns en legal eller informell förpliktelse att betala ut en ersättning till följd av en tidigare händelse och en tillförlitlig uppskattning av beloppet kan göras.

Avgiftsbestämda pensionsplaner
För avgiftsbestämda planer betalar koncernen fastställda avgifter till en separat oberoende juridisk enhet och har ingen förpliktelse att betala ytterligare avgifter. Företagets resultat belastas för kostnader i takt med att förmånerna intjänas vilket normalt sammanfaller med tidpunkten för när premier erläggs.

Kassaflödesanalys
Kassaflödesanalysen visar förändringar av företagets likvida medel under räkenskapsåret.
Kassaflödesanalysen har upprättats enligt den indirekta metoden. Det redovisade kassaflödet omfattar endast transaktioner som medfört in- och utbetalningar.

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Nyckeltalsdefinitioner

Nettoomsättning
Rörelsens huvudintäkter, fakturerade kostnader, sidointäkter samt intäktskorrigeringar.

Resultat efter finansiella poster
Resultat efter finansiella intäkter och kostnader men före bokslutsdispositioner och skatter.

Soliditet (%)
Justerat eget kapital (eget kapital och obeskattade reserver med avdrag för uppskjuten skatt) i procent av balansomslutning.

Uppskattningar och bedömningar

Uppskattningar och bedömningar utvärderas löpande och baseras på historisk erfarenhet och andra faktorer, inklusive förväntningar på framtida händelser som anses rimliga under rådande förhållanden.

Värdering av aktier
Per varje balansdag gör företaget en bedömning om det finns någon indikation på att värdet av aktier i dotterföretag är lägre än det redovisade värdet. Finns det en sådan indikation beräknar företaget återvinningsvärdet för aktierna och upprättar en nedskrivningsprövning. Vid värdering av aktier gör koncernen bedömningar avseende förväntningar på framtida kassaflöden vilka kan innefatta en osäkerhet då de bygger på förväntningar om framtiden.

Kundfordringar
I bolagets balansräkning finns det väsentliga kundfordringar. Bolaget utvärderar kontinuerligt betalningsförmågan hos kunder. Faktureringsflödet är säsongsbetonat, vilket resulterar i en hög kapitalbindning i kundfordringar i samband med årsbokslut. Det finns ingen historik av väsentliga kundförluster relaterade till nedskrivning av kundfordringar.

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Not 2 Nettoomsättningens fördelning

	2021	2020
Nettoomsättningen per rörelsegren		
Media	36 190	369
Research	53 297	62 088
Consulting	31 385	216
Övrig försäljning	36 195	72 388
	157 067	**135 061**
Nettoomsättning per geografisk marknad		
Sverige	67 157	59 854
EU	35 482	57 105
Övriga världen	54 428	18 102
	157 067	**135 061**

Not 3 Inköp och försäljningar mellan koncernföretag

	2021	2020
Andel av årets totala inköp som skett från andra företag i koncernen	10,36 %	12,34 %
Andel av årets totala försäljningar som skett till andra företag i koncernen	31,30 %	27,98 %

Not 4 Övriga rörelseintäkter

	2021	2020
Vidarefakturerade kostnader	27 112	31 773
Övriga poster	3 839	517
	30 951	**32 290**

Not 5 Operationell Leasing

Bolaget är leasetagare genom operationella leasingavtal avseende kopiatorer och kaffemaskiner. Summan av årets kostnadsförda leasingavgifter avseende operationella leasingavtal uppgår till 381 Tkr (355). Utöver nämnda leasingavtal finns hyresavtal 9 017 Tkr (9 123).

Framtida leasingavgifter, för icke uppsägningsbara leasingavtal, förfaller till betalning enligt följande:

	2021	2020
Inom ett år	8 000	8 000
Senare än ett år men inom fem år	8 000	16 000
	16 000	**24 000**

20220728283 40

Not 6 Arvode till revisorer

Med revisionsuppdrag avses granskning av årsredovisningen och bokföringen samt styrelsens och verkställande direktörens förvaltning, övriga arbetsuppgifter som det ankommer på bolagets revisor att utföra samt rådgivning eller annat biträde som föranleds av iakttagelser vid sådan granskning eller genomförandet av sådana övriga arbetsuppgifter.

	2021	2020
Ernst & Young AB		
Revisionsuppdrag	600	526
	600	**526**

Not 7 Anställda och personalkostnader

	2021	2020
Medelantalet anställda		
Kvinnor	61	67
Män	48	52
	109	**119**
Löner och andra ersättningar		
Styrelse och verkställande direktör	2 141	1 906
Ledande befattningshavare	6 301	6 936
Övriga anställda	65 304	63 460
	73 746	**72 302**
Sociala kostnader & Pensionskostnader		
Sociala kostnader enligt lag och avtal VD	1 364	1 091
Sociala kostnader enligt lag ledande befattningshavare	3 442	2 792
Sociala kostnader enligt lag och avtal övriga anställda	22 669	21 254
	27 475	**25 137**
Övriga personalkostnader*	-14 291	-4 042
Totala löner, ersättningar, sociala kostnader och pensionskostnader	**86 930**	**93 397**
Pensionsförpliktelser		
Bolagets avgiftsbestämda pensionsplaner	4 984	2 736
Nuvarande styrelse och verkställande direktör	529	562
	5 513	**3 298**

*Övriga personalkostnader avser främst omfördelning för arbete i projekt och summan återfinns i projektredovisningen.

Könsfördelning bland ledande befattningshavare		
Andel kvinnor bland övriga ledande befattningshavare	17 %	17 %
Andel män bland övriga ledande befattningshavare	83 %	83 %

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Avtal om avgångsvederlag
Mellan företaget och verkställande direktören gäller en ömsesidig uppsägningstid om sex månader. Vid uppsägning från företagets sida erhålls inget avgångsvederlag. Vid uppsägning från verkställande direktörens sida utgår inget avgångsvederlag.

Mellan företaget och andra ledande befattningshavare gäller en uppsägningstid om två månader från ledande befattningshavares sida och från företagets sida gäller LAS dock minst två månader. Vid uppsägning från företagets sida erhålls inget avgångsvederlag. Vid uppsägning från ledande befattningshavarens sida utgår inget avgångsvederlag.

Not 8 Resultat från andelar i koncernföretag

	2021	2020
Erhållna utdelningar	4 731	17 309
	4 731	**17 309**

Not 9 Övriga ränteintäkter och liknande resultatposter

	2021	2020
Ränteintäkter	1	3
Ränteintäkter, koncernföretag	735	526
Kursdifferenser	7 073	8 902
Övrigt	9	-1
	7 818	**9 430**

Not 10 Räntekostnader och liknande resultatposter

	2021	2020
Räntekostnader	14	18
Räntekostnader koncernföretag	1 717	2 213
Kursdifferenser	4 123	10 895
Övrigt	2	47
	5 856	**13 173**

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Not 11 Årets skatt

	2021	2020
Redovisat resultat före skatt	-29 745	-63 990
Skatt beräknad enligt svensk skattesats 20,6% (21,4% 2020)	0	0
Skatteeffekt av ej avdragsgilla kostnader	786	17 461
Skatteeffekt av ej skattepliktiga intäkter	-4 731	-17 312
Årets redovisade skattekostnad	30	0
Summa årets resultat efter skatt	**-33 660**	**-63 841**

Universum Communications Sweden AB har fastställda outnyttjade underskottsavdrag uppgående till 63 892 TSEK.

Not 12 Balanserade utgifter för utvecklingsarbeten och liknande arbeten

	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
Ingående anskaffningsvärden	33 890	28 101
Inköp	7 968	5 788
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	-11 105	0
Utgående ackumulerade anskaffningsvärden	**30 753**	**33 889**
Ingående avskrivningar	-25 211	-18 775
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	10 978	0
Årets avskrivningar	-4 589	-6 436
Utgående ackumulerade avskrivningar	**-18 822**	**-25 211**
Utgående redovisat värde	**11 931**	**8 678**

Not 13 Inventarier, verktyg och installationer

	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
Ingående anskaffningsvärden	4 375	4 342
Inköp	582	33
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	-1 702	0
Utgående ackumulerade anskaffningsvärden	**3 255**	**4 375**
Ingående avskrivningar	-3 802	-3 253
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	1 702	0
Årets avskrivningar	-595	-550
Utgående ackumulerade avskrivningar	**-2 695**	**-3 803**
Utgående redovisat värde	**560**	**572**

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Not 14 Förbättringsutgifter på annans fastighet

	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
Ingående Anskaffningsvärde	683	659
Inköp	0	24
Ingående Avskrivningar	-144	-8
Årets Avskrivningar	-136	-136
Utgående redovisat värde	**403**	**539**

Not 15 Andelar i koncernföretag

	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
Ingående anskaffningsvärden	101 489	98 989
Kapitaltillskott	0	2 500
Utgående ackumulerade anskaffningsvärden	**101 489**	**101 489**
Ingående nedskrivningar	-11 327	-1 327
Årets nedskrivningar	0	-10 000
Utgående ackumulerade nedskrivningar	**-11 327**	**-11 327**
Utgående redovisat värde	**90 162**	**90 162**

Not 16 Specifikation andelar i koncernföretag

Namn	Kapital-andel	Rösträtts-andel	Antal andelar	Bokfört 2021-12-31 värde	Bokfört 2020-12-31 värde
Universum Communication Ltd	100%	100%	100	0	0
Universum Communication Switzerland AG	100%	100%	100	6 060	6 060
Universum Communication Inc	100%	100%	10 000	44 496	44 496
Universum Communication Italy S.r.l	100%	100%	10 000	108	108
Universum Communication Pte Ltd	100%	100%	205 000	30 302	30 302
Universum Communication SARL	100%	100%	20 000	177	177
Universum Business Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd	100%	100%	1	0	0
Universum Communication SA	100%	100%	1	3 016	3 016
Universum Norway A/S	100%	100%	1 000 000	5 736	5 736
Universum Employer Branding GmbH	100%	100%	25 000	267	267
				90 162	**90 162**

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	Org.nr	**Säte**
Universum Communication Ltd	3,121,113	London
Universum Communication Switzerland AG	2803900467-5	Basel
Universum Communication Inc	13-4094742	New York
Universum Communication Italy S.r.l	11036880968	Milano
Universum Communication Pte Ltd	20110701W	Singapore
Universum Communication SARL	96802026583	Paris
Universum Business Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd	310000400573	Shanghai
Universum Communication SA	201216676207	Johanesburg
Universum Norway A/S	992.927.786	Oslo
Universum Employer Branding GmbH	HRB199809B	Berlin

Not 17 Förutbetalda kostnader och upplupna intäkter

	2021-12-31	**2020-12-31**
Hyror	2 291	2 254
Upplupna projektkostnader	4 783	5 436
Förutbetalda kostnader	2 677	1 355
	9 751	**9 045**

Not 18 Upparbetade/förutbetalda intäkter i projekt

	2021-12-31	**2020-12-31**
Upparbetade intäkter i projekt	18 170	20 226
Förskott från kund	-26 277	-24 484
	-8 107	**-4 258**

Siffrorna för upparbetade intäkter i projekt/förskott kund ligger föregående år som ett netto. Dessa redovisas i BR under posten "Upparbetade kostnader och förutbetalda intäkter".

Not 19 Kassa bank

	2021-12-31	**2020-12-31**
Disponibla tillgodohavanden hos banker och andra kreditinstitut	10 601	8 568
	10 601	**8 568**

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Not 20 Förändring av eget kapital

Aktiekapital 10 000 000 aktier à kvotvärde 0,05 kronor.

	Aktie-kapital	Reserv-fond	Fond för utvecklingsutg.	Balanserat resultat	Årets resultat	Totalt
Belopp vid årets ingång	500	7 008	0	88 240	-63 990	**31 758**
Disposition enligt beslut av årets årsstämma:				-63 990	63 990	**0**
Fond för utvecklingsutgifter			6 456	-6 456		0
Erhållna aktieägartillskott				76 409		**76 409**
Årets resultat					-29 775	**-29 775**
Belopp vid årets utgång	**500**	**7 008**	**6 456**	**94 203**	**-29 775**	**78 392**

Not 21 Avsättningar

	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
Övriga avsättningar		
Belopp vid årets ingång	6 900	0
Årets avsättningar Kapitaltäckning dotterbolag Shanghai	0	6 900
	6 900	**6 900**

Not 22 Upplupna kostnader och förutbetalda intäkter

	2021-12-31	2020-12-31
Upplupna löner	4 754	4 423
Upplupna semesterlöner	4 642	4 336
Upplupna sociala avgifter	4 029	2 967
Förutbetalda intäkter	0	0
Övriga poster	3 249	6 072
	16 674	**17 798**

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Undertecknade försäkrar härmed att årsredovisningen har upprättats i enlighet med årsredovisningslagen och god redovisningssed, att aktuella redovisningsnormer har tillämpats och att lämnade uppgifter stämmer med faktiska förhållanden.

Stockholm

Ciaran Mc Cooey
Ordförande

Thorsten Otte

Sebastian Dettmers

Mats Röjdmark
Verkställande direktör

Revisorspåteckning

Vår revisionsberättelse har lämnats 30/3-2022

Ernst & Young AB

Jens Bertling
Auktoriserad revisor

20220728347

Building a better working world

Revisionsberättelse

Till bolagsstämman i Universum Communications Sweden AB, org.nr 556587-5993

Rapport om årsredovisningen

Uttalanden

Vi har utfört en revision av årsredovisningen för Universum Communications Sweden AB för räkenskapsåret 2021-01-01 - 2021-12-31.

Enligt vår uppfattning har årsredovisningen upprättats i enlighet med årsredovisningslagen och ger en i alla väsentliga avseenden rättvisande bild av Universum Communications Sweden ABs finansiella ställning per den 31 december 2021 och av dess finansiella resultat och kassaflöde för året enligt årsredovisningslagen. Förvaltningsberättelsen är förenlig med årsredovisningens övriga delar.

Vi tillstyrker därför att bolagsstämman fastställer resultaträkningen och balansräkningen.

Grund för uttalanden

Vi har utfört revisionen enligt International Standards on Auditing (ISA) och god revisionssed i Sverige. Vårt ansvar enligt dessa standarder beskrivs närmare i avsnittet *Revisorns ansvar*. Vi är oberoende i förhållande till Universum Communications Sweden AB enligt god revisorssed i Sverige och har i övrigt fullgjort vårt yrkesetiska ansvar enligt dessa krav.

Vi anser att de revisionsbevis vi har inhämtat är tillräckliga och ändamålsenliga som grund för våra uttalanden.

Styrelsens och verkställande direktörens ansvar

Det är styrelsen och verkställande direktören som har ansvaret för att årsredovisningen upprättas och att den ger en rättvisande bild enligt årsredovisningslagen. Styrelsen och verkställande direktören ansvarar även för den interna kontroll som de bedömer är nödvändig för att upprätta en årsredovisning som inte innehåller några väsentliga felaktigheter, vare sig dessa beror på oegentligheter eller misstag.

Vid upprättandet av årsredovisningen ansvarar styrelsen och verkställande direktören för bedömningen av bolagets förmåga att fortsätta verksamheten. De upplyser, när så är tillämpligt, om förhållanden som kan påverka förmågan att fortsätta verksamheten och att använda antagandet om fortsatt drift. Antagandet om fortsatt drift tillämpas dock inte om styrelsen och verkställande direktören avser att likvidera bolaget, upphöra med verksamheten eller inte har något realistiskt alternativ till att göra något av detta.

Revisorns ansvar

Våra mål är att uppnå en rimlig grad av säkerhet om att årsredovisningen som helhet inte innehåller några väsentliga felaktigheter, vare sig dessa beror på oegentligheter eller misstag, och att lämna en revisionsberättelse som innehåller våra uttalanden. Rimlig säkerhet är en hög grad av säkerhet, men är ingen garanti för att en revision som utförs enligt ISA och god revisionssed i Sverige alltid kommer att upptäcka en väsentlig felaktighet om en sådan finns. Felaktigheter kan uppstå på grund av oegentligheter eller misstag och anses vara väsentliga om de enskilt eller tillsammans rimligen kan förväntas påverka de ekonomiska beslut som användare fattar med grund i årsredovisningen.

Som del av en revision enligt ISA använder vi professionellt omdöme och har en professionellt skeptisk inställning under hela revisionen. Dessutom:

- identifierar och bedömer vi riskerna för väsentliga felaktigheter i årsredovisningen, vare sig dessa beror på oegentligheter eller misstag, utformar och utför granskningsåtgärder bland annat utifrån dessa risker och inhämtar revisionsbevis som är tillräckliga och ändamålsenliga för att utgöra en grund för våra uttalanden. Risken för att inte upptäcka en väsentlig felaktighet till följd av oegentligheter är högre än för en väsentlig felaktighet som beror på misstag, eftersom oegentligheter kan innefatta agerande i maskopi, förfalskning, avsiktliga utelämnanden, felaktig information eller åsidosättande av intern kontroll.
- skaffar vi oss en förståelse av den del av bolagets interna kontroll som har betydelse för vår revision för att utforma granskningsåtgärder som är lämpliga med hänsyn till omständigheterna, men inte för att uttala oss om effektiviteten i den interna kontrollen.
- utvärderar vi lämpligheten i de redovisningsprinciper som används och rimligheten i styrelsens och verkställande direktörens uppskattningar i redovisningen och tillhörande upplysningar.
- drar vi en slutsats om lämpligheten i att styrelsen och verkställande direktören använder antagandet om fortsatt drift vid upprättandet av årsredovisningen. Vi drar också en slutsats, med grund i de inhämtade revisionsbevisen, om det finns någon väsentlig osäkerhetsfaktor som avser sådana händelser eller förhållanden som kan leda till betydande tvivel om bolagets förmåga att fortsätta verksamheten. Om vi drar slutsatsen att det finns en väsentlig osäkerhetsfaktor, måste vi i revisionsberättelsen fästa uppmärksamheten på upplysningarna i årsredovisningen om den väsentliga osäkerhetsfaktorn eller, om sådana upplysningar är otillräckliga, modifiera uttalandet om årsredovisningen. Våra slutsatser baseras på de revisionsbevis som inhämtas fram till datumet för revisionsberättelsen. Dock kan framtida händelser eller förhållanden göra att ett bolag inte längre kan fortsätta verksamheten.
- utvärderar vi den övergripande presentationen, strukturen och innehållet i årsredovisningen, däribland upplysningarna, och om årsredovisningen återger de underliggande transaktionerna och händelserna på ett sätt som ger en rättvisande bild.

Vi måste informera styrelsen om bland annat revisionens planerade omfattning och inriktning samt tidpunkten för den. Vi måste också informera om betydelsefulla iakttagelser under revisionen, däribland de eventuella betydande brister i den interna kontrollen som vi identifierat.

20220728348

Building a better working world

Rapport om andra krav enligt lagar och andra författningar

Uttalanden

Utöver vår revision av årsredovisningen har vi även utfört en revision av styrelsens och verkställande direktörens förvaltning för Universum Communications Sweden AB för räkenskapsåret 2021-01-01 - 2021-12-31 samt av förslaget till dispositioner beträffande bolagets vinst eller förlust.

Vi tillstyrker att bolagsstämman disponerar vinsten enligt förslaget i förvaltningsberättelsen och beviljar styrelsens ledamöter och verkställande direktören ansvarsfrihet för räkenskapsåret.

Grund för uttalanden

Vi har utfört revisionen enligt god revisionssed i Sverige. Vårt ansvar enligt denna beskrivs närmare i avsnittet *Revisorns ansvar*. Vi är oberoende i förhållande till Universum Communications Sweden AB enligt god revisorssed i Sverige och har i övrigt fullgjort vårt yrkesetiska ansvar enligt dessa krav.

Vi anser att de revisionsbevis vi har inhämtat är tillräckliga och ändamålsenliga som grund för våra uttalanden.

Styrelsens och verkställande direktörens ansvar

Det är styrelsen som har ansvaret för förslaget till dispositioner beträffande bolagets vinst eller förlust. Vid förslag till utdelning innefattar detta bland annat en bedömning av om utdelningen är försvarlig med hänsyn till de krav som bolagets verksamhetsart, omfattning och risker ställer på storleken av bolagets egna kapital, konsolideringsbehov, likviditet och ställning i övrigt.

Styrelsen ansvarar för bolagets organisation och förvaltningen av bolagets angelägenheter. Detta innefattar bland annat att fortlöpande bedöma bolagets ekonomiska situation och att tillse att bolagets organisation är utformad så att bokföringen, medelsförvaltningen och bolagets ekonomiska angelägenheter i övrigt kontrolleras på ett betryggande sätt. Verkställande direktören ska sköta den löpande förvaltningen enligt styrelsens riktlinjer och anvisningar och bland annat vidta de åtgärder som är nödvändiga för att bolagets bokföring ska fullgöras i överensstämmelse med lag och för att medelsförvaltningen ska skötas på ett betryggande sätt.

Revisorns ansvar

Vårt mål beträffande revisionen av förvaltningen, och därmed vårt uttalande om ansvarsfrihet, är att inhämta revisionsbevis för att med en rimlig grad av säkerhet kunna bedöma om någon styrelseledamot eller verkställande direktören i något väsentligt avseende:

- företagit någon åtgärd eller gjort sig skyldig till någon försummelse som kan föranleda ersättningsskyldighet mot bolaget, eller
- på något annat sätt handlat i strid med aktiebolagslagen, årsredovisningslagen eller bolagsordningen.

Vårt mål beträffande revisionen av förslaget till dispositioner av bolagets vinst eller förlust, och därmed vårt uttalande om detta, är att med rimlig grad av säkerhet bedöma om förslaget är förenligt med aktiebolagslagen.

Rimlig säkerhet är en hög grad av säkerhet, men ingen garanti för att en revision som utförs enligt god revisionssed i Sverige alltid kommer att upptäcka åtgärder eller försummelser som kan föranleda ersättningsskyldighet mot bolaget, eller att ett förslag till dispositioner av bolagets vinst eller förlust inte är förenligt med aktiebolagslagen.

Som en del av en revision enligt god revisionssed i Sverige använder vi professionellt omdöme och har en professionellt skeptisk inställning under hela revisionen. Granskningen av förvaltningen och förslaget till dispositioner av bolagets vinst eller förlust grundar sig främst på revisionen av räkenskaperna. Vilka tillkommande granskningsåtgärder som utförs baseras på vår professionella bedömning med utgångspunkt i risk och väsentlighet. Det innebär att vi fokuserar granskningen på sådana åtgärder, områden och förhållanden som är väsentliga för verksamheten och där avsteg och överträdelser skulle ha särskild betydelse för bolagets situation. Vi går igenom och prövar fattade beslut, beslutsunderlag, vidtagna åtgärder och andra förhållanden som är relevanta för vårt uttalande om ansvarsfrihet. Som underlag för vårt uttalande om styrelsens förslag till dispositioner beträffande bolagets vinst eller förlust har vi granskat om förslaget är förenligt med aktiebolagslagen.

Örebro den 30 mars 2022

Ernst & Young AB

Jens Bertling
Auktoriserad revisor

A member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited

20220728350

axel springer_

Consolidated Financial Statements and Management Report

Axel Springer SE

2021

Fotokopians överensstämmelse
med originalet intygas:

FREDRIK ANDERSSON
070-7960671

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Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

€ millions	Note	12/31/2021	12/31/2020*	01/01/2020*
Non-current assets		**6,044.1**	**5,170.5**	**5,559.9**
Intangible assets	(4)	4,668.6	3,854.4	4,072.7
Property, plant, and equipment	(5)	632.5	669.0	832.1
Non-current financial assets	(6)	624.6	566.5	553.9
Investments accounted for using the equity method		304.5	237.9	280.1
Other non-current financial assets		320.2	328.7	273.7
Receivables due from related parties	(32)	0.0	0.0	1.7
Receivables from income taxes		0.7	0.0	0.0
Other assets	(8)	53.6	31.5	35.2
Deferred tax assets	(26)	64.1	49.1	64.3
Current assets		**1,278.1**	**1,317.4**	**1,188.9**
Inventories		29.0	29.1	26.5
Trade receivables	(7)	904.9	728.2	731.5
Receivables due from related parties	(32)	9.0	13.0	9.3
Receivables from income taxes		21.3	18.9	44.5
Other assets	(8)	112.3	133.1	90.9
Cash and cash equivalents	(28)	201.6	216.3	286.1
Assets held for sale	(9)	0.0	178.7	0.0
ASSETS		**7,322.3**	**6,487.9**	**6,748.8**

€ millions	Note	12/31/2021	12/31/2020*	01/01/2020*
Equity	**(10)**	**2,490.8**	**2,397.7**	**2,458.9**
Shareholders of Axel Springer SE		2,254.9	2,046.3	2,103.5
Non-controlling interests		235.9	351.4	355.4
Non-current provisions and liabilities		**3,198.0**	**2,706.5**	**2,879.8**
Provisions for pensions	(12)	137.2	202.6	217.0
Other provisions	(13)	147.2	108.7	126.9
Financial liabilities	(14)	2,399.4	1,943.8	2,102.9
Trade payables		0.1	2.1	0.2
Liabilities due to related parties	(32)	22.1	29.4	23.4
Other liabilities	(15)	234.3	149.0	90.0
Deferred tax liabilities	(26)	257.8	271.0	319.4
Current provisions and liabilities		**1,633.5**	**1,383.7**	**1,410.0**
Provisions for pensions	(12)	20.4	20.3	20.7
Other provisions	(13)	159.0	188.4	220.5
Financial liabilities	(14)	226.4	79.6	136.2
Trade payables		628.0	534.3	470.0
Liabilities due to related parties	(32)	8.8	42.7	59.5
Liabilities from income taxes		58.0	70.1	68.0
Other liabilities	(15)	532.9	414.7	435.1
Liabilities related to assets held for sale	(9)	0.0	33.6	0.0
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		**7,322.3**	**6,487.9**	**6,748.8**

* For the adjustment of the values as of January 1, and December 31, 2020, see note (3p).

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Consolidated Income Statement

€ millions	Note	2021	2020*
Revenues	(17)	3,379.2	2,917.6
Other operating income	(18)	435.1	134.1
Change in inventories and internal costs capitalized	(19)	107.7	97.1
Purchased goods and services	(20)	−497.7	−424.7
Personnel expenses	(21)	−1,532.3	−1,268.0
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments	(22)	−381.6	−328.5
Other operating expenses	(23)	−1,037.9	−833.1
Income from investments	(24)	76.1	0.2
Result from investments accounted for using the equity method		15.4	−36.8
Other investment income		60.6	36.9
Financial result	(25)	−32.3	−8.9
Financial income		17.1	35.0
Financial expense		−49.4	−43.9
Income taxes	(26)	−77.0	−77.6
Net income		**439.2**	**208.2**
Net income attributable to shareholders of Axel Springer SE		390.4	189.2
Net income attributable to non-controlling interests		48.8	19.0

* For adjustment of prior-year figures, see note (3p).

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Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

€ millions	Note	2021	2020*
Net income		**439.2**	**208.2**
Actuarial gains/losses from defined benefit pension obligations		34.4	–1.9
Items that may not be reclassified into the income statement in future periods (after taxes)		**34.4**	**–1.9**
Currency translation differences		142.2	–121.4
Changes in fair value of derivatives in cash flow hedges		0.0	0.1
Other income/loss from investments accounted for using the equity method		5.7	0.0
Items that may be reclassified into the income statement in future periods if certain criteria are met (after taxes)		**147.9**	**–121.3**
Other income/loss	**(27)**	**182.3**	**–123.2**
Comprehensive income		**621.6**	**85.0**
Comprehensive income attributable to shareholders of Axel Springer SE		572.2	82.7
Comprehensive income attributable to non-controlling interests		49.3	2.3

* For adjustment of prior-year figures, see note (3p).

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Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

€ millions	Note	2021	2020
Net income		**439.2**	**208.2**
Reconciliation of net income to the cash flow from operating activities			
Depreciation, amortization, impairments, and write-ups		381.6	328.5
Result from investments accounted for using the equity method	(24)	–15.4	36.8
Dividends received from investments accounted for using the equity method		2.3	18.3
Result from disposal of consolidated subsidiaries and business units and intangible assets, property, plant, and equipment, and financial assets		–339.2	–56.6
Changes in non-current provisions		–26.2	–25.3
Changes in deferred taxes		–29.3	–30.2
Other non-cash income and expenses		–23.6	–38.1
Changes in trade receivables		–161.3	–1.6
Changes in trade payables		96.6	66.0
Changes in other assets and liabilities		109.5	4.3
Cash flow from operating activities	**(28)**	**434.2**	**510.3**
Proceeds from disposals of intangible assets, property, plant, and equipment less costs of disposal		–0.5	398.3
Proceeds from disposals of consolidated subsidiaries and business units, less cash and cash equivalents given up	(2c)	466.8	8.7
Proceeds from disposals of non-current financial assets		105.6	6.8
Purchases of intangible assets and property, plant and equipment		–184.7	–203.3
Purchases of shares in consolidated subsidiaries and business units less cash and cash equivalents acquired	(2c)	–909.5	–77.5
Purchases of investments in non-current financial assets		–76.5	–89.2
Cash flow from investing activities	**(28)**	**–598.9**	**43.7**
Dividends paid to shareholders of Axel Springer SE		–400.3	–125.2
Dividends paid to other shareholders		–5.1	–5.2
Purchase of non-controlling interests	(2c)	0.0	–21.6
Disposal of non-controlling interests		0.0	10.5
Repayments of lease liabilities		–69.4	–75.5
Proceeds from financial liabilities		2,776.8	2,444.6
Repayments of financial liabilities		–2,157.5	–2,838.1
Other financial transactions		–0.6	–5.5
Cash flow from financing activities	**(28)**	**143.9**	**–616.0**
Cash flow-related changes in cash and cash equivalents		**–20.8**	**–62.0**
Changes in cash and cash equivalents due to exchange rates		3.2	–4.4
Changes in cash and cash equivalents due to changes in companies included in consolidation		0.0	–0.5
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period		216.3	286.1
Changes to cash and cash equivalents in connection with assets held for sale		2.8	–2.8
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	**(28)**	**201.6**	**216.3**
Cash inflows and payments contained in the cash flow from operating activities:			
Income taxes paid		–155.4	–91.8
Income taxes received		15.7	51.2
Interest paid		–27.8	–22.7
Interest received		0.6	4.7
Dividends received		9.0	23.0

* For adjustment of prior-year figures, see note (3p).

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Consolidated Statement of Changes in Equity

€ millions	Subscribed capital	Additional paid-in capital	Accumulated retained earnings	Accumulated other comprehensive income: Currency translation	Accumulated other comprehensive income: Derivatives in cash flow hedges	Accumulated other comprehensive income: Other equity	Shareholders of Axel Springer SE	Non-controlling interests	Equity
Balance as of 01/01/2020	**107.9**	**579.0**	**1,600.0**	**–17.0**	**0.0**	**–142.3**	**2,127.6**	**355.4**	**2,483.1**
Adjustment*			–24.1				–24.1		–24.1
Balance as of 12/31/2020 adjusted*	**107.9**	**579.0**	**1,575.8**	**–17.0**	**0.0**	**–142.3**	**2,103.5**	**355.4**	**2,458.9**
Net income			189.2				189.2	19.0	208.2
Other income/loss				–104.7	0.1	–1.9	–106.5	–16.7	–123.2
Comprehensive income			**189.2**	**–104.7**	**0.1**	**–1.9**	**82.7**	**2.3**	**85.0**
Dividends paid			–125.2				–125.2	–7.1	–132.2
Change in consolidated companies			0.0				0.0	2.0	2.0
Purchase/Disposal of non-controlling interests			0.7				0.7	0.7	1.4
Other changes		0.5	–15.9				–15.5	–2.0	–17.4
Balance as of 12/31/2020*	**107.9**	**579.5**	**1,624.6**	**–121.7**	**0.1**	**–144.1**	**2,046.3**	**351.4**	**2,397.7**
Net income			390.4				390.4	48.8	439.2
Other income/loss				141.7	0.0	40.1	181.8	0.5	182.3
Comprehensive income			**390.4**	**141.7**	**0.0**	**40.1**	**572.2**	**49.3**	**621.6**
Dividends paid			–400.3				–400.3	–6.9	–407.2
Change in consolidated companies				12.1	0.0	1.2	13.3	–159.1	–145.9
Purchase/Disposal of non-controlling interests		–2.2	0.1	0.1			–2.0	1.0	–1.0
Other changes		25.0	0.5				25.5	0.1	25.6
Balance as of 12/31/2021	**107.9**	**602.2**	**1,615.3**	**32.2**	**0.1**	**–102.8**	**2,254.9**	**235.9**	**2,490.8**

* For the adjustment of the values as of January 1, and December 31, 2020, see note (3p).

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Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements

General Information

(1) Basic principles

The Axel Springer SE is a European stock corporation (Societas Europaea) with its registered head office in Berlin, Germany. The company is registered in the Commercial Register of the local court Berlin-Charlottenburg under number HRB 154517 B. The principal activities of Axel Springer SE and its subsidiaries ("Axel Springer Group", "Axel Springer" or the "Group") are described in note (17).

On February 28, 2022, the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE authorized the consolidated financial statements for fiscal year 2021 and subsequently presented them to the Supervisory Board for approval. The consolidated financial statements were prepared by application of Section 315e HGB in accordance with the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) of the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) and the interpretations of the IFRS Interpretations Committee (IFRS IC) approved by the IASB, in effect and recognized by the European Union (EU) on the reporting date. The reporting currency is the euro (€); unless otherwise indicated, all figures are stated in euro millions (€ millions). Totals and percentages have been calculated based on euro amounts before rounding and may differ from a calculation based on the reported million euro amounts.

(2) Consolidation

(a) Consolidation principles

The consolidated financial statements include Axel Springer SE and its subsidiaries over which Axel Springer SE either directly or indirectly has control, can influence variable outflows from the subsidiary, and is exposed to the variability of these outflows.

The consideration transferred in business combinations is offset against the pro-rated fair value of the acquired assets and liabilities on the acquisition date. Any remaining positive difference allocated to our interests is capitalized as goodwill and recognized in the amount allocated to our shares, unless we acquire all shares in the company. Negative differences are immediately recognized as income. The acquisition date indicates the time at which the possibility for gaining control of the acquired business or company was obtained. We offset differences arising from disposals and purchases of non-controlling interests in equity.

If in the context of business combinations put options for the remaining non-controlling interests are agreed upon, the contingent consideration for these shares is accounted for as a financial liability measured at fair value and is remeasured at each balance sheet date. In the case of identical or almost identical call and put options for remaining non-controlling interests, where the purchase price to be paid is based on the future results of the company, the acquisition of these interests is assumed to be anticipated. To this extent, non-controlling interests are not disclosed.

Associated companies in which the Axel Springer Group can exert significant influence over the financial and operating policies, as well as joint venture companies that are managed jointly by Axel Springer and one or more other parties, are included in the consolidated financial statements by application of the equity method. In general, the IFRS separate and IFRS consolidated financial statements of these companies as at the Axel Springer Group's reporting date, respectively, serve as the basis for applying the equity method. Goodwill as well as assets and liabilities included in the amortized carrying amount are accounted for using the accounting principles applied to business combinations. Losses that exceed the carrying amount of the investment, or any other long-term receivables related to the financing of these companies, are not recognized, unless the Axel Springer Group is bound by additional contribution requirements. Intercompany profits and losses are eliminated on a pro-rated basis. The carrying amounts of investments are tested for impairment; if impairments exist, they are written down to the lower recoverable amount.

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(b) Companies included in the consolidated financial statements

The composition of the companies included in our consolidated financial statements is shown in the following table:

	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Fully consolidated companies		
Germany	84	84
Other countries	98	112
Investments accounted for using the equity method		
Germany	12	12
Other countries	8	8

Consolidated companies are listed in note (35). Essentially, the following changes occurred in the reporting year 2021:

At the end of March, the disposal of 100.0% of the French **La Centrale Group**, Paris, France, its subsidiary and an investment accounted for using the equity method was completed.

At the end of September, the disposal of 87.0% of **Bistro.sk a.s.** (formerly Ringier Axel Springer SK, a.s.), Bratislava, Slovakia was completed.

At the middle of October, we acquired 100.0% of the shares in **Politico Media Group, LLC**, (formerly Allbritton, LLC), Arlington, USA. The acquisition also included the outstanding 50.0% share in AS TYFP Media GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin, the holding company of the POLITICO Europe Group. Both companies and their six subsidiaries have since been fully consolidated.

At the end of December, the disposal of 50.0% of the shares in Ringier **Axel Springer Media AG**, Zurich, Switzerland, was completed. Ringier Axel Springer Media AG and its 18 fully consolidated subsidiaries were deconsolidated.

The other changes related to mergers, foundations, initial consolidations and deconsolidations as well as initial at-equity consolidations which are immaterial for the consolidated financial statements.

(c) Acquisitions and divestures

At the middle of October 2021, we acquired 100.0% of the shares in **Politico Media Group, LLC**, (formerly Allbritton, LLC), Arlington, USA, which has been fully consolidated since then. The acquisition also included 50.0% of the shares in AS TYFP Media GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin, the holding company of the POLITICO EU Group, so that Axel Springer is now the only shareholder. POLITICO has one of the world's most influential offerings for political news and supports Axel Springer's growth strategy, especially the expansion in the US media market.

The preliminary acquisition costs amounted to € 912.3 million and included the purchase price paid of € 881.0 million and the 50.0 % shares in POLITICO EU Group measured at fair value of € 31.3 million (for income from revaluation see note (24)). The acquisition-related expenses included in other operating expenses amounted to € 3.2 million.

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Based on the preliminary purchase price allocation, the preliminary acquisition costs of this business combination were allocated to the purchased assets and liabilities on the acquisition date as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount after acquisition
Intangible assets	334.1
Property, plant, and equipment and non-current financial assets	26.6
Trade receivables	31.7
Other assets and deferred tax assets	8.0
Deferred tax assets	1.3
Cash and cash equivalents	19.3
Trade payables	–5.5
Financial liabilities	–21.3
Provisions and other liabilities	–61.8
Deferred tax liabilities	–6.4
Net assets	**325.9**
Acquisition cost (preliminary)	912.3
Goodwill (preliminary)	**586.4**

The acquired intangible assets mainly relate to trademarks and customer relationships. The purchase price allocation considers all knowledge and adjusting events about conditions that already existed on the acquisition date, and has not yet been completed, particularly due to the closeness in time to the balance sheet date.

The goodwill, which is to a large extent tax-deductible, is primarily attributable to inseparable values such as employee expertise, expected synergy effects from the integration, as well as the strategic advantages resulting from the leading market position and digital reach of the company.

The gross amount of the acquired trade receivables was € 32.1 million. Corresponding valuation allowances in the amount of € 0.4 million were recorded.

