20240726059B0

Årsredovisning

för

Universum Communications Sweden AB

556587-5993

Räkenskapsåret

2023

Fastställelseintyg

Undertecknad styrelseledamot i Universum Communications Sweden AB intygar att resultaträkningen och balansräkningen i årsredovisningen har fastställts på årsstämma 2024-03-21. Årsstämman beslutade att godkänna styrelsens förslag till resultatdisposition.

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

Stockholm 2024-06-17

Yusuf Azoz

20240726059811

Årsredovisning

för

Universum Communications Sweden AB

556587-5993

Räkenskapsåret

2023

20240726035982

Styrelsen och verkställande direktören för Universum Communications Sweden AB avger följande årsredovisning för räkenskapsåret 2023.

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 åt 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

Under året har bolaget gjort omfattande systeminvesteringar för att framtidssäkra och utveckla det undersökningsverktyg som utgör grunden för verksamheten.

Bolaget har inlett nedläggning av koncernbolag i Storbritannien för att istället samverka med ägarkoncernens övriga bolag i området.

Väsentliga händelser efter räkenskapsårets slut

Dotterbolaget i Storbritannien avvecklas och utgår officiellt ur koncernen i februari 2024.

Förväntad framtida utveckling samt väsentliga risker och osäkerhetsfaktorer

Året har kommit igång väl och bolaget avser fortsätta investera för tillväxt den närmaste tiden.

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)	**2023**	**2022**	**2021**	**2020**	**2019**
Nettoomsättning	182 586	205 524	157 067	135 061	191 628
Resultat efter finansiella poster	-78 720	-44 791	-29 745	-63 990	-13 769
Soliditet (%)	15,7	27,8	30,2	12,0	24,1

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

balanserad vinst	96 420 867
årets förlust	-78 719 784
	17 701 083
disponeras så att	
i ny räkning överföres	17 701 083

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

20240726059984

Resultaträkning
Tkr

	Not	2023-01-01 -2023-12-31	2022-01-01 -2022-12-31
Rörelsens intäkter			
Nettoomsättning	2, 3	182 586	205 524
Övriga rörelseintäkter	4	19 706	19 773
Summa rörelseintäkter		**202 292**	**225 298**
Rörelsens kostnader			
Handelsvaror		-91 227	-96 889
Övriga externa kostnader	5, 6	-39 825	-53 106
Personalkostnader	7	-106 460	-104 449
Avskrivningar av materiella och immateriella anläggningstillgångar		-9 325	-7 551
Övriga rörelsekostnader		-3 513	-12 523
Summa rörelsekostnader		**-250 350**	**-274 518**
Rörelseresultat		**-48 057**	**-49 221**
Resultat från finansiella poster			
Resultat från andelar i koncernföretag	8	1 073	0
Nedskrivning av finansiella anläggningstillgångar		-20 941	-15 476
Övriga ränteintäkter och liknande resultatposter	9	10 560	27 374
Räntekostnader och liknande resultatposter	10	-21 353	-7 468
Summa finansiella poster		**-30 662**	**4 430**
Resultat efter finansiella poster		**-78 720**	**-44 791**
Resultat före skatt			
Skatt på årets resultat	11	0	0
Årets resultat		**-78 720**	**-44 791**

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Balansräkning
Tkr

	Not	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
TILLGÅNGAR			
Anläggningstillgångar			
Immateriella anläggningstillgångar			
Balanserade utgifter för utvecklingsarbeten	12	21 722	18 310
Summa immateriella anläggningstillgångar		**21 722**	**18 310**
Materiella anläggningstillgångar			
Inventarier, verktyg och installationer	13	1 451	1 464
Förbättringsutgifter på annans fastighet	14	313	503
Summa materiella anläggningstillgångar		**1 764**	**1 967**
Finansiella anläggningstillgångar			
Andelar i koncernföretag	15, 16	56 844	80 162
Summa finansiella anläggningstillgångar		**56 844**	**80 162**
Summa anläggningstillgångar		**80 330**	**100 439**
Omsättningstillgångar			
Kortfristiga fordringar			
Kundfordringar		39 589	28 184
Fordringar hos koncernföretag		94 912	91 225
Övriga fordringar		3 818	3 170
Förutbetalda kostnader & upplupna intäkter	17	11 107	12 943
Upparbetade intäkter i projekt	18	31 698	27 932
Summa kortfristiga fordringar		**181 124**	**163 454**
Kassa och bank	19	3 719	2 316
Summa omsättningstillgångar		**184 843**	**165 770**
SUMMA TILLGÅNGAR		**265 173**	**266 209**

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Balansräkning
Tkr

	Not	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
EGET KAPITAL OCH SKULDER			
Eget kapital	20		
Bundet eget kapital			
Aktiekapital		500	500
Reservfond		7 008	7 008
Fond för utvecklingsutgifter		16 247	12 836
Summa bundet eget kapital		**23 755**	**20 344**
Fritt eget kapital			
Balanserad vinst eller förlust		96 421	98 572
Årets resultat		-78 720	-44 791
Summa fritt eget kapital		**17 701**	**53 781**
Summa eget kapital		**41 456**	**74 125**
Avsättningar	21		
Övriga avsättningar		10 000	12 377
Summa avsättningar		**10 000**	**12 377**
Kortfristiga skulder			
Förskott från kunder	18	41 617	31 897
Leverantörsskulder		5 661	6 858
Skulder till koncernföretag		132 948	101 000
Övriga skulder		10 001	11 276
Upplupna kostnader och förutbetalda intäkter	22	23 490	28 676
Summa kortfristiga skulder	23	**213 717**	**179 707**
SUMMA EGET KAPITAL OCH SKULDER		**265 173**	**266 209**

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Kassaflödesanalys

Tkr

	Not	2023-01-01 -2023-12-31	2022-01-01 -2022-12-31
Den löpande verksamheten			
Resultat efter finansiella poster		-78 720	-44 791
Justeringar för poster som inte ingår i kassaflödet		27 386	15 858
Betald skatt		265	-960
Kassaflöde från den löpande verksamheten före förändring av rörelsekapital		**-51 069**	**-29 893**
Kassaflöde från förändring av rörelsekapitalet			
Förändring av Kundfordringar		-11 736	10 086
Förändring av kortfristiga fordringar		-1 803	-11 370
Förändring av kortfristiga skulder		4 261	19 946
Förändring av leverantörsskulder		-1 198	-1 594
Kassaflöde från den löpande verksamheten		**-61 545**	**-12 825**
Investeringsverksamheten			
Investering i immateriella anläggningstillgångar		-11 656	-11 548
Investering i materiella anläggningstillgångar		-881	-1 778
Nedskrivning av materiella anläggningstillgångar		1 528	2 093
Förändring av finansiella anläggningstillgångar		0	50
Kassaflöde från investeringsverksamheten		**-11 009**	**-11 183**
Finansieringsverksamheten			
Förändring koncernmellanhavanden		28 261	-24 711
Erhållna aktieägartillskott		45 696	40 434
Kassaflöde från finansieringsverksamheten		**73 957**	**15 723**
Årets kassaflöde		**1 403**	**-8 285**
Likvida medel vid årets början		2 316	10 601
Likvida medel vid årets slut		**3 719**	**2 316**

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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. successiv 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.

Avgiftsbest
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.

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

	2023	2022
Nettoomsättningen per rörelsegren		
Media	32 211	43 212
Research	53 299	46 966
Consulting	40 898	47 161
Övrig försäljning	56 178	68 185
	182 586	**205 524**
Nettoomsättning per geografisk marknad		
Sverige	45 958	47 948
EU	39 690	57 444
Övriga världen	96 938	100 132
	182 586	**205 524**

Not 3 Inköp och försäljningar mellan koncernföretag

	2023	2022
Andel av årets totala inköp som skett från andra företag i koncernen	11,32 %	10,54 %
Andel av årets totala försäljningar som skett till andra företag i koncernen	39,43 %	42,53 %

Not 4 Övriga rörelseintäkter

	2023	2022
Vidarefakturerade kostnader	16 290	17 220
Övriga poster	3 416	2 553
	19 706	**19 773**

Not 5 Operationell Leasing

Bolaget är leasetagare genom operationella leasingavtal avseende kopiatorer och kaffemaskiner. Summan av årets kostnadsförda leasingavgifter avseende operationella leasingavtal uppgår till 149 Tkr (381). Utöver nämnda leasingavtal finns hyresavtal 9 517 Tkr (9 017).

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

	2023	2022
Inom ett år	8 000	8 000
Senare än ett år men inom fem år		0
	8 000	**8 000**

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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.

	2023	2022
Ernst & Young AB		
Revisionsuppdrag	600	600
	600	**600**

Not 7 Anställda och personalkostnader

	2023	2022
Medelantalet anställda		
Kvinnor	77	73
Män	53	57
	130	**130**
Löner och andra ersättningar		
Styrelse och verkställande direktör	3 062	5 574
Ledande befattningshavare	11 294	5 760
Övriga anställda	72 059	81 755
	86 415	**93 089**
Sociala kostnader & Pensionskostnader		
Sociala kostnader enligt lag och avtal VD	2 930	1 266
Sociala kostnader enligt lag ledande befattningshavare	3 825	7 069
Sociala kostnader enligt lag och avtal övriga anställda	30 658	27 996
	37 413	**36 331**
Övriga personalkostnader*	-17 368	-24 971
Totala löner, ersättningar, sociala kostnader och pensionskostnader	**106 460**	**104 449**
Pensionsförpliktelser		
Bolagets avgiftsbestämda pensionsplaner	7 909	7 654
Nuvarande styrelse och verkställande direktör	-37	433
	7 872	**8 087**

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

Könsfördelning bland ledande befattningshavare		
Andel kvinnor bland övriga ledande befattningshavare	44 %	33 %
Andel män bland övriga ledande befattningshavare	56 %	66 %

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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

	2023	2022
Erhållna utdelningar	1 073	0
	1 073	**0**

Not 9 Övriga ränteintäkter och liknande resultatposter

	2023	2022
Ränteintäkter	0	9
Ränteintäkter, koncernföretag	1 189	843
Kursdifferenser	9 347	26 522
Övrigt	24	0
	10 560	**27 374**

Not 10 Räntekostnader och liknande resultatposter

	2023	2022
Räntekostnader	11	39
Räntekostnader koncernföretag	4 178	1 460
Kursdifferenser	17 154	5 965
Övrigt	10	4
	21 353	**7 468**

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Not 11 Årets skatt

	2023	2022
Redovisat resultat före skatt	-78 720	-44 791
Skatt beräknad enligt svensk skattesats 20,6%	0	0
Skatteeffekt av ej avdragsgilla kostnader	5 026	1 906
Skatteeffekt av ej skattepliktiga intäkter	-226	-1
Årets redovisade skattekostnad	0	0
Summa årets resultat efter skatt	**-73 920**	**-42 886**

Universum Communications Sweden AB har fastställda outnyttjade underskottsavdrag uppgående till 124 780 363 kr

Not 12 Balanserade utgifter för utvecklingsarbeten och liknande arbeten

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Ingående anskaffningsvärden	42 300	30 752
Inköp	11 656	11 548
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	0	0
Utgående ackumulerade anskaffningsvärden	**53 956**	**42 300**
Ingående avskrivningar	-23 990	-18 822
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	0	0
Årets avskrivningar	-8 244	-5 168
Utgående ackumulerade avskrivningar	**-32 234**	**-23 990**
Utgående redovisat värde	**21 722**	**18 310**

Not 13 Inventarier, verktyg och installationer

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Ingående anskaffningsvärden	3 365	3 255
Inköp	882	1 511
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	-106	-1 401
Utgående ackumulerade anskaffningsvärden	**4 141**	**3 365**
Ingående avskrivningar	-1 901	-2 695
Försäljningar/utrangeringar	102	1 401
Årets avskrivningar	-891	-607
Utgående ackumulerade avskrivningar	**-2 690**	**-1 901**
Utgående redovisat värde	**1 451**	**1 464**

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Not 14 Förbättringsutgifter på annans fastighet

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Ingående Anskaffningsvärde	950	683
Inköp	0	267
Ingående Avskrivningar	-447	-281
Årets Avskrivningar	-190	-166
Utgående redovisat värde	**313**	**503**

Not 15 Andelar i koncernföretag

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Ingående anskaffningsvärden	101 489	101 489
Utgående ackumulerade anskaffningsvärden	**101 489**	**101 489**
Ingående nedskrivningar	-21 327	-11 327
Årets nedskrivningar	-23 318	-10 000
Utgående ackumulerade nedskrivningar	**-44 645**	**-21 327**
Utgående redovisat värde	**56 844**	**80 162**

Not 16 Specifikation andelar i koncernföretag

Namn	Kapital-andel	Rösträtts-andel	Antal andelar	Bokfört 2023-12-31 värde
Universum Communications Ltd	100%	100%	100	0
Universum Communications Switzerland AG	100%	100%	100	6 060
Universum Communications Inc	100%	100%	10 000	44 496
Universum Communications Italy S.r.l	100%	100%	10 000	108
Universum Communications Pte Ltd	100%	100%	205 000	0
Universum Communications SARL	100%	100%	20 000	177
Universum Business Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd	100%	100%	1	0
Universum Communications SA	100%	100%	1	0
Universum Norway A/S	100%	100%	1 000 000	5 736
Universum Employer Branding GmbH	100%	100%	25 000	267
				56 844

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	Org.nr	Säte
Universum Communications Ltd	3,121,113	London
Universum Communications Switzerland AG	CHE114039492	Zürich
Universum Communications Inc	134094742	New York
Universum Communications Italy S.r.l	11036880968	Milano
Universum Communications Pte Ltd	20110701W	Singapore
Universum Communications SARL	802026583RCS	Paris
Universum Business Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd	* Se nedan	Shanghai
Universum Communications SA	2012166762O7	Johanesburg
Universum Norway A/S	AS992297786	Oslo
Universum Employer Branding GmbH	HRB199809B	Berlin

91310000674593535E

Not 17 Förutbetalda kostnader och upplupna intäkter

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Hyror	2 734	2 608
Upplupna projektkostnader	7 440	8 812
Förutbetalda kostnader	933	1 523
	11 107	**12 943**

Not 18 Upparbetade/förutbetalda intäkter i projekt

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Upparbetade intäkter i projekt	31 689	27 932
Förskott från Kund	-41 617	-31 897
	-9 928	**-3 965**

Not 19 Kassa bank

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Disponibla tillgodohavanden hos banker och andra kreditinstitut	3 719	2 316
	3 719	**2 316**

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Not 20 Förändringar i eget kapital

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

	Aktie-kapital	Reserv-fond	Fond för utv.utgift	Balanserat resultat	Årets resultat	Totalt
Belopp vid årets ingång	500	7 008	12 836	98 572	-44 791	74 125
Disposition enligt beslut av årsstämman:				-44 791	44 791	0
Fond för utvecklingsutgifter			3 411	-3 411		0
Erhållna aktieägartillskott				46 051		46 051
Årets resultat					-78 720	-78 720
Belopp vid årets utgång	**500**	**7 008**	**16 247**	**96 421**	**-78 720**	**41 456**

Not 21 Avsättningar

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Övriga avsättningar		
Belopp vid årets ingång	12 376	6 900
Årets avsättningar Kapitaltäckning dotterbolag Shanghai	0	5 476
Under året återförda belopp	-2 376	0
	10 000	**12 376**

Not 22 Upplupna kostnader och förutbetalda intäkter

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Upplupna löner	8 345	7 281
Upplupna semesterlöner	4 931	5 019
Upplupna sociala avgifter	6 861	6 051
Övriga poster	3 353	10 327
	23 490	**28 678**

Not 23 Ställda säkerheter

	2023-12-31	2022-12-31
Till förmån för koncernföretag		
Åtagande för Universum Communications Pte.	3 257	2 655
	3 257	**2 655**

Universum Communications Sweden AB har ett åtagande mot koncernföretaget Universum Communications Pte. Ltd (hädanefter Universum Singapore) att vid påkallelse erlägga betalning för fordringarna Universum Singapore har hos Universum Business Consulting (Shanghai) Co. Ltd (hädanefter Universum Shanghai). Per 2023-12-31 uppgår Universum Singapores fordringar hos Universum Shanghai till 3 257 451 SEK. Det bedöms inte sannolikt att förpliktelsen medför något utflöde av resurser från Universum Communications Sweden AB.

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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

Wolfgang Brulin
Ordförande
2024-03-19

Thorsten Otte

2024-03-19

Sebastian Dettmers

2024-03-19

Yusuf Azoz
Verkställande direktör
2024-03-20

Revisorspåteckning

Vår revisionsberättelse har lämnats 21/3-2024

Ernst & Young AB

Jens Bertling
Auktoriserad revisor

20240726060301

Building a better working world

Revisionsberättelse

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

Rapport om årsredovisningen

Uttalanden

Vi har utfört en revision av årsredovisningen för Universum Communications Sweden Aktiebolag för räkenskapsåret 2023-01-01 - 2023-12-31.

Enligt vår uppfattning har årsredovisningen upprättats i enlighet med årsredovisningslagen och ger en i alla väsentliga avseenden rättvisande bild av Universum Communications Sweden Aktiebolags finansiella ställning per den 31 december 2023 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 Aktiebolag 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.

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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 av Universum Communications Sweden Aktiebolag för räkenskapsåret 2023-01-01 - 2023-12-31 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 Aktiebolag 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 2024-03-21

Ernst & Young AB

Jens Bertling
Auktoriserad revisor

A member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited

20240726060003

axel springer_

Consolidated Financial Statements and Management Report Axel Springer SE

2023

Fotokopians överensstämmelse
med originalet intygas:

FREDRIK ANDERSSON
020-796071

202407260604

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Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

€ millions	Notes	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Non-current assets		**5,920.2**	**5,885.6**
Intangible assets	(4)	4,951.6	4,578.3
Property, plant, and equipment	(5)	557.8	653.2
Non-current financial assets	(6)	351.4	542.9
Investments accounted for using the equity method		171.5	236.9
Other non-current financial assets		179.9	306.0
Receivables due from related parties	(32)	0.0	0.1
Other assets	(8)	28.8	71.2
Deferred tax assets	(25)	30.6	39.8
Current assets		**1,497.8**	**1,340.1**
Inventories		31.9	36.8
Trade receivables	(7)	1,041.8	919.2
Receivables due from related parties	(32)	0.7	8.0
Receivables from income taxes		42.7	38.0
Other assets	(8)	146.8	133.9
Cash and cash equivalents	(27)	233.9	204.1
ASSETS		**7,417.9**	**7,225.7**

€ millions	Note	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Equity	(9)	**2,096.9**	**2,500.9**
Shareholders of Axel Springer SE		1,816.1	2,244.8
Subscribed capital		107.9	107.9
Additional paid-in capital		611.3	607.3
Accumulated retained earnings		1,152.0	1,456.7
Accumulated other comprehensive income		–55.1	72.9
Non-controlling interests		280.8	256.1
Non-current provisions and liabilities		**3,304.5**	**3,101.9**
Provisions for pensions	(11)	92.1	44.6
Other provisions	(12)	137.0	125.9
Financial liabilities	(13)	2,504.8	2,455.8
Trade payables		0.9	0.1
Liabilities due to related parties	(32)	35.4	31.5
Other liabilities	(14)	257.7	204.4
Deferred tax liabilities	(25)	276.5	239.7
Current provisions and liabilities		**2,016.5**	**1,622.8**
Provisions for pensions	(11)	21.5	21.5
Other provisions	(12)	187.6	168.0
Financial liabilities	(13)	484.6	151.1
Trade payables		693.8	623.6
Liabilities due to related parties	(32)	6.2	6.0
Liabilities from income taxes		47.9	44.0
Other liabilities	(14)	575.0	608.6
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		**7,417.9**	**7,225.7**

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Consolidated Income Statement

€ millions	Note	2023	2022
Revenues	(16)	3,855.3	3,833.9
Other operating income	(17)	181.3	105.4
Change in inventories and internal costs capitalized	(18)	150.9	122.9
Purchased goods and services	(19)	−521.8	−556.5
Personnel expenses	(20)	−1,872.8	−1,726.7
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments	(21)	−492.4	−459.5
Other operating expenses	(22)	−1,147.3	−1,141.3
Income from investments	(23)	−19.6	−47.2
Result from investments accounted for using the equity method		46.4	−33.9
Other investment income		−66.1	−13.3
Financial result	(24)	−158.7	−48.6
Financial income		23.4	27.3
Financial expense		−182.2	−75.9
Income taxes	(25)	−143.3	−107.2
Net result		**−168.5**	**−24.7**
Net result attributable to shareholders of Axel Springer SE		−179.0	−45.0
Net result attributable to non-controlling interests		10.5	20.3

Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

€ millions	Note	2023	2022
Net result		**−168.5**	**−24.7**
Actuarial gains/losses from defined benefit pension obligations		−51.3	69.0
Items that may not be reclassified into the income statement in future periods (after taxes)		**−51.3**	**69.0**
Currency translation differences		−52.3	66.5
Changes in fair value of derivatives used to hedge cash flows		−9.3	5.1
Other income/loss from investments accounted for using the equity method		−0.1	0.3
Items that may be reclassified into the income statement in future periods if certain criteria are met (after taxes)		**−61.7**	**71.9**
Other income/loss	(26)	**−113.0**	**140.9**
Comprehensive income		**−281.5**	**116.2**
Comprehensive income attributable to shareholders of Axel Springer SE		−304.1	98.2
Comprehensive income attributable to non-controlling interests		22.6	18.0

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Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows

€ millions	Note	2023	2022
Net result		–168.5	–24.7
Reconciliation of net result to the cash flow from operating activities:			
Depreciation, amortization, impairments, and write-ups		492.4	459.5
Result from investments accounted for using the equity method	(23)	–46.4	33.9
Dividends received from investments accounted for using the equity method		3.3	17.3
Result from disposal of consolidated subsidiaries and business units and intangible assets, property, plant, and equipment, and financial assets		9.6	–10.3
Changes in non-current provisions		58.1	–113.5
Changes in deferred taxes		–18.3	1.5
Other non-cash income and expenses		137.6	43.6
Changes in trade receivables		–99.4	–1.4
Changes in trade payables		51.0	–2.3
Changes in other assets and liabilities		–110.9	60.7
Cash flow from operating activities	**(27)**	**308.5**	**464.4**
Proceeds from disposals of intangible assets, property, plant, and equipment less costs of disposal		12.1	2.4
Proceeds from disposals of consolidated subsidiaries and business units, less cash and cash equivalents given up		–1.7	–6.5
Proceeds from disposals of non-current financial assets		28.6	32.4
Proceeds from/investments in short-term financial funds		–10.3	0.0
Purchases of intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment		–188.5	–168.6
Purchases of shares in consolidated subsidiaries and business units less cash and cash equivalents acquired	(2c)	–325.5	–18.7
Purchases of investments in non-current financial assets		–13.6	–55.6
Cash flow from investing activities	**(27)**	**–499.0**	**–214.6**
Dividends paid to shareholders of Axel Springer SE		–125.2	–125.2
Dividends paid to other shareholders		–6.7	–6.2
Purchases of non-controlling interests		–5.5	–1.5
Repayments of lease liabilities		–76.5	–70.5
Proceeds from financial liabilities		1,523.1	1,040.7
Repayments of financial liabilities		–1,088.4	–1,089.4
Other financial transactions		0.0	2.9
Cash flow from financing activities	**(27)**	**220.9**	**–249.1**
Cash flow-related changes in cash and cash equivalents		**30.4**	**0.8**
Changes in cash and cash equivalents due to exchange rates		–0.5	1.4
Changes in cash and cash equivalents due to changes in companies included in consolidation		–0.1	0.4
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period		204.1	201.6
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	**(27)**	**233.9**	**204.1**
Cash inflows and payments contained in the cash flow from operating activities:			
Income taxes paid		–169.7	–181.0
Income taxes received		22.0	17.7
Interest paid		–90.0	–46.5
Interest received		6.9	1.1
Dividends received		8.6	26.5

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Consolidated Statement of Changes in Equity

				Accumulated other comprehensive income (9e)				
					Changes in fair value			
€ millions	Subscribed capital (9a)	Additional paid-in capital (9c)	Accumulated retained earnings (9d)	Currency translation	Derivatives used to hedge cash flows	Other equity	Shareholders of Axel Springer SE	Non-controlling interests (9f)	Equity
Balance as of 01/01/2022	**107.9**	**602.2**	**1,625.1**	**32.2**	**0.1**	**–102.8**	**2,264.7**	**235.9**	**2,500.6**
Net result			–45.0				–45.0	20.3	–24.7
Other income/loss (26)				68.9	5.1	69.2	143.3	–2.3	140.9
Comprehensive income			**–45.0**	**68.9**	**5.1**	**69.2**	**98.2**	**18.0**	**116.2**
Dividends paid (9d)			–125.2				–125.2	–3.3	–128.5
Change in consolidated companies			1.0			0.2	1.2	1.7	3.0
Purchase/Disposal of non-controlling interests		–1.5	0.6				–0.9	3.7	2.8
Other changes		6.5	0.2				6.7	0.1	6.8
Balance as of 12/31/2022	**107.9**	**607.3**	**1,456.7**	**101.1**	**5.2**	**–33.4**	**2,244.8**	**256.1**	**2,500.9**
Net result			–179.0				–179.0	10.5	–168.5
Other income/loss (26)				–64.4	–9.3	–51.4	–125.1	12.1	–113.0
Comprehensive income			**–179.0**	**–64.4**	**–9.3**	**–51.4**	**–304.1**	**22.6**	**–281.5**
Dividends paid (9d)			–125.2				–125.2	–2.7	–127.9
Change in consolidated companies			2.9			–2.9	0.0		0.0
Purchase/Disposal of non-controlling interests		–0.4	–0.2				–0.6	1.8	1.2
Other changes		4.4	–3.3				1.1	3.1	4.3
Balance as of 12/31/2023	**107.9**	**611.3**	**1,152.0**	**36.7**	**–4.1**	**–87.7**	**1,816.1**	**280.8**	**2,096.9**

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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 (Adress: Axel-Springer-Straße 65, 10888 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 (16).

On March 4, 2024, the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE authorized the consolidated financial statements for financial year 2023 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 the companies it controls (subsidiaries). Control exists when Axel Springer SE has power over the subsidiary, is exposed to variable returns from the subsidiary and has the ability to affect the amount of the returns through its power over the subsidiary.

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, respectively, 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:

	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Fully consolidated subsidiaries		
Germany	89	83
Other countries	104	104
Investments accounted for using the equity method		
Germany	11	13
Other countries	3	7

Companies included in the consolidated financial statements are listed in note (35). Essentially, the following changes occurred in the reporting year 2023:

At the beginning of June 2023, we acquired further 25.0 % of the shares in **SoD ScreenOnDemand GmbH**, Munich, which had previously been accounted for using the equity method, and its subsidiaries. We now hold 50.1 % of the shares in ScreenOnDemand. Since then, the company and its two subsidiaries have been fully consolidated.

At the beginning of July 2023, we acquired 100.0 % of the shares in **Bayard Intermediate Holdings, Inc.**, Wilmington, Delaware, USA, and its subsidiary via Appcast Inc. and have fully consolidated both companies since then.

At the end of November 2023, we acquired 100.0 % of the shares in **Neuraum Ventures GmbH**, Berlin, and its subsidiaries via Immowelt GmbH (since February 1, 2024: AVIV Germany GmbH). Since then, Neuraum and its three subsidiaries have been fully consolidated.

The other changes related in particular to mergers, foundations, initial consolidations and deconsolidations of fully consolidated companies as well as investments accounted for using the equity method and were non-material for the consolidated financial statements.

(c) Acquisitions and divestures

At the beginning of June 2023, we acquired further 25.0 % of the shares in **SoD ScreenOnDemand GmbH**, Munich, and its two subsidiaries via Axel Springer All Media GmbH, and now hold 50.1 % of the shares. Since then, the ScreenOnDemand Group has been fully consolidated. ScreenOnDemand is a marketer of digital advertising campaigns in Germany, Austria, and France. The acquisition strengthens Axel Springer's digital advertising marketing in the business unit News Media Germany.

For the remaining 49.9 % of shares 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 non-controlling interests.

The acquisition costs amounted to € 262.4 million, consisting of the purchase price paid of € 54.3 million, the contingent consideration in the amount of € 134.9 million (see note (29)) as well as the pre-existing investment of 25.1 % measured at a fair value of € 73.2 million (see note (23) for information on income from revaluation). The acquisition-related expenses included in other operating expenses amounted to € 0.1 million.

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Based on the purchase price allocation, the 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	77.0
Trade receivables	8.9
Property, plant, and equipment and other assets	1.0
Cash and cash equivalents	29.5
Trade payables	–1.9
Provisions	–0.4
Other liabilities	–10.4
Deferred tax liabilities	–23.8
Net assets	**80.0**
Acquisition cost	262.4
Goodwill	**182.4**

The acquired intangible assets mainly relate to customer relationships. The non-tax-deductible goodwill 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 € 8.9 million. No corresponding valuation allowances were recognized.

Since initial consolidation at the beginning of June 2023, ScreenOnDemand contributed to consolidated revenues in the amount of € 33.1 million and to consolidated net result in the amount of € 7.3 million. If ScreenOnDemand had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2023, the consolidated revenues 2023 would have changed by € 47.4 million and consolidated net result 2023 would have changed by € 9.1 million.

At the beginning of July 2023, we acquired 100.0 % of the shares in **Bayard Intermediate Holdings, Inc.**, Wilmington, Delaware, USA, and its subsidiary via Appcast, Inc., which have been fully consolidated since then. Bayard is a technology provider for programmatic job advertising in the USA. The acquisition expands Appcast's existing product portfolio as well as its customer relationships in the business unit Stepstone Group.

The acquisition costs corresponded to the purchase price paid in the financial year and amounted to € 253.2 million in total. The purchase price was hedged by a forward foreign exchange transaction in the amount of € 251.9 million (see note (31)). The acquisition-related expenses recognized in other operating expenses amounted to € 1.9 million.

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Based on the purchase price allocation, the 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	129.3
Property, plant, and equipment	4.3
Trade receivables	16.7
Other assets	4.5
Cash and cash equivalents	7.0
Trade payables	–20.7
Financial liabilities	–3.8
Other liabilities	–6.6
Deferred tax liabilities	–32.0
Net assets	**98.7**
Acquisition cost	253.2
Goodwill	**154.5**

The acquired intangible assets mainly relate to customer relationships and trademarks. The non-tax-deductible goodwill 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 € 16.9 million. Corresponding valuation allowances in the amount of € 0.2 million were recorded.

Due to the integration of Bayard into Appcast's business immediately after acquisition, it is not possible to determine Bayard's contribution to consolidated revenues and to consolidated net result. If Bayard had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2023, Bayard would have additionally contributed € 29.5 million to the consolidated revenues 2023 and € – 7.2 million to the consolidated net result 2023.

At the end of November 2023, we acquired 100.0 % of the shares in **Neuraum Ventures GmbH**, Berlin, and its three subsidiaries via Immowelt GmbH (since February 1, 2024: AVIV Germany GmbH) and have been fully consolidated since then. Neuraum operates several online platforms for house building in Germany and Austria. The acquisition expands Axel Springer's digital classifieds offerings in the business unit AVIV Group.

The preliminary acquisition costs amounted to € 30.7 million and included in addition to the purchase price of € 25.1 million paid in the financial year, purchase price liabilities of € 3.2 million for a purchase price retention and the preliminary purchase price adjustment, as well as a contingent consideration from earn-out agreements of € 2.4 million (see note (29)).

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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	11.0
Property, plant, and equipment	0.5
Trade receivables	0.8
Other assets	0.3
Cash and cash equivalents	5.5
Trade payables	–0.3
Financial liabilities	–0.4
Provisions and other liabilities	–4.5
Deferred tax liabilities	–3.2
Net assets	**9.6**
Acquisition cost (preliminary)	30.7
Goodwill (preliminary)	**21.1**

The acquired intangible assets mainly relate to customer relationships and technology. 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 non-tax-deductible goodwill 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 € 0.8 million. No corresponding valuation allowances were recognized.

Since initial consolidation at the beginning of November 2023, Neuraum contributed to consolidated revenues in the amount of € 0.6 million and to consolidated net result in the amount of € 0.0 million. If Neuraum had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2023, the consolidated revenues 2023 would have changed by € 8.3 million and consolidated net result 2023 would have changed by € 1.3 million.

Further business combinations in the reporting year related to the acquisition of 60.0 % of the shares in TorAlarm GmbH, Düsseldorf, as well as further 25.0 % of the shares in cmmrcl.ly GmbH, Hamburg, in which Axel Springer now holds 50.1 % of the shares. In addition, further 51.2 % of the shares in Homeday GmbH, Berlin, were partially acquired directly via AVIV Group GmbH and via the acquisition of shares in Einhundertsiebte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsgesellschaft mbH, Berlin, which held shares in Homeday. These acquisitions followed our strategy to become the leading provider of digital journalism and digital classifieds worldwide and had no major effects individually or collectively on the financial position, liquidity, and financial performance of the Group.