Since initial consolidation at the middle of October 2021, POLITICO contributed to consolidated revenues 2021 in the amount of € 40.2 million and to consolidated net income 2021 in the amount of € 1.1 million. If POLITICO had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2021, the consolidated revenues 2021 would have changed by € 171.3 million and consolidated net income 2021 would have changed by € 5.5 million.

At the beginning of March 2021, we have completely disposed our fully consolidated (100.0 %) shares held by Axel Springer in the French **La Centrale Group**, Paris, France, for a total purchase price of € 399.1 million. Cash and cash equivalents of the company of € 78.0 million already recognized in the Group were not disposed but distributed to us prior to the disposal. Axel Springer subsequently acquired a 22.5 % share in a newly founded acquiring company for an amount of € 50.0 million. The gain on disposal recognized in other operating income amounted to € 251.3 million. The gain on disposal included expenses of € 0.6 million previously recognized in other comprehensive income in equity.

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As part of the disposal process, disposal-related costs in the amount of € 1.1 million were recorded in personnel expenses, other operating income and other operating expenses. The carrying amounts of the assets and liabilities disposed of were as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount
Goodwill	96.3
Intangible assets	65.4
Property, plant, and equipment and non-current financial assets	1.7
Trade receivables	11.1
Other assets	4.1
Cash and cash equivalents	6.5
Trade payables	–3.3
Financial liabilities	–1.1
Provisions and other liabilities	–18.8
Deferred tax liabilities	–14.8
Disposal net assets	**147.2**
Realization of expenses previously recognized in other comprehensive income	–0.6
Selling price	399.1
Gain on disposal	**251.3**

At the end of September 2021, we have completely disposed our fully consolidated (87.0 %) shares in **Bistro.sk** (formerly Ringier Axel Springer SK, a.s.), Bratislava, Slovakia, held by Ringier Axel Springer Media AG for a preliminary total purchase price of € 43.5 million, of which € 42.8 million was paid in the reporting year. Previously, the News Media and Community Business were carved out into separate companies. The preliminary gain on disposal recognized in other operating income amounted to € 24.8 million. In the course of the sale, non-controlling interests of € 0.2 million were derecognized. In addition, disposal-related costs in the amount of € 1.8 million were recorded in personnel expenses as well as other operating expenses. The carrying amounts of the assets and liabilities disposed of were as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount
Goodwill	18.0
Intangible assets	1.0
Trade receivables	0.4
Other assets	0.3
Cash and cash equivalents	2.4
Trade payables	–0.5
Provisions and other liabilities	–2.7
Disposal net assets	**18.9**
Share of non-controlling interests in net assets	–0.2
Selling price (preliminary)	43.5
Gain on disposal (preliminary)	**24.8**

At the end of December 2021, we completed the sale of our previously fully consolidated shares (50.0 %) in **Ringier Axel Springer Media AG**, Zurich, Switzerland. Previously the Polish investments were carved out into Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska AG, Zurich, Switzerland, in which we continue to hold 50.0 % of the shares and which we continue to fully consolidate based on contractual rights. We disposed Ringier Axel Springer Media AG and all subsidiaries remaining after the carve-out in full for a preliminary total purchase price of € 213.9 million. Of the total purchase price, an amount of € 52.7 million was fulfilled by transferring a loan

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receivable granted to Axel Springer SE in the past due to cash and cash equivalents that were no longer required. The remaining preliminary purchase price of € 161.2 million was paid in the reporting year. The preliminary gain on disposal recognized in other operating income amounted to € 41.7 million. The gain on disposal included expenses of € 12.3 million previously recorded in other comprehensive income in equity, almost exclusively from foreign currency translation differences. In the course of the sale, non-controlling interests of € 159.0 million were derecognized. As part of the disposal process, disposal-related costs in the amount of € 0.9 million were recorded in personnel expenses as well as other operating expenses. The carrying amounts of the assets and liabilities disposed of were as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount
Goodwill	67.9
Intangible assets	49.6
Property, plant, and equipment and non-current financial assets	14.7
Trade receivables	17.6
Other assets	59.8
Cash and cash equivalents	98.5
Trade payables	–10.6
Financial liabilities	–7.4
Provisions and other liabilities	–18.5
Deferred tax liabilities	–5.4
Disposal net assets	**266.2**
Share of non-controlling interests in net assets	–159.0
Realization of expenses previously recognized in other comprehensive income	–12.3
Selling price (preliminary)	213.9
Loan transfer	–52.7
Gain on disposal (preliminary)	**41.7**

Additional transactions carried out in the financial year 2021, as well as finalizations of purchase price allocations arising from acquisitions of companies in the financial year 2020, had no material effects individually and collectively on the financial position, liquidity, and financial performance of the Group.

Acquisitions and divestures of the previous year:

At the end of February 2020, we acquired 100.0 % of **Gratka Spolka Z.o.o.**, Warsaw, Poland, through our subsidiary Ringier Axel Springer Media AG. In addition, Ringier Axel Springer Media AG acquired a total of 79.6 % of the shares in MZN Property S.A., Warsaw, Poland ("**Morizon**") and its subsidiaries at the end of April 2020 and in June 2020. The companies have been fully consolidated since then. Gratka operates the classifieds portal gratka.pl and Morizon the portal Morizon.pl for small real estate advertisements.

For the remaining 20.4 % of the shares in Morizon call and put options were agreed upon, in which the purchase price to be paid is based on future company results of both companies. Accordingly, we assumed an anticipated acquisition of the remaining shares and did not account for any noncontrolling interests.

Acquisition costs amounted to € 42.8 million, consisting of the purchase price of € 34.2 million paid in the financial year 2020 as well as the fair value of the contingent consideration for the agreed option rights in the amount of € 8.7 million, which is to be treated as the purchase price. The contingent consideration amounts to € 10.7 million and included a partial amount of € 2.0 million that will be recognized as personnel expenses over the option term. The acquisition-related expenses included in other operating expenses in the financial year 2020 amounted to € 1.0 million.

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Based on the purchase price allocation, the cumulated acquisition costs of these business combinations were allocated to the purchased assets and liabilities on the acquisition date as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount after acquisition
Intangible assets	12.3
Property, plant, and equipment and non-current financial assets	0.1
Trade receivables	0.9
Inventories	0.2
Other assets and deferred tax assets	0.2
Cash and cash equivalents	0.9
Trade payables	–0.9
Financial liabilities	–0.2
Provisions and other liabilities	–0.2
Deferred tax liabilities	–1.8
Net assets	**11.5**
Acquisition cost	42.8
Goodwill	**31.3**

The non-tax-deductible goodwill is mainly attributable to inseparable values such as employee expertise, expected synergy effects from the integration and the strategic advantages resulting from the leading market position and digital reach of the company.

The gross amount of the acquired trade receivables was € 1.1 million. Corresponding valuation allowances in the amount of € 0.2 million were recognized.

Since initial consolidation at the end of February or at the end of April 2020, Gratka and Morizon contributed to consolidated revenues 2020 in the amount of € 10.7 million and to consolidated net income 2020 in the amount of € –0.4 million. If Gratka and Morizon had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2020, the consolidated revenues 2020 would have changed by € 13.1 million and consolidated net income 2020 would have changed by € –0.2 million.

At the end of October 2020, we acquired 66.0 % of the shares in **Morning Brew, Inc.**, New York, USA, which has been fully consolidated since then. Morning Brew is a business news focused, high reach newsletter provider. With its various daily news sections, Morning Brew complements the digital news offerings of the Insider (formerly Business Insider) Group.

For the remaining 34.0 % of the shares in Morning Brew call and put options were agreed upon, in which the purchase price to be paid is based on future company results. Accordingly, we assumed an anticipated acquisition of the remaining shares and did not account for any noncontrolling interests.

The preliminary acquisition costs amounted to € 77.9 million and included a contingent consideration of € 48.5 million in addition to the purchase price of € 28.1 million paid in the financial year 2020 and a purchase price retention of € 1.3 million. The contingent consideration resulted from an earnout and option agreement and was recognized at its fair value as at the acquisition date. The acquisition-related expenses included in other operating expenses in the financial year 2020 amounted to € 0.5 million.

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Based on the preliminary purchase price allocation as of December 31, 2020, the preliminary acquisition costs of this business combination were allocated to the purchased assets and liabilities on the acquisition date as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount after acquisition
Intangible assets	21.0
Trade receivables	2.9
Other assets	0.4
Cash and cash equivalents	2.3
Trade payables	–1.0
Provisions and other liabilities	–1.0
Deferred tax liabilities	–7.7
Net assets	**16.9**
Acquisition cost (preliminary)	77.9
Goodwill (preliminary)	**60.9**

The purchase price allocation considers all knowledge and adjusting events about conditions that already existed on the acquisition date, and has not yet been completed, particularly due to the closeness in time to December 31, 2020.

The non-tax-deductible goodwill is mainly attributable to inseparable values such as employee expertise, expected synergy effects from the integration and the strategic advantages resulting from the leading market position and digital reach of the company.

The gross amount of the acquired trade receivables was € 2.9 million. No corresponding valuation allowances were recognized.

Since initial consolidation at the end of October 2020, Morning Brew contributed to consolidated revenues 2020 in the amount of € 3.7 million and to consolidated net income 2020 in the amount of € 0.7 million. If Morning Brew had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2020, the consolidated revenue 2020 would have changed by € 18.5 million and consolidated net income 2020 would have changed by € 2.5 million.

Additional transactions carried out in the fiscal year 2020, as well as finalizations of purchase price allocations arising from acquisitions of companies in the fiscal year 2019, had no material effects individually and collectively on the financial position, liquidity, and financial performance of the Axel Springer Group.

(d) Translation of separate financial statements denominated in foreign currency

Assets and liabilities of subsidiaries for which the functional currency is not the euro have been translated at the exchange rate in effect on the reporting date. Goodwill and fair value adjustments of assets and liabilities related to the acquisition of companies outside the European Monetary Union are assigned to the acquired company and accordingly translated at the exchange rate in effect on the reporting date.

Items of the income statement of these subsidiaries have been translated at the weighted average exchange rate. Equity components have been translated at the historical exchange rate at the date of origination. Foreign exchange differences resulting from the translation have been recognized within accumulated other comprehensive income and/or non-controlling interests.

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The exchange rates of the foreign currencies important to us developed as follows in relation to the euro:

1 € in foreign currency	Average price		Exchange rate on balance sheet date	
	2021	2020	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
British pound	0.86	0.89	0.84	0.90
Israeli shekel	3.83	3.92	3.51	3.95
Polish zloty	4.56	4.44	4.59	4.56
US-Dollar	1.18	1.14	1.13	1.23

(3) Explanation of significant accounting and valuation methods

(a) Basic principles

The accounting and valuation principles applied uniformly across the Axel Springer Group in the reporting year have basically not changed in comparison to the previous year.

(b) Revenue recognition

Axel Springer Group is a leading digital publisher whose core business is digital classified ad models and journalism. We generate revenues primarily from advertising and circulation.

Revenues are basically recognized with fulfillment of the identified performance obligations, i.e. when the customer obtains control over the agreed goods and benefits from them or the agreed services have been provided. The revenues are calculated on the basis of the amount of the respective compensation we expect to receive for the transfer of promised goods or the provision of services ("transaction price") resulting from published price lists or individual agreements. Contracts with customers are either concluded for individual deliveries and services or have terms that are predominantly short-term. Compensation is due either in advance, at the time the service is rendered or under the provision of short-term payment targets. Expenses for initiating contracts with customers are generally of minor importance or relate to short-term contracts and are therefore recognized immediately in profit or loss for reasons of simplification.

In case we have already fulfilled part of our performance obligation, but our entitlement to payment depends on other performances, we recognize a contract asset in other non-financial assets. If the customer has already paid, but the performance obligation has not yet been fulfilled by us, we recognize a contract liability in other non-financial liabilities.

Advertising revenues include, in particular, revenues from digital classifieds, from the marketing of online and print media as well as from reach and performance-based marketing. Advertising revenues from digital classifieds are mainly generated by the sale of job, real estate and car ads. In accordance with the provision of services, the revenues are always realized linearly over the period of the respective advertisement. The corresponding remuneration is often received in advance or at the beginning of the service provision, so that we recognize contract liabilities in respect of outstanding performances.

The marketing of online and print media leads to revenue from the sale of advertisements in newspapers and magazines, from TV advertising and from the sale of advertising in our online media. Revenues are recognized with the publication or reproduction of the advertisement. Discounts and bonuses granted are taken into account, as they diminish sales revenues.

In reach-based marketing, we market advertising space to advertisers, which are compensated based on the generated reach or the interaction generated by the reach. In terms of performance-based marketing, we offer platforms, as a marketplace, that bring together advertisers and online publishers. The advertisers only pay a success-based compensation to the publisher if the advertising materials have actually been used and resulted in the desired transaction for the advertising customers. Our service consists, in particular, in the technological and financial settlement between the two parties. Since we regularly do not gain control over the advertising

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space offered, we primarily act as an agent in the area of performance-based marketing and only report our revenues in the amount of our commission claim.

Circulation revenues primarily include the sale of printed newspapers and magazines to retailers, wholesalers, subscribers and the sale of digital subscriptions. Revenues from the sale of printed offers are generally recognized at the time of delivery to the customer. Expected sales returns are taken into account on the basis of empirical values and reduce revenue. Digital subscription sales are realized on a linear basis over their term, as the performance obligations are successively fulfilled with the continuous update of the contents. Payments to subscribers for conclusion of subscriptions reduce the transaction price and are distributed over the subscription period to reduce revenue. Subscription compensations are generally collected in advance, so that contract liabilities are recognized for the outstanding fulfilments.

Revenues from barter transactions are recognized if the goods or services exchanged are dissimilar and the amount of revenue can be measured reliably. They are measured at the fair value of services received. If the fair value of the service received under barter transactions cannot be measured reliably, the fair value is determined on the basis of the service rendered.

For offers containing several service components ("bundle offers"), the breakdown of the transaction price is always based on the relative stand-alone selling prices of the individual performance obligations. If stand-alone selling prices are not directly derivable from the market, they are estimated at the beginning of the contract.

(c) Intangible assets

Internally generated intangible assets are measured as the sum of costs incurred in the development phase from the time when the technical and economic feasibility has been demonstrated until the time when the intangible asset has been completed. The capitalized production costs include all costs that are directly or indirectly allocable to the development phase. Costs for the self-development of websites are capitalized only when the website directly serves the generation of revenues. Purchased intangible assets are measured at cost.

Internally generated and purchased intangible assets that have a determinable useful life are amortized over their expected useful lives using the straight-line method, starting from the time when they become available for use by the enterprise, as follows:

in years	Useful life
Software and other licenses	2 to 11
Supply rights	3 to 5
Internet platforms	3 to 8
Customer relationships	3 to 15
Title rights and trademarks	7 to 25

Intangible assets with an indefinite useful life, which include goodwill, distinct title rights and trademarks, and brand rights, are not amortized. At present, the use of these assets by the company is not limited by any economic or legal restrictions.

(d) Property, plant, and equipment

Property, plant, and equipment, with the exception of right-of-use assets resulting from leases, are measured at acquisition or production cost and depreciated over their expected useful lives using the straight-line method.

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Any gains or losses on the disposal of property, plant, and equipment were reported as other operating income or expenses. For depreciation purposes, the following useful lives are essentially applied:

in years	Useful life
Buildings	30 to 50
Leasehold improvements	2 to 21
Printing machines	5 to 20
Editing systems	3 to 10
Other operational and business equipment	2 to 15

Capital investment subsidies and bonuses granted by the government are recognized when it is reasonably certain that the subsidies will be granted, and the related terms and conditions will be fulfilled. Bonuses and subsidies granted for the acquisition or construction of property, plant, and equipment are accounted for in a deferred income item within other liabilities. In subsequent periods, the deferred income item is released and recognized as income over the useful life of the corresponding assets.

Rights-of-use assets resulting from leases are disclosed under property, plant, and equipment. A lease exists if we are entitled to use, for a certain period of time, an identifiable asset over which we have gained control, against payment. Leases mainly relate to office space, leased vehicles and other operating and office equipment at Axel Springer.

At the beginning of the lease term ("provision date"), lease rights-of-use assets are valued at acquisition costs, which in particular arise from the corresponding lease liabilities and lease prepayments, taking into account leasing incentives received. Current depreciations are calculated on a linear basis.

Lease liabilities are recognized at the present value of the lease payments that have not yet been made and reported under financial liabilities. Discounting is always calculated using term-specific and currency-specific incremental borrowing rates, as we are unable to determine the interest rates underlying the leases on a regular basis. The lease liabilities are updated in accordance with the effective interest method. We report the corresponding interest expenses in the financial result.

For reasons of simplification, lease payments in connection with lease contracts with a maximum term of twelve months and leases for so-called low-value assets (new value of up to € 5,000) are included in other operating expenses over the respective term of the leasing contracts.

As a lessor, we operate, in particular, in the context of subletting office space. On the provision date, we evaluate as to whether an operating or finance lease exists. If all material risks and rewards are transferred, this is a finance lease. In that case, a receivable in the amount of the net investment in the lease is accounted for in other financial assets. We report the corresponding interest income in the financial result. Lease payments from operating lease activities are recognized as revenue in the income statement.

(e) Recognition of impairment losses in intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment

Impairment losses are recognized in intangible assets, in property, plant, and equipment, and in investment property when as a result of certain events or changed circumstances, the carrying amount of the assets is no longer covered by the recoverable amount, i.e. the higher of the fair value less cost of disposal ("net realizable value"), and the value in use. If it is not possible to determine the recoverable amount of an individual asset, the determination of the recoverable amount is carried out at the cash generating unit level, or in the group of cash generating units (each one a "reporting unit") to which the asset belongs.

Goodwill and intangibles with indefinite useful lives which are acquired in the context of business combinations, are not subject to amortization, and shall be tested at least once annually for impairment. In order to carry out the impairment tests, these assets are assigned to those reporting units that can be expected to profit from the synergies of the business combinations. These reporting units represent the lowest level at which these assets are monitored for management purposes. They generally correspond to individual titles and digital products of

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the Axel Springer Group. In the case of integrated business models, individual titles and digital products are summed up in a single reporting unit.

If the carrying amount exceeds the recoverable amount, this results in an impairment loss. For reporting units, the goodwill is initially reduced, and an additional impairment loss is allocated pro rata to the carrying amounts of the other assets of the reporting unit.

As a basic principle, the recoverable amount is initially determined based on the value in use. The net realizable value is additionally determined when the value in use is less than the carrying amount. The net realizable value corresponds to the amount reduced by the selling costs, which can be achieved on commercial terms through the sale of an asset or reporting unit. As quoted prices are not observable, as a general rule, the net realizable value is determined as the present value of future cash flows, which are derived from the medium-term planning and from the point of view of an independent third party. Thus, the valuation is based on unobservable input factors (Level 3, see note (3f)).

The determination of the value in use is taking into consideration the further use within the Group and is based on the estimated future cash flows, which are derived from the medium-term planning. Expenses of the Group's central operations are also taken into account. Basically, the planning horizon for the medium-term planning is five years. However, the values in use are primarily determined by the terminal value. The amount of the terminal value depends on the forecasted cash flow in the last year of medium-term planning, on the growth rate of the cash flows subsequent to the medium-term planning, and on the discount rate. The cash flows to be received after the last year are extrapolated on the assumption of a growth rate, which is derived from the assumed average market or industry growth rate of the reporting unit.

The discount rates for every business unit are determined with reference to the weighted average costs of capital and costs of debt of comparable companies. In this respect, country-specific risk premiums and tax rates are taken into account.

There are estimation uncertainties in the following assumptions on which the calculations were based:

- Medium-term planning: The medium-term planning is determined on the basis of past historical values, and factors in business-segment-specific expectations about future market growth. Here, we assume that cash flows in the electronic media sector will usually exhibit higher growth rates than in the print sector.
- Discount rates: Based on the average weighted capital costs of the sector in question, the discount rates of the reporting units also consider country-specific risks, which reflect the current market estimates.
- Growth rates: The growth rates are determined on the basis of published market research reports for the sectors in question. In estimating the long-term growth rates with regard to the determination of the value in use, due consideration was given to the compensatory effects between the different business lines, based on the adopted strategy of the Group.

Write-ups are made when the recoverable amount exceeds the carrying amount of an asset or a reporting unit, due to changes in the estimates upon which the measurement is based. The write-up is limited to the amount that would have resulted if previous impairment losses had not been recognized. There is no write-up of goodwill that has been subject to impairment.

(f) Financial assets and liabilities

Financial assets are mainly composed of cash and cash equivalents, trade receivables, receivables from related parties, loans, investments, securities, and financial derivatives with positive market values. Financial liabilities are mainly composed of trade payables, liabilities due to related parties, liabilities due to banks, promissory notes, lease liabilities, contingent consideration, and other option liabilities for the acquisition of non-controlling interests as well as financial derivatives with negative market values.

At initial recognition, trade receivables are measured at transaction price, all other financial assets and liabilities are measured at fair value. Transaction costs are included if the financial assets and liabilities are subsequently valued at amortized costs. Otherwise, they are immediately recognized as expenses.

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The initial recognition and derecognition of purchases and disposals of financial assets conducted at arm's length are carried out at settlement date.

Subsequent to initial recognition, financial assets are recognized at fair value or at amortized costs, in case they are not part of a hedging relationship. We basically do not make use of the option to value certain financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income in equity. The subsequent valuation depends on the business model for managing the financial assets and the characteristics of the contractual cash flows. Financial liabilities are measured at amortized costs or at fair value through profit and loss.

For financial assets and financial liabilities which need to be measured at fair value, we apply the following valuation hierarchy. Hereby, the input factors used in the valuation models are categorized into three levels:

- Level 1: Quoted (unadjusted) prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities (e.g. stock market prices).
- Level 2: Input factors other than prices quoted in Level 1, which are observable for the asset or the liability, either directly or indirectly (e.g. interest yield curves, forward rates).
- Level 3: Input factors which are not observable on a market for the asset or the liability (e.g. estimated future results).

When determining the fair value, the application of relevant and observable input factors is given high priority, whereas the application of non-observable input factors is given less priority. The classification of the valuation models into the respective valuation hierarchy levels is monitored at the end of each reporting period.

A financial asset is derecognized when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial asset have expired or have been transferred to third parties, or when the Group has assumed a contractual obligation to pay the cash flows to a third party, under which the risks and rewards or the power of control were transferred. Provided that after reasonable assessment, we cannot assume that a financial asset is completely or partly realizable anymore, a depreciation and thus a derecognition of this asset is made. At the latest, we no longer assume realizability from an overdue date of one year. A financial liability is derecognized when the obligation underlying the liability is settled or annulled or has expired.

Investments
Subsequent valuation for investments that have not been consolidated or accounted for using the equity method in the consolidated financial statements, is made at fair value through profit and loss. The fair value is determined on the basis of stock exchange or market prices by means of generally accepted valuation methods. The valuation methods employed include especially the discounted cash flow method (DCF method) based on the expected investment income. Any unrealized gains or losses resulting from the changes in fair value are recognized directly in income from investments.

Loans, receivables, and other non-derivative financial assets
With the exception of convertible loans which are assessed at fair value through profit or loss, all other loans, receivables, and other non-derivative financial assets are recorded at amortized costs after initial recognition by applying the effective interest method and under deduction of allowances, as they are exclusively held for the contractually agreed receipt of principal and interest payments. Profits and losses from the derecognition, impairments and currency translation effects are recognized in profit and loss and reported in other operating income, other operating expenses or in the financial result.

Allowances are recognized under consideration of future-oriented information, in general in the amount of the expected bad debt losses, based on probability-weighted default events in the following twelve months. If the risk of a default has increased significantly after initial recognition, all the default events of the entire remaining term of the financial asset are considered for the valuation of the allowance. A significant increase of the default risk is especially assumed in case of an overdue period of 30 days. A default is defined as 90 days overdue.

Interest income is basically determined on the basis of gross receivables under application of the effective interest rate and recorded in the financial result. In case the default risk increased since its initial recognition

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and additionally objective indications for an impairment are given, especially a downgrade in credit rating of the financial asset, interest income is only determined on the basis of the impaired receivable under application of the initial effective interest rate. The credit rating of the financial asset is especially affected in case of significant financial difficulties or breach of contracts by the debtor, as for example outstanding payments for a period of 90 days, or in case of impending bankruptcy.

For trade receivables, contract assets and lease receivables, the simplified method for the determination of impairments is applied. Regardless of the actual change of the credit risk, all events of default of the entire remaining term are considered. The allowance is identified on the basis of historical bad debt losses and future-oriented information. By using provision matrices, bad debt rates for different overdue periods are calculated separately for individual business models and geographical regions and are applied to the actual value of receivables on the balance sheet date.

Under other financial non-derivative assets, we additionally disclose finance lease receivables and a reimbursement right which is associated with pension obligations. For accounting see note (3d), and (3i) respectively.

Financial derivatives
Financial derivatives are utilized to hedge against currency and interest rate risks that have an influence on future cash flows. These are stated at their current market value. The valuation is based on observable parameters, using recognized valuation methods, and is particularly influenced by the development of forward rates or yield curves. If the conditions for the application of hedge accounting are met, changes in the fair values, including the tax effects, are recognized directly in equity as accumulated other comprehensive income. The amounts recognized in accumulated other comprehensive income are recycled when the underlying transaction is recognized on the balance sheet or income statement. The changes in the fair value of derivatives that do not meet the conditions for the application of hedge accounting, despite their economic hedging effect, are measured at fair value through profit and loss.

Financial liabilities
Upon initial recognition, other non-derivative financial liabilities are measured at fair value less transaction costs. In subsequent periods, they are principally measured at amortized cost using the effective interest method. For the accounting of lease liabilities see note (3d).

Contingent consideration arising from acquisitions (see note (2a)) and from earn-out agreements in the context of acquisitions as well as other option liabilities from the acquisition of non-controlling interests are recognized at fair value after initial recognition and are shown under other financial liabilities. To the extent it can be reliably measured, this value is derived from the estimated earnings of the acquired companies in the years prior to the possible exercise dates of the options or the payment dates of the earn-outs. Changes in the fair value are recognized in the income statement. The discount rates are determined on the basis of the Group's cost of debt. The earnings used as a basis for measurement are generally EBITDA figures adjusted for material non-recurring effects.

(g) Inventories

Inventories are measured at production or purchase cost. Purchase costs are determined on the basis of a weighted average value. Production costs include all costs directly related to the units of production and production-related overhead costs. Inventories are measured at the reporting date at the lower of the purchase or production cost and the net realizable value. The net realizable value is the estimated selling price less estimated costs to be incurred until the sale. The net realizable value of goods and services in progress is calculated as the net realizable value of finished goods and services less remaining costs of completion. Impairments are reversed whenever the reasons justifying an earlier write-down no longer exist.

(h) Assets held for sale and discontinued operations

Assets are classified as held for sale when their disposal has been initiated, the sale of such is highly probable and the asset or disposal group is available for immediate sale in its present condition. The non-current assets held for sale are measured at the lower of the carrying amount or the fair value less costs to sell. Depreciation

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is no longer applied to these assets. Liabilities that are held in connection with assets held for sale are disclosed likewise separately in the balance sheet as a current item.

Discontinued operations represent a material geographical or operational line of business of the Group that is available for sale.

The results from continued operations in the fiscal year and the previous year are shown in the income statement. The results from discontinued operations, if existing, are shown separately. In this case, cash inflows and cash outflows from discontinued operations are shown separately in the notes to the consolidated financial statements. The information in the notes relate to the continued operations of the Group.

(i) Pension provisions

Pension obligations under defined benefit plans and a reimbursement right referring to this disclosed in the other financial assets, are determined using the projected unit credit method under which future changes in compensation and benefits are taken into account. Plan assets are recognized at fair value. In order to calculate the pension provisions, the present value of the obligations is netted against the fair value of the plan assets.

The expected life spans of the participants are determined with reference to the country-specific recognized actuarial tables. The present value of the defined benefit commitments is determined by discounting the estimated future cash outflows. The discount rate applied for this purpose is determined with reference to high-quality AA-rated corporate bonds that match the underlying pension obligations with respect to currency and maturity. If corporate bonds with matching terms do not exist, then the yields of these bonds at the balance sheet date are adjusted along the yield curve for fixed-interest government bonds using a constant spread over the term of the underlying pension obligations.

The return underlying the measurement of the plan assets is identical to the discount rate for defined benefit commitments.

Actuarial gains and losses resulting from changes in actuarial parameters are offset against accumulated other comprehensive income without affecting net income.

(j) Other provisions

Other provisions have been formed to account for all discernible legal and constructive obligations to third parties, provided that the settlement of the obligation is probable and the amount of the obligation can be reliably estimated. The amount of each provision corresponds to the expected settlement amount. In the case of long-term provisions, the expected settlement amount is discounted to the present value at the reporting date by application of appropriate market rates of interest. Provisions are recognized for restructuring expenses only when the intended measures have been sufficiently concretized and announced on or before the reporting date.

(k) Income taxes

Income taxes are taxes paid or taxes payable on income as well as deferred taxes. Income taxes consist of trade tax, corporation tax, solidarity surcharge and the corresponding foreign income tax. The calculation of income taxes is based on legal regulations and tax rates applicable in the respective countries. When assessing income tax treatments, uncertainties may arise as to how the respective tax legislations must be applied. In these cases, we consider what we believe to be the most likely amount in a range of possible outcomes.

Deferred taxes are recognized to account for the future tax effects of temporary differences between the tax bases of assets and liabilities and the carrying amounts of those assets and liabilities in the consolidated financial statements, and for interest and tax loss carry-forwards. Deferred taxes are measured on the basis of the tax laws already enacted for those fiscal years in which it is probable that the differences will reverse or the tax loss carry-forwards can be utilized. Deferred tax assets are recognized for temporary differences or interest and tax loss carry-forwards only when the ability to utilize them in the near future appears to be reasonably certain. Deferred taxes are recognized for temporary differences resulting from the fair value measurement of assets and liabilities obtained through business combinations. Deferred taxes are recognized for temporary differences relating to goodwill only when the goodwill can be utilized for tax purposes. Deferred tax assets and liabilities

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of tax groups are netted if they are based on the same kind of income taxes; otherwise, they are netted only if the deferred taxes are based on the income taxes imposed by the same tax authority and only when current taxes can be netted as well.

(l) Share-based payment programs

As part of performance-based remuneration programs, Axel Springer Group grants equity-settled and cash-settled share-based payment programs. The compensation components to be recognized as expenses over the vesting period are measured as the fair value of the options granted at the time when they were granted (in case of equity-settled programs) or at the reporting date (in case of cash-settled programs). The fair values are determined on the basis of generally accepted option pricing models. The corresponding amount is recognized in the additional paid-in capital (in the case of equity-settled programs) or as provisions/liabilities (in the case of cash-settled programs). Additions to liabilities or provisions are recognized in personnel expenses; reversals are accounted for in other operating income.

(m) Transactions in foreign currencies

Purchases and sales in foreign currencies are translated at the exchange rate on the date of the transaction. Assets and liabilities in foreign currencies are translated into the functional currency at the exchange rate on the reporting date. Any foreign exchange gains or losses resulting from such translations are recognized in profit or loss.

(n) Estimates and assumptions

The preparation of financial statements requires estimates and assumptions, as well as the exercise of discretionary powers, which can have an impact on the amount and disclosure of assets and liabilities, income and expenses and contingent liabilities. Estimates and assumptions are regularly reviewed and adjusted if necessary. Nevertheless, they may differ from the actual values. Estimates and assumptions which are affected by uncertainty are associated in particular with impairment testing of goodwill and intangible assets with indefinite useful lives (see note (3e)) as well as companies accounted for using the equity-method (see note (2a)), for purchase price allocations (see note (2c)) and assessing contingent consideration and other options for purchase of non-controlling interests (see note (3f)), setting actuarial parameters in the context of the valuation of pension obligations (see note (3i)), determining the amount of deferred tax assets to be capitalized (see note (3k)), determining fair values of financial assets (see note (3f)), accounting for other provisions (see note (3j)), assessing share-based compensation programs (see note (3l)), and the determination of the useful lives of intangible assets (see note (3c)) and property, plant, and equipment (see note (3d)). Information concerning the carrying amounts, which are based on estimates and assumptions, can be found in the comments on the specific line items.

(o) New accounting standards

For the reporting year, IFRS Standards and IFRS Interpretations to be applied for the first time had no material impact for Axel Springer. There were also no mandatory applicable statements published by IASB and IFRS IC, that will have material impact on the Axel Springer consolidated financial statements.

(p) Adjustment of prior-year figures

In the reporting year, we became aware of information that made it necessary to adjust the previous year's figures.

- In analyzing the contractual relationships of one of our fully consolidated subsidiaries, we determined that the company actually acts as an agent. The previous accounting treatment of the contractual relationships had been based on a principal position. As a result of this adjustment, revenues and purchased goods and services each decreased by € 50.7 million in the financial year 2020.
- For our fully consolidated subsidiaries operating in the Jobs business division, we have determined that the revenues generated from performance obligations in connection with job classifieds must be recognized over the period of usage (i.e., display time) of the respective advertisement. Previously, revenue was recognized at the time the advertisement was placed. As a result of the later revenue recognition, revenues for the

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financial year 2020 increased by € 2.4 million and income taxes by € 0.4 million, so that consolidated net income increased by a total of € 2.0 million. Consolidated comprehensive income increased by € 2.3 million due to the € 0.3 million increase in other comprehensive income, which exclusively is related to changes from foreign currency translation. As of January 1, and December 31, 2020, deferred tax assets increased by € 9.0 million and contract liabilities as part of current other non-financial liabilities by € 34.2 million and € 31.4 million, respectively; deferred tax liabilities decreased by € 1.0 million and € 0.5 million, respectively. Equity decreased by € 24.1 million and € 21.9 million as of January 1, and December 31, 2020, respectively. The change in equity related only to shareholders of Axel Springer SE and consisted of a decrease in accumulated retained earnings of € 24.1 million and € 22.1 million, respectively, and an increase in accumulated other comprehensive income of € 0.0 million and € 0.3 million, respectively.

- Some fully consolidated subsidiaries had previously recognized trade receivables at a time when there was no unconditional right to consideration. Due to the adjustment of the statement of financial position disclosure, trade receivables and other current non-financial liabilities decreased by € 111.7 million and € 96.0 million as of January 1, and December 31, 2020, respectively. Of this amount, € 95.5 million and € 82.2 million were attributable to the reduction in contract liabilities.

The changes only affected individual items within cash flow from operating activities.

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Notes to the Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

(4) Intangible Assets

The changes in intangible assets were as follows:

€ millions	Purchased rights and licenses	Internally generated rights	Goodwill	Total
Acquisition or production cost				
Balance as of 01/01/2020	2,190.7	491.4	2,540.8	5,222.9
Initial consolidation	39.8	2.0	103.4	145.2
Deconsolidation	−1.8	0.0	0.0	−1.8
Currency effects	−58.8	−8.4	−62.6	−129.7
Additions	17.3	94.4	0.0	111.7
Disposals	−10.7	−17.8	0.0	−28.6
Reclassifications	−62.9	−47.4	−96.3	−206.7
Balance as of 12/31/2020	**2,113.6**	**514.2**	**2,485.3**	**5,113.0**
Initial consolidation	329.5	16.1	592.9	938.5
Deconsolidation	−100.0	−10.3	−87.0	−197.2
Currency effects	63.1	8.0	81.2	152.4
Additions	45.1	103.0	0.0	148.0
Disposals	−28.2	−17.0	0.0	−45.2
Reclassifications	−0.5	4.3	0.0	3.8
Balance as of 12/31/2021	**2,422.7**	**618.3**	**3,072.4**	**6,113.4**
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments				
Balance as of 01/01/2020	746.0	325.7	78.6	1,150.3
Deconsolidation	−1.8	0.0	0.0	−1.8
Currency effects	−12.7	−5.8	0.0	−18.5
Additions	111.9	90.4	0.0	202.3
Thereof depreciation	*96.7*	*83.6*	*0.0*	*180.2*
Thereof impairment losses	*15.2*	*6.8*	*0.0*	*22.0*
Disposals	−10.4	−17.4	0.0	−27.8
Reclassifications	−5.3	−40.6	0.0	−45.8
Balance as of 12/31/2020	**827.7**	**352.3**	**78.6**	**1,258.6**
Deconsolidation	−52.1	−5.5	0.0	−57.6
Currency effects	12.8	5.7	0.3	18.9
Additions	143.0	89.4	31.7	264.1
Thereof depreciation	*142.4*	*87.8*	*0.0*	*230.2*
Thereof impairment losses	*0.6*	*1.7*	*31.7*	*33.9*
Disposals	−23.2	−16.0	0.0	−39.1
Reclassifications	−2.8	2.8	0.0	0.0
Balance as of 12/31/2021	**905.5**	**428.8**	**110.6**	**1,444.8**
Carrying amounts				
Balance as of 12/31/2021	1,517.2	189.5	2,961.9	4,668.6
Balance as of 12/31/2020	1,285.8	161.9	2,406.7	3,854.4

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At the balance sheet date, the purchased rights and licenses mainly comprised title rights, trademarks, and customer relationships as in the previous year. The internally generated rights mainly consisted of software solutions and websites as in the previous year.

The previous year reclassifications consisted exclusively of the reclassification into assets held for sale (see note (9)).

In the following tables, we disclose the allocation of goodwill and the purchased rights and licenses within the intangible assets with indefinite useful lives for reporting units, as well as the discount rates and growth rates used for impairment testing:

	€ millions					
Intangible assets with indefinite useful life	**Goodwill**	**Others**	**12/31/2021**	**Discount rate (before tax)**	**Discount rate (after tax)**	**Growth rate**
AVIV	1,018.9	0.2	1,019.1	9.4%	7.6%	2.0%
POLITICO*	604.9	0.0	604.9			
Insider	407.3	0.9	408.3	10.0%	8.1%	2.0%
StepStone	365.6	41.2	406.9	9.5%	7.5%	2.0%
Awin	250.0	0.3	250.3	9.0%	7.3%	2.0%
Others	315.0	104.5	419.5	7.2% to 10.5%	5.5% to 8.0%	0.0% to 2.0%
Total	**2,961.9**	**147.2**	**3,109.1**			

* Acquisition of POLITICO-Group mid-October 2021 (see note (2c)).

	€ millions					
Intangible assets with indefinite useful life	**Goodwill**	**Others**	**12/31/2020**	**Discount rate (before tax)**	**Discount rate (after tax)**	**Growth rate**
AVIV	1,030.9	374.1	1,405.0	8.7% to 9.6%	6.6% to 7.8%	2.0%
Insider	375.7	214.9	590.6	9.1% to 9.2%	7.5%	2.0%
StepStone	355.2	186.7	541.9	9.2%	7.3%	2.0%
Awin	242.2	0.3	242.5	10.1%	8.1%	2.0%
Others	402.7	160.7	563.4	5.9% to 11.2%	4.5% to 9.5%	0.0% to 2.0%
Total	**2,406.7**	**936.8**	**3,343.5**			

The changes in goodwill of the major reporting units were as follows:

€ millions	**01/01/2020**	**Initial consoli-dation**	**Currency effects**	**Reclassi-fications**	**12/31/2020**	**Initial consoli-dation**	**Impair-ment**	**Currency effects**	**12/31/2021**
AVIV	1,129.8	0.0	−2.5	−96.4	1,030.9	2.0	−31.7	17.7	1,018.9
POLITICO	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	586.4	0.0	18.5	604.9
StepStone	364.1	1.2	−10.1	0.0	355.2	0.0	0.0	10.4	365.6
Insider	346.9	60.9	−32.1	0.0	375.7	0.0	0.0	31.6	407.3
Awin	251.1	2.1	−4.7	−6.3	242.2	2.5	0.0	5.3	250.0
Total	**2,091.9**	**64.3**	**−49.3**	**−102.7**	**2,004.0**	**590.9**	**−31.7**	**83.6**	**2,646.8**

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The change in other intangible assets with indefinite useful lives resulted almost exclusively from title rights and trademarks, which are amortized using the straight-line method from the reporting year onwards based on determinable useful lives. The identified useful lives ranged from 10 to 25 years. In the reporting year amortization of € 51.3 million was recognized for these title rights and trademarks for the first time (see note (22)).

In the reporting year, we adjusted the reporting units in line with the current management. The reporting unit Insider includes the previously separate disclosed reporting units Insider and Insider Intelligence as well as last year acquired Morning Brew. The reporting unit AVIV includes the previously separate disclosed reporting units SeLoger, Yad2, Immowelt and MeilleursAgents as well as Immoweb disclosed under other reporting. Additionally, Housell acquired in the reporting year. As part of the adjustment of the reporting units, the reporting units existing in the previous year were tested for impairment. This resulted in an impairment loss of € 31.7 million on goodwill at one reporting unit. The impairment resulted from adjusted earnings forecasts due to market-related reduced expectations for business development in the core business areas.

In addition to the discount rates and growth rates stated above, the impairment tests depend upon the medium-term planning of the reporting units.

After a year 2021 characterized by macroeconomic catch-up effects, from which the **StepStone Group** was able to benefit strongly, StepStone's medium-term planning is based on the assumption that the economic situation in StepStone's key markets of EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) and North America will continue to develop positively. Moreover, StepStone anticipates an additional expansion of its business during the planning period due to an expected continued shortage of labor and an increasing frequency of job changes. To attract new customers and to expand business with existing customers, StepStone plans to make significant investments in customer-group-specific products as well as technologies that ensure a high applicant rate per published advertisement. In EMEA, StepStone will continue to invest in branding campaigns to strengthen brand awareness and to expand its market position. In summary, these assumptions lead to strong revenue and earnings growth in StepStone's medium-term planning.

The medium-term planning of the **AVIV Group**, which operates its real estate portals in the markets of Germany, France, Belgium, Spain, and Israel, is based on the assumption of stable market conditions. In the planning period revenue and earnings growth is expected. Most of the revenue growth is expected to result from the monetization of contacts with property owners willing to sell. In Spain, investments are being made in the hybrid brokerage portal Housell, which is expected to be a further driver of revenue growth for the AVIV Group. In particular, a significant increase in the number of instructions is to be achieved through investments in personnel and advertising. In addition to these growth initiatives, the core business of advertising is also to be expanded by ongoing investments in personnel, advertising and technology, as well as expanded product offerings, in order to expand the customer base and to increase average revenue per customer.

In the medium-term planning, the **Insider Group** expects significant growth in revenue and operating profit. Insider assumes a continued positive development of the macroeconomic situation in the USA and thus a friendly advertising environment. Advertising revenues are also to be increased by optimizing the marketing of premium inventory. Besides advertising revenues as the main source of revenues and revenues from content commerce, circulation revenues are a key driver of the forecast revenue growth due to the expansion of B2C and B2B subscription offerings. The driver of this growth is a continuous expansion of journalistic and data-driven content. Extensive investments, especially in the areas of journalism and product & technology, will be pushed further in the planning period.

The **POLITICO Group's** medium-term planning envisages strong growth in revenues and earnings. Assuming sustained positive economic development in the main market USA. The main growth drivers are volume- and price-driven increases in advertising revenues and the expansion of the subscription business. POLITICO is developing its POLITICO pro platform into a complete workflow solution with interactive stakeholder management and communication functions as well as personalized data/information feeds. Additional growth is also expected from a range of new business activities such as news and information on topics of energy, environment and technology.

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The medium-term planning of **Awin Group** is primarily characterized by implementing strategic projects. These include the creation of a self-service platform for small and medium-sized companies, customized software-as-a-service solutions for large customers and the establishment of flexible payment models. This should bind existing customers more strongly and win new customers, so that a significant increase from revenue and earnings can be realized over the next few years.

As in the previous year the recoverable amount was basically determined as the value in use for all above mentioned major reporting units. For one former reporting unit of the classifieds media division the calculation was based on the net realizable value in the previous year. In the course of a sensitivity analysis, we have assumed separately for each of our large reporting units a 10 % decrease of future cash flows in the last planning year, a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital or a decrease of the terminal growth rate by half a percentage point. On this basis, as in the previous year, no major reporting unit showed that their carrying amounts of the assets exceeded their recoverable amounts.

Goodwill and intangible assets with indefinite useful lives allocated to the other reporting units of the Group of € 419.5 million (PY: € 563.4 million) amounted to less than 10 % or cumulatively to less than 20 % of the total value. As in the previous year the net realizable value of these reporting units was basically determined by the value in use. In the previous year, the net realizable value was only used for the reporting unit News Media National. In the course of a sensitivity analysis, we have assumed separately for each of our other reporting units a 10 % decrease of future cash flows in the last planning year, a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital or a decrease of the terminal growth rate by half a percentage point. Based on this, for none of these reporting units the carrying amount of the assets exceeds the recoverable amount on the reporting period.

In the previous year for one other intangible asset with indefinite useful life of the News Media business division an impairment of € 12.4 million was recorded. The impairment was based on adjusted earnings planning for upcoming years. The calculation was based on non-observable input factors (Level 3) using a discounted cash flow method with a post-tax discount rate of 11.3 % and a terminal growth rate of 0.0 %.

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(5) Property, plant, and equipment

The changes in property, plant, and equipment were as follows:

€ millions	Land and buildings	Technical equipment and machinery	Other equipment, operational and office equipment	Prepayments on construction in progress	Right-of-use assets	Total
Acquisition or production cost						
Balance as of 01/01/2020	228.6	544.1	257.0	283.5	373.0	1,686.2
Initial consolidation	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.5	0.8
Deconsolidation	−11.6	−0.7	−1.7	0.0	−0.2	−14.3
Currency effects	−1.5	−0.9	−5.7	−0.2	−7.6	−15.9
Additions	33.4	3.7	42.0	21.5	211.7	312.4
Disposals	−324.2	−2.3	−22.4	0.0	−27.1	−376.0
Reclassifications	256.8	9.5	4.6	−273.7	−5.1	−7.8
Balance as of 12/31/2020	**181.7**	**553.3**	**274.0**	**31.0**	**545.3**	**1,585.4**
Initial consolidation	0.0	0.1	6.0	0.4	20.6	27.0
Deconsolidation	−7.6	−12.9	−8.6	−0.2	−11.4	−40.7
Currency effects	0.7	−0.1	3.4	0.0	7.9	11.9
Additions	0.6	3.8	25.0	5.6	59.9	95.0
Disposals	−0.5	−12.3	−17.1	−0.4	−81.1	−111.4
Reclassifications	−0.2	18.2	5.8	−27.6	0.0	−3.8
Balance as of 12/31/2021	**174.7**	**550.1**	**288.6**	**8.9**	**541.1**	**1,563.3**
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments						
Balance as of 01/01/2020	89.9	462.1	186.6	0.0	115.4	854.0
Deconsolidation	−4.2	−0.5	−1.5	0.0	−0.1	−6.4
Currency effects	−0.2	−0.8	−3.7	0.0	−2.3	−7.0
Additions	4.2	18.6	30.6	0.0	72.9	126.2
Thereof depreciation	*4.2*	*18.6*	*30.5*	*0.0*	*72.8*	*126.2*
Thereof impairment losses	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.0*
Disposals	−2.0	−2.0	−20.5	0.0	−19.8	−44.3
Reclassifications	0.0	0.0	−2.4	0.0	−3.9	−6.2
Balance as of 12/31/2020	**87.8**	**477.3**	**189.2**	**0.0**	**162.1**	**916.4**
Deconsolidation	−3.0	−10.2	−6.6	0.0	−5.9	−25.7
Currency effects	0.1	−0.1	2.0	0.0	2.5	4.5
Additions	4.3	20.2	30.1	0.0	62.9	117.5
Thereof depreciation	*4.3*	*20.2*	*29.1*	*0.0*	*62.8*	*116.4*
Thereof impairment losses	*0.0*	*0.0*	*1.0*	*0.0*	*0.1*	*1.1*
Disposals	−0.4	−12.3	−16.1	0.0	−53.0	−81.8
Reclassifications	0.3	0.0	−0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Balance as of 12/31/2021	**89.0**	**475.0**	**198.3**	**0.0**	**168.5**	**930.8**
Carrying amounts						
Balance as of 12/31/2021	85.7	75.1	90.2	8.9	372.5	632.5
Balance as of 12/31/2020	93.9	76.0	84.9	31.0	383.2	669.0

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As of December 31, 2021, property, plant, and equipment with acquisition or production costs of € 404.6 million (PY: € 331.9 million) were in use, that had already been fully depreciated. At the balance sheet date, property, plant, and equipment had not been pledged as security for own liabilities as in the previous year.

Reclassifications of prepayments on construction in progress of the reporting period were mainly related to studio technology in the new Axel Springer building. Reclassifications as well as the additions of the previous year in land and buildings in the amount of € 33.0 million related to the new Axel Springer building in Berlin. Moreover, further additions basically related to tenant fixtures and operating facilities in the new Axel Springer building.

The in July 2017 contractually agreed sale of the new Axel Springer building has been completed in the previous year by purchase price payment and handover of the completed building. The purchase price amounted to € 427.1 million (before tax payments of € 35.4 million in the previous year and the reporting period), of which € 426.1 million have been paid in the previous year (see note (28)). For further use of the building by Axel Springer a rent contract for the entire building on long-term basis with a minimum term of 15 years (with three extension options of each five years) was agreed with an initial rent of € 15.0 million p.a.

The sale and leaseback of the new Axel Springer building in the previous year was presented as a sale and leaseback transaction. Therefore, amortized costs for the land (€ 26.9 million) and the building (€ 289.0 million) as of the selling date were recognized with € 152.8 million as a new right-of-use asset and an amount of € 163.1 million was derecognized. Based on the future lease payments, a lease liability of € 206.6 million was recognized at the time of disposal. Overall, the transaction resulted in other operating income of € 57.4 million in the previous year (see note (18)).

The following right-of-use assets from leases were accounted for:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Real Estate	366.5	374.6
Technical equipment and machinery	1.3	2.4
Other equipment, operational and office equipment	4.7	6.2
Right-of-use assets	**372.5**	**383.2**

Depreciations regarding right-of-use assets from leases broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Real Estate	56.5	64.7
Technical equipment and machinery	1.7	1.6
Other equipment, operational and office equipment	4.7	6.6
Depreciation on right-of-use assets	**62.9**	**72.9**

For further information on right-of-use assets, lease liabilities and lease expenses see note (3d), (14), (16), (17), (23), (25), (28) and (34).

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(6) Non-current financial assets

(a) Investments recognized using the equity method

Summarized financial information regarding all companies which are accounted for using the equity method and are not individually material are shown below:

€ millions	2021	2020*
Non-material associates		
Carrying amounts	261.6	192.9
Share attributable to the group:		
Net income	50.3	21.4
Other income/loss	5.7	0.0
Comprehensive income	**56.0**	**21.4**

* Adjusted for Purplebricks Group plc, which has no longer been classified as a material associated company since the reporting year.

Of the carrying amounts and the total comprehensive income, an amount of € 138.6 million (PY: € 60.3 million) respectively € 82.4 million (PY: € 21.2 million) was attributable to our early-stage funds, mainly attributable to revaluation effects on investments recorded in the funds.

€ millions	2021	2020
Non-material joint-ventures		
Carrying amounts	42.9	45.0
Share attributable to the group:		
Net income	2.9	3.5
Other income/loss	0.0	0.0
Comprehensive income	**2.9**	**3.6**

For information regarding the impairment loss of non-material associates and non-material joint ventures see note (24).

In the reporting year proportionate net income to be recognized in income from investments was not recorded in the amount of € –3.4 million (PY: € –3.5 million), since a carrying amount of zero was reached due to impairment losses or the recognition of proportionate income for the corresponding net investments. For this reason, cumulative net income not recognized as of December 31, 2021, amounted to € –10.6 million (PY: € –7.2 million).

For commitments in connection with associates and joint ventures as of the reporting date see note (32).

(b) Other non-current financial assets

Other non-current financial assets included financial assets measured at fair value through profit or loss in the amount of € 289.5 million (PY: € 300.8 million). These financial assets mainly concern investments of € 234.2 million (PY: € 261.8 million) as well as convertible loans of € 55.3 million (PY: € 39.0 million). The miscellaneous other non-current financial assets in the amount of € 30.7 million (PY: € 27.9 million) are mainly loans and were accounted for at amortized cost.

Loss allowances amounting to € 1.0 million (PY: write-ups of € 0.2 million) were recognized for miscellaneous other financial assets in the reporting year. The total of loss allowances amounted to € 1.8 million (PY: € 0.8 million). In addition, write-ups for loan commitments amounting of a total of € 0.7 million (PY: loss allowances of € 0.2 million).

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The investments contained particularly our shares in Lakestar II LP. with € 49.3 million (PY: € 29.2 million) as well as in Group Nine Media Inc. with € 44.0 million (PY: € 54.5 million). The previous year also included our shares in Airbnb Inc. amounting to € 72.2 million (see note (28)).

(7) Trade receivables

The trade receivables broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Trade receivables, nominal	931.9	770.0
Allowances for doubtful trade receivables	–27.0	–41.8
Trade receivables	**904.9**	**728.2**

The allowances for trade receivables were determined in the amount of the expected losses on receivables. This resulted in the following provision matrix as of December 31, 2021:

€ millions	Trade receivables		
Overdue	Expected loss rate	Trade receivables, nominal	Allowances for doubtful trade receivables
Non overdue	0.2%	696.4	–1.3
up to 30 days	0.8%	153.7	–1.2
31 to 90 days	3.9%	41.4	–1.6
91 to 180 days	33.5%	13.2	–4.4
> 180 days past due	67.9%	27.2	–18.5
12/31/2021	**-**	**931.9**	**–27.0**

As of December 31, 2020, allowances for trade receivables resulted in the following provision matrix:

€ millions	Trade receivables		
Overdue	Expected loss rate	Trade receivables, nominal	Allowances for doubtful trade receivables
Non overdue	0.9%	603.0	–5.3
up to 30 days	1.6%	78.7	–1.3
31 to 90 days	5.2%	32.7	–1.7
91 to 180 days	31.9%	24.3	–7.7
> 180 days past due	82.4%	31.4	–25.9
12/31/2020	**-**	**770.0**	**–41.8**

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The changes in the allowances for trade receivables are presented below:

€ millions	2021	2020
Balance as 01/01	**41.8**	**21.1**
Additions	25.7	38.1
Reversals	−29.3	−8.9
Utilization	−9.8	−7.9
Other changes	−1.4	−0.6
Balance as 12/31	**27.0**	**41.8**

In the reporting year, trade receivables in the amount of € 9.8 million (PY: € 7.9 million) were impaired and derecognized (utilizations). Of the amounts derecognized in the reporting year € 0.1 million (PY: € 0.3 million) were still subject to enforcement measures.

(8) Other assets

The other assets broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Reimbursement claim for pension obligation	18.6	21.0
Deposits	6.8	5.4
Receivables under finance leases	1.0	3.8
Loan receivables from third parties	0.7	48.3
Other	24.2	16.2
Other financial assets	**51.3**	**94.6**
Thereof current	*25.5*	*70.4*
Thereof non-current	*25.8*	*24.2*
Advance payments	43.3	31.5
Receivables from other taxes	17.0	22.6
Contract costs	2.2	0.0
Receivables due from employees	0.5	0.8
Contract assets	0.3	0.5
Other	51.3	14.6
Other non-financial assets	**114.6**	**70.0**
Thereof current	*86.8*	*62.6*
Thereof non-current	*27.8*	*7.3*
Other assets	**165.9**	**164.6**
Thereof current	*112.3*	*133.1*
Thereof non-current	*53.6*	*31.5*

In the previous year the loan receivables from third parties, almost exclusively related to Ringier AG, Zurich, Switzerland, concerned not required cash and cash equivalents of Ringier Axel Springer Media AG and had been disposed through the sale of the company in the reporting period (see note (2c), (28)). Regarding the reimbursement right concerning pension obligations, see note (12). The receivables from finance leases related almost entirely to subleases of office spaces.

The miscellaneous other financial assets particularly included a contractual claim against a third party for taking over a partial amount of an employee compensation program of a subsidiary, a purchase price claim for the final instalment regarding the sale of the office building in Hamburg executed in the financial year 2016 as well

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as creditors with a debit balance. The other non-financial assets mainly related to the accrual of the compensation component from the adjustment of a contingent consideration for the purchase of non-controlling interests in Appcast (see note (30)).

(9) Assets and liabilities held for sale

In the previous year the assets held for sale of € 178.7 million and the associated liabilities of € 33.6 million were related to the French La Centrale Group and were fully disposed of in the reporting year (see note (2c)).

(10) Equity

The components and changes in consolidated equity are summarized in the consolidated statement of changes in equity.

(a) Subscribed capital

The fully paid-in subscribed capital in the amount of € 107.9 million remained unchanged and is divided into 107,895,311 registered shares with a calculated ratio of € 1.00 per share. The shares can only be transferred with the company's consent.

(b) Authorized capital

Pursuant to Section 5 (4) of the Articles of Incorporation, the Executive Board is entitled to increase the share capital one time or multiple times by a maximum amount of € 10.5 million with consent of the Supervisory Board until April 17, 2023, by issuance of newly registered shares in return for cash and/or contributions in kind (authorized capital). The shareholders generally thereby must be granted a subscription right. However, the Executive Board is entitled under specific circumstances with the approval of the Supervisory Board to waive the subscription right of the shareholders.

As of December 31, 2021, the authorized capital was not utilized and amounted to € 10.5 million unchanged to the previous year balance sheet date.

(c) Additional paid-in capital

The additional paid-in capital (€ 602.2 million; PY: € 579.5 million) mainly consists of share premiums from the capital increase in kind and issue of treasury shares and the equivalent of the personnel expenses for the share-based payment programs settled with equity instruments (see note (11)).

(d) Accumulated retained earnings

The accumulated retained earnings comprised the income of the companies included in the consolidated financial statements, to the extent that they have not been distributed to shareholders. In the reporting year, Axel Springer SE distributed an amount of € 400.3 million (PY: € 125.2 million) or € 3.71 (PY: € 1.16) per qualifying share for the previous reporting year. For the reporting year 2021, the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board propose to distribute a dividend of € 1.16 per share entitled to the dividend, in total representing € 125.2 million in expected payments. Payment of the proposed dividend is contingent upon approval at the Annual General Meeting.

Furthermore, transactions with shareholders are recognized within the accumulated retained earnings.

The accumulated retained earnings were reduced by € 24.1 million to € 1,575.8 million as of January 1, 2020, due to adjustments of prior-year figures (see note (3p)).

(e) Accumulated other comprehensive Income

At balance sheet date, accumulated other comprehensive income mainly comprised actuarial gains and losses from pension plans of € – 102.5 million (PY: € – 138.0 million).

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Changes in foreign currency translations during the reporting year are primarily due to conversions of financial statements denominated in US-Dollar, Israeli shekel and British pound (see note (2d)). In the previous period these changes mainly referred to conversions of financial statements in US-Dollar, British pound and Polish zloty.

(f) Non-controlling interests

The non-controlling interests mainly related to the following companies:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Ringier Axel Springer Polska Group (PY: Ringier Axel Springer Media Group)	123.5	252.3
AWIN Group	72.3	62.4
Other companies	40.1	36.7
Non-controlling interests	**235.9**	**351.4**

At the end of December 2021, we completed the disposal of our previously fully consolidated shares (50.0 %) in Ringier Axel Springer Media AG, Zurich, Switzerland (see note (2c)). Prior to that, the Polish investments were carved out into Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska AG, Zurich, Switzerland, in which we continue to hold 50.0 % of the shares and which we continue to fully consolidate on the basis of contractual rights. Non-controlling interests of € 159.0 million were disposed of in the course of the disposal.

(11) Share-based payment

In the reporting year, expenses and income for share-based payment programs amounted to € –65.5 million and € 0.8 million respectively (PY: € –28.6 million and € 0.6 million respectively). These effects were attributable to equity-settled programs with an amount of € –24.0 million (PY: € –0.1 million) and to cash-settled programs with an amount of € –41.5 million and € 0.8 million respectively (PY: € –28.4 million and € 0.6 million respectively). The liabilities and provisions recorded in relation to share-based payments totaled to € 72.3 million (PY: € 121.1 million), whereof an amount of € 21.3 million (PY: € 64.7 million) was recorded in liabilities due to related parties (see note (32)). In addition, an amount of € 23.2 million was recognized directly in additional paid-in capital. The summarized effects presented were related in particular to the following option programs.

In the reporting year, a **Management Incentive Plan** was established for the members of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE and for selected senior executives of the Axel Springer Group ("**MIP**"). The MIP is based in each case on contractual agreements between the participant and the respective employing company of the participant.

The MIP comprises the granting of Virtual Shares of Axel Springer SE ("VS") and various Phantom Stock Programs ("PSP"). The participants are granted VS at the beginning of the program, for which they have to make a personal investment. The personal investment is made through future work performance, for which the participants make a partial salary waiver, or through payment. The VS are not equity instruments. They only constitute remuneration claims against the respective employing company of the participant, which are intended to reflect a participation in Axel Springer SE's performance corresponding to that of a shareholder. This also includes rights to payments in the amount of dividends paid to shareholders.

In addition, the participants participate in the PSP, each of which establishes a remuneration claim, limited in amount, against the participant's respective employing company for a percentage share in the increase in value of Axel Springer SE ("AS-PSP") and, for some of the senior executives, additionally a participation in the increase in value of the group division to which they belong ("OpCo-PSP"), in particular StepStone, AVIV and News Media National ("NMN"). The base values relevant for determining the increase in value were agreed in each case based on value ratios at the beginning of the financial year 2020. Payment claims from the AS-PSP and the OpCo-PSP (except OpCo-PSP for the NMN business division) generally only arise if the market value of Axel Springer SE and the respective group division has increased by at least 50 % and 40 %, respectively, compared to the respective base value. The percentage remuneration for these OpCo PSPs increases from a

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value increase of 150 %. In the case of the OpCo-PSP for the NMN business division, a remuneration will arise if defined revenue and earnings objectives are achieved.

The settlement of the remuneration claims only applies upon the occurrence of defined payment or valuation events, in particular distributions, the disposal of shares of Axel Springer SE or individual group divisions in a determined amount, initial public offerings of individual group divisions, the renewed stock exchange listing of Axel Springer SE, and generally only if the participant is still working for Axel Springer at that time. In the event of a renewed stock exchange listing of Axel Springer SE, the remuneration claims may also be settled by the issue of shares. If an individual group division for which an OpCo PSP is in place goes public, the compensation entitlements of the senior executives working in this group division can also be settled in the form of shares. The compensation claims to be converted into shares are to be reduced by any tax amounts to be paid. If an IPO is carried out by the end of 2024, the compensation claims from the relevant PSPs are initially only to be settled pro rata temporis on the basis of a calculated term from January 2020. Remaining claims from these PSPs will be forfeited but will lead to corresponding claims of the participants under a new compensation program to be established at similar conditions. In the event of termination before the end of the term, the participant will generally only receive a payment in the amount of the investment made or the lower fair value of the VS. In certain cases, a share in the increase in value achieved is also granted.

Depending on the most probable payment or valuation event, the VS and PSP (except for the OpCo-PSP for the NMN division) are recognized either as equity-settled share-based payment program or as cash-settled share-based payment program. The VS and PSP granted to the beneficiaries of a group division are accounted for as equity-settled share-based payment program, as an IPO is considered the most probable payment or valuation event for this subprogram and there is no current obligation to settle in cash. For the remaining subprograms, the probability of cash settlement is higher. The OpCo PSP for NMN business division does not meet the criteria of share-based payment and is accounted for as employee benefits.

The remuneration components resulting from the VS and PSP are recognized in profit or loss on a straight-line basis over the respective expected vesting period based on the fair values of the VS and PSP at the grant date (in the case of equity-settled program) or at the respective reporting date (in the case of cash-settled program). The personal investments made for the VS granted are recognized under other provisions until the VS are settled.

The MIP was granted between May and December 2021 based on individual contracts concluded with the participants. The vesting period began with the announcement of the program in the second and third quarters of 2021. It is expected to end for the VS granted to the beneficiaries of a business division and the parts of the PSP to be settled by then (approx. 41 %) with the expected IPO, which is planned for 2022. For claims from the forfeited portions of these PSP (approx. 59 %) to be transferred to a new compensation program, an expected total vesting period of four years until the second quarter of 2025 was estimated. For the VS and PSP granted to the remaining beneficiaries, a vesting period of four or five years was assumed until the second quarter of 2025 and 2026, respectively. Expected payments from the VS in the amount of the dividends are vested over the respective period until payment. A regular dividend of € 1.16 p.a. is assumed.

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The following shows further parameters of the program in relation to share-based payments:

	Share-based payments					
	Compensation through shares			Compensation through cash		
	VS	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP	VS	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP
VS granted (in thousand)	173	-	-	451	-	-
Term in years*	1.0	1.0 / 4.0	1.0 / 4.0	4.0 to 5.0	4.0 to 5.0	4.0
Personal investment per VS (€)	58.13	-	-	58.13	-	-
PSP entitlement / PSP entitlement to increase in value (%)	-	0.294/ -	1.837/ 2.143	-	3.272/ 3.345	1.035/ 1.196
Total fair value at valuation date (€ millions)**	5.9	8.0	49.3	15.3	93.0	9.4

* Compensation through shares: PSP terms separately for the portion to be settled at the time of the planned IPO of the business division and for further entitlements from the transfer to a new compensation program.
** Fair value of VS less personal investment. Equity-settled: fair value at grant date; Cash-settled: fair value at balance sheet date.

At the respective valuation dates the fair values of the VS were determined as the proportionate fair values of Axel Springer SE on the basis of a discounted cash flow method. The respective medium-term plans and division-specific discount rates and growth rates were taken into account.

The fair values of the AS-PSP and OpCo-PSP were estimated using a binomial model. The key valuation parameters are the value increases based on the market values of Axel Springer SE and the respective group divisions relevant for the OpCo-PSP compared to their underlying values, the expected volatility of the market values in relation to the expected residual terms at the valuation date, and the term-dependent risk-free interest rates. The market values for Axel Springer SE and the relevant group divisions are derived from the respective fair values plus the dividends paid or profit transfers since the beginning of 2020. The fair values were determined in each case based on a discounted cash flow method. The respective medium-term plans and division-specific discount and growth rates were taken into account. In addition, the following significant parameters were taken into account for the measurement of the PSP at the respective valuation date:

	Compensation through shares		Compensation through cash	
	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP
Remaining term (in years)*	0.3 / 3.3	0.3 / 3.3	3.3 to 4.3	3.3
Value increase compared to the underlying (%)	54.0	80.4	54.0	1.0
Volatility of the market value (%)**	29.2 / 34.7	37.1 / 43.4	34.7	42.9
Risk-free interest rate (%)**	−0.5 / −0.1	−0.5 / −0.1	−0.1	−0.2

* Settlement by shares: residual terms separately for the portion to be settled at the time of the planned IPO of the business division and for remaining entitlements.
** In each case related to the remaining term.

The expected volatilities are based on an assessment of the historical volatilities of share prices of peer companies, in particular in the period corresponding to the expected term.

The VS and PSP granted in the reporting year remained unchanged as of the balance sheet date. The expense recognized for the MIP in the reporting year was as follows:

	2021
Expenses from share-based payments (equity-settled)	24.0
Expenses from share-based payments (cash-settled)	16.8
Expenses from share-based payments	**40.7**
Expenses from employee benefits	1.0
Expenses from the MIP	**41.7**

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The expense from equity-settled share-based payment (€ 24.0 million) was recognized directly in the additional paid-in capital in the amount of € 23.2 million. Provisions were recognized in the amount of other expenses (€ 18.5 million). In addition, payment claims from other share-based payment programs, which were waived as a personal investment for the granting of the VS, in the amount of € 12.3 million were reclassified to provisions for obligations from the MIP. These amounted to a total of € 30.8 million as of December 31, 2021.

In addition to the MIP, a **Virtual Employee Participation Program** (**"VEP"**) was introduced for employees of the Axel Springer Group in the reporting year. The VEP is based in each case on contractual agreements between the participant and the respective employing company of the participant. At the beginning of the program, participants are granted Virtual Shares of Axel Springer SE ("VS"), for which they must make a personal investment. This will be satisfied by future work performance for which the participants make a partial salary waiver. The VS are not equity instruments. They create only payment claims against the respective employing company of the participant, which are intended to reflect a participation in the performance of Axel Springer SE corresponding to that of a shareholder. However, the participant will in any case receive back the personal investment made.

Payment claims are settled in cash only and only upon the occurrence of defined payment or valuation events, which generally are the same as for the MIP. In addition, participants have the option of calling a payout at the end of financial year 2025 based on the fair value of the VS at that time, as long as no other payment or valuation event has occurred by then. In the event of early termination by the participant before the occurrence of a defined payment or valuation event, in principle only the personal investment made is paid out.

The VEP is accounted for as a cash-settled share-based payment. Over the vesting period, the remuneration components resulting from the program are recognized in profit or loss on a straight-line basis based on the fair value of the VEP at the respective reporting date. The personal investments made for the VS granted are recognized in other provisions until the VS are settled.

The vesting period began in September 2021 with the announcement of the program. Since – as in line with the MIP – an IPO of a business division is considered the most probable payment or valuation event, the program and therefore the vesting period for the beneficiaries of the business division is expected to end in the financial year 2022. For the remaining part of the VEP, a duration of approximately five years until the second quarter of 2026 is assumed. The respective grant date is the participant's individually concluded program contract. Further parameters of the program are presented below:

	VEP
Granted VS (in thousand)*	34 / 192
Term (in years)*	0.7 / 4.7
Personal investment per VS (€)	58.13
Total fair value as of the balance sheet date (€ millions)**	9.4

* Separate for the part to be fulfilled at the time of the planned IPO of the business division and the remaining part of the VEP.
** Less personal investment.

The fair value of the VEP is determined based on an option pricing model. Key valuation parameters are the market value of Axel Springer SE and its volatility over the anticipated remaining duration of the VEP. For the determination of the fair value of Axel Springer SE, see the disclosures on the MIP.

The VS granted in the reporting year remained unchanged at the balance sheet date. The expense recognized in the reporting year for cash-settled share-based payment amounted to € 1.1 million. The provisions recognized as of December 31, 2021, for obligations under the VEP, including the personal investments made in the reporting year, amounted to € 1.4 million.

Members of the Executive Board and selected Executives were granted a long-term variable remuneration in the form of a **Long-Term Incentive Plan ("LTIP")** in 2016 and 2018 respectively. The LTIP was almost completely terminated in the reporting year with the introduction of the MIP (see above) and the remuneration claims earned under the LTIP up to this point were transferred to the MIP as a personal investment or paid out.

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The LTIP was measured as a cash-settled share-based payment program at its fair value at the balance sheet date determined using a stochastic model for the valuation of stock option rights and recognized in line with the expected vesting. In the four-year performance period ending in the previous year, the specified value growth target was achieved. Based on a volume-weighted average price of the Axel Springer share of € 62.30, which was used as the basis for determining the increase in market capitalization, this resulted in a remuneration claim totaling € 100.0 million, half of which was attributable to payout amount I and half to payout amount II.

The compensation entitlement required market capitalization of Axel Springer SE to increase by at least 40 % within three, four, and a maximum of five years (respective "performance periods"). No claim for compensation could be made below this threshold. The compensation entitlement will increase only up to a growth in market capitalization by maximally 60 %. In the event of targets being achieved, the eligible members of the Executive Board and Executives were entitled to a payment claim totaling 3.63 % and 0.48 % respectively of the increase in market capitalization. The increase in market capitalization was calculated on the basis of the volume-weighted average price of Axel Springer shares for the last 90 calendar days before May 1, 2016, or before the end of the respective performance period multiplied by the number of outstanding Axel Springer shares (less treasury shares) adding dividend distributions during the performance period.

The payout of payment amount I, which vested in the previous year, was initially postponed until 2021 due to a deferral agreement concluded with the beneficiaries in the previous year. Payment amount II would have been paid in 2022 after a cooling-off period of two years. The net amount of all payments (after considering taxes and duties payable) would have had to be invested in full in Axel Springer shares issued. However, in the reporting year, a partial transfer of remuneration claims to the MIP as a personal investment and payment of the remaining remuneration claims was agreed with the majority of LTIP beneficiaries, thus terminating the LTIP. The remaining beneficiaries received payment amount I in the reporting year. In accordance with the initial agreement, they will receive payment amount II in financial year 2022.

In the reporting year, the LTIP resulted in personnel expense of € 9.0 million (PY: € 11.4 million). Payment claims of beneficiaries under the LTIP amounting to € 11.4 million were transferred to the MIP as a personal investment. Payments amounting to € 67.9 million (PY: € 17.8 million) were made to beneficiaries (including beneficiaries who left in the reporting year). Provisions of € 1.4 million (PY: liabilities and provisions of € 63.1 million and € 8.6 million, respectively) had to be recognized for remaining claims under the LTIP as of December 31, 2021.

The Executive Board member not participating in the LTIP was granted a **virtual stock option plan** in the 2018 financial year. The program was terminated in the reporting year with the introduction of the MIP (see above) and the claims earned up to this point were transferred to the MIP as a personal investment. The key parameters of the program are shown below:

	Executive Board Program 2018
Grant date	10/01/2018
Term in years	6
Qualifying period in years	4
Option rights granted	225,000
Underlying (€)	62.06
Maximum payment (€)	124.12

The further conditions of the program and conditions for a claim to remuneration, which are described below, would have depended in particular on the performance of the Axel Springer share. However, the price of the Axel Springer share has not been determined since the delisting in the previous year.

If the employment relationship had existed at least until the expiration of the vesting period, all virtual stock options granted could have vested. If the employment relationship had ended before the end of the vesting

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period, but no earlier than one year after the grant date, the option rights would have vested pro rata in proportion to the vesting period.

A further condition for vesting to take place was that either the volume-weighted average price of the Axel Springer share was at least 30 % over the base value or that the percentage increase of this average price exceeded that of the base value of the development of the DAX over a period of 90 calendar days within a time period of a year before the end of the waiting period.

Exercising stock options was only possible if the volume-weighted average price of the Axel Springer share of 90 calendar days before exercising such options was at least 30 % over the base value and that the percentage increase exceeded that of the DAX index. Each option granted a payment claim in the amount of the growth in value of the Axel Springer share, restricted to a maximum of 200 % of the base value, which corresponds to the difference between the volume-weighted average price during the last 90 calendar days previous to exercise and the base value.

The eligible member of Executive Board was obliged to hold one Axel Springer share for every ten stock options as his personal investment. Disposing of these shares previous to exercising the stock options would have resulted in the stock options being forfeited at the same rate.

The virtual stock option plan was recognized as a cash-settled share-based payment program at its fair value determined using a Black-Scholes model in a Monte Carlo simulation as of the respective balance sheet date or until the termination date and recognized in accordance with the expected vesting. The revaluation at the date of termination of the program resulted in income of € 0.7 million (PY: expense of € 0.4 million). The remaining claim amounted to € 0.9 million (PY: € 1.6 million) and was transferred to the MIP as a personal investment.

The following material share-based payment programs existed at our subsidiaries:

With respect to the acquisition of **Appcast** in the financial year 2019 an existing equity-settled share-based payment program was replaced by a cash-settled share-based payment program. The stock options will vest after a period of four years and were linked to call and put options, which can be exercised between 2023 and 2025 and where the acquisition price to be paid will be measured by the future performance of the company (see note (30)). In May 2021, the call and put options were adjusted. The exercise price is now based on a revenue multiple. In addition, exercise dates were individualized, and maximum payout amounts were determined depending on the respective exercise dates. As a result of the amendment, the remuneration program no longer met the requirements for share-based payments as of the amendment date. Since then, it has been reported as other non-current obligations towards employees (see notes (13), (21)).

In the reporting period, personnel expenses from share-based payments amounting to € 6.8 million (PY: € 4.8 million) and other operating income amounting to € 0.0 million (PY: € 0.2 million) were recognized up to the amendment date. As of December 31, 2020, the provision amounted to € 10.4 million.

Upon closing date of the acquisition with respect to the majority shareholding in **Insider** at the end of 2015, present management board members of Insider were granted a total of 15,854 stock options to acquire a total of 13 % of the shares in Insider. The stock options will vest over a period until the end of 2025 (30 % become vested after three years, and subsequently a further 10 % each year) and are after that exercisable until the end of 2025. At the end of 2025 all shares that have been obtained can be tendered at fair value on exercise date to Axel Springer, which leads to an irrevocable obligation to be settled in cash and thus a cash-settled share-based payment program. At grant date, the fair value of these stock options was € 9.3 million. A partial amount of € 6.3 million of the options was treated as consideration transferred of the acquisition in the course of the initial consolidation. The remaining amount was classified as remuneration for the continuing employment. In 2018, 4,756 options that have become vested by then were repurchased for a payment of USD 4.6 million (€ 4.0 million), so that unchanged to the previous year there were 11,098 options as of December 31, 2021.

An upfront payment of USD 7.5 million (€ 6.3 million) was granted in the reporting year because the 2020 revenue targets were met. Additionally, a further upfront payment of up to USD 12.0 million (€ 10.6 million) will be

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made if the 2022 and 2023 revenue and earnings targets are met. In addition, without defined targets USD 9.0 million (€ 8.0 million) will be paid out in equal annual installments of USD 1.5 million (€ 1.3 million) from 2018 to 2023. All aforementioned prepayments will be offset against future payments from these options. There is no repayment obligation in case of stock options being forfeited or not being exercised.