The acquisition costs for these business combinations amounted to a total of € 52.8 million and included in addition to the purchase prices paid of € 10.6 million, a purchase price retention of € 1.0 million as well as contingent considerations of € 19.6 million. In addition, the acquisition costs included the pre-existing investment of 25.1 % in cmmrcl.ly measured at fair value of € 7.8 million (see note (23) for information on income from revaluation) and the pre-existing convertible loan to Homeday measured at fair value in the amount of € 13.7 million (see note (24) for information on expenses from revaluation). As part of the transfer of control of Homeday, payments of € 5.0 million were made to minority shareholders, which were recognized directly in the result from the disposal of investments accounted for using the equity method.

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The contingent consideration resulted from option agreements and were recognized at their fair values on the acquisition date. The fair values predominantly depend on the earnings performance of the acquired companies in the years prior to the possible exercise or payment dates. Accordingly, we assumed an anticipated acquisition of the remaining 40.0 % of the shares in TorAlarm, the remaining 49.9 % of the shares in cmmrcl.ly and the remaining 19.8 % of the shares in Homeday and did not account for any non-controlling interests. The contingent consideration related to the shares in TorAlarm totaling € 4.8 million included a partial amount of € 0.7 million, that will be recognized as personnel expense over the option term. See note (29) for information on contingent consideration.

Based on the partially preliminary purchase price allocations the cumulative acquisition costs of these business combinations were allocated to the purchased assets and liabilities as follows:

€ millions	Carrying amount after acquisition
Intangible assets	24.6
Property, plant, and equipment	1.5
Trade receivables	5.7
Other assets	2.7
Deferred tax assets	2.2
Cash and cash equivalents	5.5
Trade payables	–3.2
Financial liabilities	–1.4
Provisions	–1.2
Other liabilities	–5.7
Deferred tax liabilities	–7.7
Net assets	**23.2**
Acquisition cost	52.8
Goodwill (preliminary)	**29.7**

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

The non-tax-deductible goodwill 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 € 6.6 million. Corresponding valuation allowances in the amount of € 0.9 million were recorded.

Since the initial consolidations of these companies, they have contributed to consolidated revenues in the amount of € 18.1 million and to consolidated net result in the amount of € –5.8 million. If these acquisitions had already been finalized on January 1, 2023, the consolidated revenues 2023 would have changed by € 39.3 million and consolidated net result 2023 would have changed by € –6.0 million.

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

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Acquisitions and divestures of the previous year:

At the beginning of July 2022, we acquired further 26.0 % of the shares in **No Fluff Jobs, Sp. Z o.o.**, Gdansk, Poland, via Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska AG, and now hold 70.0 % of the shares. Since then, the company has been fully consolidated. No Fluff Jobs operates a portal for IT job advertisements in Poland.

For the remaining 30.0 % of the shares in No Fluff Jobs 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 non-controlling interests.

The acquisition costs amounted to € 31.5 million, consisting of the purchase price paid of € 8.4 million in the financial year 2022, the partial fair value of the contingent consideration to be treated as purchase price in the amount of € 5.7 million (see note (29)), as well as the pre-existing investment of 44.0 % measured at a fair value of € 17.4 million. For information on income from revaluation see note (23). The contingent consideration totaling € 10.9 million resulted from an earn-out and option agreement and included a partial amount of € 5.2 million that will be recognized as personnel expense over the option term.

Based on the preliminary purchase price allocation as of December 31, 2022, the 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	11.3
Property, plant, and equipment	0.1
Trade receivables	0.2
Other assets and deferred tax assets	0.7
Cash and cash equivalents	3.3
Trade payables	–0.3
Provisions and other liabilities	–1.4
Deferred tax liabilities	–2.5
Net assets	**11.5**
Acquisition cost	31.5
Goodwill (preliminary as of December 31, 2022)	**20.0**

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 December 31, 2022.

The non-tax-deductible goodwill 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 € 0.2 million. No corresponding valuation allowances were recognized.

Since initial consolidation at the beginning of July 2022, No Fluff Jobs contributed to consolidated revenues 2022 in the amount of € 1.6 million and to consolidated net result 2022 in the amount of € –3.4 million. If No Fluff Jobs had already been fully consolidated on January 1, 2022, the consolidated revenues 2022 would have changed by € 4.9 million and consolidated net result 2022 would have changed by € –4.5 million.

Additional transactions carried out in the financial year 2022, as well as finalizations of purchase price allocations arising from acquisitions of companies in the financial year 2021, had no material effects individually and collectively on the financial position, liquidity, and financial performance of the Group.

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(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.

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	
	2023	2022	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
British pound	0.87	0.85	0.87	0.89
Israeli shekel	3.99	3.54	4.00	3.76
Polish zloty	4.54	4.69	4.34	4.69
US-Dollar	1.08	1.05	1.11	1.07

(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) Revenues recognition

Axel Springer Group is a media and technology company whose core business is digital classified offers 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.

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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 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, which include in particular the barter of advertising services, 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 on the basis of market prices for comparable goods and services.

(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	5 to 25

Intangible assets with an indefinite useful life, which include goodwill, individual 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.

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(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. 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 arise from the corresponding lease liabilities and lease prepayments, taking into account leasing incentives received. Current depreciation is 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 (acquisition or production cost 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 and in property, plant, and equipment 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 costs of disposal, 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

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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 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 fair value less costs of disposal is additionally determined when the value in use is less than the carrying amount. The fair value less costs of disposal corresponds to the amount reduced by the costs of disposal, 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 fair value less costs of disposal 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 based on published industry-related market research. When estimating the growth rates, we take into account the fact that the Group's strategic orientation results in compensatory effects between the Group's various business areas in the case of long-term growth rates.

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-derivate 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 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

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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.

Other financial non-derivative assets also include finance lease receivables, reimbursement rights which are associated with pension obligations, and net defined benefit assets. 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 financial performance measures 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 financial performance measures used as a basis for measurement are generally revenues, resp. EBIT or EBITDA figures adjusted for material non-recurring effects as well as effects from lease accounting.

(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 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.

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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 financial 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 related reimbursement rights disclosed in 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 measured at fair value and netted against the pension obligations secured by them. Net defined benefit obligations are recognized as pension provisions, while net defined benefit assets are recognized under other financial 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 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.

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

(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 financial years in which it is probable that the differences will reverse or the tax loss carry-forwards can be utilized. Tax effects that may result from the future application of the regulations on global minimum taxation (Pillar 2) are not taken into account when determining the recognition of deferred taxes. 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 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.

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(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 and the determination of the fair value of plan assets (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 payment 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)). For further information on estimates and assumptions, see the relevant comments on the specific line items within the notes to the consolidated financial statements.

(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. For the amendments to IAS 12, see note (25). 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.

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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 01/01/2022	2,422.7	618.3	3,072.4	6,113.4
Initial consolidation	15.0	4.9	32.9	52.8
Currency effects	20.2	–0.2	38.1	58.1
Additions	12.2	117.3	0.0	129.5
Disposals	–40.9	–19.8	0.0	–60.7
Reclassifications	0.7	1.5	0.0	2.3
Balance as of 12/31/2022	**2,429.9**	**722.1**	**3,143.4**	**6,295.4**
Initial consolidation	237.8	4.2	387.6	629.6
Deconsolidation	–9.5	–0.4	–1.2	–11.1
Currency effects	–20.3	–0.2	–38.3	–58.8
Additions	15.8	145.8	0.0	161.6
Disposals	–110.3	–8.6	0.0	–118.8
Reclassifications	0.2	–0.4	0.0	–0.2
Balance as of 12/31/2023	**2,543.5**	**862.4**	**3,491.5**	**6,897.5**
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments				
Balance as of 01/01/2022	905.5	428.8	110.6	1,444.8
Currency effects	–4.4	–0.1	–2.1	–6.6
Additions	164.2	95.5	76.3	336.0
Thereof depreciation	*160.5*	*92.2*	*0.0*	*252.7*
Thereof impairment losses	*3.7*	*3.4*	*76.3*	*83.4*
Disposals	–38.6	–19.7	0.0	–58.3
Reclassifications	0.0	1.1	0.0	1.1
Balance as of 12/31/2022	**1,026.7**	**505.7**	**184.7**	**1,717.1**
Deconsolidation	–8.6	–0.2	0.0	–8.9
Currency effects	–5.3	–0.3	–1.8	–7.4
Additions	171.2	124.4	68.1	363.7
Thereof depreciation	*171.1*	*115.8*	*0.0*	*286.8*
Thereof impairment losses	*0.1*	*8.6*	*68.1*	*76.8*
Disposals	–110.3	–8.4	0.0	–118.8
Balance as of 12/31/2023	**1,073.6**	**621.2**	**251.1**	**1,945.9**
Carrying amounts				
Balance as of 12/31/2023	1,469.9	241.3	3,240.4	4,951.6
Balance as of 12/31/2022	1,403.2	216.4	2,958.7	4,578.3

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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.

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	12/31/2023	Discount rate (before tax)	Discount rate (after tax)	Growth rate
AVIV	1,031.3	0.2	1,031.5	14.1%	11.3%	2.0%
POLITICO	617.2	0.0	617.2	11.6%	9.3%	2.0%
Stepstone	509.9	41.2	551.1	14.6%	11.2%	2.0%
Insider	353.2	0.7	353.9	11.2%	9.0%	2.0%
Awin	248.6	0.3	249.0	13.4%	10.4%	2.0%
Others	480.3	110.0	590.2	8.3% to 12.4%	7.5% to 9.4%	0.0% to 2.0%
Total	**3,240.4**	**152.4**	**3,392.9**			

	€ millions					
Intangible assets with indefinite useful life	Goodwill	Others	12/31/2022	Discount rate (before tax)	Discount rate (after tax)	Growth rate
AVIV	1,011.3	0.2	1,011.5	11.7%	9.4%	2.0%
POLITICO	638.8	0.0	638.8	11.2%	9.8%	2.0%
Insider	431.6	1.0	432.6	12.7%	10.2%	2.0%
Stepstone	359.5	41.2	400.8	12.0%	9.3%	2.0%
Awin	248.6	0.3	248.9	11.8%	9.5%	2.0%
Others	268.9	102.5	371.4	9.0% to 12.4%	7.7% to 9.6%	0.0% to 2.0%
Total	**2,958.7**	**145.2**	**3,103.9**			

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

€ millions	01/01/2022	Initial consolidation	Currency effects	12/31/2022	Initial consolidation	Impairment	Currency effects	12/31/2023
AVIV	1,018.9	1.0	−8.6	1,011.3	27.3	0.0	−7.3	1,031.3
POLITICO	604.9	0.0	33.9	638.8	0.0	0.0	−21.6	617.2
Stepstone	365.6	0.0	−6.1	359.5	154.5	0.0	−4.1	509.9
Insider	407.3	0.0	24.2	431.6	0.0	−63.9	−14.5	353.2
Awin	250.0	0.0	−1.4	248.6	0.0	0.0	0.1	248.6
Total	**2,646.8**	**1.0**	**42.0**	**2,689.8**	**181.7**	**−63.9**	**−47.5**	**2,760.2**

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

The medium-term planning of the **AVIV Group**, which operates its real estate portals in Germany, France, Belgium and Israel, is based on the assumption of constant market conditions compared to 2023. In the planning period, revenue and earnings growth is expected. The revenue growth is expected to result from a value-based pricing policy, modified product bundles as well as the extension of the transactional business model. The listings core business is to be expanded by ongoing investments targeted to drive further profitable growth as well as capitalizing on synergies within the group, especially through harmonizing technology and product components. The aim is to extend and expand the market position by an enlarged customer base as well as an increased average revenue per customer.