In fiscal year 2019, in the course of the operational merger of two US companies Insider and Insider Intelligence the overall responsibility of the merged companies was transferred to the Executive Board of Business Insider and thus the existing option program was adjusted encompassing as well the performance of Insider Intelligence compared to a base valuation of approx. USD 400.0 million. For this purpose, the Executive Board was granted 9,351 options to acquire a total of 9.1 % of the shares in Insider Intelligence while maintaining all the conditions of the existing option program.

As of December 31, 2021, unchanged to the previous year, there were options to acquire 9.1 % of the shares of the merged companies Insider and Insider intelligence of which none can be exercised. The exercise price and the weighted average remaining term respectively of the existing options are USD 3.6 to 3.9 thousand (€ 3.2 to 3.4 thousand) and 3.8 years (PY: 4.8 years) respectively.

The fair value as of the grant date and as of each reporting date was determined based on an option pricing model using a Monte-Carlo simulation, considering the strike price of the options, the risk-free interest rate and the expected dividends; the volatility was derived using a peer group comparison. At each reporting date, the option rights will be remeasured; likewise, the personnel expenses to be recorded over the vesting period will be calculated. In the reporting period, an amount of € 5.7 million (PY: € 8.9 million) was recorded in personnel expenses. As of December 31, 2021, the provision amounted to € 36.5 million (PY: € 35.6 million) and was also affected by the payouts made (€ 7.6 million) in the reporting year as well as currency translations effects.

Other share-based payment programs were individually and in total insignificant for the financial position, liquidity, and financial performance of the Group.

(12) Pension obligations

The pension obligations in the reporting year relate almost exclusively to Group companies domiciled in Germany.

Under its defined contribution pension plans, the Group mainly contributes to public sector pension insurance carriers by virtue of the applicable laws. The current contribution payments amounted to € 54.3 million (PY: € 49.7 million) and were reported in personnel expenses.

Provisions for pensions were created to account for the obligations arising from vested pension rights and current benefits for former and active employees of the Axel Springer Group and their survivors. The reserves for performance-based pension plans correspond to the cash value of the obligations on the reporting date less fair value of the plan assets. Along with general actuarial risks such as risks from salary and pension increases, longevity risk, and interest rate risk as well as inflation risk, capital market and investment risk.

Essentially, four different pension plans exist in the German Group companies that are subject to the German Company Pension Act, and thus to the statutory regulations relating in particular to vesting, compensation for inflation in the benefit phase, and insolvency protection by the Pensions Guarantee Corporation. The pension plans are partially financed by premium reserve funds that are managed by Axel Springer Pensionstreuhand e.V. as trustee. Two pension plans provide for an annual pension for entitled persons based on fixed amounts that depend for the first pension plan only on the length of service in the company, and for the second pension plan additionally on the position in the company and are static in the vesting period and dynamic in the benefit payment period in accordance with the requirements of the Company Pension Act. The commitments to the Executive Board correspond in their design to the second pension plan and are additionally dynamic in the vesting period depending on inflation. The third pension plan is a defined-contribution benefit in which a benefit is calculated using fixed factor tables dependent on converted compensation components. Ongoing benefits are adjusted from the beginning of pension payments at 1 % p.a. The fourth pension plan includes

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direct commitments based on subsidized remuneration conversions which are congruently covered by insurance and usually grant a one-time payment upon retirement.

The measurement was based on the following parameters:

Information in %	2021	2020
Discount rate	1.0%	0.7%
Salary trend	1.5%	1.4%
Pension trend	1.5%	1.4%

As in the previous year, the expected life spans were determined with reference to the mortality tables 2018 G by Dr. Klaus Heubeck.

The following table shows the development of the defined benefit pension liabilities, associated plan assets and reimbursement rights:

	Defined benefit liabilities		Plan assets		Provisions for pensions		Reimbursement right		Net obligation	
€ millions	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
Balance as of 01/01	**595.7**	**591.9**	**−372.7**	**−354.1**	**223.0**	**237.8**	**−21.0**	**−22.6**	**202.0**	**215.2**
Current service costs	5.7	6.7			5.7	6.7			5.7	6.7
Subsequently charged service costs	0.0	−0.2			0.0	−0.2			0.0	−0.2
Net interest expense	4.0	5.7	−2.6	−3.5	1.4	2.1	−0.1	−0.2	1.3	1.9
Pension expenses	**9.7**	**12.1**	**−2.6**	**−3.5**	**7.1**	**8.6**	**−0.1**	**−0.2**	**7.0**	**8.4**
Actuarial gains/losses from plan assets			−28.0	−12.0	−28.0	−12.0			−28.0	−12.0
Changes in financial assumptions	−19.2	18.8			−19.2	18.8	0.3	0.3	−18.9	19.2
Experience-related adjustments	−1.4	−3.7			−1.4	−3.7	0.5	−0.4	−1.0	−4.0
Actuarial gains/losses	**−20.6**	**15.2**	**−28.0**	**−12.0**	**−48.6**	**3.2**	**0.8**	**0.0**	**−47.8**	**3.2**
Employer contribution			0.0	−3.3	0.0	−3.3			0.0	−3.3
Employee contribution	2.5	2.8	−0.1	−0.2	2.4	2.7			2.4	2.7
Benefit payments	−21.2	−21.8	0.0	0.5	−21.2	−21.3	1.8	1.8	−19.4	−19.5
Change in consolidated companies	−3.3	−0.2	−1.9		−5.2	−0.2			−5.2	−0.2
Other	0.1	−4.4			0.1	−4.4			0.1	−4.4
Other changes	**−22.0**	**−23.5**	**−2.0**	**−3.0**	**−23.9**	**−26.6**	**1.8**	**1.8**	**−22.2**	**−24.8**
Balance as of 12/31	**562.8**	**595.7**	**−405.3**	**−372.7**	**157.6**	**223.0**	**−18.6**	**−21.0**	**139.0**	**202.0**

Current and subsequently charged service costs are represented in personnel expenses as expenses from defined benefit plans (see note (21)). Net interest expenses are recognized in financial result (see note (25)). Actuarial gains and losses are recognized in other income or loss in the consolidated statement of comprehensive income (see note (27)).

As of December 31, 2021, the weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation was 14 years (PY: 14 years).

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Plan assets broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Bonds	105.3	120.2
Shares	76.0	49.9
Real estate funds	5.5	5.5
Cash and cash equivalents	9.4	6.3
Other	5.2	5.4
Plan assets with market price quotations	**201.2**	**187.4**
Real Estate	202.0	184.7
Other	2.0	0.7
Plan assets without market price quotations	**204.0**	**185.3**
Plan assets	**405.3**	**372.7**

Real estate amounted to € 202.0 million (PY: € 184.0 million) related to the own-used Axel Springer high-rise in Berlin.

For the financial year 2022 we do not expect any significant employer contributions to plan assets.

Axel Springer SE is entitled to reimbursement of pension obligations or pension expenses arising in connection with them in connection with the outsourcing of rotogravure printing operations in 2005. The reimbursement right was recorded as other financial asset (see note 8), whereas in the income statement, the income from the reimbursement was netted with the corresponding pension expenses. Based on the existing contractual regulations, we do not assume a short-term settlement of the reimbursement claim and the corresponding pension obligations anymore, and therefore in the reporting period, the asset as well as the related pension liability in an amount of € 16.8 million (PY: € 19.1 million) were classified as non-current. The remaining amount of € 1.8 million (PY: € 1.9 million) was classified as current.

An increase or decrease in the material actuarial assumptions would have the following effects on the present value of the total pension obligations as of the balance sheet date:

	Increase by 25 basis points		Decrease by 25 basis points	
	2021	2020	2021	2020
Discount rate	–3.3%	–3.5%	3.5%	3.7%
Salary trend	0.1%	0.1%	–0.1%	–0.1%
Pension trend	2.3%	2.4%	–2.2%	–2.3%

An increase of life expectancy by one year on average for persons entitled to pensions as of December 31, 2021, would have led to an increase of pension obligations by 4.5% (PY: 4.6%). The sensitivity calculations are based on the average term of the pension obligations calculated as of the balance sheet date. The calculations were carried out in isolation for the actuarial parameters classified as material. As the sensitivity analysis is based on the average term of the expected pension obligations and as a consequence, the expected payment dates are not taken into account, this leads to approximate information or to describe tendencies.

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(13) Other provisions

Other provisions broke down as follows:

€ millions	Balance as of 01/01/2021	Utilization	Reversals	Additions	Other changes	Balance as of 12/31/2021	*Thereof current*	*Thereof non-current*
Other obligations towards employees	128.8	–85.9	–1.9	128.1	13.1	182.2	*78.9*	*103.3*
Partial early retirement program (Altersteilzeit)	44.3	–14.1	0.0	11.0	0.8	42.0	*13.9*	*28.0*
Structural measures	61.4	–41.8	–3.9	13.2	–0.8	28.2	*20.0*	*8.3*
Other taxes	14.4	–0.8	–0.2	0.1	0.0	13.6	*13.6*	*0.0*
Discounts and rebates	10.8	–10.3	–0.4	11.3	0.0	11.4	*11.4*	*0.0*
Returns	6.5	–5.6	–0.3	7.6	–1.1	7.2	*7.2*	*0.0*
Litigation expenses	6.5	–0.3	–0.9	1.6	–2.2	4.7	*3.6*	*1.1*
Dismantling obligations	6.6	–2.7	–0.7	1.0	0.1	4.3	*1.4*	*2.9*
Other	17.7	–8.7	–3.2	6.5	0.3	12.5	*9.0*	*3.5*
Other provisions	**297.1**	**–170.1**	**–11.5**	**180.4**	**10.3**	**306.2**	***159.0***	***147.2***

Other obligations towards employees primarily included performance-based remuneration. Share-based payments were also included (see note (11)). The increase in the reporting year is mainly due to the Management Incentive Plan set up in the reporting year and the long-term remuneration program for Appcast employees (see note (11) for both programs).

Other provisions among others involved supervisory board remuneration (see note (32)) as well as rebuilding measures still to be carried out in connection with the sale of the office building complex in Hamburg in the financial year 2016 and the sale of the Axel-Springer-Passage in Berlin in the financial year 2017.

Other changes mainly resulted from the initial consolidation of acquired companies as well as the deconsolidation of disposed companies (see note (2c)), currency translation as well as compounding.

(14) Financial liabilities

The financial liabilities included liabilities from promissory notes in the amount of € 612.7 million (PY: € 623.1 million), other liabilities due to banks amounting to € 1,480.4 million (PY: € 849.2 million), as well as lease liabilities amounting to € 532.7 million (PY: € 551.5 million).

The promissory notes (nominal amounts) were characterized by the following utilizations, interest rates, and maturities at the reporting date.

2021 € million	2020 € million	Interest rate in %	Maturity
322.0	322.0	1.14	05/30/2024
146.0	146.0	0.73	05/30/2022
72.0	72.0	0.91	05/30/2023
62.5	62.5	6-month EURIBOR + 0.70	05/30/2024
12.0	12.0	6-month EURIBOR + 0.55	05/30/2022
0.0	11.5	0.51	05/30/2021

The other liabilities due to banks (nominal amounts) related almost exclusively to utilization of credit lines by Axel Springer SE (incl. term loans), characterized by utilizations, interest rates, and maturities set forth in the table below.

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2021 € million	2020 € million	Interest rate in %	Maturity
500.0	0.0	3-month EURIBOR + 1.45	07/03/2026
300.0	300.0	3-month EURIBOR + 0.85 (PY: EURIBOR + 1.65)	07/03/2024
300.0	0.0	1-month EURIBOR + 0.525	07/03/2024
187.5	167.6	0.04*	07/03/2024
169.0	180.0	Eonia + 0.45	07/03/2024
30.0	100.0	Eonia + 0.45	07/03/2024
0.0	100.0	Eonia + 0.575	07/03/2024

* Changeable daily by the bank depending on market developments.

As part of and in extension of our credit line, we concluded a term loan in the amount of € 500 million in September 2021 and utilized the full amount in October. The loan is due for repayment in July 2026. The term loan of € 300.0 million concluded in the previous year was extended by one year to July 2024 in the reporting year.

On the reporting date unused long-term credit facilities amounted to € 813.5 million (PY: € 952.4 million).

The commercial paper program (see note (29)) was used in the reporting year on average in the amount of approximately € 228 million (PY: approximately € 240 million) with an average interest rate of 0.03 % (PY: 0.06 %). As in the previous year, there is no utilization as of the reporting date.

(15) Other liabilities

The other liabilities broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	222.1	144.3
Debit balances in accounts receivable	16.3	21.2
Liabilities from loans	5.3	7.6
Other	27.1	25.1
Other financial liabilities	**270.8**	**198.3**
Thereof current	*58.0*	*58.5*
Thereof non-current	*212.8*	*139.7*
Contract liabilities	298.8	199.5
Liabilities from other taxes	74.7	75.3
Liabilities due to employees	48.3	26.7
Accrued liabilities	26.3	25.4
Liabilities due to social insurance carriers	14.5	12.9
Capital investment subsidies	8.8	10.3
Liabilities for duties and contributions	4.2	4.2
Other	20.7	11.1
Other non-financial liabilities	**496.4**	**365.5**
Thereof current	*474.9*	*356.2*
Thereof non-current	*21.5*	*9.2*
Other liabilities	**767.2**	**563.7**
Thereof current	*532.9*	*414.7*
Thereof non-current	*234.3*	*149.0*

Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests increased mainly due to adjustments of contingent considerations in Appcast and Morning Brew (see note (30)). Contract liabilities

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mainly related to customer prepayments. Liabilities due to employees related to outstanding wage and salary payments, management bonuses, and severance compensation claims. Accrued liabilities mainly contained liabilities resulting from unused vacation.

(16) Maturity analysis of financial liabilities

The contractually agreed (undiscounted) payments related to financial liabilities are presented in the following table.

		Undiscounted cash outflows		
€ millions	**Carrying amount as of 12/31/2021**	**2022**	**2022–2026**	**2027 ff.**
Financial liabilities	2,625.8	254.3	2,211.8	295.2
thereof lease liabilities	*532.7*	*75.0*	*239.0*	*295.2*
Other non-derivative financial liabilities	686.3	670.3	13.9	2.2
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	222.1	24.3	185.6	18.3

		Undiscounted cash outflows		
€ millions	**Carrying amount as of 12/31/2020**	**2021**	**2021–2025**	**2026 ff.**
Financial liabilities	2,023.4	102.0	1,709.6	336.2
thereof lease liabilities	*551.1*	*75.0*	*224.2*	*336.2*
Other non-derivative financial liabilities	597.7	579.6	10.5	7.7
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	144.3	20.4	122.6	5.1

Notes to the Consolidated Income Statement

(17) Revenues

Axel Springer's business is bundled into three business divisions: Classifieds Media, News Media and Marketing Media. In addition, there is the Services/Holding business division.

The **Classifieds Media** business division encompasses all business models that generate their revenues primarily through advertisers paying for advertising of jobs, real estate, cars, etc. The activities of the Classifieds Media business division are divided into two operational areas StepStone (jobs) und AVIV (real estate).

StepStone's job portals encompass the portals of Totaljobs, Jobsite and Saongroup, the regional portal meinestadt.de, the employer branding specialist Universum, as well as the content of Gehalt.de, Studydrive and Appcast. AVIV's real estate portals encompass the portals of SeLoger (incl. Logic-Immo), MeilleursAgents, Immoweb, Immowelt/Immonet as well as the generalist portal Yad2. In March 2021, the car portal La Centrale was sold (see note (2c)).

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The **News Media** business division essentially comprises business models whose basis is the creation of journalistic content, and which are financed by advertising, paying readers, and content utilization with third parties such as social media platforms.

News Media National essentially comprises the BILD and WELT brands with their respective digital, TV and print offerings, including the computer, car and sports magazines of the BILD brand family, and the price comparison portal Idealo. Since August 2021, the TV station BILD LIVE has expanded the range of this area.

News Media International comprises international digital and print media offerings. In the U.S., Axel Springer is represented by the Insider Group, which includes the business, stock market, and financial news services Insider, Insider Intelligence, and Morning Brew. In mid-October 2021, the presence in the U.S. was strengthened with the acquisition of POLITICO, and POLITICO EU was fully acquired (see note (2c)). In Europe, we are represented in particular by the Ringier Axel Springer Polska Group, which includes the news and entertainment portal onet.pl, the classifieds portal Gratka.pl, and the real estate portal Morizon.pl. The business division also includes the news aggregator upday, the finance portal finanzen.net, and the drive-to-store marketing partner Bonial. Until the disposal of Ringier Axel Springer Media in December 2021, the business division also comprised our business activities in Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, and the Baltic countries (see note (2c)).

The **Marketing Media** business division includes the affiliate marketing platform Awin as the main operating unit. Awin mainly generates revenues through the performance-based display of advertising on the Internet.

The **Services/Holding** business division includes group services and holding functions.

Revenues in the reporting year and the previous period were almost exclusively generated from contracts with customers and broke down as follows:

€ millions	Classifieds Media	News Media	Marketing Media	Services/ Holding	2021	Classifieds Media*	News Media*	Marketing Media	Services/ Holding	2020
Advertising revenues	1,253.5	1,053.5	145.5	1.1	2,453.6	1,010.8	905.3	127.3	0.0	2,043.4
Circulation revenues	0.0	525.8	0.0	0.0	525.8	0.0	521.4	0.0	0.0	521.4
Other revenues	60.4	301.1	31.7	6.6	399.8	52.4	276.2	19.0	5.2	352.8
Revenues	**1,313.9**	**1,880.4**	**177.2**	**7.7**	**3,379.2**	**1,063.1**	**1,702.9**	**146.3**	**5.2**	**2,917.6**

* For adjustment of prior-year figures, see note (3p).

Revenues in the Classifieds Media business division resulted almost exclusively from advertising revenues from online classifieds ads and broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Jobs	812.0	556.8
Real Estate	501.9	506.4
Revenues	**1,313.9**	**1,063.1**

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Revenues in the News Media business division were predominantly generated by national and international advertising and circulation revenues and broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Advertising revenues national	570.5	562.0
Circulation revenues national	406.8	422.8
Other revenues national	203.2	200.1
Revenues national	**1,180.5**	**1,184.9**
Advertising revenues international	483.0	343.3
Circulation revenues international	118.9	98.6
Other revenues international	98.0	76.1
Revenues international	**699.9**	**517.9**
Revenues	**1,880.4**	**1,702.9**

As in the previous year, most of the revenues in the Marketing Media business division were generated by advertising customers in performance-based marketing.

€ millions	2021	2020
Performance-based marketing	162.6	139.8
Reach-based marketing	14.6	6.5
Revenues	**177.2**	**146.3**

Furthermore, revenues in the Services/Holding business division for group services and holding functions of € 7.7 million (PY: € 5.2 million) were generated.

Contract liabilities recognized as of December 31, 2020, of € 199.5 million (PY: € 276.9 million) led to revenue of € 195.3 million (PY: € 266.3 million) in the reporting year.

Other revenues included revenues from operating leasing of € 2.9 million (PY: € 3.5 million). Thereof € 2.5 million (PY: € 2.9 million) were attributable to income from sub-leasing in the reporting year.

(18) Other operating income

The other operating income broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Income from disposal of subsidiaries and business units	324.3	0.0
Income from reversal of allowances on receivables	29.3	8.9
Income from reversal of provisions	10.7	12.2
Subsequent valuation of contingent considerations	9.5	19.5
Foreign exchange gains	7.5	5.6
Income from disposal of intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment	6.2	61.8
Miscellaneous operating income	47.5	26.0
Other operating income	**435.1**	**134.1**

Income from disposal of subsidiaries and business units resulted mainly from the sale of La Centrale Group, Ringier Axel Springer Media Group (except for our Polish investments), and Bistro.sk (see note (2c)). For income from the subsequent valuation of contingent considerations see note (30). In the prior year, income from disposal of intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment in the amount of € 57.4 million resulted from

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the disposal of the new Axel Springer building (see note (5)). Miscellaneous operating income contained a large number of non-material items.

(19) Change in inventories and internal costs capitalized

Change in inventories and internal costs capitalized increased to € 107.7 million (PY: € 97.1 million) in the reporting year and as in the previous year mainly related to IT development projects to develop and expand our digital business models.

(20) Purchased goods and services

The purchased goods and services broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Raw materials and supplies and purchased merchandise	73.5	86.1
Purchased services	424.2	338.5
Purchased goods and services	**497.7**	**424.7**

Raw materials and supplies and purchased merchandise comprised paper costs amounted to € 34.2 million (PY: € 37.0 million).

The cost of purchased services was mainly related, as in the previous year, of purchased third-party printing services (including paper costs), professional fees and other purchased services.

(21) Personnel expenses

The personnel expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Wages and salaries	1,270.3	1,061.2
Other social expenses	134.3	121.4
Share-based payments	65.5	28.5
Expenses from defined contribution plans	54.3	49.7
Expenses of defined benefit plans	5.7	6.5
Other personnel expenses	2.3	0.8
Personnel expenses	**1,532.3**	**1,268.0**

Wages and salaries included additions to provisions for structural measures. In addition to the increase in personnel figures, the increase in the reporting year was mainly due to variable compensation components. The increase in these variable compensation components resulted in particular from the partial compensation amounts recognized in the reporting year from the adjustments of contingent considerations for purchase of non-controlling interests in Appcast and Morning Brew (see note (30)) and from the compensation program for the employees of Appcast, which, after program adjustments in the reporting year, now had to be reported as other non-current obligations towards employees instead of share-based compensation (see note (11)).

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The average number of employees in the Group is shown below:

	2021	2020
Salaried employees	13,611	13,110
Editors	2,936	2,760
Wage-earning employees	289	344
Total employees	**16,835**	**16,213**

The increase in personnel figures compared with the previous year resulted in particular from the increase of the workforce in the fast-growing digital business divisions and consolidation-related changes. This was offset in particular by the decrease in the personnel figures in the Services/Holding business division as a result of structural measures.

(22) Depreciation, amortization, and impairments

Depreciation, amortization, and impairments broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Impairment losses in goodwill	31.7	0.0
Amortization of other intangible assets	230.2	180.2
Impairment losses in other intangible assets	2.2	22.0
Depreciation of property, plant, and equipment	116.4	126.2
Impairment losses in property, plant, and equipment	1.1	0.0
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments	**381.6**	**328.5**

Depreciation of property, plant and equipment included depreciation of right-of-use lease assets of € 62.8 million (PY: € 72.8 million), see note (5).

The increase in amortization of other intangible assets related almost exclusively to title rights and trademarks and resulted from the amortization recognized since the reporting year based on identified useful lives for these assets (see note (4)). The impairment losses on other intangible assets of the previous year mainly related to an asset with an indefinite useful life (see note (4)). For impairment losses in goodwill see note (4).

Impairment losses in investments are included in the income from investments (see note (24)).

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(23) Other operating expenses

The other operating expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Advertising expenses	353.7	262.5
Expenses for non-company personnel	227.8	201.1
Subsequent valuation of contingent considerations	70.7	2.5
Mailing and postage expenses	68.1	70.2
Consulting, audit and legal fees	61.2	55.0
Commissions and gratuities	46.6	39.4
Maintenance and repairs	40.8	36.3
Allowances for doubtful receivables	25.7	38.1
Training of employees	18.8	14.8
Foreign exchange losses	16.2	5.3
Other taxes	15.2	15.9
Travel expenses	10.8	10.1
Services provided by related parties	9.0	8.2
Lease expenses	7.9	8.6
Miscellaneous operating expenses	65.4	65.0
Other operating expenses	**1,037.9**	**833.1**

For expenses from the subsequent valuation of contingent considerations see note (30). The miscellaneous operating expenses included additional rental costs, expenses from bank charges and other operating expenses.

Lease expenses included expenses for short-term leases (€ 6.1 million; PY: € 7.0 million), low-value assets (€ 1.0 million; PY: € 0.9 million) as well as expenses for variable lease payments (€ 0.8 million; PY: € 0.7 million).

The following professional fees for the services rendered by the auditor Ernst & Young GmbH were recognized:

€ millions	2021	2020
Audits of the annual financial statements	2.4	1.6
Tax advisory services	0.2	0.3
Other services	0.0	0.3
Total professional fees	**2.6**	**2.2**

The professional fees for the audit of financial statements included mainly statutory and voluntary audits of the separate financial statements of Axel Springer SE and other German subsidiaries, the consolidated financial statements, the audit of financial statements according to IDW PS 480, which prescribes the audit of financial statements compiled for a special purpose, as well as the audit of internal control systems in service companies according to IDW PS 951. The tax advisory fees were a result of support services regarding specific tax questions. Other services in the previous year were related to support services in connection with business acquisitions.

(24) Income from investments

The income from companies accounted for using the equity method amounted to € 15.4 million (PY: € –36.8 million). Besides our share in the investee's net income, it consisted mainly of impairment losses of € 63.9 million

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(PY: € 63.7 million) as well as income of € 26.1 million from the transitional consolidation of POLITICO EU Group (see note (2c)). As in the previous year, our share in the investee's net income were affected in particular by income from our early-stage funds (see note (6a)). Impairment losses were accounted for by our investment in Purplebricks in the amount of € 59.4 million (PY: € 16.5 million) and Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG in the amount of € 4.5 million (PY: € 41.4 million).

The other investment income of € 60.6 million (PY: € 36.9 million) included mainly gains from the measurement of other investments at fair value in the amount of € 48.9 million (PY: € 33.4 million). These are mainly related to our investments in early-stage funds in the reporting year (in the previous year to our investment in Airbnb Inc.).

(25) Financial result

The financial income broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Interest income from loans and securities	3.1	2.1
Interest income from taxes	0.3	4.4
Interest income from bank accounts	0.1	0.2
Other interest income	0.1	0.3
Interest income	**3.6**	**6.9**
Other financial income	13.5	28.1
Financial income	**17.1**	**35.0**

The financial expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Interest expenses on liabilities due to banks and on promissory notes	17.6	13.7
Interest expenses from leases	8.5	8.9
Net interest expense due from pension accounting	1.3	1.9
Interest expense from compounding	1.7	0.3
Miscellaneous interest expenses	3.6	5.0
Interest expenses	**32.8**	**29.8**
Other financial expenses	16.6	14.2
Financial expenses	**49.4**	**43.9**

With respect to financial assets and liabilities not carried at fair value through profit or loss, interest income and expenses amounting to € 3.3 million (PY: € 2.3 million) and € –28.8 million (PY: € –26.2 million) were recognized respectively.

Other financial income as well as other financial expenses included gains and losses from currency translation of € 8.2 million (PY: € 12.6 million) and € –11.9 million (PY: € – 10.8 million). In addition, other financial income and other financial expenses included gains and losses from the revaluation of convertible loan receivables amounting to € 0.0 million (PY: € 8.9 million) and € –3.4 million (PY: € –2.1 million), respectively.

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(26) Income taxes

The income tax expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Current taxes	129.8	97.7
Deferred taxes	–52.8	–20.1
Income taxes	**77.0**	**77.6**

The increase in current taxes as well as the increase in income from deferred taxes mainly related to the Management Incentive Plan agreed as of this financial year and other employee compensation programs (see note (11)). In addition, deferred tax income resulted from the first-time amortization of title rights and trademarks in this financial year (see note (4)).

The reconciliation of the tax expenses expected – applying the tax rate of Axel Springer SE – to income taxes that have been recognized in the income statement is as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Income before income taxes	516.3	285.8
Tax rate of Axel Springer SE	31.0%	31.0%
Expected tax expenses	**160.0**	**88.6**
Differing tax rates	–33.2	–1.5
Changes in tax rates	–3.0	–0.3
Permanent differences	53.7	–10.9
Adjustments to carrying amounts of deferred taxes	–12.5	4.7
Current income taxes for prior years	2.2	–6.3
Deferred income taxes for prior years	–6.1	–4.8
Non-deductible operating expenses	25.9	12.9
Tax-exempt income	–112.1	–4.7
Trade tax additions/deductions	0.3	1.1
Other effects	1.8	–1.2
Income taxes	**77.0**	**77.6**

Companies with the legal form of a corporation domiciled in Germany are subject to corporate income tax at the rate of 15.0% and solidarity surcharge of 5.5% of the corporate income tax owed. In addition, the profits of these companies are subject to trade tax, for which the amount is municipality specific. Companies with the legal form of a partnership are subject to trade tax exclusively. The net income is assigned to the shareholder for purposes of corporate income tax. The Group tax rate remains unchanged to the previous year at 31.0%.

The effects of different tax rates for partnerships and for foreign income taxes from the tax rate applicable to Axel Springer SE are explained in the reconciliation in the item differing tax rates. The permanent differences resulted mainly from revaluation effects of investments (see note (24)), liabilities for contingent considerations (see note (30)), as well as other consolidation effects that are not taken into account for tax purposes. In addition, impairment losses on goodwill (see note (4)) were included. The adjustments recorded to the carrying amounts of deferred taxes included € 2.3 million (PY: € 6.7 million) for the non-recognition of deferred taxes on tax loss carryforwards. The effects of the first-time recognition of deferred tax assets had an offsetting effect. The tax-exempt income resulted in particular from the disposal of La Centrale Group, Ringier Axel Springer Media Group as well as Bistro.sk (see note (2c)).

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Deferred tax assets and liabilities were recognized to account for temporary differences and tax loss carry-forwards, as follows:

	12/31/2021		12/31/2020	
€ millions	**Deferred tax assets**	**Deferred tax liabilities**	**Deferred tax assets**	**Deferred tax liabilities**
Intangible assets	17.7	341.3	14.2	344.3
Property, plant, and equipment	6.5	121.5	5.1	129.7
Non-current financial assets	0.2	1.7	1.2	1.6
Inventories	0.6	0.0	0.5	0.0
Receivables and other assets	66.7	3.6	61.7	5.8
Pension provisions	12.8	56.5	17.4	43.9
Other provisions	32.4	6.2	23.7	4.8
Liabilities	175.5	7.5	171.3	3.4
Temporary differences	**312.5**	**538.4**	**295.1**	**533.5**
Tax loss carry-forwards	**32.1**	**0.0**	**16.5**	**0.0**
Total	**344.7**	**538.4**	**311.7**	**533.5**
Offsetting	−280.5	−280.5	−262.6	−262.6
Amounts as per balance sheet	**64.1**	**257.8**	**49.1**	**271.0**

Deferred tax liabilities related to property, plant and equipment as well as the deferred tax assets related to liabilities resulted mainly from lease accounting (see note (3d)). The increase in deferred tax assets on other provisions are mainly related to the Management Incentive Plan (see note (11)).

The development of the net balance of deferred tax items is shown below:

€ millions	**2021**	**2020**
Deferred tax assets as of January 1	49.1	64.3
Deferred tax liabilities as of January 1	−271.0	−319.4
Net tax position as of January 1	**−221.9**	**−255.0**
Deferred tax of current year	52.8	20.1
Changes in deferred taxes recognized in other comprehensive income	−13.9	1.2
Changes due to currency translations	−9.5	9.0
Changes in consolidation group	−1.2	−10.1
Reclassification into assets and liabilities held for sale	0.0	13.0
Net tax position as of December 31	**−193.7**	**−221.9**
Deferred tax assets as of December 31	64.1	49.1
Deferred tax liabilities as of December 31	−257.8	−271.0

Of the deferred tax assets and deferred tax liabilities an amount of € 20.9 million (PY: € 28.0 million) and € 22.5 million (PY: € 4.5 million) can be realized in the short term.

The amount of deferred tax assets to be disclosed in accordance with IAS 12.82 was € 4.0 million (PY: € 2.7 million). It is expected that this amount can be realized by utilization against the available operating income.

Deferred taxes in the total amount of € 46.8 million (PY: € 60.7 million) were recognized directly in equity, as they were related to matters that were likewise recognized directly in equity.

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In the fiscal year, no deferred tax assets were recognized with respect to corporate income tax loss carry-forwards amounting to € 175.6 million (PY: € 247.8 million), and with respect to trade tax loss carry-forwards amounting to € 87.0 million (PY: € 85.6 million), because it did not appear probable that sufficient taxable income could be generated for these amounts in the near future.

Of the unrecognized tax loss carry-forwards and interest carry-forwards, as in the previous year, no amounts can be carried forward for a limited period of up to ten years. The utilization of tax loss carry-forwards or interest carry-forwards that had not previously been recognized as deferred tax assets caused a reduction in income tax expenses of € 4.3 million (PY: € 3.2 million). In the previous year, there were corrections of recognized tax loss carry-forwards due to tax audits or differing tax assessments in the amount of € 1.4 million (PY: € –4.8 million).

Under certain criteria, deferred taxes must be recognized on the difference between the Group's interest in the equity of subsidiaries as presented in the consolidated statement of financial position and investment balance recognized in the financial statements for tax purposes, e.g. by retaining profits. Deferred tax liabilities were not recognized on differences of € 51.2 million (PY: € 24.9 million) because a realization is not planned at the present time. In the case of sale or profit distribution, 5.0 % of the gain on disposal or the dividend, respectively, would be subject to taxation in Germany; in addition, foreign withholding taxes might be incurred.

Notes to the Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

(27) Other income/loss

The other income/loss broke down as follows:

	2021			2020		
€ millions	**Before tax**	**Tax effect**	**Net**	**Before tax**	**Tax effect**	**Net**
Actuarial gains/losses from defined benefit pension obligations	47.8	–13.5	34.4	–3.2	1.3	–1.9
Currency translation differences	142.2	0.0	142.2	–121.4	0.0	–121.4
Changes in fair value of derivatives in cash flow hedges	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Other income/loss from investments accounted for using the equity method	5.7	0.0	5.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other income/loss	**195.8**	**–13.5**	**182.3**	**–124.5**	**1.3**	**–123.2**

Other income/loss from companies accounted for using the equity method is as in the previous year exclusively attributable to items that may not be reclassified into the income statement in future periods.

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Notes to the Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

(28) Other disclosures

The cash and cash equivalents were composed of short-term-available cash in banks, securities and cash on hand. In the previous year, also checks were included.

Additions in both intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment of € 1.6 million (PY: € 2.8 million) had not been paid yet. For the purchases in the previous year in intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment in connection with the new Axel Springer building see note (5).

The total cash outflow for leases amounted to € 85.7 million (PY: € 93.0 million).

The Cash flow from investing activities included income taxes paid amounted to € 7.6 million (PY: € 27.8 million). These resulted from the purchase of the new Axel Springer building (see note (5)). Together with the income taxes paid disclosed in the cash flow from operating activities below the cash flow statement, income taxes paid amounted to a total of € 163.0 million (PY: € 119.6 million).

The acquisition costs, cash payments, as well as acquired assets and liabilities for business acquisitions are presented as follows (see note (2c) for the major acquisitions):

€ millions	2021	2020
Intangible assets	345.7	41.4
Property, plant, and equipment	26.8	0.8
Inventories	0.0	0.2
Trade receivables	34.5	6.4
Other assets	8.7	5.2
Deferred tax assets	2.0	0.0
Cash and cash equivalents	25.0	6.6
Trade payables	−6.5	−2.0
Financial liabilities	−22.0	−0.7
Provisions and other liabilities	−63.6	−5.1
Deferred tax liabilities	−9.3	−11.4
Net assets	**341.3**	**41.4**
Acquisition cost	934.0	142.7
Thereof paid	*895.6*	*73.1*

The cashflow from the purchases of shares in consolidated subsidiaries and business units less cash and cash equivalents acquired which are reported in the cash flow statement mainly related to the acquisition of POLITICO (see note (2c)) and, in addition to the cash payments and acquired funds listed above, also include payments for acquisitions of the previous years (in particular payments from contingent consideration totaling € 37.3 million (PY: € 10.6 million); see note (30)).

Investments in non-current financial assets included a short-term loan to Ringier in the amount of € 5.0 million (PY: € 47.5 million); see note (8).

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Sales proceeds, paid up amounts, and disposed assets and liabilities arising from investment transactions with loss of control are as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
Goodwill	183.4	0.0
Other intangible assets	118.0	0.0
Property, plant, and equipment and non-current financial assets	15.3	6.1
Trade receivables	29.2	0.0
Other assets	65.4	0.0
Cash and cash equivalents	108.4	0.0
Financial liabilities	–8.6	0.0
Trade payables	–14.4	0.0
Provisions and other liabilities	–39.9	0.0
Deferred tax liabilities	–20.9	0.0
Disposal net assets	**435.8**	**6.1**
Net realizable value	666.4	8.0
Thereof paid-up	*563.0*	*8.0*

In the reporting year, the proceeds from disposals comprised in particular the sale of La Centrale Group of € 399.1 million, of which Axel Springer subsequently acquired a share of € 50.0 million in the newly founded acquiring company, and Ringier Axel Springer Media Group of € 213.9 million (see note (2c)). The disclosure of cash inflows from divestitures in the cash flow statement is made under proceeds from disposals of consolidated subsidiaries and business units less cash and cash equivalents given up. In addition, these also included proceeds from disposals from previous years.

In the reporting year, proceeds from disposals of non-current financial assets mainly related to proceeds from the sale of our shares in Airbnb Inc. amounting to € 76.1 million.

In the previous year, the line purchase of non-controlling interests included primarily the payment to acquire the remaining shares of the Immowelt Group in the amount of € 21.6 million.

The change in the statement of financial positions of current and non-current financial liabilities resulted almost exclusively from cash proceeds and cash repayments disclosed in the cash flow from financing activities. The change of the lease liabilities included repayments and interest payments (see note (25)) as well as non-cash-effective changes of the lease liabilities due to additions and disposals.

The cash outflows from other financing activities in the reporting year and the previous year mainly related to the repayment of other non-current loans. Together with consolidation-related changes in the reporting year (see note (2c)) and the repurchase of other non-current loans below their nominal value in the previous year, this resulted in a change in the statement of financial positions of other non-current financial liabilities.

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Other disclosures

(29) Capital management

Beyond the provisions of German law applicable to stock corporations, Axel Springer SE is not subject to any further obligations relating to capital preservation, whether from its own Articles of Incorporation or from contractual obligations. The financial key figures we used for management purposes are primarily earnings-driven. The goals, methods, and processes of our capital management are subordinate to the earnings-driven financial key figures.

We can utilize the funds derived from the promissory notes (€ 614.5 million) and a term loan (€ 300.0 million) in place since the previous year as well as also avail ourselves of our long-term credit lines (€ 1,500.0 million), both for general business purposes as well as to finance acquisitions. In addition, a further term loan (€ 500.0 million) has been concluded since the reporting year exclusively for the purpose of financing acquisitions. For interest-optimizing satisfaction of short-term capital requirements, we are able to issue certain forms of short-term bearer bonds (commercial paper) with a maximum volume of € 750.0 million and a term of up to one year. For further information on financial liabilities see note (14).

As of the balance sheet date, we can continue to utilize long-term credit lines of € 1,500.0 million, the utilization of which is due for repayment in July 2024. As part of and in extension of our credit line, we concluded a term loan in the amount of € 500.0 million in September 2021 and utilized the full amount in October, which is due for repayment in July 2026. The term of the term loan of € 300.0 million granted in the previous year was extended by one year to July 2024 in the reporting year. The utilization of the credit lines and the term loan is tied to compliance with covenants. We have fully complied with all loan covenants to date.

In addition, there existed promissory notes amounting to € 614.5 million as of December 31, 2021, with maturities until May 2022 (€ 158.0 million), May 2023 (€ 72.0 million), and May 2024 (€ 384.5 million).

As of the reporting date, the commercial paper program had not been utilized. It was only used within the reporting year (see note (14)).

For the purpose of maintaining and adjusting the capital structure, the company can adjust the dividend payments to its shareholders or purchase treasury shares representing up to 10.0 % of the subscribed capital as of the date of the resolution at the Annual General Meeting on the authorization to acquire treasury shares on April 18, 2018. Treasury shares can be used for acquisition financing or they can be retired. At the reporting date and the previous year's reporting date, we held no treasury shares.

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(30) Financial assets and liabilities

The carrying amounts of the items in the statement of financial positions as of December 31, 2021, comprising financial assets and liabilities can be attributed to the measurement categories according to IFRS 9 as follows (see note (3f)):

		Valuation categories according to IFRS 9		
€ millions	Carrying amount as of 12/31/2021	At fair value through profit or loss	At amortized cost	Other*
ASSETS				
Investments	234.2	234.2		
Loans	86.0	55.3	30.7	
Other non-current financial assets	320.2	289.5	30.7	
Trade receivables	904.9		904.9	
Receivables due from related parties	9.1		9.1	
Other assets	165.9		51.3	114.6
Cash and cash equivalents	201.6		201.6	
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Financial liabilities	2,625.8		2,093.1	532.7
Trade payables	628.1		628.1	
Liabilities due to related parties	30.8		9.6	21.3
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	222.1	222.1		
Remaining other liabilities	545.1		48.7	496.4
Other liabilities	767.2	222.1	48.7	496.4

* No valuation categories according to IFRS 9 and non-financial assets and liabilities.

A designation of financial assets and financial liabilities as measured at fair value through profit or loss was not made.

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The carrying amounts of the items in the statement of financial positions as of December 31, 2020, comprising financial assets and liabilities can be attributed to the measurement categories according to IFRS 9 as follows:

		Valuation categories according to IFRS 9		
€ millions	Carrying amount as of 12/31/2020	At fair value through profit or loss	At amortized cost	Other*
ASSETS				
Investments	261.8	261.8		
Loans	66.9	39.0	27.9	
Other non-current financial assets	328.7	300.8	27.9	
Trade receivables	728.2		728.2	
Receivables due from related parties	13.1		13.1	
Other assets	164.6		94.6	70.0
Cash and cash equivalents	216.3		216.3	
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Financial liabilities	2,023.4		1,472.3	551.1
Trade payables	536.4		536.4	
Liabilities due to related parties	72.1		7.4	64.7
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	144.3	144.3		
Remaining other liabilities	419.5		54.0	365.5
Other liabilities	563.7	144.3	54.0	365.5

* No valuation categories according to IFRS 9 and non-financial assets and liabilities.

The following table presents the applied valuation hierarchy for financial assets and liabilities, which are not measured at amortized cost (see note (3f)):

	12/31/2021			12/31/2020		
€ millions	Fair value based on market price (level 1)	Fair value based on observable market data (level 2)	Fair value not based on observable market data (level 3)	Fair value based on market price (level 1)	Fair value based on observable market data (level 2)	Fair value not based on observable market data (level 3)
Investments	20.3		213.9	79.9		181.9
Loans			55.3			39.0
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests			222.1			144.3

The development of investments mainly related to additions amounting to € 21.1 million, disposals amounting to € 93.3 million, fair value changes from the valuation affecting profit or loss recognized in income from investments amounting to € 48.9 million as well as reclassifications to investments accounted for using the equity method of € 5.1 million.

The development of loans mainly related to additions amounting of € 28.4 million, fair value changes from the valuation affecting profit or loss recognized in financial result amounting to € –3.4 million, and reclassifications to investments accounted for using the equity method of € 7.4 million.

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The fair values of liabilities for contingent consideration from business combinations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests developed as follows:

€ millions	2021	2020
01.01.	**144.3**	**80.3**
Acquisitions or granting of option rights	1.1	92.5
Payment	–37.3	–10.6
Subsequent valuation affecting net income	61.2	–17.0
thereof other income	*–9.5*	*–19.5*
thereof other expenses	*70.7*	*2.5*
Compound	1.6	0.0
Other	51.2	–0.9
31.12.	**222.1**	**144.3**

Contingent consideration and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests as of December 31, 2021, mainly related to contingent considerations for purchase of non-controlling interests in Morning Brew and Appcast (PY: Morning Brew).

The expenses of the reporting year mainly related to Morning Brew and were attributable to contractual adjustments to contingent considerations due to the positive business development and adjustment made to the medium-term planning of the company accordingly. The previous year income from subsequent valuation was mainly related to Gehalt.de and upday. The other changes related to the identified compensation components at the time of the adjustment of contingent considerations for Morning Brew and Appcast, which were partially recognized in personnel expenses at the time of the adjustment (see note (21)). The remaining portion was accrued as an asset at the time of the adjustment and will be released to personnel expenses over the remaining option term (see note (8)).

The fair value measurement of contingent consideration essentially depends on the estimated results of the acquired companies in the years before the possible exercise periods of the option rights or the payment dates of the earn-outs. The earnings used as a basis for measurement are generally EBITDA figures adjusted for effects from lease accounting and material non-recurring effects. In case of an increase of the relevant estimated earnings measures by 10 %, the value of the contingent consideration would increase by approximately 7 %. A decrease of the relevant earnings measures by 10 % would result in a reduction of approximately 7 %.

With the exception of the financial liabilities presented below, the carrying amounts of the financial assets and liabilities were identical to their fair values:

	12/31/2021		12/31/2020	
€ millions	**Carrying amount**	**Fair value**	**Carrying amount**	**Fair value**
Financial liabilities	538.2	547.9	548.6	563.4

As in the previous year, the fair value disclosed related entirely to promissory notes and is determined on the basis of the difference between the contractually agreed effective interest rate and the market interest rate taking into account our credit risk (level 2 of the measurement hierarchy, see note (3f)).

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The net gains and losses of financial instruments (excluding interest, income from investments and results from the currency translation) recognized in profit or loss are presented in the following table:

€ millions	2021	2020
Financial assets and liabilities at fair value through profit or loss	–1.0	50.6
Financial assets at amortized cost	7.9	–23.3

As in the previous year, the net gains and losses in the category of "financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through profit or loss" resulted mainly from the revaluation of other investments and convertible loans as well as effects from subsequent valuation of contingent consideration. The reporting year also included income from disposals of other investments.

The net losses in the category of "financial assets at amortized cost" are mainly valuation effects for trade receivables and other assets as in the previous year. In addition, the reporting year included effects from the subsequent revaluation of a modified financial liability. In the previous year, income from the repurchase of other non-current loans below their nominal value was also included.

(31) Financial risk management

With respect to its financial assets and liabilities, the Axel Springer Group is exposed to financial market risks, liquidity risks, and credit risks. The task of financial risk management is to limit these risks by means of targeted measures.

(a) Financial market risks

Financial market risks for financial assets and liabilities mainly consist of interest rate risks and exchange rate risks. In principle, the effects of these risks on the value can be assessed promptly and, where applicable, the loss risks can be reduced.

Selected derivative hedging instruments are used to hedge risks. The use of financial derivatives is governed by appropriate guidelines of the Group. These guidelines define the relevant responsibilities, permissible actions, reporting requirements and business partner limit, and prescribe the strict separation of trading and back-office functions.

To hedge the interest rate risk, we employ in particular fixed interest agreements. The degree of hedging specified in the Axel Springer finance regulations ranges between 25.0 % and 39.0 % (PY: 27.0 % and 46.0 %) of the underlying transaction volume. On average for the year, a hedging ratio of 34.2 % (PY: 37.1 %) was achieved in relation to gross indebtedness (promissory notes and liabilities to banks) entirely (PY: almost entirely) by using fixed interest agreements.

The effects of market interest rate changes on variable-interest financial instruments not hedged with financial derivatives are calculated using a sensitivity analysis. Assuming an increase of the interest level by 50 basis points, the financial result in the reporting period would have decreased by € 0.4 million (PY: € 0.4 million). Assuming a decrease of the interest level by 50 basis points, the financial result would have increased by € 0.4 million (PY: € 0.4 million). The financial result reacts generally less sensitively to interest rate reductions due to agreed minimum interest rates with regard to variable interest rate financial instruments. As in the previous year, this was not the case due to the higher negative market interest rates.

Currency risks from operations are mainly avoided through the occurrence of operating costs in the countries in which we sell our products and services. Remaining currency risks from operations are insignificant to the Group since the majority of adjusted EBITDA is earned in the euro currency zone (for the definition of adjusted EBITDA, please see section "Financial performance, liquidity and financial position" in the combined management report). In the reporting period, the share of adjusted EBITDA not earned in Euros was 33 % (PY: 25 %).

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Currency risks from foreign currency claims and liabilities (without liabilities from contingent consideration) as well as claims and liabilities in euros in non-euro countries with net exposures starting at € 5 million per foreign currency are in principle hedged by means of maturity-congruent forward exchange transactions.

Local currency cash flows generated in non-euro zone countries are either reinvested to expand local business operations or invested with Axel Springer SE and hedged by means of forward exchange deals or distributed in the form of dividends. Therefore, the foreign exchange risk from fluctuating exchange rates for foreign currency cash and cash equivalents is limited.

Effects from the currency translation of statements prepared by subsidiaries in foreign currencies are recorded directly in accumulated other comprehensive income. Therefore, Axel Springer does not hedge such currency effects.

(b) Liquidity risk

We continually monitor the availability of financial resources to fund the company's operating activities and investments by means of a group-wide liquidity planning system and monthly cash flow analyses. Liquidity and financial flexibility of the Axel Springer Group is ensured by fixed credit lines in the amount of € 1,500.0 million (until 2024), by two term loans in the amount of in total € 800.0 million (until 2024 and 2026) as well as by promissory notes (€ 614.5 million). Note (16) contains a maturity analysis of our financial liabilities. The payment obligations for financial obligations that have been contractually agreed but not yet recorded are presented in note (34).

(c) Credit risk

Financial assets may be impaired if business partners do not adhere to payment obligations. Significant risk items are contained in non-current financial assets (loan receivables) as well as in trade receivables, receivables due from related parties, and other assets. The maximum exposure to risk from financial assets, which are fundamentally subject to credit risk, correspond to their carrying amounts. Collateral for related receivables and repayment claims usually does not exist.

The majority of our business models are based on a widely distributed and heterogeneous customer base. We therefore estimate the risk of significant defaults to be low. To the extent that credit risks are discernible, we reduce them using active management of receivables, credit limits, and credit checks of our business partners. Credit risks are taken into account in the statement of financial positions through appropriate allowances (see note (3f)). For the provision matrix for trade receivables see note (7).

The impairment losses (net) for trade receivables and other financial assets amounted to € –3.9 million (PY: € 28.4 million).

Investments in securities are mainly made only in instruments with first-class ratings according to our finance regulations. Investment in time deposits occurs exclusively at financial institutions that belong to the deposit protection fund and/or are classified by leading rating agencies as being at least of investment grade status BBB- (S&P) or Baa3 (Moody's).

(32) Relationships with related parties

The Axel Springer Group was jointly managed by Dr. Mathias Döpfner, KKR Management LLP, Wilmington, Delaware, USA ("KKR") and Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board, Toronto, Canada ("CPPIB") in the reporting year. KKR is the ultimate parent company of the financial investor Kohlberg Kravis Roberts. CPPIB is the parent company of the Canadian government-owned financial investor CPP Investments. In the previous year, the Axel Springer Group was jointly managed by Dr. h. c. Friede Springer and KKR until November 29, 2020, and then jointly managed by Dr. h. c. Friede Springer, KKR and CPPIB from November 30, 2020, until December 6, 2020, and since December 7, 2020, jointly managed by Dr. Mathias Döpfner, KKR and CPPIB.

Related parties for the Axel Springer Group for the respective periods of joint control were Dr. h. c. Friede Springer and Dr. Mathias Döpfner as well as their immediate family members, the companies controlled, jointly controlled and or that are subject to significant influence by this family, as well as companies in whose

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management they hold a key position. Furthermore, for the described periods of joint control, the subsidiaries, joint ventures, and associates of the Axel Springer Group and, additionally for the respective periods of joint control, the other companies controlled, jointly controlled, and significantly influenced by KKR and CPPIB were related parties. Furthermore, the subsidiaries, joint ventures, and associated companies of the Axel Springer Group and additionally for the respective periods of control, the companies controlled, jointly controlled, and significantly influenced by KKR as well as CPPIB have been defined as related parties.

In addition, related parties have been the acting members of the Executive Board and Supervisory Board of Axel Springer SE (including their family members) and their controlled or jointly managed investments as well as the Axel Springer Pensionstreuhand e. V., which manages the plan assets of the Axel Springer Group, in the reporting year.

Besides the business relationships with consolidated subsidiaries, the following business relationships with related parties existed:

€ millions	Total	Associates and joint ventures	Other related parties	Total	Associates and joint ventures	Other related parties
Balance sheet	**12/31/2021**			**12/31/2020**		
Loans	59.7	59.7	0.0	39.7	39.6	0.1
Receivables	9.1	4.1	4.9	14.8	10.8	4.0
Thereof trade	*4.9*	*1.0*	*3.9*	*3.2*	*0.3*	*2.9*
Allowances included	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Provisions	25.7	0.6	25.1	31.1	1.2	29.9
Liabilities	30.5	0.2	30.2	72.0	0.2	71.8
Thereof trade	*3.1*	*0.2*	*2.8*	*0.9*	*0.2*	*0.7*
Income statement	**2021**			**2020**		
Goods and services supplied	16.8	5.3	11.5	10.1	2.6	7.4
Goods and services received	53.0	1.5	51.5	47.5	1.7	45.8
Financial result	1.9	2.3	−0.5	1.2	1.2	0.1

The amount of allowances for receivables from related parties amounted to € 0.0 million (PY: € 0.1 million). In the reporting year, reversals amounting to € 0.1 million (PY: reversals of € 0.4 million) were recognized.

The loans relating to associates and joint ventures mainly refer to a receivable from a convertible loan for a joint venture, through which we hold shares in Homeday. Loan impairment losses amounting to € 1.8 million (PY: € 2.9 million) were recorded for associates and joint ventures, as of December 31, 2021.

The receivables attributable to associates and joint ventures mainly related to the joint venture through which we hold the share in Homeday in the reporting year (in the previous year mainly Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG). In addition, receivables from finance leases amounting to € 1.7 million were included in the previous year.

Provisions mainly related to pension provisions to members of the Executive Board. Liabilities due to other related parties mainly include obligations in connection with the share-based compensation program granted to members of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE in the amount of € 21.3 million (PY: € 64.7 million) (see note (11)).

Goods and services provided to associates and joint ventures mainly included advertising services (PY: advertising services as well as other services). Goods and services provided to other related parties in the reporting year related in particular to circulation revenues.

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Goods and services received from other related parties related in particular to Supervisory and Executive Board members as in the previous year. The fixed compensation of members of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE amounted to € 11.5 million (PY: € 14.2 million) in the reporting period 2021. The variable compensation amounted to € 8.4 million (PY: € 8.6 million). The measurement of the share-based compensation granted to the Executive Board (see note (11)) resulted in personnel expenses of € 18.3 million in the reporting period (PY: € 10.7 million) and other operating income of € 0.8 million (PY: € 0.0 million). Guaranteed pension payments to members of the Executive Board resulted in personnel expense of € 1.1 million (PY: € 1.4 million). The compensation of the members of the Supervisory Board amounted to € 3.0 million (PY: € 2.9 million). In addition, services received mainly included as in the previous year other services of related parties.

An amount of € 2.4 million (PY: € 2.4 million) was paid to former Executive Board members and former managing directors and their survivors. A total amount of € 33.7 million (PY: € 29.2 million) was deferred for their pension obligations.

At the balance sheet date, there were payment commitments towards associates (€ 13.0 million, PY: € 4.5 million) and joint ventures (€ 15.2 million, PY: € 31.7 million). In addition, loan commitments were granted to associates amounting to € 2.1 million (PY: € 4.6 million) and financing guarantees were given amounting to € 2.1 million (PY: € 2.4 million), see note (33) and (34).

In the previous years, we granted convertible loans to a related party of a Supervisory Board member in the total amount of € 3.5 million. The company develops future mobility concepts. In December 2019, we converted the loan into shares in the company. Our shareholding remained unchanged at 27.3 % as of the balance sheet date. The related party of a Supervisory Board member continues to hold a further 41.0 % of the shares in the company.

In addition, we continue to hold a stake of approximately 93 % in an investment fund for media start-ups, in which the remaining shares are held by a related party of a Supervisory Board member. Due to partnership arrangements, we treat this investment as a joint venture. As of the balance sheet date, there were payment commitments in this investment fund in the amount of € 1.1 million (PY: € 1.1 million). As in the previous year, the related party of the Supervisory Board member received a compensation of € 0.3 million for the management services provided.

The Axel Springer high-rise building in Berlin has been managed by Axel Springer Pensionstreuhand e.V. as trustee since the beginning of 2018. A lease agreement with a term of 30 years was concluded for the further use of the building. The corresponding lease liability as of December 31, 2021, amounted to € 107.4 million (PY: € 110.0 million). Lease payments in the reporting year amounted to € 6.1 million (PY: € 6.1 million). For further information on plan assets, see note (12).

(33) Contingent liabilities

As of December 31, 2021, contingent liabilities from guarantees existed in the amount of € 4.1 million (PY: € 3.5 million), which related to associates in the amount of € 2.1 million (PY: € 2.4 million), see note (32).

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(34) Other financial commitments

The other financial commitments broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Purchase commitments for		
- intangible assets	0.9	0.3
- plant, and equipment	4.4	22.1
- inventories	54.7	22.1
Future payments from unrecorded leases	29.9	6.8
Other obligations	174.1	178.8
Other financial obligations	**264.0**	**230.1**

Future lease payments from unrecorded leases included obligations under short-term leases (€ 3.9 million; PY: € 1.3 million), leases from low-value assets (€ 0.8 million; PY: € 0.7 million) and contracts that have already been concluded but start after the reporting date (€ 25.2 million; PY: € 4.8 million). All other leases have been accounted for as financial liabilities already (see note (14)).

Potential future cash outflows due to extension options not yet included in the valuation of lease liabilities amounted to € 353.4 million (PY: € 326.0 million) as of December 31, 2021. These options almost exclusively resulted from leases for office space, in particular the leaseback of the new Axel Springer building (see note (5)). As of the balance sheet date it was uncertain that these options will be exercised in the future.

Other commitments included commitments due to associates and joint ventures in the amount of € 30.3 million (PY: € 40.8 million) (see note (32)). In addition, other commitments resulted primarily from contracts for TV productions and TV rights respectively as well as other services.

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(35) Companies included in the consolidated financial statements and share property

No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	12/31/2021 via No.	12/31/2020 Share-holding	12/31/2020 Via No.	
1	Axel Springer SE, Berlin	-	-	-	-	
	Fully consolidated subsidiaries					
	Germany					
2	AS TV-Produktions- und Vertriebsges. mbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	
3	AS TYFP Media GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	50.0%	192	-	-	6)
		50.0%	1	-	-	
4	AS TYFP Media Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	3	-	-	
5	AVIV Group GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	13	100.0%	13	5)
6	AWIN AG, Berlin	80.0%	14	80.0%	14	
7	Axel Springer All Media GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
8	Axel Springer Asia GmbH, Hamburg	-	-	100.0%	24	
9	Axel Springer Audio GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
10	Axel Springer Auto-Verlag GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
11	Axel Springer Corporate Solutions GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	6)
12	Axel Springer Digital Classifieds GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	14	100.0%	14	5)
13	Axel Springer Digital Classifieds Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	12	100.0%	12	5)
14	Axel Springer Digital GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
15	Axel Springer Digital Ventures GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	14	100.0%	14	5)
16	Axel Springer Digital Ventures US GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	
17	Axel Springer Digital Ventures US II GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	
18	Axel Springer Druckhaus Spandau GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	6)
19	Axel Springer hy GmbH, Berlin	55.7%	15	55.7%	15	
20	Axel Springer hy Technologies GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	19	-	-	
21	Axel Springer Ideas Engineering GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0%	30	
22	Axel Springer INSIDER Ventures GmbH, Berlin	80.1%	15	80.1%	15	
		19.9%	142	19.9%	142	
23	Axel Springer International GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
24	Axel Springer International Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	23	100.0%	23	5)
25	Axel Springer Kundenservice GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
26	Axel Springer Liveware IT GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	
27	Axel Springer Media for Equity GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	5)
28	Axel Springer Mediahouse Berlin GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
29	Axel Springer Medien Accounting Service GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
30	Axel Springer National Media & Tech GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	6)
31	Axel Springer Offsetdruckerei Ahrensburg GmbH & Co. KG, Ahrensburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	6)
32	Axel Springer Offsetdruckerei Kettwig GmbH & Co. KG, Essen	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
33	Axel Springer Print Management GmbH, Ahrensburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	
34	Axel Springer Services & Immobilien GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
35	Axel Springer Sport Verlag GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
36	Axel Springer Syndication GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	38	100.0%	38	5)
37	Axel Springer Teaser Ad GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	7	100.0%	7	
38	"Axel Springer Verlag" Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
39	B.Z. Ullstein GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	38	100.0%	38	5)
40	BILD GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)

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No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	12/31/2021 via No.	12/31/2020 Share-holding	12/31/2020 Via No.	
41	Bonial Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	14	95.0%	14	9)
42	Bonial International GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	41	100.0%	41	
43	Business Insider Deutschland GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	5)
44	Buzz Technologies GmbH, Berlin	51.0%	1	51.0%	1	
45	Cammio GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	115	100.0%	115	
46	CeleraOne GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0%	1	
47	Commerz-Film GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0%	24	
48	comparado GmbH, Lüneburg	100.0%	58	100.0%	58	
49	COMPUTER BILD Digital GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
50	Content Factory TV-Produktion GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	89	100.0%	89	5)
51	Einundneunzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
52	eprofessional GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	7	100.0%	7	
53	finanzen.net GmbH, Karlsruhe	75.0%	15	75.0%	15	10)
54	finanzen.net zero GmbH, Karlsruhe	100.0%	53	-	-	
55	FRAMEN GmbH, Berlin	57.50%	1	57.5%	1	11)
56	Gehalt.de GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	74	51.0%	74	9)
57	Idealo International GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	58	100.0%	58	
58	Idealo Internet GmbH, Berlin	74.9%	14	74.9%	14	
59	ImmoSolve GmbH, Bad Bramstedt	100.0%	61	100.0%	61	
60	Immowelt GmbH (previously Immowelt AG), Nuremberg	100.0%	62	100.0%	62	5)
61	Immowelt Hamburg GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	62	100.0%	62	5)
62	Immowelt Holding GmbH (previously Immowelt Holding AG), Nuremberg	100.0%	5	100.0%	5	5)
63	infoRoad GmbH, Heroldsberg	90.0%	10	90.0%	10	
64	MAZ & More TV-Produktion GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	89	100.0%	89	5)
65	Media Impact GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0%	7	100.0%	7	6)
66	Media Impact Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	7	-	-	5)
67	meinestadt.de GmbH, Cologne	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
68	meinestadt.de Vertriebs-GmbH, Cologne	100.0%	67	100.0%	67	
69	PACE Paparazzi Catering & Event GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
70	Panther Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	58	100.0%	58	
71	Press Impact GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	
72	Sales Impact GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
73	SAMAS upday Investment GmbH, Berlin	51.0%	1	51.0%	1	
74	StepStone Continental Europe GmbH, Düsseldorf	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	
75	StepStone Deutschland GmbH, Düsseldorf	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
76	StepStone GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	13	100.0%	13	
77	Studydrive GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
78	TraderFox GmbH, Reutlingen	50.1%	53	50.1%	53	
79	Transfermarkt GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg	51.0%	40	51.0%	40	6)
80	Ullstein GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	38	100.0%	38	5)
81	Umzugsauktion GmbH & Co. KG, Bötzingen	100.0%	61	100.0%	61	6)
82	Universum Employer Branding Services GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
83	upday GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	77.6%	1	77.6%	1	6)
		22.4%	73	22.4%	73	
84	upday Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	83	100.0%	83	

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No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	12/31/2021 via No.	12/31/2020 Share-holding	12/31/2020 Via No.	
85	Vertical Media GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0%	89	
86	Visoon Video Impact GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	51.0%	7	51.0%	7	6)
87	Visual Meta GmbH, Berlin	96.0%	58	96.0%	58	
88	Wake Word GmbH, Munich	64.9%	9	64.9%	9	
89	WeltN24 GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	5)
	Other countries					
90	APM Print d.o.o., Belgrade, Serbia	-	-	100.0%	166	
91	Appcast, Inc., Lebanon, USA	91.2%	76	91.2%	76	9)
92	Appcast.IO LTD, Bristol, United Kingdom	100.0%	91	100.0%	91	
93	AS-NYOMDA Kft, Kecskemét, Hungary	-	-	100.0%	167	
94	Autobazar.EU portál s.r.o., Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Slovakia	-	-	100.0%	193	
95	AWIN AB, Stockholm, Sweden	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
96	AWIN B.V., Amsterdam, Netherlands	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
97	AWIN Global Affiliate Network S.L., Madrid, Spain	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
98	AWIN Inc., Wilmington, USA	100.0%	99	100.0%	99	
99	AWIN Ltd., London, United Kingdom	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
100	AWIN SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
101	AWIN Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
102	AWIN SRL, Milan, Italy	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
103	AWIN VEICULAÇÃO DE PUBLICIDADE NA INTERNET LTDA., São Paulo, Brazil	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
104	Axel Springer Beteiligungen Schweiz AG, Zurich, Switzerland	100.0%	108	100.0%	108	
105	Axel Springer España S.A., Madrid, Spain	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	
106	Axel Springer France S.A.S., Paris, France	100.0%	1	100.0%	1	
107	Axel Springer International Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	24	100.0%	24	
108	Axel Springer Schweiz AG, Zurich, Switzerland	100.0%	107	100.0%	107	
109	Axel Springer Services Inc., Wilmington, USA	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	
110	Axel Springer Wagon Holding Inc., Wilmington, USA	100.0%	15	-	-	
111	Blikk Kft., Budapest, Hungary	-	-	100.0%	168	
112	Bonial SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	42	100.0%	42	
113	Business Insider Europe Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	142	100.0%	142	
114	Cammio B.V., The Hague, Netherlands	100.0%	115	100.0%	115	
115	Cammio Holding B.V., The Hague, Netherlands	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	
116	Candidate Manager Ltd, Dublin, Ireland	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
117	CaribbeanJobs Ltd, George Town, Cayman Islands	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
118	City-Nav Sp. z o.o., Poznań, Poland	69.3%	169	69.3%	169	
119	Commission Factory Pty Ltd, Sydney, Australia	100.0%	6	100.0%	6	
120	Commission Factory Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	100.0%	119	100.0%	119	
121	Concept Multimédia SAS, Aix-en-Provence, France	-	-	100.0%	124	
122	Coral-Tell Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0%	5	100.0%	5	
123	CV Keskus OÜ, Tallinn, Estonia	-	-	100.0%	168	
124	Digital Classifieds France SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	5	100.0%	5	
125	Drive Innovation Insight SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	4	-	-	
126	eMarketer Inc., New York, USA	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	

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No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	12/31/2021 via No.	12/31/2020 Share-holding	12/31/2020 Via No.	
127	Estascontratadocom S.A., Panama City, Panama	100.0%	184	100.0%	184	
128	Falgulère Conseil SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	124	100.0%	124	
129	FinPack Sp. z o.o., Szczecin, Poland	100.0%	154	100.0%	154	
130	Garantie System SAS, Paris, France	-	-	100.0%	133	
131	G-Construct SA, Brussels, Belgium	-	-	100.0%	141	
132	Gratka Spolka Z.o.o., Warsaw, Poland	-	-	100.0%	154	
133	Groupe La Centrale SAS, Paris, France	-	-	100.0%	124	
134	Grupa Morizon-Gratka Sp. z o.o. (previously Grupa Morizon Sp. z o.o.), Warsaw, Poland	100.0%	154	100.0%	154	
135	Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska AG, Zurich, Switzerland	50.0%	107	-	-	3)
136	HOUSELL FINANCE ONLINE SERVICES SL, Madrid, Spain	100.0%	137	-	-	
137	Housell Inmo Online Services, S.L., Madrid, Spain	99.3%	5	-	-	
138	ICI Formations SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	176	100.0%	176	
139	ictjob SPRL, Brussels, Belgium	1.0%	177	1.0%	177	
		99.0%	74	99.0%	74	
140	Immoweb Financial Services SA, Brussels, Belgium	100.0%	141	100.0%	141	
141	Immoweb SA, Brussels, Belgium	100.0%	124	100.0%	124	
142	Insider Inc., New York, USA	100.0%	15	100.0%	15	
143	Interactive Junction Holdings Proprietary Limited, Rosebank/Johannes-burg, South Africa	100.0%	159	100.0%	159	
144	Jobcity Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0%	122	100.0%	122	
145	Jobmagnet Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	
146	Jobs LU Ltd, Dublin, Ireland	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
147	Jobs.ie Ltd, Dublin, Ireland	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
148	Jobsite UK (Worldwide) Limited, Havant, United Kingdom	100.0%	181	100.0%	181	
149	Lendi Finance Sp. z o.o., Pruszcz Gdanski, Poland	-	-	100.0%	154	
150	Lendi Property Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	-	-	100.0%	154	
151	Lendi Sp. z o.o., Szczecin, Poland	100.0%	154	100.0%	154	
152	Morning Brew, Inc., New York, USA	75.4%	15	66.0%	15	9)
153	My Web Ltd, Ebene, Mauritius	100.0%	159	100.0%	159	
154	MZN Property S.A., Warsaw, Poland	90.0%	135	90.0%	168	9)
155	NARKS INFOSERVIS, a.s., Bratislava, Slovakia	-	-	100.0%	193	
156	New Digital d.o.o. Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia	-	-	100.0%	166	
157	NIJobs.com Ltd, Belfast, United Kingdom	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
158	NIN d.o.o., Belgrade, Serbia	-	-	99.7%	166	
159	Pnet (Pty) Ltd, Johannesburg, South Africa	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
160	Politico LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0%	161	-	-	
161	Politico Media Group, LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0%	110	-	-	
162	POLITICO SRL, Brussels, Belgium	100.0%	4	-	-	
163	profession.hu Kft, Budapest, Hungary	-	-	100.0%	168	
164	Protocol Media LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0%	161	-	-	
165	RealSoft s.r.o., Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Slovakia	-	-	50.0%	193	
		-	-	50.0%	188	
166	Ringier Axel Springer d.o.o., Belgrade, Serbia	-	-	100.0%	168	
167	Ringier Axel Springer Magyarország Kft, Budapest, Hungary	-	-	100.0%	168	
168	Ringier Axel Springer Media AG, Zurich, Switzerland	-	-	50.0%	107	3)

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No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	12/31/2021 via No.	12/31/2020 Share-holding	12/31/2020 Via No.	
169	Ringier Axel Springer Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0%	135	100.0%	168	
170	Ringier Axel Springer SK, a.s., Bratislava, Slovakia	-	-	87.0%	168	
171	Saknai Net Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	80.2%	122	80.2%	122	
172	Saongroup Limited, Dublin, Ireland	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	12)
173	ShareASale.com Inc., Chicago, USA	100.0%	98	100.0%	98	
174	Single.V.iew Tech Ltd., Manchester, United Kingdom	100.0%	6	-	-	
175	SPORT.SK s.r.o., Zilina, Slovakia	-	-	66.7%	170	
176	StepStone France SAS, Paris, France	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
177	StepStone NV, Brussels, Belgium	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
		0.0%	179	0.0%	179	7)
178	Stepstone Online-Recruiting Inc. (previously Good & Co Labs, Inc.), San Francisco, USA	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	
179	StepStone Österreich GmbH, Vienna, Austria	100.0%	75	100.0%	75	
180	StepStone Services Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
181	StepStone UK Holding Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	
182	StepStone.pl Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	-	-	51.0%	168	
		-	-	49.0%	74	
183	Tecoloco El Salvador S.A. de C.V., San Salvador, El Salvador	100.0%	184	100.0%	184	
		0.0%	172	0.0%	172	7)
184	Tecoloco International Inc, Panama City, Panama	100.0%	172	100.0%	172	
185	Tecoloco S.A. de C.V. Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras	99.6%	184	99.6%	184	
		0.4%	172	0.4%	172	
186	Tecoloco.com Cybersearch S.A. (previously Cybersearch S.A.), Guatemala City, Guatemala	100.0%	184	100.0%	184	
		0.0%	172	0.0%	172	7)
187	Tecoloco.com S.A. de C.V. Nicaragua, Managua, Nicaragua	95.0%	184	95.0%	184	
		3.0%	183	3.0%	183	
		2.0%	186	2.0%	186	
188	Topreality.sk s.r.o., Nové Mesto nad Váhom, Slovakia	-	-	100.0%	193	
189	Totaljobs Group Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	181	100.0%	181	
190	Turijobs México S DE RL DE CV, Mexico City, Mexico	100.0%	184	100.0%	184	
		0.0%	172	0.0%	172	7)
191	Turijobs Tourism Services S.L., Barcelona, Spain	100.0%	74	100.0%	74	
192	TYFP Europe, LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0%	160	-	-	
193	United Classifieds s.r.o., Bratislava, Slovakia	-	-	60.0%	170	
194	Universum Business Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd, Shanghai, China	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
195	Universum Communications Inc., New York, USA	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
196	Universum Communications Italy S.R.L., Milan, Italy	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
197	Universum Communications Ltd, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
198	Universum Communications Norway AS, Oslo, Norway	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
199	Universum Communications Pte Ltd, Singapore, Singapore	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
200	Universum Communications SA (PTY) Ltd, Johannesburg, South Africa	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
201	Universum Communications SARL, Paris, France	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
202	Universum Communications Sweden AB, Stockholm, Sweden	100.0%	76	100.0%	76	
203	Universum Communications Switzerland AG, Zurich, Switzerland	100.0%	202	100.0%	202	
204	upday France SARL, Paris, France	100.0%	84	100.0%	84	

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		12/31/2021		12/31/2020	
No.	Company	Share-holding	via No.	Share-holding	Via No.
205	upday Italia S.r.l., Milan, Italy	100.0%	84	100.0%	84
206	upday Nederlands B.V., Amsterdam, Netherlands	100.0%	84	100.0%	84
207	upday Nordics AB, Stockholm, Sweden	100.0%	84	100.0%	84
208	upday Polska Sp. z o.o. Sp.k., Warsaw, Poland	100.0%	84	100.0%	84
209	upday UK Ltd., London, United Kingdom	100.0%	84	100.0%	84
210	Virtal Sp. z o.o., Gdansk, Poland	90.0%	154	90.0%	154
211	WEBIMM SAS, Paris, France	65.0%	124	65.0%	124
212	YOURCAREERGROUP Schweiz GmbH, Kloten, Switzerland	100.0%	74	100.0%	74

		12/31/2021	
No.	Company	Share-holding	Via No.
	Other subsidiaries[1)]		
	Germany		
213	Achtundachtzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
214	AS Buchversand GmbH, Munich	100.0%	38
215	Axel Springer Corporate Solutions Verwaltungs-GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
216	Axel Springer Financial Media GmbH i.L., Munich	100.0%	1
217	Axel Springer National Media & Tech Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
218	Axel Springer Security GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
219	Buch- und Presse-Großvertrieb Hamburg GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg	100.0%	1
220	Dreizehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH i.L., Hamburg	100.0%	1
221	Einhundertachte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
222	Einhundertdreizehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	38
223	Einhundertelfte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
224	Einhunderterste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
225	Einhundertneunte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
226	Einhundertsechste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
227	Einhundertste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
228	Einhundertvierzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	38
229	Einhundertzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
230	Einhundertzwölfte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
231	Finanzen Corporate Publishing GmbH i.L., Berlin	100.0%	1
232	Fünfundneunzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
233	Hammerich & Lesser Zeitschriften- und Buchverlag GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1
234	Informationsmedien Handels GmbH, Hamburg	100.0%	1
235	kinkaa GbR, Berlin	50.0% 50.0%	58 70
236	meinestadt.de Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Cologne	100.0%	67
237	SCOUTASTIC GmbH, Bremen	50.1%	79
238	Scubia GbR, Berlin	50.0% 50.0%	58 70
239	Siebenundachtzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
240	Tarif24 GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	58

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No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	Via No.
241	Transfermarkt Verwaltungs GmbH, Hamburg	51.0%	40
242	Umzugsauktion Verwaltungs GmbH, Bötzingen	100.0%	61
243	upday Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
244	Varsavsky Axel Springer Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	15
245	Vertical Media GmbH, Berlin	100.0%	89
246	Vierundneunzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
247	Visoon Video Impact Management GmbH, Berlin	51.0%	7
248	Zweiundsechzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0%	1
	Other countries		
249	affilinet Schweiz GmbH in Liquidation, Zurich, Switzerland	100.0%	6
250	Axel Springer International Group Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	1
251	Axel Springer Media Italia s.r.l., Milan, Italy	100.0%	65
252	Axel Springer Norway AS, Oslo, Norway	100.0%	107
253	Axel Springer Publishing International Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	249
254	Axel Springer TV International Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0%	249
255	BILD Inc., City of Wilmington, USA	100.0%	40
256	Business Insider Asia Pte. Ltd., Singapore, Singapore	100.0%	142
257	Car Price List Yad2 Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0%	122
258	Commission Factory Pte Ltd, Singapore, Singapore	100.0%	119
259	Digitalni klik d.o.o., Zagreb, Croatia	60.0%	60
260	ETSBA Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0%	122
261	eurobridge Inc., New York, USA	100.0%	1
262	Immostreet ES, Barcelona, Spain	100.0%	124
263	Lendi Care sp. z o.o., Szczecin, Poland	100.0%	154
264	MB Insider Holdings Inc., New York, USA	100.0%	15
265	Politico Canada Corp, Arlington, USA	100.0%	160
266	Politico International Services LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0%	160
267	Saongroup Caribbean (Jamaica) Ltd, Kingston, Jamaica	100.0%	117
268	Saongroup Caribbean (Trinidad) Ltd, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago	100.0%	117
269	Saongroup.com India Pvt Ltd, Pune, India	100.0%	172
270	upday Polska Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0%	84
271	Vooop GmbH, Vienna, Austria	100.0%	64
272	Yad2 Internet Ads Ltd., Haifa, Israel	100.0%	122
273	Yad2Pay Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0%	122
	Associates and joint ventures accounted for using the equity method		
	Germany		
274	Axel Springer Plug and Play Accelerator GmbH, Berlin	50.0%	15
275	Axel Springer Porsche GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	50.0%	15
276	Boerse Stuttgart Digital Exchange GmbH, Stuttgart	9.0% 18.0%	53 1
277	Einhundertsiebte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	50.0%	5
278	Goggo Network GmbH, Berlin	27.3%	15
279	InterRed GmbH, Haiger	24.0%	1
280	Media Pioneer Publishing AG, Berlin	36.5%	51
281	Oskar.de GmbH, Karlsruhe	37.8%	53