The medium-term planning of the **POLITICO Group** foresees robust revenue and earnings growth. Following the challenging market environment in 2023, a positive economic development is expected again in the main market, the USA, starting in 2024. Key drivers of growth include increasing advertising revenues due to higher quantities and prices, as well as the expansion of the subscription business, among other factors such as new product launches. Additionally, as part of the expansion strategy in 2023, new markets in Europe were tapped into, and the existing offerings in the core market of the USA were expanded.

Due to the current economic situation and various crises, low growth is expected for the **Stepstone Group** in 2024. However, there is a fundamental assumption of a long-term strong demand for labor, which has a positive impact on Stepstone due to labor shortages in many sectors. The medium-term planning is based on the assumption that Stepstone will continue to benefit from increasing labor shortages and rising employee turnover in the market and will develop significantly positively again from 2025 onwards despite the current economically and politically challenging situation, including catch-up effects in the following years. To attract new customers and expand business with existing customers, Stepstone plans to invest in customer-specific products and technologies that ensure a high number and quality of applicants per published advertisement. Artificial intelligence will play an important role in this regard. Especially in EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa), Stepstone will continue to invest in branding campaigns to strengthen brand awareness and expand market position. In summary, these assumptions in Stepstone's medium-term planning led to revenue and earnings growth.

In the medium-term planning, the **Insider Group** expects significant growth in revenue and operating profit. Insider Group assumes, after a difficult economic environment in 2023, a continued positive development of the macroeconomic situation in the USA and thus an improving digital advertising environment. Advertising revenues are also to be increased by optimizing the marketing of premium inventory and overall improved efficacy of the sales organizations. Besides advertising revenues and revenues from third-party marketing of journalistic content as the main source of revenues, 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. Continued investments, especially in the areas of journalism and product & technology, will be pushed further in the planning period.

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, tailor-made software-as-a-service solutions for large customers and the establishment of subscription 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 generally determined by the value in use for all the above-mentioned major reporting units. Only the reporting units POLITICO and Insider were measured based on the fair value less costs of disposal in the reporting year (in the previous year only the reporting unit POLITICO). For the reporting unit Insider an impairment loss of € 63.9 million was recognized on the goodwill. The impairment loss resulted from adjusted earnings plannings for the coming years caused by market-related reduced expectations for business development. The recoverable amount of the reporting unit was equal to a fair value less costs of disposal of € 572.1 million. The measurement was based on non-observable input factors (Level 3) using a discounted cash flow method with a post-tax discount rate of 9.0 % and a terminal growth rate of 2.0 %. As a result, the sensitivity analysis for this reporting unit indicated that a 10 % decrease of future cash flows in the last planning year, a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital, respectively, a decrease of the

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terminal growth rate by half a percentage point would result in an additional impairment of € 51.4 million, € 74.9 million, and € 34.3 million, respectively.

In the course of a sensitivity analysis, we have assumed separately at the respective measurement date for each of our mayor 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. As a result, the reporting unit POLITICO indicated that the carrying amount of the assets would have exceeded the recoverable amount of the reporting unit (PY: none of the major reporting units). For the reporting unit POLITICO, the recoverable amount exceeded the carrying amount by € 1.0 million. The recoverable amount would have corresponded to the carrying amount if, separately in each case, the future cash flows in the last planning year had been reduced by 0.1 %, the discount rate after taxes of 9.3 % had been increased by 0.01 % or the terminal growth rate of 2.0 % had been reduced by 0.01 %.

Goodwill and intangible assets with indefinite useful lives allocated to the other reporting units of the Group of € 590.2 million (PY: € 371.4 million) amounted to less than 10 %, respectively, cumulatively to less than 20 % of the total value. As in the previous year the recoverable amount of these reporting units was generally determined by the value in use. In the reporting year, the fair value less costs of disposal was used for two reporting units (PY: three reporting units). An impairment loss was recognized for one other reporting unit (PY: three other reporting units). In the course of a sensitivity analysis, we have assumed separately at the respective measurement date 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. On this basis one (PY: none) reporting unit indicated that the carrying amount of the assets exceeded the recoverable amount of the reporting unit.

An impairment loss of € 4.2 million (PY: € 7.5 million) was recognized on the goodwill of an other reporting unit operating in the Other Business Units division, which generates sales and advertising revenues mainly from print offerings via an joint venture in France. The impairment was based on adjusted earnings plannings for the coming years caused by market-related reduced expectations of business development. In the previous year this was additionally caused by a market-related change in input factors in determining the discount rate. The recoverable amount of the reporting unit was equal to a fair value less costs of disposal of € 6.3 million (PY: € 11.1 million). The measurement was based on non-observable input factors (Level 3) using a discounted cash flow method with a post-tax discount rate of 7.8 % (PY: 8.3 %) and a terminal growth rate of unchanged 0.0 %. As a result, the sensitivity analysis for this reporting unit indicated that a 10 % decrease of future cash flows in the last planning year, a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital, respectively, a decrease of the terminal growth rate by half a percentage point would result in an additional impairment of € 0.5 million (PY: € 0.7 million), € 0.6 million (PY: € 1.0 million), and € 0.3 million (PY: € 0.4 million), respectively.

In the previous year, an impairment loss of € 55.3 million was recognized on the goodwill of News Media Germany division as part of the other reporting units, which generates sales and advertising revenue from digital, TV and print offerings in Germany. The impairment loss resulted from adjusted earnings plannings for the coming years caused by market-related reduced expectations for business development, as well as on the market-related change in input factors in determining the discount rate. In the previous year, the recoverable amount of the reporting unit was equal to a fair value less costs of disposal of € 352.3 million. The measurement was based on non-observable input factors (Level 3) using a discounted cash flow method with a post-tax discount rate of 7.7 % and a terminal growth rate of 1.0 %. The sensitivity analysis of the previous year for this reporting unit indicated that a 10 % decrease of future cash flows in the last planning year, a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital, respectively, a decrease of the terminal growth rate by half a percentage point would have resulted in an additional impairment of € 7.9 million, € 39.7 million, and € 17.7 million respectively for the previous year.

In the previous year, an impairment loss of € 13.5 million was recognized on the goodwill of another reporting unit operating in the Other Business Units division, which generates circulation and advertising revenues from digital and print offerings, as well as classified ads and job listings in Poland. The impairment was mainly based on the market-related change in input factors in determining the discount rate. In the previous year, the recoverable amount of the reporting unit was equal to a fair value less costs of disposal of € 261.0 million. The measurement was based on non-observable input factors (Level 3) using a discounted cash flow method with a post-tax discount rate of 8.8 % and a terminal growth rate of 2.0 %. The sensitivity analysis of the previous year for

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this reporting unit indicated that a 10 % decrease of future cash flows in the last planning year, a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital, respectively, a decrease of the terminal growth rate by half a percentage point would have resulted in an additional impairment of € 22.1 million, € 32.4 million, and € 15.1 million respectively in the previous year. The sensitivity analysis of the reporting year indicated that only a 10 % increase of the weighted average costs of capital would have resulted in an impairment. In the reporting year the recoverable amount exceeded the carrying amount by € 25.6 million. The recoverable amount would have been equal to the carrying amount if the post-tax discount rate had been increased from 8.4 % to 9.0 %.

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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 01/01/2022	174.7	550.1	288.6	8.9	541.1	1,563.3
Initial consolidation	7.0	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.0	7.5
Currency effects	0.3	−0.1	0.5	0.0	0.1	0.7
Additions	0.3	2.4	32.3	5.0	107.3	147.3
Disposals	−2.7	0.0	−22.2	0.0	−23.9	−48.9
Reclassifications	0.2	3.0	0.4	−5.9	0.1	−2.3
Balance as of 12/31/2022	**179.7**	**555.4**	**299.9**	**7.9**	**624.6**	**1,667.6**
Initial consolidation	0.0	0.0	0.7	0.0	5.7	6.4
Deconsolidation	0.0	0.0	−1.3	0.0	−3.7	−5.0
Currency effects	0.2	0.2	0.5	0.0	−0.9	−0.1
Additions	0.0	1.8	23.5	1.3	29.4	56.0
Disposals	−9.4	−11.7	−46.3	0.0	−42.5	−109.9
Reclassifications	−4.6	4.0	7.2	−6.5	0.0	0.2
Balance as of 12/31/2023	**165.8**	**549.8**	**284.3**	**2.7**	**612.5**	**1,615.1**
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments						
Balance as of 01/01/2022	89.0	475.0	198.3	0.0	168.5	930.8
Currency effects	−0.1	−0.1	0.0	0.0	−0.3	−0.4
Additions	4.9	18.4	30.3	0.0	69.8	123.5
Thereof depreciation	*3.8*	*18.4*	*30.0*	*0.0*	*68.5*	*120.9*
Thereof impairment losses	*1.1*	*0.0*	*0.3*	*0.0*	*1.3*	2.7
Disposals	−0.3	0.0	−21.5	0.0	−16.5	−38.4
Reclassifications	0.2	0.0	−1.3	0.0	0.0	−1.1
Balance as of 12/31/2022	**93.8**	**493.3**	**205.8**	**0.0**	**221.6**	**1,014.4**
Deconsolidation	0.0	0.0	−1.0	0.0	−1.6	−2.6
Currency effects	0.1	0.2	0.6	0.0	−0.2	0.6
Additions	8.1	21.3	29.5	0.0	69.7	128.7
Thereof depreciation	*8.0*	*21.3*	*29.5*	*0.0*	*68.9*	*127.8*
Thereof impairment losses	*0.1*	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.7*	*0.9*
Disposals	−0.1	−11.7	−43.7	0.0	−28.1	−83.6
Reclassifications	−3.7	0.0	3.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
Balance as of 12/31/2023	**98.2**	**503.1**	**194.8**	**0.0**	**261.2**	**1,057.4**
Carrying amounts						
Balance as of 12/31/2023	67.7	46.7	89.5	2.7	351.2	557.8
Balance as of 12/31/2022	85.9	62.2	94.2	7.9	403.1	653.2

As of December 31, 2023, property, plant, and equipment with acquisition or production costs of € 495.6 million (PY: € 431.0 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.

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

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Real Estate	344.9	395.5
Technical equipment and machinery	1.0	2.9
Other equipment, operational and office equipment	5.3	4.7
Right-of-use assets	**351.2**	**403.1**

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

€ millions	2023	2022
Real Estate	63.4	62.7
Technical equipment and machinery	1.8	1.7
Other equipment, operational and office equipment	4.5	5.4
Depreciation on right-of-use assets	**69.7**	**69.8**

For further information on right-of-use assets, lease liabilities and lease expenses see note (3d), (8), (13), (15), (16), (22), (24), (27) and (34).