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No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	Via No.	
282	Project A Ventures GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	26.3%	14	
283	Radio Hamburg GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg	35.0%	9	
284	SoD ScreenOnDemand GmbH, Munich	25.1%	7	
285	Varsavsky Axel Springer GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	93.3%	15	4)
	Other countries			
286	BV (Germany) Ltd., Gibraltar, Gibraltar	0.0%	40	8)
287	Editions Mondadori Axel Springer (EMAS) S.E.N.C., Montrouge Cedex, France	50.0%	106	
288	GLC Group SAS, Paris, France	22.5%	124	
289	No Fluff Jobs Sp. z o.o., Gdansk, Poland	44.0%	135	
290	Purplebricks Group plc, Solihull, United Kingdom	26.5%	5	
291	QWANT SAS, Paris, France	15.6%	15	9)
292	Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG, Zurich, Switzerland	50.0%	104	
293	WeCheck Ltd., Ramat Hasharon, Israel	25.0%	122	
	Other associates and joint ventures[2]			
	Germany			
294	Axel Springer Porsche Management GmbH, Berlin	50.0%	15	
295	Berliner Pool TV Produktion Gesellschaft mbH, Berlin	50.0%	89	
296	Blitz-Tip Radio Hessen Beteiligungsges. mbH & Co. KG, Bad Soden at Taunus	33.3%	9	
297	cmmrcl.ly GmbH, Hamburg	25.1%	7	
298	Dalim Software GmbH, Kehl	20.4%	1	
299	Filmgarten GmbH, Berlin	42.0%	58	
300	Ges. für integr. Kommunikationsforschung mbH & Co. KG, Munich	20.0%	1	
301	Ges. für integr. Kommunikationsforschung Verwaltungs GmbH, Munich	20.0%	1	
302	Intermedia Standard Presse-Code GmbH, Hamburg	32.0%	1	
303	ISPC Intermedia Standard Presse-Code GmbH & Co.KG, Hamburg	32.0%	1	
304	LAUT AG, Konstanz	25.0%	1	
305	Project A Management GmbH, Berlin	26.3%	14	
306	Qivive GmbH i. L., Bad Homburg	33.3%	1	
307	Sparheld International GmbH, Berlin	30.0%	58	
308	Xingu Advertising GmbH, Munich	25.1%	7	
	Other countries			
309	BULGARPRESS OOD i.L., Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria	25,5%	1	
310	EMAS Digital SAS, Montrouge Cedex, France	50.0%	106	
311	Inoveo Holding SA, Sugiez, Switzerland	20.0%	124	
312	Real Estate Media S.A., Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg	35.0%	141	

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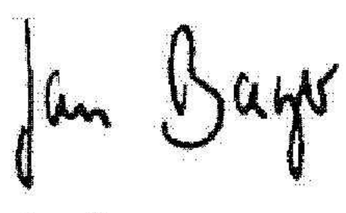
No.	Company	12/31/2021 Share-holding	Via No.	Equity € million[13]	Net income € million[13]	
	Other significant investments					
	Germany					
313	ANTENNE BAYERN GmbH & Co. KG, Ismaning	16.0%	1	-	-	14)
		1.0%	1			
314	dpa Deutsche Presse Agentur GmbH, Bonn	1.0%	39	41.7	1.6	
		1.4%	89			
315	Project A Ventures II GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	2.1%	14	109.7	–7.9	
316	Project A Ventures III GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	2.7%	14	73.1	–6.7	
317	RADIO/TELE FFH GmbH & Co. Betriebs-KG, Bad Vilbel	15.0%	9	-	-	14)
	Other countries					
318	F&J Labs Co-Invest III, L.P., New York, USA	4.0%	15	60.9	–2.0	
319	Group Nine Media, Inc., New York, USA	8.7%	15	194.9	–34.6	
320	Lakestar II LP, Guernsey, Guernsey	5.7%	15	503.3	130.3	
321	Lerer Hippeau Ventures IV, LP, New York, USA	1.6%	15	176.2	–4.0	
322	Lerer Hippeau Ventures V, LP, New York, USA	1.8%	15	255.0	81.2	
323	Lerer Hippeau Ventures VI, LP, New York, USA	2.5%	15	82.8	9.6	

[1] No full consolidation due to immaterial impact (relation of revenues, net income and balance sheet total for the company to revenues, net income and balance sheet total of the Group).
[2] No at-equity consolidation due to immaterial impact (relation of net income of the company to net income of the Group).
[3] Control due to existing option rights exercisable at any time.
[4] In the reporting year and/or previous year, no control due to the lack of contractual agreements, which exclude the power of control and the possibility to influence the variable outflows.
[5] The company has exercised the exemption rights of Section 264 (3) of the German Commercial Code (Handelsgesetzbuch – HGB).
[6] The company has exercised the exemption rights of Section 264b of the German Commercial Code (Handelsgesetzbuch – HGB).
[7] Shares less than 0.1% in the reporting year and/or in the previous year.
[8] Rights that grant significant influence based on contractual agreements in the reporting year and/or in the previous year.
[9] Due to option rights in the reporting year and in the previous year a share of 100.0% consolidated.
[10] Due to option rights in the reporting year and in the previous year a share of 89.99% consolidated.
[11] Due to option rights in the reporting year and in the previous year a share of 74.79% consolidated.
[12] Applying rules of Section 357 (1) of the Companies Act 2014.
[13] Unless otherwise stated, equity and profit for the year according to local annual financial statements for the financial year 2020. Values translated into foreign currency using the closing rate as of December 31, 2021.
[14] No statement of equity and profit for the year as the annual financial statements are not published.

Berlin, February 28, 2022

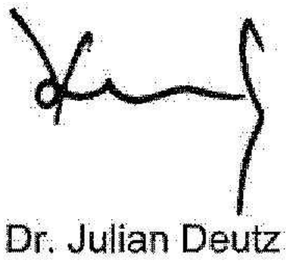
Axel Springer SE

Dr. Mathias Döpfner



Jan Bayer

Dr. Stephanie Caspar



Dr. Julian Deutz

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Combined Management Report

Introductory remarks

The combined management report for Axel Springer SE and the Group are summarized. The current combined management report for Axel Springer SE and the Group contains statements concerning the economic situation and business developments of the Axel Springer Group. These essentially also apply to Axel Springer SE. Further information on the economic situation of the parent company Axel Springer SE is contained in the chapter "Economic position of Axel Springer SE".

For explanations of the key performance indicators used and the adjustments to our key earnings figures, we refer to the "Financial performance, liquidity, and financial position" section.

Fundamentals of the Axel Springer Group

Business model

Axel Springer is a media and technology company focusing on digital classifieds and journalism. From an economic point of view, the digital classifieds, especially in the area of job and real estate advertising, are the most important pillars in the Group. The offerings in the field of journalism include a broad portfolio of brands such as the BILD and WELT Groups in Germany or Insider Inc. and POLITICO in the USA.

Legal structure, business locations

Axel Springer SE, parent company of the Axel Springer Group, is a European company (Societas Europaea) with its registered head office in Berlin. We are also represented at other locations in Germany. There are also numerous companies in Germany and abroad. The consolidated shareholdings of the Group are shown in the notes (see note (35)).

Segments of the Axel Springer Group

Axel Springer's business is divided into three operating segments: Classifieds Media, News Media and Marketing Media. In addition, there is the Services/Holding segment. The segment allocation of the individual companies used in the 2021 financial year is decisive for the following description of the segments and the presentation of the key financial figures. The segment allocation has not changed significantly compared to the previous year.

Classifieds Media

The Classifieds Media segment encompasses all business models that generate their revenues primarily through advertisers paying for advertising of jobs, real estate, cars, etc. Companies pay a certain price per ad for placing job ads, estate agents for advertising real estate, or car dealerships for publishing car ads. In addition, revenues are generated through the supply of qualified contacts or prospects (lead generation), marketing of online advertising spaces and collaborations as well as through the provision of software functionalities for customers. Long-term growth drivers are, among others, the continuing shift of classified ads to the Internet, new customer gains, and the extension of the product offer beyond the pure listing business, e.g. in the field of lead generation. Price measures also contribute to revenue growth. Moreover, business developments are significantly determined by the economic environment in the respective market segments, the market position in the respective segment, and online usage behavior of advertisers and seekers.

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The activities of the Classifieds Media segment are divided into two operational areas, the main brands of which are as follows.

Portfolio Classifieds Media

StepStone	AVIV
– StepStone	– SeLoger/Logic-Immo
– Totaljobs/Jobsite	– MeilleursAgents
– Saongroup	– Immowelt
– Appcast	– Immoweb
	– Yad2

In the **StepStone** business, advertisements are sold to job advertisers and access to the online résumé databases of the respective portals is offered, in which job advertisers can actively search for suitable candidates.

With its various brands, StepStone is one of the largest online job platforms and is represented in over 20 countries worldwide. In Germany, Ireland, Belgium and South Africa it is the leading company among the private job portals and holds very attractive market positions in other countries such as United Kingdom and Austria. StepStone's activities are mainly organized centrally, which means that synergies are realized within the group, such as jointly used products and offers and the joint coordination of development projects. Services in the area of employer branding are offered by the globally represented company Universum. With the company Appcast, StepStone occupies a leading position in the field of programmatic display of job ads in the world's largest recruiting market, the USA.

After a slowdown in business in 2020 caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, StepStone has recovered in 2021 with revenues well above 2019 levels. In addition to a recovery in business in the core markets of Germany and United Kingdom, strong growth in business in the USA also contributed to this. Overall, StepStone is benefiting from a strong demand for qualified workers, which is currently difficult to meet due to a shortage of workers in in-demand profiles. The demand for qualified workers depends on global and regional economic growth. If, for example, a negative development of the Covid-19 pandemic affects the general economic environment, this would have a negative impact on StepStone's business developments.

At **AVIV**, the portals specializing in real estate generate their revenues primarily from the sale of advertising space to brokers, project developers, housing associations or private individuals. Our Israeli portal Yad2 generates its revenues from commercial car sellers, real estate agents, project developers and private individuals who mainly sell used goods on this marketplace.

AVIV is the leading provider in the area of portals specializing in real estate with SeLoger, Logic-Immo and MeilleursAgents in France and with Immoweb in Belgium and number two in Germany with Immowelt. Across all brands, AVIV is concentrating on the development of portals that focus purely on advertisements towards transaction-based marketplaces that also offer upstream and downstream services, as well as on the joint development of new products and increasing efficiencies through e.g., the exchange of already existing technical components or algorithms. In addition to the real estate portals, the Israeli portal Yad2 also belongs to AVIV. In terms of reach, Yad2 is the leading general classifieds portal in Israel for real estate, car and classified ads, as well as a job portal (Drushim) that is established in the market.

The Covid-19 pandemic is not expected to have any long-term negative effects on real estate portals. Rather, the real estate portal market is currently characterized by a declining number of real estate owners who are willing to sell. This leads to a declining number of advertisements. Our real estate portals cannot escape this trend, triggered by a shortage of alternative, low-risk investment opportunities.

In the previous year, the AVIV Group also included the French Groupe La Centrale, operator of a specialist classifieds portal for used cars in France and other portals in the automotive field. The group was sold at the beginning of March 2021; however, Axel Springer has held a 22.5 % investment in the newly founded acquiring company and thus continues to hold shares in the La Centrale Group.

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News Media

The News Media segment primarily includes business models, that are based on the creation of journalistic content and financed by advertising, paying readers and content exploitation with third parties such as social media platforms. The revenues in the News Media segment essentially consist of advertising and circulation revenues. The advertising revenues result from the marketing of the reach of online and print media. The circulation revenues come from the sale of classic print products and digital subscriptions. The value chain is aligned across all media and includes all essential processes from creation to sales/marketing of information, entertainment and moving images. In integrated news rooms, some of which are used across different titels, all journalistic content is combined and prepared differently for online and print media. We mainly use our own printing plants to manufacture our print products. Distribution takes place primarily through press wholesalers. In addition to the activities characterized by journalistic content, the segment also includes business with price and product portals, which generates click- and transaction-based advertising revenues by generating reach with online retailers.

The News Media segment is divided into national and international offers. The main activities are as follows:

Portfolio News Media

National	International
– BILD	– Insider Inc.
– WELT	– eMarketer
– idealo	– Morning Brew
	– POLITICO
	– Ringier Axel Springer Polska
	– upday
	– Bonial
	– finanzen.net

The sub-segment **News Media National** mainly includes the brands BILD and WELT with their respective digital, TV and print offers as well as the price comparison portal idealo.

According to the Online Research Working Group (agof), BILD.de is one of the widest-reaching news and entertainment portals in Germany and reached an average of 5.44 million in November 2021 (previous year: 5.87 million) unique users per day and 26.48 million (previous year: 25.82 million) unique users per month. BILD's digital offerings also include other themed portals such as fitbook.de, stylebook.de, techbook.de, travelbook.de and myhomebook.de. The new TV channel BILD started on August 22, 2021.

According to agof, the digital products of WELT reach 25.75 million (previous year: 26.64 million) unique users per month in the segment of German quality media to the most successful offers on the Internet. According to AGF video research, WELT Fernsehen (WELT and N24 Doku) will also have a market share of 1.7 % in 2021 (PY: 1.7 %) in the advertising-relevant viewer group of 14- to 49-year-olds and thus maintained its leading position among private news and information offers.

With BILDplus and WELTplus, Axel Springer's digital paid content offerings reached 773,000 subscribers in December 2021 (IVW/December 2021; December 2020: around 647,000 subscribers). According to the "Global Digital Subscription Snapshot/Q3 2020" study by FIPP/CeleraOne, BILDplus is by far the largest paid content offering in Germany and is one of the most successful digital news subscriptions worldwide. In the digital business, industry's circulation revenues are still much smaller than in the print business, but are recording strong growth.

idealo operates price and product comparison portals under the brands idealo and Ladenzeile. According to SimilarWeb, idealo.de is Germany's leading portal with the widest reach in the area of product search and price comparison.

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The national print portfolio in the News Media segment includes the newspapers of the umbrella brands BILD and WELT as well as our magazines.

BILD is Europe's largest daily newspaper with the widest reach and, according to internal analytics, by far the number one in Germany for sales newspapers with a share of 83.5 % in the fourth quarter of 2021 (all information for German newspapers and magazines measured by the paid circulation according to IVW - Informationsgemeinschaft to determine the distribution of advertising media - as of December 31, 2021; BILD incl. BZ). BILD am SONNTAG is Germany's best-selling national Sunday newspaper in 2021 with a share of 54.6 %. The car, computer and sports media of the BILD brand family form a magazine portfolio around the core brands AUTO BILD, COMPUTER BILD and SPORT BILD.

In the field of national quality Sunday newspapers, WELT AM SONNTAG is number one in terms of circulation. DIE WELT is (in terms of paid circulation) the third largest quality daily newspaper in Germany.

The print business continues to face the challenge of falling print circulations. For advertisers, in addition to the circulation development, the reach is particularly important. BILD, in particular, continues to benefit from the fact that, with 7.82 million daily readers, it has the largest reach among daily newspapers in Germany (ma 2022 Pressemedien I; Angebot: BILD Germany Total).

The **News Media International** subsegment includes international digital and print media offerings.

In the USA, Axel Springer is represented by Insider Inc., which includes Insider, one of the leading digital providers of business, stock market and financial news, Insider Intelligence, a leading provider of fee-based analytics, studies and digital market data for companies and institutions, as well as Morning Brew, a newsletter provider focused on business magazines. With the acquisition of POLITICO, one of the world's most influential political news sites, in mid-October 2021, the presence in the USA was further strengthened and at the same time POLITICO Europe was fully acquired.

In Eastern Europe, Axel Springer was active with Ringier Axel Springer Media until the end of 2021 in the markets of Poland, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia and the Baltic countries. With the exception of the Polish activities, all Eastern European activities were sold by December 31, 2021. The Ringier Axel Springer Polska brands are among the leading digital offerings. In addition to news and entertainment portals such as Onet, this also includes Gratka.pl, one of the largest and most popular classifieds providers, and Morizon.pl, one of the largest websites for real estate ads. The Polish print offers include the largest Polish newspaper FAKT (according to the Polish Association of Press Distribution Control, ZKDP). Offers from the portfolio sold at the end of 2021 include the Hungarian job portal profession.hu and Hungary's leading mass circulation daily BLIKK.

Our news aggregator upday aggregates "top news" curated by editors in 34 European countries and also personalizes algorithm-based "My News" messages for users, making it the largest mobile news service in Europe. In addition, upday operates the e-sports news platform "Jaxon".

According to the Bonial Group, which is based in Berlin, it is the leading drive-to-store marketing partner in Germany. The German consumer information portals kaufDA.de and MeinProspekt.de deliver digitized advertising brochures from the retail trade in a regionalized form and mainly via mobile devices. The services are also offered under a local brand in France.

finanzen.net, one of the financial portals with the widest coverage in Germany according to agof, offers its users data and news on current developments on the financial markets every trading day. As part of its internationalization strategy, the portal is also represented with an offer in Switzerland, the USA and Austria. finanzen.net has been operating its own so-called Neobroker with ZERO since 2021.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact across the industry in 2020, which was reflected in the area of print offers by significant losses in circulation in newsstand sales and advertising. Despite the persistence of the pandemic situation, business development in print offers became stable again in 2021. In the digital area, strong traffic and innovative marketing concepts as well as an increase in the number of subscribers in 2020 led to a significant increase in revenues. Idealo benefited from the new pandemic-related shopping behavior on

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the Internet and recorded significant increases in sales. The high level of sales achieved in 2020 due to the pandemic was maintained throughout 2021. The development of the general economic environment, the pandemic as well as the sustainability of trends in the digital sector will also be of great importance for the business developments in the News Media segment in 2022.

Media Marketing

The Media Marketing segment includes the affiliate marketing platform Awin as a key operating unit. Awin generates revenues through performance-based placement of advertising on the Internet. Advertisers can use Awin technology and the Awin network to advertise their products and offers on publisher websites using advertising media such as text links or advertising banners. Advertisers pay a mainly success-based commission if a transaction desired by the advertiser is generated via the advertising material.

According to its own statements, the globally leading affiliate marketing platform Awin offers innovative technologies, international reach and data-based insights for performance-based advertising partnerships with over 240,000 active publishers and over 20,000 advertisers worldwide. Awin's performance is closely correlated with e-commerce growth and benefited from the global increase in e-commerce consumption across all regions. We assume that this trend will continue in 2022, although the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic holds certain uncertainties.

Services/Holding

Superordinate Group services and holding functions are reported in the Services/Holding segment. Group services are purchased by customers within the group at normal market prices.

Management and supervision

The Executive Board of Axel Springer SE consists of four members. The Executive Board is advised and supervised by a Supervisory Board composed of nine members.

The responsibilities on the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE are or were distributed as follows in the 2021 financial year:

Dr. Mathias Döpfner is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. All editors-in-chief and the areas of Corporate Communications, Public Affairs, New Business/Blockchain, Strategic Partnerships, Innovation & Ventures, HR Managers and the Free Tech Academy report to him.

Dr. Julian Deutz is responsible for finance and human resources. In addition to the financial areas, the department also includes the areas of M&A and Strategy, People & Culture, Group Legal and Compliance (including data protection), Group Procurement, Corporate Security and Corporate Audit & Risk Management; he also has additional responsibility for the Awin Group.

In the reporting year, Jan Bayer was responsible for all of the Group's News Media activities, i.e. the Axel Springer media brands in Germany, including BILD TV and WELT TV, including marketing (Media Impact, Visoon), sales (Sales Impact) and for the printing plants, as well as for the international news media activities in the USA including POLITICO, in Eastern Europe, Switzerland as well as for the media brands in France, Spain and for POLITICO Europe. His board departments also included upday, idealo, finanzen.net and Bonial.

Dr. Stephanie Caspar was responsible for the entire Classifieds Media business (Real Estate Classifieds and Jobs Classifieds), i.e. for the AVIV Group and the StepStone Group, in the reporting year.

Goals and strategy

Axel Springer's goal is to become the global market leader in the field of digital journalism and digital classified ads. Strategic priorities lie particularly in the area of Classifieds Media and News Media. When implementing the strategy and increasing the value of the company, growth should be pursued more strongly than in recent years.

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Segment strategies

In the **Classifieds Media** segment, Axel Springer intends to further expand its position as a leading international provider of digital classifieds portals. In addition to organic development, additional acquisitions should contribute to growth, depending on acquisition opportunities. Synergies within the group are used consistently. In addition, early phase activities were started focused in the Classifieds Media segment and selected minority investments were made in order to identify innovative business models and providers at an early stage.

In the **News Media** segment, Axel Springer wants to leverage the potential of the strong national brands BILD and WELT in digital and print media, as well as the potential of international brands such as Insider, POLITICO or upday. The print area is about limiting the circulation decline and aligning our products even more consistently with the readers in order to consolidate the strong position of our titles. The digital sector, on the other hand, requires greater investment in technological innovations and product range expansions across brands. With the digital brand subscriptions BILDplus, WELTplus and Insider Premium, the basis of paying readers on the internet is being established and expanded. Another focus is the expansion of video content in the digital offerings of BILD and WELT, including the launch of the linear TV channel BILD LIVE in August 2021. In the coming years, more investments will be made in expanding this range. Via the central marketer Media Impact, the segment offers advertisers a cross-media and far-reaching platform for advertising campaigns.

The strategy in the **Marketing Media** segment aims to successfully promote activities with new, innovative products and by expanding services and the publisher network.

Organic and acquisitions-driven growth

The segment-specific organic growth measures are aimed at growing out of the existing portfolio and, among other things, increasing revenues and earnings per user or reader through attractive product and pricing, winning new users for our offers or existing users through new business models to be able to make offers.

In all segments, Axel Springer also takes the opportunity to expand the business model by investing in companies with innovative business ideas. Investments are also occasionally made in companies that are still in the early stages of company development. Above all, however, established companies are acquired when opportunities arise. We select suitable participations primarily based on their appropriate strategic direction, the quality of management, profitability and the scalability of the business model. We assess the profitability of investments in new or existing business areas using, among other things, recognized capital value methods that take into account business and country-specific risks.

Performance indicators

We focus on increasing both our profitability and our company value in a sustainable way. In terms of profitability, **pro forma revenues**, **adjusted EBITDA** and **adjusted EBIT** are the most important **financial performance indicators**. A description of the definitions can be found in the "Explanations on the key performance indicators used" section of the "Group's financial performance, liquidity, and financial position" chapter.

In addition, the following **non-financial performance indicators** are relevant for assessing our customer, market and supply-related services, even if the company as a whole is not controlled accordingly:

- Unique users/visitors as well as business model-related key figures of our online media and the resulting market position
- Reach of our media in the advertising market as well as key figures on brand and advertising awareness
- Average paid circulation of all major newspapers and magazines sold
- Digital subscriptions

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Economic report

General economic conditions

In its outlook published in January 2022, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates real growth in the **global economy** at 5.9% in 2021. In 2020, the economy contracted by −3.1% in real terms due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

According to calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, the **German economy** grew by 2.7% on a price-adjusted basis in 2021. This compares to a price-adjusted decline of 4.6% in 2020. Price-adjusted private consumption in 2021 was at the previous year's level. Price-adjusted investments increased by 1.3% compared to the previous year. Exports were also able to increase by 9.4% on a price-adjusted basis. Imports also increased by 8.6% on a price-adjusted basis compared to the previous year.

After a brightening of consumer sentiment over the course of the year, it clouded over significantly in December 2021, according to GfK surveys. The renewed slump in the consumer confidence can be attributed to the worsening Covid-19 pandemic and, above all, to a significant increase in inflation, especially in energy prices.

According to calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, consumer prices rose by 3.1% in 2021 compared to the previous year. On average for 2021, the Federal Employment Agency recorded 2.6 million unemployed. The number increased by 0.2% compared to the previous year, the average unemployment rate in 2021 was 5.7%.

Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the IMF estimated growth of the **US economy** in 2021 was 5.6% in real terms. For 2020, the IMF calculated a decline in economic output of 3.4% in real terms.

The **British economy** was able to recover significantly after a slump of −9.4% in 2020 and, according to the IMF, achieved estimated real growth of 7.2% in 2021.

For **France**, the IMF estimates real economic growth in 2021 at 6.7% after a slump in economic output of 8.0% in 2020.

According to the IMF, the estimated real economic growth in **Poland** in 2021 was 5.4%, in 2020 the decline was −2.5%.

Industry-specific environment

Advertising market

Based on the current advertising market forecast by Zenith ("Advertising Expenditure Forecast", December 2021), the advertising market in Germany in 2021 was nominally 6.6% above the previous year's level, compared to the global advertising market with an increase of 15.6% in 2020

According to the latest surveys, the net turnover in Germany for the **total advertising market** was € 22.6 billion in the reporting period (including classified ads and leaflet supplements, less granted discounts and agency commissions and excluding production costs).

In the **online** sector in Germany (display, social media, search and affiliate), net advertising revenues rose by 10.0% to € 10.9 billion in 2021. Digital advertising expenditure thus corresponds to a share of 48.5% in total advertising expenditure. The proportion has increased again compared to the previous year. The decisive factor for this is the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which is further driving the digital transformation of brands.

In print media, the net advertising revenues of the **newspapers** (newspapers, advertising papers and newspaper supplements) in the reporting period were at € 3.0 billion on the previous year level. The **magazines** (general and specialist magazines, directory media) were at the previous year's level with net advertising revenues of € 2.5 billion.

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Television advertising in Germany recorded growth of 8.0 % to € 4.3 billion in 2021, while net **advertising** revenues for **radio** continued to decline and were, at € 684 million, 4.1 % below the previous year's level. Net advertising revenues in **outdoor advertising** grew by 8.0 % to € 1.1 billion in 2021.

According to Zenith, the following digital advertising revenue development is expected for selected countries in 2021:

Digital advertising activity 2021 (selection)

Change in net advertising revenues compared to prior year (nominal)	Digital
Germany	10.0 %
Central and Eastern Europe	35.0 %
USA	33.7 %
United Kingdom	27.9 %

Source: Zenith, Advertising Expenditure Forecast, December 2021; preliminary estimates.

Distribution market

As in previous years, an increasing willingness to pay for **digital content** can be observed in Germany. At the same time, the number of subscription-based services continues to grow. Individual media providers also focus exclusively on circulation revenues as a business model and give these more importance than reach-based revenues (source: Reuters, Journalism, Media and Technology Trends Predictions 2022). The Axel Springer offerings in this segment of online sales, BILDplus and WELTplus, which were pioneers founded in 2013 and 2012 respectively, have been recording strong growth in subscriber numbers for years, with BILDplus increasing its subscriber base to over 592,000 in 2021. This is the strongest portfolio growth in over five years. With 181,000 subscribers, WELTplus also recorded growth of over 30 % compared to 2020. The paid offers from INSIDER in the USA and POLITICO in the USA and Europe are also showing strong growth in subscriber numbers.

The **domestic press distribution market** recovered slightly compared to the previous year, which was heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The total circulation of newspapers and magazines sold in 2021 fell only 2.9 % below the same period of the previous year. Due to the price increases realized in the past four quarters, however, sales revenues increased by 4.9 % compared to the previous year. Buying restraint in the newspaper segment continues. Here, the decline of 4.5 % is more pronounced compared to the overall average.

In 2021, the 325 IVW registered daily and Sunday newspapers achieved total sales of about 13.6 million copies per publication date. Compared to the same period of the previous year, this corresponded to a decrease of 4.2 %. Newsstand sales (–8.9 %) – as in the prior year – suffered a much greater decline than subscription sales (–3.1 %). Demand in the segment of daily and Sunday newspapers – weighted according to the frequency of publication – fell by 2.6 %.

Overall sales of general-interest magazines including membership and club magazines was 58.2 million copies per publication date. Compared to the same period of the previous year, this corresponded to a decrease of 4.6 %. IVW tracked a total of 598 titles (–8.8 % compared with the prior-year figure). Weighted according to the respective frequency of publication, demand in the general-interest magazine segment declined by 4.2 %.

Business development

On November 26, 2020, The Annual General Meeting of Axel Springer SE decided to transfer the shares of the other shareholders (minority shareholders) of Axel Springer SE to Traviata BV in return for an appropriate cash compensation to be paid by Traviata BV in the amount of € 60.24 per share transfer (**squeeze-out**). The squeeze-out took effect in February 2021 and all shares in the minority shareholders were transferred to Traviata BV. Since then, Traviata BV has been involved in Axel Springer SE with around 48.5 %.

In the beginning of March 2021, the sale of 100 % of the shares held by Axel Springer in the French **La Centrale Group** (formerly CarBoatMedia Group) was completed. Funds of the company in the amount of € 78.0 million,

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already invested in the group, were not sold, but distributed to us before the sale. Axel Springer then paid an amount of € 50.0 million to gain a 22.5 % stake in the newly founded acquired company.

In August 2021, Axel Springer and Meta (**Facebook**) agreed on a global collaboration primarily focused on distribution. Content from Axel Springer is to be increasingly distributed in various offers on the platform, including the "Facebook News" product. In addition, the media brands involved will increasingly share their video content on Facebook. The ancillary copyright for press publishers is explicitly excluded from this agreement.

The new **TV channel BILD** started in August 2021. The core offer is a live program starting in the morning and running for up to six hours a day. The new studios in the new Axel Springer building in Berlin will also be used for this purpose. The station's program should be supplemented with documentation, reports and other formats. The focus is on politics, sports, VIP, crime and service topics. The programming may be interrupted at any time for live reporting on current topics.

In October 2021, Axel Springer announced the acquisition of 100 % stake in **POLITICO**, one of the world's most influential political news outlets. The acquisition also included 50 % of the shares in POLITICO Europe, making Axel Springer the sole owner. In addition to POLITICO and POLITICO Europe, the media properties Protocol, E&E News and Agency IQ are also part of the portfolio. POLITICO supports Axel Springer's growth strategy, in particular its expansion in the US media market.

At the end of December 2021, Axel Springer sold its shares in **Ringier Axel Springer Media** in Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia and the Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to the joint venture partner Ringier. As part of the growth strategy, Axel Springer focuses on digital business in large strategic markets. The focus of investment in the News Media segment is on Germany, the USA and Poland. Accordingly, the successful joint venture between Ringier and Axel Springer in Poland will retain under the name Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska. As early as the end of September 2021, Ringier Axel Springer Media sold all of its shares in **Bistro.sk**, an online food delivery service in Slovakia, in order to focus on content, classifieds and community business in the Slovak market.

Overall statement by the Executive Board on the business development and the economic environment

Digitization continues to be the defining trend for the economic environment for media companies. This reflects the development of segments of the Axel Springer Group. In the year under review, the macroeconomic environment was characterized in particular by a recovery from the economic, political and social effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Our strategy of constant digitization of the company has enabled us to limit the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Business development was also influenced by acquisitions in digital business models and by active portfolio management. With long-term investors as strategic partners who support our growth strategy, we are well positioned to leverage the potential that we see in our business areas and thus achieve further organic growth.

Financial performance, liquidity, and financial position

Financial performance

Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, our activities developed excellently in the past financial year. In particular, business with job portals and with advertisements in our journalistic brands, which was particularly hard hit by the economic recession in the first year of the crisis, 2020, was able to grow strongly again in 2021. Business models such as idealo and Awin, whose services and products are benefiting from the eCommerce boom, were able to consolidate and further expand their business at a high level in 2021. Accordingly, revenues in the reporting year were € 3,379.2 million and thus 15.8 % above the previous year (PY: € 2,917.6 million).[1] Overall, changes in the companies included in the consolidated financial statements had no significant impact

[1] The revenues of the previous year have been adjusted. Due to methodological adjustments to revenue recognition, other revenues and purchased goods and services were reduced by € 50.7 million and advertising revenues were increased by € 2.5 million. Please also refer to the disclosures in Note (3p) to the consolidated financial statements.

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on revenues. Significant changes related to the acquisition of POLITICO in mid-October 2021 and the sale of the Eastern European business (with the exception of the Polish activities) at the end of 2021.

At € 3,386.9 million, **pro forma revenues** were 16.6 % above the previous year's figure (PY: € 2,903.7 million). Pro forma revenues of the Classifieds Media segment increased by 29.6 %; the News Media segment grew by 8.9 %. The Marketing Media segment was also able to increase pro forma revenues by 18.2 %.

Advertising revenues increased significantly by 20.1 % to € 2,453.6 million (PY: € 2,043.4 million). **Pro forma advertising revenues** increased by 21.5 % to € 2,430.2 million (PY: € 2,000.3 million). All operating segments contributed to this growth, with the Classifieds Media segment recording disproportionately high growth, particularly in the activities of StepStone. At 71.8 %, the share of pro forma advertising revenues in pro forma revenues was slightly above the previous year's level (PY: 68.9 %).

Circulation revenues increased by 1.0 % to € 525.8 million (PY: 520.8 million). The increase in **pro-forma circulation revenues** by 1.8 % from € 568.7 million to € 578.8 million was achieved through a significant increase in digital subscription sales despite a structural decline in the circulation of printed newspapers and magazines. The share of pro-forma circulation revenues in pro-forma total sales fell to 17.1 % (PY: 19.6 %).

The other revenues amounted to € 399.8 million. This corresponded to an increase of 13.2 % (PY: 353.3 million). **Other pro forma revenues** amounted to € 377.9 million, 12.9 % above the previous year's value of € 334.7 million. Overall, other pro forma revenues accounted for 11.2 % (PY: 11.5 %) of the pro forma revenues.

Other operating income was at € 435.1 million (PY: € 134.1 million) and essentially comprised gains from the disposal of consolidated subsidiaries, in particular the La Centrale Group with € 251.3 million and the Ringier Axel Springer Media Group (with the exception of our Polish investments) with € 41.7 million. The previous year's figure was primarily characterized by the profit of € 57.4 million. from the purchase price of € 427.1 million (before tax payments of € 35.4 million) and followed the sale of the new Axel Springer building in Berlin.

The **change in inventories and other own work capitalized** amounted to € 107.7 million (PY: € 97.1 million) and, as in the prior year, were mainly related to IT development projects to upgrade and expand our digital business models.

Compared to the prior-year figure, **total expenses** increased by 20.9 % to € 3,449.4 million (PY: € 2,854.3 million).[2]

The **purchased goods and services** increased by 17.2 % to € 497.7 million (PY: € 424.7 million). The reason for the increase was, in particular, other purchased services in the area of Classifieds Media. The cost of materials ratio remained almost constant at 14.7 % (PY: 14.6 %).

The **personnel expenses** were at € 1,532.3 million (PY:€ 1,268.0 million) by 20.8 % over the prior year's level. The main reasons for this development were the increases in personnel in the high-growth digital business areas and effects from the valuation of long-term company value-based compensation programs. The average number of employees in the Group rose by 3.8 % to 16,835 in 2021.

The increase in **depreciation, amortization and impairments** to € 381.6 million (PY: € 328.5 million) resulted primarily from higher scheduled amortization of other intangible assets as a result of adjustments to the useful lifetimes of certain title and trademark rights as well as impairments of goodwill.

The **other operating expenses** were € 1,037.9 million. (PY: € 833.1 million). The increase was mainly due to expenses in connection with the subsequent measurement of contingent considerations and increased expenses for advertising measures.

The **income from investments** amounted to € 76.1 million (PY: € 0.2 million) and, as in the previous year, was characterized by the revaluation of financial assets as well as earnings contributions from our early-stage funds.

[2] The total expenses of the previous year have been adjusted (see footnote 1).

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In the year under review, impairment losses on our investments in Purplebricks and Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG, which are accounted for using the equity method, amounted to € 59.4 million (PY: € 16.5 million) or € 4.5 million (PY: € 41.4 million). The earnings contributions from our early-stage funds, accounted for using the equity method, had a positive effect in the amount of € 82.4 million (PY: € 21.2 million), which essentially resulted from revaluation effects on investments recognized in the funds. In the previous year, there was an additional income of € 51.2 million from the fair value measurement of our stake in Airbnb.

The **interest income** amounted to € –32.3 million (PY: € –8.9 million). The decrease in the financial result was caused by, among other things, increased interest expenses from liabilities to banks and currency translation results. In addition, the previous year included in particular interest income from tax refunds from previous years, write-ups on convertible loan receivables and positive effects from the partial elimination of loan obligations.

Income taxes amounted to € –77.0 million in the year under review (PY: € –77.6 million). The tax rate was 14.9 % (PY: 27.2 %) and was characterized in particular by the largely tax-neutral income in connection with the sale of consolidated subsidiaries and tax-neutral depreciation of financial assets.

The **adjusted EBITDA** increased significantly compared to the previous year by 12.6 % to € 712.9 million (PY: € 633.3 million). The Group's margin was 21.0 % (PY: 21.8 %). The Classifieds Media segment was able to increase adjusted EBITDA by 19.6 % from € 328.3 million to € 392.7 million. The adjusted EBITDA of the News Media segment fell by 1.4 % from € 318.2 million to € 313.6 million. This contrary development compared to the segment's revenue development resulted in particular from start-up losses in connection with the establishment of the TV station Bild TV. The Marketing Media segment was able to increase adjusted EBITDA by 24.4 % from € 49.6 million to € 61.7 million. The Services/Holding segment improved adjusted EBITDA from € –62.8 million to € –55.0 million, mainly due to a reallocation of functions to the News Media segment and a streamlining of holding functions.

Adjusted EBIT increased by 20.2 % to € 490.2 million through nearly unchanged depreciation, amortization and impairments (PY: € 407.7 million). At 14.5 %, the margin was above the level of the previous year (PY: 14.0 %). The Classifieds Media segment was able to increase adjusted EBIT by 28.4 % from € 229.5 million to € 294.5 million. The adjusted EBIT of the News Media segment fell by 3.2 % from € 208.5 million to € 201.9 million. The Marketing Media segment was able to increase the adjusted EBIT by 32.6 % from € 36.9 million to € 48.9 million increase. The Services/Holding segment improved the adjusted EBIT from € –67.1 million to € –55.0 million. Due to intra-group leases of office space to other areas of the group, income from on-charges to other segments was recognized under depreciation and amortization in the Services/Holding segment.

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The following adjustment effects resulted in adjusted EBITDA and adjusted EBIT:

Adjustment effects in adjusted EBITDA and adjusted EBIT

€ millions	2021	2020*
Effects from business acquisitions	–5.7	–5.1
Effects from disposal of consolidated subsidiaries/real estate	321.0	47.2
Subsequent measurement of contingent considerations	–61.2	17.0
Company value-based compensation	–104.8	–26.4
Restructuring costs	–23.2	–48.3
Pro forma effects	2.7	24.1
Income from investments	76.1	0.2
Special items	12.3	–18.8
Adjustments EBITDA	**217.2**	**–10.1**
Depreciation, amortization and impairments from purchase price allocations	–156.1	–88.9
Other adjustments	–2.8	–14.1
Adjustments EBIT	**58.3**	**–113.1**

* The EBITDA adjustments of the previous year were aligned due to the items being adjusted in the 2021 financial year. In addition, the pro forma effects of the previous year are subject to changes due to acquisitions and disposals during the year under review.

In the year under review, the effects from the disposal of consolidated subsidiaries and real estate were mainly attributable to the La Centrale Group, the Ringier Axel Springer Media Group (with the exception of our Polish holdings), and Bistro.sk. The previous year's figure included in particular the profit from the sale of the new Axel Springer building in Berlin. Adjustments in connection with the subsequent measurement of contingent considerations related, in particular, to Morning Brew in the year under review. In addition, personnel expenses from the revaluation of company value-based compensation programs were adjusted. In the year under review, the adjustment resulted particularly from the newly launched long-term management incentive plan and remuneration programs at Appcast and Morning Brew. As in the previous year, amounts for the previous long-term incentive plan for members of the Executive Board and selected executives as well as for the option programs at Insider were also included. Restructuring costs during the previous year mainly related to the News Media National and Services/Holding segments. In the year under review, there were pro forma effects from the acquisition of POLITICO and the disposal of the business segments of the Ringier Axel Springer Media Group, which almost offset each other. The pro forma effects of the previous year related, in particular, to the La Centrale Group. In addition to the current results from the at-equity consolidation, the complete adjustment of the income from investment includes, in particular, the revaluation effects on our investments recorded in the year under review and in the previous year.

The reconciliation of adjusted EBITDA to net income is shown below:

Reconciliation of adjusted EBITDA to net income*

€ millions	2021	2020*
Adjusted EBITDA	**712.9**	**633.3**
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments/write-ups (without adjustments and purchase price allocations)	–222.7	–225.6
Adjusted EBIT	**490.2**	**407.7**
Adjustments	58.3	–113.1
Net financial result	–32.3	–8.9
Income taxes	–77.0	–77.6
Net income	**439.2**	**208.2**

*For the partial restatement of prior year figures, please refer to note (3p) to the consolidated financial statements.

The **net income** rose by 111.0 % to € 439.2 million (PY: € 208.2 million). Due to a higher percentage increase in minority interests, **earnings per share** increased by 106.4 % to € 3.62 per share (PY: € 1.75 per share).

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Liquidity

Financial management

As a general rule, Axel Springer SE provides all financing for the Axel Springer Group. This arrangement ensures that the Group companies have sufficient liquidity at all times. The overriding goal of financial management is to provide cost-effective liquidity in the form of maturity-matched financing.

Net liquidity/debt

€ millions	2021	2020
Cash and cash equivalents	201.6	216.3
Financial liabilities	2,625.8	2,023.4
Net liquidity/debt*	**–2,424.2**	**–1,807.0**

* Including lease liabilities amounting to € 532.7 million (PY: € 551.1 million).

The long-term credit lines still available, amounting to € 1,500.0 million, with a term until July 2024 amounted to € 686.5 million on the balance sheet date. (PY: € 547.6 million). In September 2021, another term loan in the amount of € 500.0 million was concluded to finance the acquisition of POLITICO with a term until July 2026 and was fully utilized in October 2021. The term of the term loan taken out in the previous year in the amount of € 300.0 million was extended by one year to July 2024 in the reporting year. In addition, there were still promissory notes in the amount of € 614.5 million (PY: € 626.0 million) with terms up to May 2022 (€ 158.0 million), May 2023 (€ 72.0 million) and May 2024 (€ 384.5 million).

To cover short-term capital requirements with optimized interest rates, we can also issue certain types of short-term bearer bonds (commercial paper) with a maximum volume of € 750.0 million and a term of up to one year. As of the reporting date, no commercial paper had been issued.

The credit line, the term loan of € 300.0 million, the promissory notes and the short-term commercial paper program can be used both for general corporate purposes and to finance acquisitions. The term loan of € 500.0 million utilized in the reporting year is used exclusively for acquisition financing.

Cash flow development

Consolidated Cash Flow Statement (condensed)

€ millions	2021	2020
Cash flow from operating activities	434.2	510.3
Cash flow from investing activities	–598.8	43.7
Cash flow from financing activities	143.9	–616.0
Cash flow-related changes in cash and cash equivalents	**–20.8**	**–62.0**
Cash and cash equivalents as of December 31	**201.6**	**216.3**

Cash flow from operating activities was € 434.2 million and thereby 14.9 % below the value of the same period last year (€ 510.3 million). The development resulted, in particular, from higher net tax payments and higher payments for long-term compensation programs based on the company's value. The positive operating result adjusted for non-cash items had the opposite effect.

Cash flow from investing activities amounted to € –598.8 million, (PY: € 43.7 million). Investments in intangible assets and property, plant and equipment were below the previous year's level, particularly due to the completion of the new Axel Springer building in Berlin. The payments (less cash acquired) for company and investment acquisitions completed in the year under review related mainly to € 861.7 million. the acquisition of POLITICO (including 50 % of the shares in POLITICO Europe). In the previous year, € 33.3 million was pledged to the acquisition of Gratka (100 %) and Morizon (79.6 %) and € 25.7 million towards the acquisition of a 66 % stake in Morning Brew. The investments in financial assets are mainly related to investments in our hybrid broker

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holdings and digital agencies. In the previous year, investments in our hybrid broker holdings and loan payments to Ringier were included. On the other hand, there were proceeds from the disposal of our shares (less cash transferred) in the La Centrale Group (€ 342.6 million, after the deduction of an investment amount of € 50.0 million into the acquiring company), the Ringier Axel Springer Media Group (with the exception of our Polish holdings) (€ 62.8 million), as well as Bistro.sk (€ 40.4 million). We also sold our stake in Airbnb in the year under review (€ 76.1 million). In the previous year, the payment of the purchase price from the sale of the new Axel Springer building was € 427.1 million (before tax payments of € 35.4 million, which were mainly paid in the 2020 financial year).

The cash flow from financing activities of € 143.9 million (PY: € – 616.0 million) was characterized by a net borrowing (PY: net repayment) of financial liabilities in the year under review. This was counteracted by the higher dividend paid to the shareholders of Axel Springer SE compared to the previous year.

Financial position

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position (condensed)*

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Non-current assets	6,044.1	5,170.5
Current assets	1,278.1	1,317.4
Assets	**7,322.3**	**6,487.9**
Equity	2,490.8	2,397.7
Non-current liabilities	3,198.0	2,706.5
Current liabilities	1,633.5	1,383.7
Equity and liabilities	**7,322.3**	**6,487.9**

*For the partial restatement of prior year figures, please refer to note (3p) to the consolidated financial statements.

The development of the non-current assets was primarily characterized by the recognition of intangible assets as part of the first-time consolidation of the acquisition of POLITICO, which was completed in the year under review, and by positive currency translation effects. The disposal of the Ringier Axel Springer Media Group (with the exception of our Polish holdings), and Bistro.sk, which were completed in the year under review, provided a compensating effect. The increase in investments accounted for using the equity method was mainly due to positive earnings contributions from our early-stage funds; due to revaluation effects on investments recorded in the funds. This was offset by impairments, particularly of Purplebricks.

Current assets were only slightly below the previous year's value. The reduction in assets and liabilities held for sale due to the disposal of the La Centrale Group was counteracted by an increase in trade receivables, mainly due to the positive operating business development.

The increase in equity resulted from the net income generated, currency translation effects in consolidated financial statements and the recognition of actuarial gains from the increase in the discount rate used in pension accounting (taking into account the corresponding tax effects). This was countered, in particular, by the dividend paid to the shareholders of Axel Springer SE and the disposal of existing shares held by other shareholders in connection with the disposal of the Ringier Axel Springer Media Group. The equity ratio fell to 34.0 %, in particular due to the acquisition-related increase in financial liabilities (PY: 37.0 %).

The increase in non-current liabilities is mainly related to the increased utilization of our credit line reported under financial liabilities despite the reclassification of the promissory notes due in the 2022 financial year. In addition, other liabilities from agreed option rights increased due to subsequent valuation effects, particularly in connection with Morning Brew and Appcast. This was offset by a reduction in the net pension obligation due to the adjustment of the discount rate and the increase in plan assets.

The increase in current liabilities was mainly due to the reclassification of the promissory notes due in the financial year of 2022. In addition, due in part to consolidation, trade payables and other liabilities increased. The decrease in liabilities due to related parties was partially offset by payments in connection with the portion

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of the long-term incentive plan, attributable to the Executive Board and the non-recognition of the liabilities held for sale due to the disposal of the La Centrale Group completed in the year under review.

Explanations of the key performance indicators used

The key performance indicators used in these consolidated financial statements are pro forma revenues, adjusted EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortization and impairments), adjusted EBITDA margin, adjusted EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes), adjusted EBIT margin, free cash flow, net debt/liquidity and equity ratio are not defined key performance indicators according to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), which are to be regarded as additional information.

When calculating the pro forma revenues, the revenues for the companies acquired in the reporting year or previous year are taken into account as if these companies had been included in the consolidated financial statements since the beginning of the previous year. In the case of revenues, the revenues of the companies sold are completely disregarded in the reporting year and in the previous year.

Adjusted EBITDA, adjusted EBITDA margin, adjusted EBIT and adjusted EBIT margin do not include any special effects and no depreciation, amortization and impairments from purchase price allocations. Special effects include effects from the acquisition and disposal (including contribution) of subsidiaries, parts of companies and investments (including effects from the subsequent measurement of contingent considerations and other option liabilities for the acquisition of non-controlling interests), impairments and write-ups on investments, effects from the sale of real estate, impairments and write-ups on owner-occupied real estate, expenses in connection with long-term company value-based compensation programs, restructuring costs, the entire income from investments and other significant one-off effects. In addition, an adjustment for company acquisitions and disposals corresponding to the determination of the pro forma revenues is made. Purchase price allocation effects include the expenses of depreciation, amortization and impairments of intangible assets, and property, plant, and equipment from the acquisition of companies and business divisions. The segment-specific adjustments are explained in more detail in the presentation of the financial performance.

The adjusted EBITDA margin is determined as the ratio of the adjusted EBITDA to the pro forma revenues. The adjusted EBIT margin is determined as the ratio of the adjusted EBIT to the pro forma revenues.

The free cash flow results from the cash flow from operating activities less investments in intangible assets and property, plant and equipment (capital expenditures) plus proceeds from the disposal of intangible assets and property, plant and equipment. These partial amounts are stated separately in the Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows. Net debt/liquidity is calculated as the balance of cash and cash equivalents and financial liabilities.

The equity ratio reflects the ratio between equity and the balance sheet total as of the respective balance sheet date.

We consider the pro forma revenues, the adjusted EBITDA, the adjusted EBITDA margin, the adjusted EBIT and the adjusted EBIT margin to be suitable key performance indicators for measuring the operating profitability of Axel Springer, since these key performance indicators disregard effects that do not reflect the fundamental business development of Axel Springer. We consider free cash flow, net debt/liquidity and the equity ratio to be suitable key performance indicators for assessing our current financing and capital structure and future financing volume.

Non-financial performance indicators

Personnel

In the year under review, Axel Springer had an average of 16,835 (PY: 16,213) employees (excluding trainees, journalism students, and volunteers). An average of 8,344 employees worked abroad (previous year: 7,817); this corresponds to a share of 49.6 % (previous year: 48.2 %). An average of 7,495 women were employed in the Group, resulting in the proportion of women at 44.5 % (previous year: 43.9 %) being slightly above the previous year's level. The number of editors rose by 6.0 % to 2,936 in the reporting period. The number of salaried employees increased by 3.7 % to 13,611.

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Employees per segment

Average number per year	2021	2020	Change
Classifieds Media	5,425	5,301	2.3%
News Media	9,758	9,333	4.6%
Media Marketing	1,157	1,007	14.9%
Services/Holding	495	572	- 13.5%
Group	**16,835**	**16,213**	**3.8%**

In the Classifieds Media segment, the number of employees increased, particularly at StepStone. The increase in the News Media segment resulted primarily from the organic growth of Insider Inc., and the acquisition of POLITICO. In the Marketing Media segment, the number of employees at Awin increased. The decline in the Services/Holding segment was mainly due to structural measures.

Equal opportunity and diversity

Equal opportunities and diversity are of great relevance to Axel Springer. The previous focus on women in management positions has been expanded to include a holistic diversity & inclusion approach. In July 2020, the role of "Head of Global Diversity & Inclusion" was created, which will coordinate and further promote commitment in this area across the Group. Seven fields of action were defined: age & generations, personal background and context, ethnic origin and nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation and identity, physical and mental abilities, religion and worldview. The aim is to create a working environment in which all employees feel they belong and can contribute their full potential.

The 32.0% women in management positions reached in 2016 through the "Opportunities: equal!" Initiative (comparison: 16% in 2010) and remained stable at 35.1% in 2021 (HR Management Summary, as of: December 2021). However, the proportion of women in management positions is not evenly distributed across all management levels. The proportion of women is lower, especially at higher management levels. The proportion of women on the Executive Board is currently 25.0%. The promotion of women in management positions is still the focus and part of the holistic diversity & inclusion approach. Axel Springer thus set itself the goal of achieving a gender ratio of at least 40% women in top management positions by 2026. Efforts are being made to include people with 'diverse' and non-binary gender identities in this goal.

In order to increase awareness of diversity & inclusion, the Axel Springer Essentials have been expanded to include a fifth point: "We reject political and religious extremism and any kind of racism and sexual discrimination."

Research and Development

Axel Springer does not have a traditional research and development department of the kind that industrial enterprises maintain. All areas of the company optimize the existing offers and are working on establishing innovative products on the market. Above all, this means that we are continuously expanding our range of services through innovations in the digital business, developing editorial content and expanding our journalistic excellence. In doing so, we pay great attention to taking changing media use into account at an early stage.

In addition to our early-stage investments, we made our own contributions of € 108.3 million in the year under review (PY € 97.1 million) in connection with IT development projects to expand and extend our digital business models.

Further development of Classifieds Media

The development of new offers plays an important role in the Classifieds Media sector. The following examples illustrate this:

StepStone continuously invests in technologies to automate applicant selection, interviews and communication. Search & Match algorithms allow users to view the jobs most relevant to them. The use of artificial intelligence increases the efficiency of the recruitment process, for example by motivating users to interact and apply more

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actively. Video solutions support the entire application process through digital job interviews and time-shifted video interviews as well as video formats for, among other things, letters of motivation and video pitches. Rule-based, self-learning algorithms are used for the reach-optimized allocation of job ads. Salary databases enable users (including employers) to get a well-founded overview of salary levels in line with the market and to compare the current salary with the respective profile average.

The focus of technological developments at AVIV is on the one hand in the internationalization of the product and technology competence of MeilleursAgents for real estate valuation and the creation of price cards. The offer is currently being further developed and introduced in both Germany and Belgium. On the other hand, technology and product components are harmonized within AVIV. The aim is to achieve economies of scale within the group through joint developments in the future through the fundamentals of a uniform technological platform.

Further development of News Media
Our journalistic products as well, both digital and printed, were consistently expanded in the reporting year.

The editorial systems have been continuously updated and the necessary components for BILD Live have been added. Appropriate systemic updates were made for the subscription management system, and the production systems were further developed based on the process optimizations of the past few years.

In the digital area, we continued to invest in product and technology. Activities in the area of paid offers were pushed ahead intensively BILD and the number of subscribers increased further. The video offensive launched in the previous year was consistently continued. BILD Live – previously only available on the bild.de website and via the apps – has been available as a separate free-to-air TV channel since August 2021. Live shows and talks about politics, sports, entertainment and service topics are offered. Reports and documentation complete the new programming. The audio formats in the podcast area were also successfully expanded and the total number of streams increased significantly. In addition, the range of service and buying guide content was greatly expanded in order to participate in the e-commerce and online shopping trend in the long term.

Important initiatives have also taken place in the News Media International division. In Poland, Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska is developing technologies for creating personalized user profiles in order to optimize the marketing of its offers and is investing in user-friendly features to bind users more closely to its offers. In the US, Insider has invested in the performance of its websites to increase loading speed as a relevant ranking signal. In addition, Insider has completely redesigned and launched its mobile apps for iOS and Android under the unified Insider brand. Morning Brew has expanded its customer management system to make it easier to serve content in different formats and products. Insider Intelligence has started to research customer behavior using machine learning and artificial intelligence. In addition, Insider Intelligence is developing new application architecture to better position the organization to scale the business. POLITICO is developing its POLITICO Pro platform into a complete workflow solution with interactive stakeholder management and communication functions as well as personalized data/information feeds. General digital extensions were rolled out for the POLITICO.com website. In addition, the content management system is continuously expanded and adapted in order to support the publishing objectives across the B2B and B2C platforms. In addition, POLITICO invests in its own data collection and analyzes for new product developments and sources of revenue.

Our news aggregate upday has opened up new business areas with the development of the upday app for iOS and the multimedia eSports news platform. In addition, upday develops native content and marketing channels for business customers, such as an audio platform integration in the vehicles of a German car manufacturer.

The online offers from finanzen.net and Bonial are also being continuously developed. The expansion of innovative product functionalities and marketing technologies are aimed at increasing the reach and use of the offers and their monetization.

Further development of Marketing Media
The affiliate marketing platform Awin invests heavily in the development of "Software as a Service" models that are tailored to the needs of both large customers and small and medium-sized companies. With this offer, Awin wants to establish itself as a technology leader in its industry, increase its competitiveness compared to pure

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"Software as a Service" networks, in order to win over technology-savvy customers and strengthen the efficiency of its customer service.

General assessment of the company's financial performance, liquidity, and financial position by the Executive Board

The 2021 financial year was characterized by overall economic recovery, which, however, was weaker than expected at the beginning of the year due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Against this background, the 2021 financial year was extremely successful for us. Our pro forma revenues increased by 16.6 %, adjusted EBITDA increased by 12.6 %. Business with our job portals made a disproportionately high contribution to this positive development due to the economic situation. Real estate portals, which were moderately affected by the crisis year 2020, were able to increase their sales and earnings again in 2021. In the News Media segment, structurally related sales declines in the national print area were almost completely offset by higher sales in the digital media offerings. In the international area of the News Media segment, revenues increased significantly, particularly in the USA. The Marketing Media segment also continued to record significant growth in business.

We are convinced that there is still significant growth potential, especially in the area of digital classified ads and digital journalism. We pushed ahead with our growth initiatives and massively expanded our US presence with the acquisition of POLITICO. Acquisitions and active portfolio management will remain a building block for the further development of the group in the future. Thanks to the strategic partnership with long-term investors who support our growth strategy, we are well positioned to leverage the potential that we see in our business areas in order to continue to achieve organic growth in the future.

Net debt increased primarily due to the acquisition of POLITICO. With a very strong cash flow, a solid balance sheet structure and the favorable financing options available to us, we are still in a good position, despite this highest investment in our company's history, to be able to continue to make the necessary investments to realize future growth.

Selected key figures at Group level*

€ millions	2021	2020
Revenues, pro forma	3,386.9	2,903.7
EBITDA, adjusted	712.9	633.3
EBITDA margin, adjusted	21.0 %	21.8 %
EBIT, adjusted	490.2	407.7
EBIT margin, adjusted	14.5 %	14.0 %
Net income	439.2	208.2
Earnings per share	3.62	1.75
Advance payment on retained earnings (in €)**/dividend per share (in €)***	1.16	3.71
Total advance payment on retained earnings (in €)**/total dividends***	125.2	400.3
Equity ratio as at December 31	34.0 %	37.0 %
Net debt/liquidity as at December 31	–2,424.2	–1,807.0
Free cash flow (FCF)	248.9	705.2
FCF without effects from real estate transactions and LTIP****	331.9	339.4

* For the partial restatement of prior year figures, please refer to note (3p) to the consolidated financial statements as well as in the section financial performance of the management report.
**The advance payment on the unappropriated profit for 2021 is subject to a corresponding resolution by the Executive Board and an approving resolution by the Supervisory Board.
***The dividend for the 2021 financial year is subject to the approval of the Annual shareholder's meeting.
**** FCF adjusted for effects from the construction and sale of the new building, the Axel-Springer-Passage in Berlin and the buildings in Hamburg as well as the LTIP program for the Executive Board as well as selected executives.

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Economic position of Axel Springer SE

Selected key figures

€ millions	2021	2020	2018	2017	2016
Revenues	794.1	775.4	851.1	823.2	833.1
Net income	539.3	16.2	124.3	271.9	296.4
Advance payment on retained earnings (in €)*/ dividend per share (in €)**	1.16	3.71	2.10	2.00	1.90
Total advance payment on retained earnings*/ total dividends**	125.2	400.3	226.6	215.8	205.0

* The advance payment on the distributable profit for 2021 is subject to a corresponding resolution by the Executive Board and an approving resolution by the Supervisory Board

** The dividend for the 2021 financial year is subject to the approval of the Annual shareholder's and the Supervisory Board meeting.

Introductory remarks

Axel Springer SE is the parent company of the Axel Springer Group. Due to its subsidiaries, which Axel Springer SE controls directly or indirectly, the business developments are subject to the same risks and opportunities as the entire Group. These are presented in detail in the "Report on risks and opportunities" chapter. Likewise, the expectations with regard to the development of Axel Springer SE essentially correspond to the Group expectations described in the forecast report (see chapter "Forecast report").

The following explanations are based on the annual financial statements of Axel Springer SE, which was prepared in accordance with the provisions of the German Commercial Code and the German Stock Corporation Act. The annual financial statements and management report are published in the Federal Gazette.

Business activity

Axel Springer SE operates in the News Media National segment and publishes national daily and weekly newspapers in particular. In addition, the operating business activity includes offers from the digital portfolio of newspapers as well as car, computer and sports magazines. In addition, Axel Springer SE, as the parent company of the Axel Springer Group, performs holding functions, controls Group-wide liquidity management and provides other services to companies within the Group. The general economic conditions of Axel Springer SE essentially correspond to those of the Group and are described in the "Economic report" chapter.

Financial performance

Income Statement (condensed)

€ millions	2021	2020
Revenues	794.1	775.4
Other operating income	99.4	145.3
Purchased goods and services	–216.9	–183.3
Personnel expenses	–193.6	–190.2
Amortization, depreciations, and impairments of intangible assets and property, plant and equipment	–10.0	–11.7
Other operating expenses	–481.6	–471.4
Income from non-current financial assets	579.6	–4.5
Interest income	–0.5	–9.8
Income taxes	–31.3	–33.5
Net income	**539.3**	**16.2**

Revenues increased by € 18.7 million or 2.4% in the reporting year. While circulation revenues fell by € 11.2 million or 3.2% to € 336.8 million due to further market-related declines in the print business, advertising

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revenues remained at the previous year's level at € 267.1 million (PY: € 265.7 million). Other revenues increased by € 28.5 million, in particular due to higher online transaction revenues. or 17.7 % to € 190.2 million.

Other operating income amounted to € 99.4 million in the year under review (PY: € 145.3 million) and, as in the previous year, were characterized by income from the sale of assets. While the sale of a non-controlling interest in Airbnb resulted in income of € 76.0 million in the year under review, the sale of the new Axel Springer building in Berlin resulted in income of € 114.2 million in the previous year.

Purchased goods and services increased by € 33.5 million or 18.3 % to € 216.9 million. This was mainly due to a higher purchase of intercompany services as a result of the outsourcing of editorial activities to subsidiaries.

Personnel expenses increased by € 3.3 million or 1.7 % to € 193.6 million. Higher expenses resulted, in particular, from enterprise value-based compensation and the measurement of pension obligations. Expenses from restructuring measures developed in the opposite direction. Furthermore, a 15.5 % decline in the average of employees (1,036; PY: 1,227) led to lower personnel expenses.

Amortization, depreciations, and impairments of intangible assets and property, plant and equipment fell by € 1.7 million to € 10.0 million in the year under review, in particular due to lower depreciation of acquired software.

Other operating expenses were € 481.6 million by € 10.2 million or 2.2 % above the previous year's value. This included services from subsidiaries in the amount of € 212.7 million (PY: € 211.7 million).

The income from non-current financial assets increased by € 584.1 million to € 579.6 million This was mainly due to the transfer of profits from subsidiaries (€ 555.7 million; PY: € –23.6 million). While in the previous year these were burdened in particular by impairments on financial assets, higher earnings contributions from StepStone had an impact this year, which also included income from capital measures. Other income from direct investments of Axel Springer SE and loans amounted to € 18.7 million (PY: € 15.1 million). In addition, the valuation of investments and loans resulted in a positive result of € 5.0 million (PY: € 4.0 million), which included impairment losses of € 10.4 million (PY: € 4.9 million) and write-ups of € 15.4 million (PY: € 8.9 million).

The interest income for the year under review was € –0.5 million (PY: € –9.8 million) and essentially comprised interest expenses from credit lines used, promissory notes and short-term commercial paper issues as well as from the valuation of pension obligations. The increase in interest income compared to the previous year was mainly due to higher income from assets used to cover pension obligations.

Income taxes included € 31.3 million (PY: € 33.5 million). Despite a higher net income, tax expenses remained below the level of the previous year, since in particular the transfer of profits from subsidiaries only had to be partially taken into account in the context of the tax calculation.

The 2021 financial year ended with a net income of € 539.3 million (PY: € 16.2 million).

Liquidity

Net debt (liabilities to banks and borrower's note loans minus financial resources) amounted to € 2,033.1 million as of December 31, 2021 (PY: € 1,379.1 million).

The long-term credit lines still available, amounting to € 1,500.0 million, with a term until July 2024 amounted to € 686.5 million on the balance sheet date (PY: € 547.6 million). In September 2021, another term loan in the amount of € 500.0 million was concluded to finance the acquisition of POLITICO with a term until July 2026 and was fully utilized in October 2021. The term of the term loan taken out in the previous year in the amount of € 300.0 million was extended by one year to July 2024 in the reporting year. In addition, there were still promissory notes in the amount of € 614.5 million (PY: € 626.0 million) with terms up to May 2022 (€ 158.0 million), May 2023 (€ 72.0 million) and May 2024 (€ 384.5 million).

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To cover short-term capital requirements with optimized interest rates, Axel Springer can issue certain forms of short-term bearer bonds (commercial paper) with a maximum volume of € 750.0 million and a term of up to one year. As of the reporting date, no commercial paper had been issued.

The line of credit, the term loan of € 300.0 million, the promissory notes and the short-term commercial paper program can be used both for general corporate purposes and to finance acquisitions. The term loan of € 500.0 million utilized in the reporting year is used exclusively for acquisition financing.

Financial position

Balance Sheet (condensed)

€ millions	12/31/2021	12/31/2020
Intangible assets and property, plant and equipment	46.9	49.7
Non-current financial assets	7,634.5	6,505.4
Receivables from affiliated companies	364.9	225.5
Cash and cash equivalents	69.5	95.2
Other assets	75.3	53.2
Total assets	**8,191.2**	**6,928.9**
Equity	2,477.3	2,338.3
Provisions	140.4	232.6
Liabilities due to banks and promissory notes	2,102.6	1,474.3
Liabilities to affiliated companies	3,398.9	2,807.0
Other liabilities	71.9	76.8
Total equity and liabilities	**8,191.2**	**6,928.9**

The balance sheet total increased in the reporting year by € 1,262.2 million to € 8,191.2 million. Fixed assets amounted to € 7,681.4 million (PY: € 6,555.1 million) and represented 93.8 % (PY: 94.6 %) of total assets. It was 32.3 % (PY: 35.7 %) covered by equity.

Non-current financial assets increased by € 1,129.1 million to € 7,634.5 million in the year under review. The increase resulted primarily from additions of € 1,244.3 million as a result of equity and debt financing of subsidiaries. These also included financing the acquisition of POLITICO in October 2021. Disposals of financial assets in the amount of € 120.4 million, which resulted almost exclusively from loan repayments, had the opposite effect.

The receivables from affiliated companies (€ 364.9 million; PY: € 225.5 million) and liabilities to affiliated companies (€ 3,398.9 million; PY: € 2,807.0 million) essentially resulted from Group-wide liquidity management.

Shareholders' equity as of December 31, 2021 increased compared to the preceding year, by € 139.0 million and amounted to € 2,477.3 million (PY: € 2. 338.3 million). The decline resulting from the dividend payment for the past financial year (€ 400.3 million) was more than offset by the net income for the year under review (€ 539.3 million). The equity ratio decreased to 30.2 % as of the balance sheet date (PY: 33.7 %).

The provisions decreased by € 92.2 million compared to the previous year's reporting date to € 140.4 million (PY: € 232.6 million). The main reasons for the decline were lower obligations from share-based payment programs as well as lower tax provisions and provisions for restructuring measures.

Liabilities due to banks and promissory notes increased by € 628.3 million to € 2,102.6 million in the reporting year. The main reason for this was the financing of the acquisition of POLITICO in October 2021 (see above).

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Dependency report

The Management Board of Axel Springer SE has submitted the dependent company report required by Section 312 of the German Stock Corporation Act (Aktiengesetz – AktG) to the Supervisory Board and issued the following concluding statement:

"According to the circumstances known by the Axel Springer SE at the time when legal transactions were carried out with an affiliated company, Axel Springer SE received appropriate consideration for each legal transaction and did not take or omit any measures in the reporting period either at the instigation or in the interest of the controlling companies or any company affiliated with them."

Risk and opportunity report

As an international group, Axel Springer is exposed to a large number of internal and external influences that can have a significant effect on the achievement of our goals. We define risks as the possibility of a negative deviation of the company's development from our goals, while opportunities represent the possibility of a deviation in a positive sense. Against this background, opportunities to increase the earnings and company value should be used and risks should only be taken if they are within an acceptable and reasonable framework for the company. Thus, risks should be limited to a level deemed acceptable by taking appropriate measures, be transferred to third parties in full or in part, or, in those cases where risk mitigation is not considered advisable, be avoided or monitored closely.

Risk management system

The risk management process is aligned to identify and assess all material risks and risks that are potentially threatening the Group's existence as early as possible in order to be able to take appropriate countermeasures. The basic design of the structures and processes of the risk management system at Axel Springer is based not only on national standards but also on the internationally recognized "Enterprise Risk Management Framework", the framework developed by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission (COSO). Overall responsibility for risk management lies with the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE, the operational management of the individual risks falls primarily within the area of responsibility of the respective company divisions or shareholders of Axel Springer. This includes the early detection, identification and assessment of sector- or company-specific risks, the definition of suitable measures, their management and control as well as adequate documentation and reporting.

In addition, the respective divisional heads and management boards of our companies are obliged to participate in the regular, systematic and standardized risk campaigns. Significant ad hoc changes in the risk situation must be reported to the central corporate risk management department immediately.

Central Corporate Risk Management provides overarching standards, methods and tools, manages both semi-annual and annual risk campaigns and ensures reporting to the Audit Committee of the Supervisory Board and the Executive Board. It coordinates the risk management activities at the Group level and plausibility testing of the reported risks against completeness. In addition, central Corporate Risk Management continuously develops the risk management system of Axel Springer.

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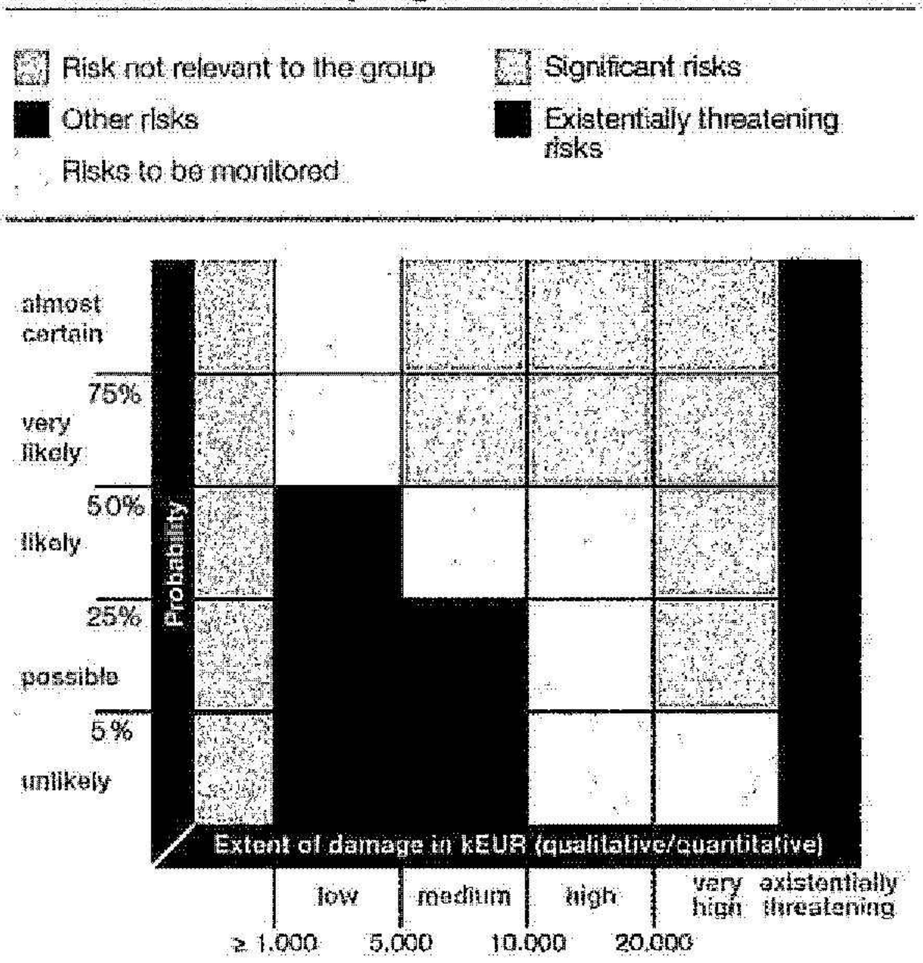
Risks are assessed quantitatively or on the basis of qualitative criteria, where appropriate and quantifiable, based on the parameters "damage amount" (impact) and "probability of occurrence". A qualitative assessment of the potential damage is based on criteria such as operational effects, impact on our reputation or legal consequences. The risk is assessed taking countermeasures or risk reduction measures into account (net view). The net risk determined in this way is assessed in terms of its probability of occurrence. The subsequent classification of the risks takes place in an ordinal-scaled risk matrix.

To assess the priority of the overall risk portfolio, the risks are categorized as existentially threatening, significant, to be monitored, other or not relevant to the Group.

Risk Matrix of Axel Springer SE



Opportunity management system

Axel Springer pursues the goal of sustainably securing entrepreneurial success. Potential opportunities arising from positive developments in the course of business activities should be identified early and exploited. As part of the management, strategy and planning processes, potential internal and external opportunities are identified and analyzed for the business units and shareholdings of Axel Springer. External opportunities are offered, for example, by changing market structures or customer requirements; internal opportunities arise from product innovations or quality improvements. The basis for identifying opportunities are e.g. market and competition observations, analyzes and regular exchange with experts. Identified opportunities, when weighed against the associated risks, serve as the basis for business decisions and the initiation of appropriate measures, e. g. the management of opportunities is the responsibility of the Management Board across the Group and is carried out on a decentralized basis by the operational departments and their managing directors or department heads.

The internal audit system

Corporate Audit is organizationally assigned to the Corporate Audit, Risk Management and Corporate Cyber Security department, which is functionally subordinate to the entire Board of Management and disciplinary to the Executive Board for Finance and Human Resources. It is divided into the Operational Audit and IT Audit teams, which are separate from the Corporate Risk Management and Corporate Cyber Security teams in terms of organization and personnel.

Corporate Audit provides risk-oriented consulting and audits in all Group companies and divisions, aligning activities with the relevant national and international professional standards. In particular, the department has the task of systematically reviewing the adequacy and functionality of the internal control and monitoring system in a risk-oriented manner and, if necessary, to undertake measures for remedying the weaknesses. In order to maintain independence, the audit mandate of Corporate Audit with regard to risk management extends only to the decentralized components. Central risk management is regularly subject to an effectiveness review by qualified, external audit service providers.

Corporate Audit monitors the correct and timely implementation of the agreed measures to eliminate the identified vulnerabilities based on a systematic follow-up.

The results of individual audit or consultancy mandates are reported to the Executive Board and periodically summarized to the Audit Committee of the Supervisory Board.

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To ensure the effectiveness of the internal auditing system, quality assurance and improvement procedures have been set up, which include external quality assessments in accordance with professional requirements.

Report on the accounting-related risk management system and internal control system

The accounting-related risk management system and the connected internal control system, which is also based on the COSO framework, form an essential part of the internal monitoring system of Axel Springer SE. The effective interaction of these systems should ensure the regularity, completeness and reliability of accounting and financial reporting. The financial reporting is therefore intended to convey a true and fair view of the assets, finances and financial performance of Axel Springer SE and the Axel Springer Group, taking into account the relevant laws and standards. The accounting-related risk management and internal control system encompass all organizational regulations and measures for identifying and dealing with the risks associated with accounting and financial reporting. However, even an effective and therefore adequate and functional risk management system and internal control system does not provide absolute certainty to prevent or detect any irregularities or inaccuracies.

The main elements of the accounting-related risk management and internal control system are:

- Processes for identifying, assessing, and documenting all significant financial reporting-related processes and risk areas, as well as the corresponding key controls.
- Process-integrated controls (computer-aided controls, validation of reporting data, dual control principle, separation of functions, analytical controls).
- Standardized financial accounting processes, through the use of an internal, intra-group shared Services Center in which a large part of the consolidated German Group companies are integrated.
- Group-wide requirements for accounting guidelines, charts of accounts and reporting processes.
- Quarterly communication of information to all consolidated Group companies on developments related to accounting, and the process of preparing the financial statements.
- Assuring the requisite expertise of employees involved in the financial accounting and financial reporting process by means of appropriate selection procedures and training. Use of external experts, e.g. for pension accounting and selected valuation tasks.
- Central preparation of the consolidated financial statements (including management report) using manual and system controls with regard to accounting-specific relationships.
- Protection of accounting-related IT systems against unauthorized access through authorization restrictions.
- Monthly internal group reporting including analysis and reporting of significant developments as well as target/actual deviations. Regular, Group-wide reporting to the persons responsible for reporting, the Executive Board and the Supervisory Board.