(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	2023	2022
Non-material associates		
Carrying amounts	120.7	180.4
Share attributable to the group:		
Net result	–11.0	–45.5
Other income/loss	–0.1	0.3
Comprehensive income	**–11.1**	**–45.2**

€ millions	2023	2022
Non-material joint-ventures		
Carrying amounts	50.8	56.5
Share attributable to the group:		
Net result	–10.9	–4.7
Other income/loss	0.0	0.0
Comprehensive income	**–10.9**	**–4.7**

For information regarding the result of transitional consolidation and the impairment loss of non-material associates and non-material joint ventures, see note (23).

In the reporting year proportionate net result to be recognized in income from investments was not recorded in the amount of € –0.0 million (PY: € –1.1 million), since a carrying amount of zero was reached due to the recognition of proportionate income for the corresponding net investments. The cumulative net result not

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recognized as of December 31, 2023, amounted to € –0.0 million (PY: € –9.9 million). The reduction related to the disposal of an associated company.

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 € 145.4 million (PY: € 274.8 million). These financial assets concern investments of € 142.7 million (PY: € 211.4 million) as well as convertible loans of € 2.7 million (PY: € 63.4 million). In addition, loans in the amount of € 34.5 million (PY: € 31.2 million) were accounted for at amortized cost.

Loss allowances amounting to € 0.7 million (PY: write-ups of € 0.1 million) were recognized for miscellaneous other financial assets in the reporting year. The total of loss allowances amounted to € 2.4 million (PY: € 1.7 million) on the balance sheet date. In addition, write-ups for loan commitments amounting of a total of € 1.0 million (PY: loss allowances of € 2.0 million) were recognized.

The investments contained particularly our shares in Lakestar II LP amounting to € 34.1 million (PY: € 51.3 million).

(7) Trade receivables

The trade receivables broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Trade receivables, nominal	1,091.6	953.5
Allowances for trade receivables	–49.7	–34.3
Trade receivables	**1,041.8**	**919.2**

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, 2023:

€ millions	Trade receivables		
Overdue	Expected loss rate	Trade receivables, nominal	Allowances for trade receivables
Non overdue	0.3%	782.6	–2.1
up to 30 days	0.5%	131.5	–0.6
31 to 90 days	1.5%	64.5	–1.0
91 to 180 days	17.8%	42.2	–7.5
> 180 days past due	54.5%	70.7	–38.6
12/31/2023	**-**	**1,091.6**	**–49.7**

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As of December 31, 2022, allowances for trade receivables resulted in the following provision matrix:

€ millions	Trade receivables		
Overdue	Expected loss rate	Trade receivables, nominal	Allowances for trade receivables
Non overdue	0.1 %	724.7	−0.8
up to 30 days	1.5 %	108.8	−1.7
31 to 90 days	3.0 %	62.9	−1.9
91 to 180 days	20.2 %	21.4	−4.3
> 180 days past due	71.9 %	35.6	−25.6
12/31/2022	**-**	**953.5**	**−34.3**

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

€ millions	2023	2022
Balance as 01/01	**34.3**	**27.0**
Additions	28.6	24.1
Reversals	−7.8	−13.3
Utilization	−5.1	−4.8
Other changes	−0.2	1.4
Balance as 12/31	**49.7**	**34.3**

In the reporting year, trade receivables in the amount of € 5.1 million (PY: € 4.8 million) were impaired and derecognized (utilizations). Of the amounts derecognized in the reporting year € 0.7 million (PY: € 0.4 million) were still subject to enforcement measures.

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(8) Other assets

The other assets broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Reimbursement right for pension obligations	13.9	13.8
Investments in short-term financial funds	10.3	0.0
Assets held in trust to secure claims from share-based payment programs	9.2	2.2
Deposits	7.8	8.0
Derivatives	2.6	7.4
Receivables under finance leases	2.3	0.6
Net defined benefit asset	0.0	23.4
Other	16.5	27.8
Other financial assets	**62.7**	**83.2**
Thereof current	*42.5*	*33.6*
Thereof non-current	*20.2*	*49.6*
Advance payments	57.5	49.6
Receivables from other taxes	30.7	26.1
Contract costs	2.1	2.6
Receivables due from employees	0.8	1.9
Contract assets	0.0	0.1
Other	21.8	41.7
Other non-financial assets	**112.9**	**121.9**
Thereof current	*104.3*	*100.3*
Thereof non-current	*8.6*	*21.6*
Other assets	**175.6**	**205.1**
Thereof current	*146.8*	*133.9*
Thereof non-current	*28.8*	*71.2*

For information regarding the reimbursement rights for pension obligations as well as the net defined benefit asset from the previous year, see note (11). For investments in short-term financial funds, see note (27). Derivatives related entirely to interest rate derivatives in the form of interest rate swaps (see note (31)). The receivables from finance leases related almost entirely to subleases of office spaces.

The miscellaneous other financial assets particularly included creditors with a debit balance as well as a large number of non-material items. In the previous year, 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 as well as creditors with a debit balance. The other non-financial assets mainly related to program assets as well as to the accrual of partial amounts of contingent considerations identified as remuneration (see note (29)).

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(9) 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 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 March 2028, 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, 2023, 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 (€ 611.3 million; PY: € 607.3 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 (10)).

(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 € 125.2 million (PY: € 125.2 million) or € 1.16 (PY: € 1.16) per qualifying share for the previous reporting year. For the reporting year 2023, the Executive Board proposes to distribute a dividend of € 1.16 per share entitled to the dividend, in total representing € 125.2 million in expected payments. The dividend is contingent upon approval at the Annual General Meeting.

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

(e) Accumulated other comprehensive income

At the balance sheet date, accumulated other comprehensive income mainly comprised actuarial gains and losses from pension plans of € –84.6 million (PY: € –33.4 million), as well as comprised effects from foreign currency translations of € 36.7 million (PY: € 101.1 million). In the reporting year the changes in foreign currency translations were mainly attributable to conversions of financial statements denominated in US-Dollar, Polish zloty and Israeli shekel. In the previous year the changes in foreign currency translations were mainly attributable to conversions of financial statements denominated in US-Dollar, British pound and Israeli shekel (see note (2d)).

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(f) Non-controlling interests

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

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska	145.6	131.5
Awin Group	85.9	79.1
Other companies	49.3	45.5
Non-controlling interests	**280.8**	**256.1**

(10) Share-based payment

In the reporting year, expenses and income for share-based payment programs amounted to € –70.8 million and € 19.8 million respectively (PY: € –38.2 million and € 18.7 million respectively) and were attribute to equity-settled programs with an amount of € –6.7 million (PY: € –11.4 million) as well as to cash-settled programs with an amount of € –64.1 million and € 19.8 million respectively (PY: € –26.8 million and € 18.7 million respectively). The liabilities and provisions recorded in relation to share-based payments totaled to € 93.9 million (PY: € 77.7 million), whereof an amount of € 33.7 million (PY: € 24.8 million) was recorded in liabilities due to related parties (see note (32)). Furthermore, the additional paid-in capital increased by € 4.0 million (PY: € 5.0 million) due to share-based payment programs. The summarized effects presented were related in particular to the following option programs.

In the fiscal year 2021, 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 Steptone, AVIV and News Media Germany. 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 News Media Germany 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 fair values for Axel Springer SE and the relevant Group divisions as defined in the MIP result from the respective fair values plus the dividends paid or profit transfers since the beginning of 2020. The percentage remuneration for these OpCo-PSPs increases from a 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.

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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 premature termination of the MIP, in particular in the event of the termination of a participant's employment relationship, the remuneration claims from the VS and PSP are forfeited. In this case, the participant will generally receive a compensation claim 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.

The MIP was mainly granted between May and December 2021 ("MIP 2021") based on individual contracts concluded with the participants. The MIP has been granted to additional participants in the reporting year 2022 and 2023 ("MIP 2022" respectively "MIP 2023"). The vesting period began with the announcement of the program in the second and third quarters of 2021 (MIP 2021), or with the individual granting (MIP 2022 and MIP 2023). 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. 97 %; PY: approx. 82 %) with the expected IPO, which is planned for the first quarter 2025 (PY: 2024). For claims from the forfeited portions of these PSP (approx. 3 %; PY: approx. 18 %) 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.

Depending on the most probable payment or valuation event, the VS and PSP (except for the OpCo-PSP for the News Media Germany 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. At the respective valuation dates the fair values of the VS are 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 are taken into account. The fair values of the AS-PSP and OpCo-PSP are 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 fair values and the respective group divisions in relation to the expected terms or residual terms at the valuation date, and the term-dependent risk-free interest rates.

For the reporting year, no additional PSPs under the equity-settled MIP were granted. For the prior year, the following significant parameters were considered for the measurement of the PSPs:

	2022	
	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP
Weighted average term (in years)*	1.2 / 2.3	1.2 / 2.3
Value increase compared to the underlying (%)	41.2	79.4
Volatility of the market value (%)**	31.5 / 36.1	40.0 / 48.8
Risk-free interest rate (%)**	3.0 / 3.1	3.0 / 3.1

* Terms separately fort he 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.

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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 following table shows the development of VS and PSP granted:

	Compensation through shares				Compensation through cash			
	Personal investment*	VS	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP**	Personal investment*	VS	AS-PSP	OpCo-PSP**
	€/VS	thousand	%	%	€/VS	thousand	%	%
01/01/2022	58.13	173	0.294	1.837 (2.143)	58.13	451	3.272 (3.345)	0.964 (1.123)
Granted	68.47	13	0.022	0.139 (0.162)	77.56	98	0.287 (0.288)	0.647 (0.754)
Forfeited	58.13	−21	−0.037	−0.217 (−0.258)	63.39	−105	−0.491 (−0.494)	−0.110 (−0.128)
12/31/2022	**58.95**	**165**	**0.279**	**1.759 (2.047)**	**61.17**	**443**	**3.066 (3.138)**	**1.502 (1.748)**
Granted	0.00	0	0.000	0.000 (0.000)	89.63	31	0.065 (0.068)	0.206 (0.240)
Forfeited	60.45	−12	−0.020	−0.125 (−0.145)	58.32	−95	−0.473 (−0.475)	−0.018 (−0.021)
12/31/2023	**58.84**	**154**	**0.259**	**1.634 (1.902)**	**64.22**	**379**	**2.659 (2.731)**	**1.690 (1.967)**

* Weighted average of personal investment.
** *Increased remuneration claims from PSP to value increases in parentheses.*

During the reporting period to compensate for forfeited VS and PSP, participants have acquired compensation claims in the amount of € 27.8 million (PY: € 13.9 million) and were mainly paid out in the reporting year. The VS and PSP outstanding at the end of the respective periods were not exercisable. No equity-settled components of the MIP were granted in the reporting year. The fair value of the equity-settled components of the MIP granted in the previous year amounted in total € 0.2 million for the VS (excluding personal investment), € 0.5 million for the AS-PSP and € 4.0 million for the OpCo-PSP. The weighted average residual term of the equity-settled MIP with respect to the VS and the part of the PSP to be settled at the time of the planned IPO of the respective group division was assumed to be 1.2 years (PY: 1.2 years) as of December 31, 2023, and 1.3 years (PY: 2.3 years) for the continuing entitlements from the transfer to a new compensation program. The weighted average residual term of the cash-settled MIP was assumed to be 2.1 years (PY: 3.1 years) as of December 31, 2023.

The expense recognized for the MIP in the reporting year was as follows:

	2023	2022
Expenses from share-based payments (equity-settled)	9.0	11.2
Expenses from share-based payments (cash-settled)	48.9	20.9
Expenses from share-based payments	**57.9**	**32.1**
Expenses from employee benefits	4.2	0.0
Expenses from the MIP	**62.1**	**32.1**

Provisions and liabilities for obligations from the MIP amounted to € 79.7 million as of December 31, 2023 (PY: € 49.4 million).

In addition to the MIP, a **Virtual Employee Participation Program ("VEP")** was introduced for employees of the Axel Springer Group in the fiscal year 2021. 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.

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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 (see above). 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 was granted mainly in the fiscal year 2021 through individually concluded program contracts with the participants. The VEP was granted to further participants in the previous year. The vesting period began in the fiscal year 2021 with the announcement of the program in September 2021, and in the previous year with the individual granting in the summer of the previous year. 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 this business division is expected to end in financial year 2025 (VEP I). In the previous year, VEP I was expected to end in 2024. For the remaining part of the VEP (VEP II), a duration of approximately five years until the second quarter of 2026 is assumed.

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 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. The personal investments made for the VS granted are reported under other provisions until the VS are settled.

The development of the VS granted is presented below:

	Personal invest-ment*	VEP I	VEP II	Total
	€/VS	thousand	thousand	thousand
01/01/2022	58.13	34	192	226
Granted	58.13	0	1	1
Forfeited	58.13	–2	–6	–8
12/31/2022	**58.13**	**32**	**187**	**219**
Forfeited	58.13	–3	–21	–24
12/31/2023	**58.13**	**29**	**166**	**195**

* Weighted average of personal investment.

In the reporting period, no additional VS in the VEP were granted. The VS outstanding at the end of the respective periods were not exercisable. The weighted average remaining term of the VS granted was assumed to be 1.2 years (PY: 1.2 years) for VEP I and 2.3 years (PY: 3.3 years) for VEP II as of December 31, 2023. The expense recognized for the VEP in the reporting year amounted to € 8.1 million (PY: € 4.7 million). The provisions recognized as of December 31, 2023, for obligations under the VEP, including the personal investments made, amounted to € 13.5 million (PY: € 6.1 million).

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

Upon closing date of the acquisition with respect to the majority shareholding in **Insider** at the end of 2015, present chairman of the board of Insider Group 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 to Axel Springer, which leads to a cash-settled share-based payment program. In the financial year 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, 2023.

In financial 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 present chairman of the board

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of Insider and the existing option program was thus extended in such a way that the performance of Insider Intelligence is considered. For this purpose, 9,351 options to acquire a total of 9.1 % of the shares in Insider Intelligence were granted to him while maintaining all the conditions of the existing option program.

An upfront payment of USD 7.5 million (€ 6.3 million) was made in the financial year 2021 because the revenue targets for the financial year 2020 were met. In addition, without defined targets USD 9.0 million (€ 8.0 million) were paid out in equal annual installments of USD 1.5 million (€ 1.4 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.

As of December 31, 2023, 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 thousand to USD 3.9 thousand (€ 3.3 thousand to € 3.5 thousand) per share and 1.8 years (PY: 2.8 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, other operating income in the amount of € 17.2 million (PY: € 18.4 million) due to lower expectations of business performance affected by market-related declines, as well as personnel expenses of € 0.2 million (PY: € 0.0 million) were recognized. As of December 31, 2023, the provision amounted to € 0.3 million (PY: € 19.1 million) and was also affected by the payouts made (€ 1.4 million) in the reporting year as well as currency translation effects.

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

(11) 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 € 58.5 million (PY: € 58.3 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 pension increases, longevity risk, and interest rate risk as well as inflation risk, capital market and investment risk.

Essentially, four different types of 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 (Pensions-Sicherungs-Verein VVaG, Cologne). The pension plans are partially financed by premium reserve funds that are managed by Axel Springer Pensionstreuhand e.V., Berlin, 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 direct commitments based on subsidized remuneration conversions which are congruently covered by insurance and usually grant a one-time payment upon retirement.

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The measurement was based on the following parameters:

Information in %	2023	2022
Discount rate	3.3%	3.9%
Pension trend	2.0%	2.0%

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	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022
Balance as of 01/01	**429.2**	**562.8**	**–363.0**	**–405.3**	**66.2**	**157.6**	**–13.8**	**–18.6**	**52.4**	**139.0**
Current service costs	2.6	5.2	-	-	2.6	5.2	-	-	2.6	5.2
Net interest expense	16.2	5.5	–15.1	–4.1	1.1	1.4	–0.5	–0.2	0.6	1.2
Pension expenses	**18.8**	**10.7**	**–15.1**	**–4.1**	**3.7**	**6.7**	**–0.5**	**–0.2**	**3.2**	**6.5**
Actuarial gains/losses from plan assets	-	-	43.3	21.3	43.3	21.3	-	-	43.3	21.3
Changes in demographic assumptions	–0.1	–0.4	-	-	–0.1	–0.4	0.0	0.0	–0.1	–0.4
Changes in financial assumptions	30.5	–132.3	-	-	30.5	–132.3	–0.5	2.6	30.0	–129.7
Experience-related adjustments	–3.1	9.4	-	-	–3.1	9.4	–0.8	0.7	–3.9	10.1
Actuarial gains/losses	**27.4**	**–123.2**	**43.3**	**21.3**	**70.6**	**–102.0**	**–1.3**	**3.3**	**69.4**	**–98.7**
Employer contribution	0.0	0.0	–0.3	–16.5	–0.3	16.5	0.0	0.0	–0.3	16.5
Employee contribution	2.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.2	0.0	0.0	2.0	2.2
Benefit payments	–22.2	–21.5	16.6	16.5	–5.5	–38.0	1.7	1.7	–3.8	–36.3
Change in consolidated companies	0.0	–0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	–0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	–0.3
Other	0.3	–1.6	0.0	1.6	0.3	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.1
Other changes	**–19.9**	**–21.2**	**16.4**	**1.6**	**–3.5**	**–19.5**	**1.7**	**1.7**	**–1.8**	**–17.8**
Changes in net defined benefit asset	**-**	**-**	**–23.4**	**23.4**	**–23.4**	**23.4**	**-**	**-**	**–23.4**	**23.4**
Balance as of 12/31	**455.4**	**429.2**	**–341.8**	**–363.0**	**113.5**	**66.2**	**–13.9**	**–13.8**	**99.6**	**52.4**

Current charged service costs are represented in personnel expenses as expenses from defined benefit plans (see note (20)). Net interest expenses are recognized in financial result (see note (24)). Actuarial gains and losses are recognized in other income or loss in the consolidated statement of comprehensive income (see note (26)).

As of December 31, 2023, the weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation was 11.5 years (PY: 12.5 years).

Plan assets amounted to € 341.8 million as of December 31, 2023 (PY: € 386.5 million). In the previous year, there was a net defined benefit asset amounting to € 23.4 million, which was recognized under other financial assets (see note (8)).

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Plan assets broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Bonds	88.7	89.1
Pension fonds	54.3	0.0
Shares	26.8	0.0
Cash, cash equivalents and money market instruments	17.4	98.2
Real estate funds	0.0	5.7
Other	4.5	0.0
Plan assets with market price quotations	**191.5**	**193.0**
Real Estate	150.0	193.1
Other	0.4	0.4
Plan assets without market price quotations	**150.4**	**193.5**
Plan assets	**341.8**	**386.5**

Real estate related entirely to the own-used Axel Springer high-rise in Berlin.

For the financial year 2024 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 in full; the asset as well as the related pension liability are therefore presented as non-current in an amount of € 12.3 million (PY: € 12.2 million) and as current in the amount of € 1.6 million (PY: € 1.6 million).

An increase or decrease in the key actuarial assumptions would have the following percentage 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	
	2023	2022	2023	2022
Discount rate	–2.6%	–2.6%	2.8%	2.7%
Pension trend	1.9%	1.9%	–1.9%	–1.8%

An increase of life expectancy by one year on average for persons entitled to pensions as of December 31, 2023, would have led to an increase of pension obligations by 4.0% (PY: 3.8%). 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 are based on the average duration of the expected pension obligations and therefore do not consider the expected payment dates, they only approximate information or statements on trends.

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(12) Other provisions

The other provisions broke down as follows:

€ millions	Balance as of 01/01/2023	Utilization	Reversals	Additions	Other changes	Balance as of 12/31/2023	*Thereof current*	*Thereof non-current*
Other obligations towards employees	188.0	–107.8	–44.0	107.0	–2.1	141.2	*67.0*	*74.2*
Structural measures	22.5	–19.4	–2.0	96.8	–1.7	96.2	*61.7*	*34.5*
Partial early retirement program (Altersteilzeit)	34.7	–12.6	0.0	10.2	2.6	34.9	*13.0*	*21.9*
Discounts and rebates	8.1	–7.5	–0.2	9.4	–0.2	9.5	*9.5*	*0.0*
Other taxes	11.6	–2.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.5	*9.5*	*0.0*
Returns	6.3	–6.0	–0.3	5.5	0.0	5.5	*5.5*	*0.0*
Dismantling obligations	3.9	–0.3	–0.4	1.2	0.0	4.3	*1.5*	*2.8*
Litigation expenses	2.6	–0.4	–0.1	0.4	–0.3	2.1	*1.8*	*0.3*
Other	16.2	–6.4	–2.3	13.4	0.4	21.3	*18.0*	*3.3*
Other provisions	**293.9**	**–162.5**	**–49.3**	**243.9**	**–1.3**	**324.6**	***187.6***	***137.0***

Other obligations towards employees primarily included performance-based remuneration, as well as share-based payments (see note (10)). The reversal in the reporting year was mainly attributable to share-based payment programs (see note (10)). Other provisions related, among others, to Supervisory Board compensation (see note (32)) as well as to storage and archiving costs.

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.

(13) Financial liabilities

The financial liabilities included liabilities from promissory notes in the amount of € 793.7 million (PY: € 455.6 million), other liabilities due to banks amounting to € 1,688.8 million (PY: € 1,589.0 million), as well as lease liabilities amounting to € 507.0 million (PY: € 562.3 million).

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

2023 € millions	2022 € millions	Interest rate in %	Maturity
322.0	322.0	1.14	May 2024
150.0	0.0	6-month EURIBOR + 1.35	December 2026
91.5	0.0	4.81	February 2026
75.0	0.0	4.81	February 2028
62.5	62.5	6-month EURIBOR + 0.70	May 2024
38.0	0.0	6-month EURIBOR + 1.70	February 2028
27.0	0.0	6-month EURIBOR + 1.50	February 2026
15.0	0.0	4.79	February 2027
13.5	0.0	6-month EURIBOR + 1.60	February 2027
0.0	72.0	0.91	May 2023

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New promissory notes in the amount of € 260.0 million were issued in February 2023. These have terms of three, four and five years and each have a fixed and variable interest tranche. In addition, a promissory note in the amount of € 150.0 million was issued in December 2023, which is due for repayment in December 2026.