The effectiveness of the accounting-related risk management system and the internal control system is monitored by means of process-integrated controls. As a process-independent body, Corporate Audit regularly tests selected elements of the accounting-related internal control system set up at central level and in the group companies in order to identify weaknesses and thus contribute to improving legal compliance. In addition, the Audit Committee of the Supervisory Board monitors the financial reporting processes and the effectiveness of the accounting-related internal control system and risk management system.

Risks and opportunities

If not stated elsewhere, all risks and opportunities will be mentioned in the following which could have a considerable effect on reaching our company-wide targets. Within the types of risks presented, the risks and opportunities are generally classified according to their materiality for the Group.

The risks and opportunities identified as of the reporting date and presented below generally relate to the forecast period of 2022, unless they relate to long-term goals.

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Covid-19 Pandemic

The outlook for 2022 continues to be shaped by uncertainties for economic and social development resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. New virus variants and the potential for renewed restrictions (e.g. stricter infection protection measures) could slow down economic momentum. The resulting negative effects on economic activities worldwide and in particular on the markets in which we operate could affect us. It is extremely difficult to forecast the possible extent and expected duration of any individual impact on our business. For example, we could experience the absence of key personnel, which could adversely affect our ability to provide our products and services.

At the Group level, a central task force continuously monitors the development of the Covid-19 pandemic and works out overarching decisions, formulates recommendations and identifies offers of help. This measure will carefully monitor the various effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the health and safety of our employees always at the forefront.

Certain business models of Axel Springer could also benefit from the social and economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in the 2022 financial year. For example, people's need for news and information has increased disproportionately across borders. Our price comparison portals, for example, could also benefit from the population's rapidly growing online consumption during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Market and competition risks

Market and competition risks generally relate to changes in sales and procurement conditions and the development of competitors. Since Axel Springer operates and acquires globally, a large number of economic factors must be taken into account to determine market risks. Economic forecasts, above all for the important sales markets of Germany, Europe and the USA, serve as overarching indicators for assessing market and competition risks.

Information on economic development and growth assumptions in 2022, especially for our relevant sales markets, are described in detail in the "Forecast report" section.

The business activities in our Classifieds Media, News Media and Marketing Media segments (see chapter "Fundamentals of the Axel Springer Group") continue to be subject to high market and competitive dynamics, which could lead to a loss of market share and thus to a decline in revenues and earnings. In particular, the competition from the global Internet giants Google, Apple, Meta and Amazon, known as GAFA, continues to increase. These companies not only bundle specialized knowledge in their groups, but also continue to set the direction in the course of digitized globalization, enter new market segments and partly also compete with our activities.

The dependency on key customers is relevant for the economic development of some of our business models. The loss of key customers could result in a significant drop in sales and weaken our competitive position. Focused measures for customer loyalty and customer enthusiasm, the search for and expansion of alternative contractual partners and professional customer cooperation all contribute to risk minimization.

Start-ups with innovative or disruptive business models, missing (market) trends and new technologies, as well as a general lack of further development of our products, could also potentially jeopardize our existing market position and lead to lower revenues and earnings. In order to limit the market and competition risks, a systematic and continuous monitoring of the relevant market and competitive environment and emerging trends is carried out. Control measures for operational management are derived on the basis of this information. We improve the attractiveness of our business models, among other things, by investments in innovative product developments and adjustments, new high-quality services, the use of new technologies, target group-oriented marketing and increasing brand awareness. With these measures, we want to meet the changing needs of our customers while at the same time maintaining or expanding our competitive edge. The hiring and further development of highly qualified specialists and the expansion of long-term customer relationships also reduce risk.

A large number of the digital offerings in our Classifieds Media, Marketing Media and News Media segments are still constantly confronted with the risk of a sudden loss of visibility, which results in particular from the

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dominance of large Internet search engines, especially Google. The constantly changing and sometimes non-transparent criteria of the search algorithms lead to unexpected visibility losses and can therefore have a significant impact on the current and future revenue situation. Even small increases and decreases in the visibility or placement on the results pages can lead to significant traffic loss accompanied with a decline in traffic-related revenues for certain business models.

We address this risk through professional search engine marketing, the improvement of the online page structure and invest in alternative traffic sources. At the same time, we focus on continuously improving the attractiveness of our offerings and increasing awareness of the Axel Springer brands and offerings.

Our job portals may also face increased price erosion due to price dumping, in the sense of pricing below their own production costs. Price dumping on the part of the competition can also lead to a necessary price reduction on the part of our job portals, which in turn could reduce the income. In order to prevent this, we are trying to increase our market position and expand our market lead.

The ongoing change in reading behavior towards digital offers continues to lead to a significant drop in revenue in the area of printed publications, which so far has not been offset by the proceeds from digital offers. A changing market environment, which is characterized by product innovations, as well as unforeseeable market developments can further intensify the already calculated declines. The loss of large advertising customers due to legal advertising restrictions or the switching of important commercial customers to other advertising formats such as television, radio or other online media continue to represent a risk that must be taken seriously.

Other risks of our digital offerings still exist due to the implementation of consent management. Here, the share of personalized advertising could decrease and thus lead to a decline in programmatic revenues. To address these risks, we continuously build an inventory of non-personalized advertising and develop new "cookie-free" products.

The priority for all market and competition risks is to identify the changing needs of our customers at an early stage through continuous market analysis and intensive customer support, and to align our product offerings with market trends and customer requirements.

Market and competitive opportunities

The uncertainty due to the Covid-19 pandemic persists and the dynamics of the upswing are expected to vary significantly between countries and individual business sectors in 2022 as well. If the global economy recovers faster and better than forecasted, this could have a positive impact on our sales development. In particular, our digital business models, which, unlike many analogue business models, are not affected by pandemic-related curfews, could also benefit from the pandemic in 2022, as the shift from "analogue" to "digital" increased exponentially during the crisis.

With our investments in digital growth markets, Axel Springer sees itself in a good position to master the economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic and expand our market share in digital business models. Even a negative overall economic development can open up opportunities: This could eliminate competitors from the market, thereby strengthening our own position. In addition, it would be possible to acquire companies at advantageous prices, thus expanding our position in existing markets and investing in new markets with growth potential.

In the Classifieds Media segment, technological solutions for the marketing of real estate, such as our investments in Purplebricks and Homeday, are becoming increasingly important. They combine the expertise of classic agents such as the personal support of customers on site, with efficiency-enhancing software solutions and the latest advertising and communication technologies. Due to the resulting efficiency advantages, real estate sellers can be offered professional real estate marketing at significantly more favorable conditions. In addition, we are internationalizing the MeilleursAgents product, which supports brokers in identifying owners who are willing to sell and thus generating additional business and are introducing it in Germany and Belgium.

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Intelligent matching and recruiting technologies are rapidly gaining importance at StepStone. The acquisition of Cammio (in 2020), a Dutch video recruitment provider, gives us the opportunity to benefit even more from the demand to recruit from remote situations. With the 2019 acquisition by StepStone of Appcast, a leading provider of programmatic e-recruiting in the USA, we are participating in this rapidly growing market and consistently continue our growth strategy. The acquisition of the new conversational AI technology Mya by StepStone also contributes to the achievement of our growth targets. Optimized for dialogue situations, Mya's artificial intelligence (Conversational AI) can significantly change the way job seekers communicate. StepStone will interact with users through new channels to learn about their preferences and skills. The innovative technology draws conclusions from the interviews with candidates and suggests suitable jobs via SMS, WhatsApp or on-site chat. This can lead to improved matching and thus a higher quality and number of suitable applications. This can increase the number of job seekers who can be reached and thereby increase our revenues.

In the News Media National area, the constant further development of the media brands BILD and WELT opens up new possibilities. In particular, the consistent expansion of the digital platforms and the focus on the moving image range of BILD and WELT offers opportunities and additionally strengthens the presence of two of the largest media brands in Europe. The multi-mediality (print, digital, TV and audio), as well as the cross-editorial sports competence center enable the consistent development of new business and growth areas, new business opportunities and the acquisition of new target groups. With over 590,000 paid content users (IVW/Dec.2021) at BILDplus and 180,000 paid content users (IVW/Dec.2021) at WELTplus, we are a media pioneer.

The media market in the USA is still in a state of change. This gives our journalistic offerings the chance to expand their market position. Our US subsidiary Insider Inc. already offers one of the largest websites for business news and analysis in the US with Insider (formerly Business Insider). It is now represented in 23 countries with its own portals and offers tailor-made information in real time for the digital generation. Insider Inc. could thus emerge as one of the winners of the changes in the media market. The subsidiary Morning Brew, which also addresses a younger target group via alternative channels (newsletter, podcast), could also contribute to this. With the acquisition of the US news company POLITICO, which is one of the leading providers in its segment and has a diversified revenue model through corporate customer subscriptions as well as different advertising revenue streams, and operates in complementary segments, Axel Springer has been able to expand its position in the media market.

Strategic Risks

Significant strategic risks at Axel Springer result primarily from decisions to invest in new business fields and models as well as companies that develop differently than anticipated over the long term or that cannot assert themselves on the market or are displaced by new business models. This could result in an impairment loss and lower profitability would be the result. This risk could affect activities in all of our three operating segments: Likewise, possible insufficient diversification harbors a high risk potential.

In general, the business segments and models of our investments are, however, extremely heterogeneous, so that so-called cluster risks are limited by means of diversification. There is also further risk minimization, preventive control measures such as clear investment criteria, which we use to review new investments as part of our M & A activities, as well as active portfolio and investment management, the establishment and maintenance of a qualified management level and active and systematic monitoring of business and market development.

In addition to the aforementioned risks, the dependency on strategically significant cooperation partners is also subject to risks. Active key account management, legal support in the negotiation and renegotiation of contracts and continuous monitoring of the business activities of our cooperation partners contribute to reducing this risk.

Strategic opportunities

In a constantly changing environment, we are continuously developing our company so that we can continue to meet global and industry-specific challenges with innovative and needs-based solutions and strengthen our position as Europe's leading digital media company.

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Due to the very positive development of the digital markets, Axel Springer's strategy, which aims to further expand the business along the existing core competencies, continues to offer good opportunities to build up a high-growth and high-yield digital portfolio, and to promote journalism as a successful business model in the digital world as well. In addition to the continuous digital transformation and monetization of the established strong media brands and its own new/online developments, Axel Springer uses the market development through strategically aligned acquisitions of and investments in new and future-oriented companies and technologies. Networking with the founding generation of digital start-ups, entering into new partnerships and expanding existing ones is also part of our international digitization strategy.

Entry into new markets or the expansion in existing markets (e.g. USA) as well as a further possible carve-out of segments could also open up growth options for us.

The acquisition of stakes in companies with promising digital business models in the growth phases of their life cycle gives us the opportunity to establish contacts within the industry and to other founders and investors as well as to gain and use access to new ideas and business models. If the portfolio companies develop successfully, we can benefit from potentially significant increases in value.

Information security risks

Due to the high degree of integration of information technologies into business processes and business models, Axel Springer relies on a high availability of IT components, to avoid interruption of business activity with far-reaching consequences for revenues and reputation. External factors in the form of cybercrime represent an increasing risk for the company. Examples of this are infiltrated malware, which prevents access to company data by means of encryption or which threatens the publication of company data (ransomware), targeted overload attacks (DDoS attacks) and CEO fraud (attempted fraud).

Additional IT risks are classified as important if the confidentiality of information or data integrity can be compromised as a consequence. In consideration of the growing importance of paid digital content offerings, programmatic online-advertising as well as the European Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant processing of personal data, the protection against theft or loss of data is of great importance. For this reason, specific measures have been and are being taken to avoid or limit the effects of criminal activities and the failure of IT components as far as possible. The risk reduction measures include, among others, DDoS protection, backup data centers, vulnerability analysis, use of encryption, network access control, consolidation and standardization, search for data leaks and improving of systems. The stated measures are continuously analyzed and expanded or improved if necessary.

Data protection risks

The relevance of data protection as well as the social and political sensitivity to privacy and security gaps in the digital domain have been steadily increasing for years.

There are still risks for 2022, in particular from two European legislations. On the one hand, there is the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which has been in force since 2018. In addition to numerous substantive tightenings of data protection (including consent, information to those affected, the processing of large amounts of data as part of "Big Data" and the requirements for IT security), the GDPR brought two fundamental changes in particular, which significantly increase risks for data processing companies: There is corporate accountability under which the data processor must be able to demonstrate compliance with the GDPR. Under the GDPR, fines of up to € 20 million or, in the case of the Company, up to 4 % of the total annual global revenue generated in the previous fiscal year can be imposed.

In response to the introduction of GDPR, we have already taken numerous measures throughout the Group since 2017. These include, among other things, the definition of responsibilities regarding data protection and data security, the implementation of training courses and the introduction of a new directive. In addition, a service center ("Data Privacy Hub") was established within the holding within the Data & IP (Group Legal) division, which, in addition to process instructions, leaflets, and templates, enables a group-wide exchange of all stakeholders and addresses strategically important and group-wide topics. For the measures taken by Axel Springer in the area of IT security, please refer to the section "Information security risks".

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In December 2021, the new **Telecommunications Telemedia Data Protection Act** (TTDSG) came into force. The TTDSG regulates, among other things, the protection of privacy when using end devices (e.g. a PC or smartphone), regardless of whether there is a personal reference or not. The TTDSG states that storing information such as cookies and other tracking technologies in the end device or accessing this information is only permitted with the consent of the sufficiently informed end users. The regulated exceptions to the consent requirement have been further restricted by the new legislations, which could have a significant impact on our German digital business models. This concerns specifically the regulation of using so-called cookies and similar technologies, in particular the permissibility of creating user profiles and the integration of advertising networks and "Retargeting" in the areas of web, mobile and app, as well as the high requirements for obtaining consent that complies with data protection. The consent banners used by website operators (consent management solutions) are increasingly viewed critically by the supervisory authorities, since the authorities believe that these often do not constitute informed and voluntary consent within the meaning of the GDPR and generated by the TTDSG. The topic of cookie banners is currently being discussed intensively and legally compliant solutions are being sought. These legal developments could have an impact on the economic development of our digital business models, for example, the generation of digital advertising revenues could be affected negatively. Another current topic is the so-called third-country transfer of personal data, which particularly affects data processing in the USA. For example, this is relevant for contracts with companies that have their headquarters in the USA and who operate servers there on which personal data is processed. In 2020, the ECJ found the level of data protection in the USA to be inadequate (Schrems II) and the previous adequacy decision by the EU Commission was declared invalid. The so-called standard contractual clauses that had been in force until then were no longer sufficient without additional measures. In June 2021, the European Commission adopted new Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC), which created a legal basis for data transfers to countries that have a different level of data protection than the European Union.

Potential violations of the aforementioned data protection laws could result in fines, claims for damages and even the risk for reputational damage. We address these risks by informing ourselves at an early stage - also via the associations that represent us - about developments in the area of data protection and trying to identify the changes that are relevant to us in good time and the resulting organizational and legal requirements within the framework of a risk-oriented prioritization to implement appropriately.

Political Risks

Possible uncertainties arise for Axel Springer from our business activities in Poland, which belong to the News Media International segment. The political situation is characterized by the political influence of the national-conservative government on public media, but also by possible future attempts to influence private media.

Political and legal opportunities

In the political and legal environment, the (now completed) implementation of the European Copyright Directive in national law is an opportunity for press publishers. In 2019, the European Union agreed on a reform of European copyright law. As a result, license fees may be charged for the Internet use of publisher content by aggregators and search engine providers, provided that they are not "single words" or "very short extracts". This strengthens Axel Springer's legal position for its publishing products in the EU. The directive was transposed into national law in the summer of 2021. Now it has become necessary to negotiate corresponding agreements with the platform operators. At the same time, efforts are being made to export the regulations to other countries, especially the USA.

At the European level, institutions are currently working on two particularly important new legal texts, the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. The latter is intended to ensure fair market conditions with regard to the large digital platforms, from which Axel Springer would also benefit. Once the drafts have been approved, the institutions will compete to reach a common compromise in 2022.

Reputational risks

In addition to the reputational risks mentioned so far in connection with data protection and information security, further secondary risks or secondary effects can arise in connection with a primary risk. For example, a violation of law and order can cause high attention and damage our reputation due to Axel Springer's prominent position

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and its contribution to social opinion making. Further potential reputation risks may arise, for example, from the violation of journalistic independence if the journalistic work is endangered due to personal advantage, inadequate research, incomplete information or lack of care in dealing with sources. Violations of country-specific laws and regulations, disregard of programs for equal treatment and equal opportunities or social and ecological conflicts in the context of the resource procurement process could also result in reputation damage. Violations of confidentiality agreements and incorrectly published information in the context of external reporting can have economic or legal consequences for Axel Springer. In addition, there is the risk of damage to the image of the Group or its brands through negative reporting or campaigns in social media channels, even if there is no legal violation from a legal perspective.

The reputational risks mentioned are addressed, among other things, through regular employee awareness training through e-learning, guidelines and corporate principles of transparent internal and external communication as well as our Code of Conduct, which defines behavioral standards that apply throughout the Group. In addition, our International Social Policy, a catalog of social standards, counteracts potential reputational risks. The International Social Policy defines the attitude of the company and others on questions of legal compliance, the protection of children and young people, dealing with employees and health and safety.

Personnel risks

The individual skills, professional competences and the commitment of our employees contribute significantly to the success of Axel Springer. A significant risk therefore represents the loss of specialists and executives and the associated company-specific loss of knowledge and competence. We address this professionally and actively. One focus of our human resources management is the targeted and forward-looking employee development and motivation with the help of individual training and further education measures, regular feedback meetings and attractive bonus programs. Department-specific measures such as coaching, training needs analyzes and our group-wide talent management support us in identifying individual needs and then in filling positions with the right people/talents and developing them in a targeted manner. A particular focus is filling top management positions with women. Flexible working time models, the possibility of mobile working and comprehensive offers to improve the compatibility of family and work have also gained in importance, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, including its contribution to risk minimization.

Systematic succession planning and development, especially in the case of age-related fluctuation, supports the filling of key positions and is indispensable. In this way, the transfer of valuable wealth of experience and company expertise should be guaranteed and the personnel requirements should be covered in the long term. In addition, the difficult situation in recruiting junior executives and executives represents a continuously growing risk. As a result of demographic change and increasing competition on the labor market, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find qualified personnel. With a view to the continuously increasing digitization of the Group, IT specialists in particular are still increasingly in demand. That's why we have launched strategic HR initiatives, for example to ensure the long-term development of a joint talent pool with a focus on bottleneck and other key functions. Our proactive recruiting approach, additional recruiting resources and a salary level adjusted to current market prices also make an important contribution to positioning Axel Springer as an attractive and innovative employer in the age of New Work in the relevant target group.

Financial risks and risks associated with the use of financial instruments

Due to the degree of internationalization of Axel Springer, the Group is exposed to a number of market price risks. These include in particular interest rate risks and currency risks. These risks are mainly managed by the Group Finance department on the basis of the guidelines set by the Axel Springer Management Board. Derivative financial instruments are used exclusively for hedging purposes. Currency risks are largely avoided by raising operating costs in the countries in which we sell our products and services. Any remaining currency risks from foreign currency cash flows (transaction risks) are not hedged. Currency risks from open net positions of € 5 million or more per foreign currency are discussed on an individual basis with the relevant departments and hedged as far as possible. Currency effects from the translation of foreign currency financial statements (translation risks) are recognized directly in accumulated equity. Therefore, Axel Springer does not hedge against such currency risks. The existing interest rate risk results primarily from financial assets or liabilities with variable interest rates. However, this risk is limited due to well-defined financing principles and regular monitoring of the variable interest component, or, if necessary, minimized through the use of interest rate derivatives.

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The liquidity risk is regularly monitored on the basis of mid-term planning. The agreed credit line, the additional term loans agreed in May 2020 and October 2021 of € 300.0 million and € 500.0 million, respectively, and the promissory notes form a sufficient risk buffer for unplanned payments.

The investment of cash and cash equivalents generates only minor default risks in the Group. Default risks exist in the Group to a lesser extent from investments of cash and cash equivalents.

The risks from financial instruments and hedging measures are explained in detail in the notes to the consolidated financial statements under item (31). Overall, the financial risks are considered to be low.

Other Risks

As part of our advanced sustainability management, we have developed a comprehensive climate strategy that provides for the continuous reduction of emissions. Our printing plants already operate an optimized energy management system and we regularly and successfully participate in energy audits.

Potential risks arising from global climate change have also been investigated. However, there are currently no signs that climate change would have a direct impact on Axel Springer's business models.

As a part of our journalistic work, we are confronted with risks that can arise when our journalists have to travel to war zones. In addition to possible physical or mental impairments, reporting on site could also become impossible for us, especially in high-risk areas. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, it is not only war zones that are now classified as risk areas, and therefore it is not only our journalists that are exposed to potential dangers, but also every one of our employees who makes a mandatory trip and thus endanger their health with a potential Covid-19 infection. This would not only result in the absence of our employees due to illness or repatriation costs, but also the possible loss of our media coverage. We minimize these risks significantly with special training to prepare travelers for emergencies, appropriate insurance and a 24/7 hotline to ensure on-site medical and security care.

Terrorist attacks continue to pose a serious risk to Axel Springer. We counter this, among others, with increased security standards, significantly tightened access regulations and controls as well as a detailed education and training of the safety-relevant group of people. The financial risk due to possible property damage and business interruption is covered by appropriate insurance.

Operational and other opportunities

The ongoing cultural change at Axel Springer to become a world market leader in digital journalism and in digital classified ads generates additional opportunities in various areas. Firstly, the reduction of strict hierarchies and restructuring will ensure faster reaction and decision-making capacity to changing market and competition conditions. On the other hand, there is the opportunity to increase Axel Springer's attractiveness as an employer through a modern, international and increasingly digital working environment. Various initiatives make our company more attractive as an employer brand, especially for young professionals from the start-up environment and other relevant target groups. For example, the "FreeTech Academy of Journalism and Technology" aims to develop one's own technology competence in the long term, to combine journalism and technology in a unique way and to lay the foundation for close cooperation in these areas. As the first institution of its kind, the FreeTech Academy links the training of journalists and tech talents under one roof.

Overall view of the risk and opportunity situation

The overall picture of the risk and opportunity situation of the Axel Springer Group consists of the individual risks and opportunities of all risk and opportunity categories of the consolidated majority interests and the central functions.

The overall risk position of the Axel Springer Group showed a moderate increase compared to the previous year. There are currently no apparent risks that could jeopardize the continued existence of the Axel Springer Group or have a significant impact on the assets, earnings and liquidity. This applies to the condition that there is no significant deterioration of the economy in our markets and the media industry and, consequently, a

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significant deterioration in the financial performance of the Group. In addition, risk concentrations are reduced through continuous diversification, internationalization, optimization of the brand and product portfolio and digitization.

Forecast report

Anticipated economic environment

General economic environment

In its January 2022 outlook, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the global economy to continue recovering and forecasts real global economic growth of 4.4% for 2022. The slowdown in growth results, in particular, from mobility restrictions and the health effects of the omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus, which are still having a negative impact on economic development in the first quarter of 2022. In its forecast, the IMF assumes that the Covid-19 pandemic will subside in the course of the second quarter of 2022 and that there will be no more new virus variants that could lead to restricted mobility. The IMF also expects supply bottlenecks to continue for the time being, which will only be resolved in the second half of 2022.

In its economic forecast published in December 2021, the ifo Institute still sees the **German economy** as being in a phase of stagnation at the beginning of 2022 due to persistent supply bottlenecks and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. As the year progresses, supply bottlenecks are expected to subside and consumer spending to recover, so that real economic growth of 3.7% is expected for 2022 (IMF: 3.8%). Private consumption is expected to grow by 6.5% in real terms. In view of improved business expectations, the ifo Institute expects higher capacity utilization again in 2022 and a corresponding increase in price-adjusted investments in equipment by 5.2%. Economic researchers are assuming export growth of 5.2% in real terms. This will probably be countered by a rise in imports of 5.4% in real terms. The ifo Institute expects consumer prices to continue to rise sharply by 3.3% in 2022.

According to the ifo Institute, the number of people in employment is expected to rise by around 400,000 to an annual average of 45.3 million. The unemployment rate is likely to be around 5.2%.

Anticipated Economic Development (selection)

Change in gross domestic product compared to prior year (real)	2021
Germany	3.8%
United Kingdom	4.7%
France	3.5%
Poland	4.6%
USA	4.0%

Source: IMF, January 2022.

The key negative factors mentioned for the global economy as a whole will have an equally dampening effect on the economic growth expected for 2022 in all of our key markets. For developed markets, the IMF expects inflation to average 3.9% in 2022, driven, in particular, by supply bottlenecks and rising energy prices.

In the USA, the IMF also expects the US Federal Reserve's more restrictive interest rate policy to have a dampening effect on economic growth. According to assumptions, the trend of a pronounced shortage of workers and the associated sharp rise in wages will continue.

The development of economic growth in China has a significant influence on the development of the global economy as a whole. For China, the IMF expects growth of just 4.8% in 2022 after an estimated 8.1% in 2021. A restrained development in consumption and the tense situation on the real estate market play a key role in this assessment.

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Industry environment

According to the current advertising market forecast by Zenith, a worldwide increase of 9.1 % (nominal) is expected for 2022.

With the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the phase of digital transformation has also lengthened. The purchasing behavior of people has changed structurally and the importance of the e-commerce business has increased significantly. Companies have reacted to this and are accompanying their investments in technical infrastructure and adjustments to their business models with greater investments in advertising. Branding campaigns are used to draw attention to providers' e-commerce offers, performance marketing directs user traffic to the platforms and advertising within the shops (retail media advertising) highlights specific products. Despite progress in the fight against the pandemic through the vaccines that are now available, the containment of the Covid-19 pandemic is proving to be more protracted than initially assumed. The pace of digital transformation will slow, but not reverse, as the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic continues.

As a result, the **shift in advertising budgets to the Internet** continued in 2021. According to Zenith's current forecast, well over half (59.0 %) of global advertising spending went to online advertising by the end of 2021. In 2022, the share is expected to increase again to 61.5 %.

The structural change in buying behavior has also led to a sharp increase in **retail media advertising** – display or search advertising on e-commerce platforms. This effective form of advertising allows brands to address active customers at the point of sale. After growing 24 % in 2019 and 53 % in 2020, retail media advertising grew 47 % year over year in 2021. Zenith estimates that the global volume in 2021 was USD 77 billion, which corresponds to the volume of advertising in newspaper, magazine, radio and cinema combined and accounts for 20 % of all digital display and search ads.

In addition, Zenith expects the greatest growth in the next few years in **social media** with an average growth rate of 14.8 %, followed by online video with 14.0 %. In 2022, global social media ad spending ($ 177 billion) is expected to surpass TV ad spending ($ 174 billion) for the first time.

The forecasts available so far for **Germany** show a largely similar picture for the individual media types. Zenith expects the net advertising market (advertising sales after deduction of discounts and brokerage commissions) in Germany to increase by 3.7 % (nominal) in 2022.

In addition to the expected trend of digital advertising growth (7.5 %), linear TV (3.0 %) and out-of-home (2.8 %) are also forecast to grow in 2022. Zenith is predicting a slight drop in net advertising revenues for newspapers (−2.0 %), magazines (−3.0 %) and radio (−2.5 %). However, the traditional media of newspapers, magazines and TV will develop more positively in Germany than internationally.

Nevertheless, the structural redistribution of advertising expenditure in favor of digital offerings progressed faster last year than initially forecast. While a share of digital advertising in Germany of 44.9 % was forecast for the past year 2021, the share for 2021 was already 48.5 % according to the latest survey. For 2022, the share is expected to increase to 50.3 %. However, this puts Germany below the global average (59.0 %).

Since organic growth in the print market is difficult, and the tech companies from the USA dominate in the growing digital sector, it is expected that the market will continue to form strongly in mergers and partnerships.

According to Zenith's forecast, the **foreign digital markets** in which Axel Springer is involved with its own company activities will develop differently: In the online market in Western Europe, the net advertising volume will increase by 8.7 % to $ 77.1 billion in 2022. After digital advertising spending in France, United Kingdom and the USA grew much faster than in Germany in 2021, the growth rates in France (+ 13.4 %) and the USA (+ 17.2 %) in 2022 are expected to be significantly higher than in Germany (+ 7.5 %) again. United Kingdom, on the other hand (+ 6.8 %), is expected to record lower growth.

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Anticipated digital advertising activity in 2022 (selection)

Change in net advertising revenues compared to prior year (nominal)	Digital
Germany	7.5%
Central and Eastern Europe	18.6%
USA	17.2%
United Kingdom	6.8%

Source: Zenith, Advertising Expenditure Forecast, December 2021.

Group

Strategic and organizational orientation

Axel Springer's goal is to become the global market leader for digital journalism and classified ads. To this end, we are constantly developing our offerings and expanding our business organically and, where possible and sensible, through targeted acquisitions. Together with our investors, we want to consistently continue on the path of growth we have taken thus far and thereby achieve long-term growth in company value.

Comparison of forecast with actual performance

In the forecast published in the 2020 Annual Report, we expected growth in pro forma revenues in the Group in the low to mid single-digit percentage range for the 2021 financial year. For the adjusted EBITDA and the adjusted EBIT, we expected a result significantly below the previous year. In fact, despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 financial year was exceeded in the double-digit percentage range in terms of revenues and EBITDA, and the adjusted EBIT was even significantly exceeded.

We expect pro-forma revenues in the Classifieds Media segment to grow in the high single-digit percentage range in 2021. For the adjusted EBITDA and the adjusted EBIT, we expected a decline in the single-digit percentage range due to increased investments in future growth. In fact, we were able to significantly exceed the 2020 financial year in terms of both revenues and adjusted EBIT, the adjusted EBITDA was exceeded in the double-digit percentage range. Business with our job portals, which benefited from an upturn in the economy and a significant shortage of workers, made a particular contribution to this.

In the News Media segment, we expected pro-forma revenues for 2021 to be at the level of the previous year due to market conditions. We expected a significant decline in adjusted EBITDA and adjusted EBIT. Pro forma revenues exceeded expectations with high single digit percentage growth despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Adjusted EBITDA only fell by a low single-digit percentage compared to the 2020 financial year, while the decline in adjusted EBIT was in the mid single-digit percentage range. In the News Media segment, we were able to benefit in particular from a significantly better than expected development of the advertising market.

In the Marketing Media segment, we expected an increase in pro-forma revenues in the low single-digit percentage range for 2021. However, due to the increased importance of e-commerce as a result of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and the improved economic situation, we were able to significantly exceed the 2021 financial year in this segment with double-digit growth. Accordingly, adjusted EBITDA and adjusted EBIT increased significantly. As part of our forecast, we still expected a decline in the single-digit percentage range due to investments.

For the Services/Holding segment, we assumed an increase in adjusted EBITDA in the single-digit percentage range for 2021 due to the streamlining of central functions, while we assumed a significant improvement in adjusted EBIT. In fact, the two forecast figures improved in the double-digit percentage range.

If our forecast refers to the double-digit percentage range, this refers to the range of at least 10 % and at most 20 %, based on the English term "teens". In contrast, "significantly below the previous year" or "significantly above the previous year" means deviations from the previous year of more than 20 %.

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Anticipated business developments and operating performance

The forecast for the 2022 financial year is based on pro forma figures. Key financial figures from company acquisitions made in the period from January 1, 2021 up to the time the forecast was prepared are included in the group key figures used for internal control purposes from January 1, 2021. Conversely, key financial figures from Group companies that were sold during the same period are no longer included in the Group key figures used for internal control purposes from January 1, 2021.

For fiscal year 2022, we expect **pro forma revenue** growth in the low double-digit percentage range. We are assuming that the Classifieds Media segment will make a disproportionately high contribution to revenue growth, as we expect business to develop dynamically in particular at StepStone. In the News Media segment, on the other hand, we anticipate slightly underproportional growth, in particular due to the print business, which is still structurally declining. For **adjusted EBITDA** and **adjusted EBITDA**, we expect growth in the mid single-digit percentage range, which will be achieved almost exclusively by the Classifieds Media segment. In the News Media segment, we expect declining results due to investments.

Anticipated liquidity and financial position

Investments in property, plant and equipment and intangible assets in 2022 are expected to be at the level of 2021. The financing comes from the operative cash flow.

Dividend policy

In the future dividend proposals to the Annual shareholders' meeting, the respective status of the implementation of the growth strategy and the necessary funds for this should be taken into account.

Expected development in the number of employees

The average number of employees in the Axel Springer Group in 2022 is expected to be higher than in the previous year. The main reason for this is the implementation of the company's growth strategy.

Planning assumptions

We plan the future development of the Group's financial performance, liquidity, and financial position on the basis of assumptions that are plausible and sufficiently probable from today's perspective. However, the actual development can deviate significantly from the assumptions made and the resulting planning and trend statements.

In particular, the forecast is based on the assumption that there will be no significant deterioration in our stated expectations with regard to the economic environment. Our expectation is based on the Covid-19 pandemic abating and the following acceleration of the economic recovery in the second half of 2022. Furthermore, the forecast is based on the assumption that the actual exchange rates will not deviate significantly from the underlying target exchange rates.

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Independent Auditor's Report

To Axel Springer SE

Report on the audit of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report

Opinions

We have audited the consolidated financial statements of Axel Springer SE, Berlin, and its subsidiaries (the Group), which comprise the consolidated statement of financial position as at December 31, 2021, and the consolidated income statement, consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31, 2021, and notes to the consolidated financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. In addition, we have audited the management report of Axel Springer SE and the Axel Springer Group (hereinafter "Group management report") for the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31, 2021.

In our opinion, on the basis of the knowledge obtained in the audit,

- the accompanying consolidated financial statements comply, in all material respects, with the IFRSs as adopted by the EU, and the additional requirements of German commercial law pursuant to Section 315e (1) HGB ["Handelsgesetzbuch": German Commercial Code] and, in compliance with these requirements, give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, and financial position of the Group as at December 31, 2021, and of its financial performance for the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31, 2021, and
- the accompanying Group management report as a whole provides an appropriate view of the Group's position. In all material respects, this Group management report is consistent with the consolidated financial statements, complies with German legal requirements and appropriately presents the opportunities and risks of future development.

Pursuant to Section 322 (3) Sentence 1 HGB, we declare that our audit has not led to any reservations relating to the legal compliance of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report.

Basis for the opinions

We conducted our audit of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report in accordance with Sec. 317 HGB and in compliance with German Generally Accepted Standards for Financial Statement Audits promulgated by the Institut der Wirtschaftsprüfer [Institute of Public Auditors in Germany] (IDW). Our responsibilities under those requirements and principles are further described in the "Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report" section of our auditor's report. We are independent of the group entities in accordance with the requirements of German commercial and professional law, and we have fulfilled our other German professional responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinions on the consolidated financial statements and on the Group management report.

Responsibilities of the executive directors and the supervisory board for the consolidated financial statements and the Group management report

The executive directors are responsible for the preparation of the consolidated financial statements that comply, in all material respects, with IFRSs as adopted by the EU and the additional requirements of German commercial law pursuant to Section 315e (1) HGB, and that the consolidated financial statements, in compliance with these requirements, give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, financial position, and financial performance of the Group. In addition, the executive directors are responsible for such internal control as they have determined necessary to enable the preparation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

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In preparing the consolidated financial statements, the executive directors are responsible for assessing the Group's ability to continue as a going concern. They also have the responsibility for disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern. In addition, they are responsible for financial reporting based on the going concern basis of accounting unless there is an intention to liquidate the Group or to cease operations, or there is no realistic alternative but to do so.

Furthermore, the executive directors are responsible for the preparation of the Group management report that, as a whole, provides an appropriate view of the Group's position and is, in all material respects, consistent with the consolidated financial statements, complies with German legal requirements, and appropriately presents the opportunities and risks of future development. In addition, the executive directors are responsible for such arrangements and measures (systems) as they have considered necessary to enable the preparation of a Group management report that is in accordance with the applicable German legal requirements, and to be able to provide sufficient appropriate evidence for the assertions in the Group management report.

The supervisory board is responsible for overseeing the Group's financial reporting process for the preparation of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and whether the Group management report as a whole provides an appropriate view of the group's position and, in all material respects, is consistent with the consolidated financial statements and the knowledge obtained in the audit, complies with the German legal requirements and appropriately presents the opportunities and risks of future development, as well as to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinions on the consolidated financial statements and on the Group management report.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Sec. 317 HGB and in compliance with German Generally Accepted Standards for Financial Statement Audits promulgated by the Institut der Wirtschaftsprüfer (IDW) will always detect a material misstatement. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these consolidated financial statements and this Group management report.

We exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also

- identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements and of the Group management report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinions. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control;
- obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit of the consolidated financial statements and of arrangements and measures (systems) relevant to the audit of the Group management report in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of these systems;
- evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used by the executive directors and the reasonableness of estimates made by the executive directors and related disclosures;
- conclude on the appropriateness of the executive directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Group's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in the auditor's report to the related disclosures in the consolidated financial statements and in the Group management report or, if such

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disclosures are inadequate, to modify our respective opinions. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Group to cease to be able to continue as a going concern;

- evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the consolidated financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the consolidated financial statements present the underlying transactions and events in a manner that the consolidated financial statements give a true and fair view of the assets, liabilities, financial position and financial performance of the Group in compliance with IFRSs as adopted by the EU and the additional requirements of German commercial law pursuant to Section 315e (1) HGB;
- obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information of the entities or business activities within the group to express opinions on the consolidated financial statements and on the Group management report. We are responsible for the direction, supervision and performance of the group audit. We remain solely responsible for our audit opinions;
- evaluate the consistency of the Group management report with the consolidated financial statements, its conformity with [German] law, and the view of the Group's position it provides;
- perform audit procedures on the prospective information presented by the executive directors in the Group management report. On the basis of sufficient appropriate audit evidence we evaluate, in particular, the significant assumptions used by the executive directors as a basis for the prospective information, and evaluate the proper derivation of the prospective information from these assumptions. We do not express a separate opinion on the prospective information and on the assumptions used as a basis. There is a substantial unavoidable risk that future events will differ materially from the prospective information.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Berlin, March 2, 2022

Ernst & Young GmbH
Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft

Ludwig	von Michaelis
Wirtschaftsprüfer	Wirtschaftsprüfer
[German Public Auditor]	[German Public Auditor]