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, as well as maturities, which are shown in the following table:

2023 € millions	2022 € millions	Interest rate in %	Maturity
500.0	500.0	3-month EURIBOR + 1.20	July 2026
405.0	0.0	1-month EURIBOR + 1.10	July 2028
385.0	0.0	3-month EURIBOR + 1.65	July 2027
152.5	0.0	4.80	July 2028
120.0	0.0	€STR + 0.99	July 2028
100.0	0.0	3-month EURIBOR + 1.10	July 2028
25.0	300.0	3-month EURIBOR + 1.05	July 2024
0.0	250.0	1-month EURIBOR + 1.00	July 2027
0.0	162.5	2.59	July 2027
0.0	139.0	€STR + 0.99	July 2027
0.0	100.0	3-month EURIBOR + 1.00	July 2027
0.0	100.0	€STR + 0.90	July 2027
0.0	40.0	€STR + 1.03	July 2027

In December 2023, the term of the existing long-term revolving credit lines was extended by another year based on extension options. The credit lines with an unchanged volume of up to € 1,500.0 million and the new maturity date in July 2028 were utilized in the amount of € 777.5 million (PY: € 791.5 million) at the balance sheet date. The undrawn amount of the long-term credit lines amounted to € 722.5 million (PY: € 708.5 million). Term loans in the amount of € 275.0 million originally maturing in July 2024 were refinanced prematurely in the reporting year and increased by € 110.0 million. The maturity date was extended to July 2027. Other term loans are maturing in July 2024 (€ 25.0 million) and July 2026 (€ 500.0 million).

The commercial paper program (see note (28)) was used in the reporting year on average in the amount of approximately € 303 million (PY: approximately € 278 million) with an average interest rate of 4.05% (PY: 0.41%). As in the previous year, there was no utilization as of the reporting date.

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(14) Other liabilities

The other liabilities broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	221.9	213.0
Interest liabilities from liabilities due to banks and promissory note	24.3	6.4
Debit balances in accounts receivable	20.1	20.1
Liabilities from derivatives	7.6	0.0
Liabilities from loans	3.8	3.0
Others	26.7	21.0
Other financial liabilities	**304.4**	**263.4**
Thereof current	*73.3*	*81.3*
Thereof non-current	*231.1*	*182.1*
Contract liabilities	327.8	343.2
Liabilities from other taxes	86.7	70.9
Liabilities due to employees	37.9	62.1
Accrued liabilities	29.1	27.2
Liabilities due to social insurance carriers	12.7	16.3
Capital investment subsidies	5.8	7.2
Liabilities for duties and contributions	4.2	3.8
Other	24.2	18.9
Other non-financial liabilities	**528.3**	**549.6**
Thereof current	*501.7*	*527.3*
Thereof non-current	*26.6*	*22.2*
Other liabilities	**832.7**	**813.0**
Thereof current	*575.0*	*608.6*
Thereof non-current	*257.7*	*204.4*

Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests were mainly attributable to option liabilities for the acquisition of the non-controlling interests in ScreenOnDemand (see note (2c) and (29)). Contract liabilities 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.

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(15) 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 12/31/2023	2024	2025 to 2028	2029 ff.
Financial liabilities incl. derivatives designated as a hedging instrument	2,997.0	589.3	2,568.0	263.3
thereof lease liabilities	*507.0*	*76.9*	*244.6*	*263.3*
Other non-derivative financial liabilities	777.4	768.8	6.4	2.3
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	221.9	4.5	234.1	6.3

		Undiscounted cash outflows		
€ millions	Carrying amount as of 12/31/2022	2023	2024 to 2027	2028 ff.
Financial liabilities	2,606.9	206.6	2,359.1	309.9
thereof lease liabilities	*562.3*	*80.7*	*255.0*	*309.9*
Other non-derivative financial liabilities	686.8	672.1	12.3	2.5
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	213.0	39.1	170.9	16.3

Notes to the Consolidated Income Statement

(16) Revenues

Since the reporting year, Axel Springer's business has been divided into the operating business units Stepstone Group, AVIV Group, News Media Germany, News Media US and Other Business Units. Additionally, there is the Holding business division.

The **Stepstone Group** operates digital recruiting platforms and offers profession-related services. Stepstone's job portals include the portals of Totaljobs, Jobsite, and Saongroup, the programmatic recruiting platform Appcast, the regional portal meinestadt.de, the employer branding specialist Universum, as well as the content of Gehalt.de and Studydrive. The Stepstone Group generates its revenue primarily through advertisers paying to place job advertisements.

The **AVIV Group** mainly operates digital real estate portals. Particularly in Europe, the AVIV Group operates with various brands. These include real estate portals such as Groupe SeLoger in France, Immowelt in Germany, Immoweb in Belgium, the online service provider specialized in real estate valuation Meilleurs Agents in France, the hybrid brokers Homeday in Germany and Yad2, a general classifieds portal in Israel for real estate, car, and classified ads. At AVIV, the portals specialized in real estate generate their revenues primarily from the sale of advertising space to brokers, project developers, housing associations or private individuals. The Israeli portal Yad2 generates revenue from commercial car sellers, real estate agents, project developers and private individuals who primarily sell used goods through its marketplace.

The **News Media Germany** business unit encompasses Axel Springer's journalistic offerings in Germany and mainly includes the brands BILD and WELT with their respective digital, TV and print offers. The car, computer and sports media of the BILD brand family form a magazine portfolio around the core brands AUTO BILD,

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COMPUTER BILD and SPORT BILD. In addition, the marketer of digital advertising campaigns ScreenOn-Demand, which was acquired in the reporting year, is also included. The News Media Germany business unit mainly generates advertising and circulation revenues, as well as revenues from content exploitation with third parties such as social media platforms. Advertising revenues are generated through the marketing of online and print media reach. Sales revenues come from paying readers for subscriptions of classic print products and digital subscriptions as well as individual sales of print products and digital access.

The **News Media US** business unit comprises Axel Springer's journalistic offerings in the USA. These include Business Insider, a digital offering for business, stock market and financial news, Insider Intelligence, a provider of paid analyses, studies and digital market data for companies and institutions, as well as Morning Brew, a newsletter provider focused on business news, and POLITICO, with its political news offerings. In addition to the US business, POLITICO also includes the activities of POLITICO EU. The News Media US business unit mainly generates advertising and circulation revenues. Advertising revenues are generated through the marketing of online media reach while circulation revenues come from digital subscriptions.

The business unit **Other Business Units** includes the Awin Group, the Idealo Group, the Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska, the Finanzen.net Group and the Bonial Group. The Awin Group operates a global affiliate marketing network. Revenues are primarily generated through the placement of advertising either on a success-based or fixed commission rate. The Idealo Group generates predominantly click- and transaction-based advertising revenues by providing reach for online retailers. In addition to news and entertainment portal Onet, Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska also includes Gratka.pl, a classified ads provider, Morizon.pl, a website for real estate ads as well as the IT recruitment advertising portal No Fluff Jobs. Advertising revenues are primarily generated from marketing the reach of online and print media while circulation revenues are generated from print and digital products. Finanzen.net Group is the operator of the financial portal finanzen.net and the neobroker finanzen.net zero, primarily generating commission and advertising revenues. The Bonial Group, operating in Germany and France, is a drive-to-store marketing partner and delivers digitized retail advertising brochures from retail stores generating advertising revenues.

The **Holding** unit provides superordinated Group services and holding functions. The services are purchased by the Group's internal customers at market prices.

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

€ millions	Stepstone Group	AVIV Group	News Media Germany	News Media US	Other Business Units	Holding	Revenues with other business units	2023
Advertising revenues	986.8	494.7	354.2	269.9	635.3	0.4	–5.4	2,735.8
Circulation revenues	0.0	0.0	373.3	191.0	31.8	0.0	–0.1	596.0
Other revenues	31.3	62.3	247.7	30.3	169.4	3.0	–20.5	523.5
Revenues	**1,018.1**	**557.0**	**975.2**	**491.2**	**836.4**	**3.4**	**–26.1**	**3,855.3**

€ millions	Stepstone Group	AVIV Group	News Media Germany	News Media US	Other Business Units	Holding	Revenues with other business units	2022
Advertising revenues	1,063.4	486.2	341.0	328.1	606.5	0.3	–6.6	2,818.8
Circulation revenues	0.0	0.0	387.2	178.7	26.6	0.0	–0.2	592.2
Other revenues	27.2	36.6	207.3	25.4	136.6	1.1	–11.3	422.9
Revenues	**1,090.5**	**522.8**	**935.5**	**532.2**	**769.7**	**1.4**	**–18.2**	**3,833.9**

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Other revenues in the News Media Germany business unit mainly related to revenues from printing services, digital marketing as well as TV production revenues. Other revenues generated in Other Business Units primarily concerned commission and consulting revenues.

Contract liabilities recognized as of December 31, 2022, of € 343.2 million (PY: € 298.8 million) led to revenues of € 338.1 million (PY: € 296.4 million) in the reporting year.

Other revenues included revenues from operating leasing of € 3.7 million (PY: € 3.9 million). Thereof € 3.2 million (PY: € 3.5 million) were attributable to income from sub-leasing in the reporting year.

(17) Other operating income

The other operating income broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Subsequent valuation of contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	63.2	19.4
Income from reversal of provisions	48.2	29.9
Income from reversal of allowances on receivables	7.8	13.3
Foreign exchange gains	5.6	13.4
Income from disposal of subsidiaries and business units	1.7	0.3
Income from disposal of intangible assets and property, plant and equipment	1.1	1.8
Miscellaneous operating income	53.8	27.4
Other operating income	**181.3**	**105.4**

For information on income from the subsequent valuation of contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests, see note (29). Income from the reversal of provisions predominantly resulted from share-based payment programs (see note (10)). Miscellaneous operating income in the reporting year mainly included income to be recognized due to the revaluation from the reversal of partial amounts of contingent considerations identified as remuneration in the past of € 18.4 million (PY: € 0.0 million) (see note (29)). In addition, miscellaneous operating income contained a multitude of non-material items.

(18) Change in inventories and internal costs capitalized

Change in inventories and internal costs capitalized increased to € 150.9 million (PY: € 122.9 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.

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(19) Purchased goods and services

The purchased goods and services broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Raw materials and supplies and purchased merchandise	81.3	94.4
Purchased services	440.5	462.1
Purchased goods and services	**521.8**	**556.5**

Raw materials and supplies and purchased merchandise comprised paper costs of € 46.1 million (PY: € 55.0 million).

The cost of purchased services was mainly related, as in the previous year, to fee-based services and other purchased services.

(20) Personnel expenses

The personnel expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Wages and salaries	1,574.4	1,466.1
Other social expenses	165.2	157.5
Share-based payments	70.8	38.2
Expenses from defined contribution plans	58.5	58.3
Expenses of defined benefit plans	2.6	5.2
Other personnel expenses	1.2	1.4
Personnel expenses	**1,872.8**	**1,726.7**

The increase in wages and salaries was mainly related to higher restructuring measures, especially in the News Media Germany business unit. In contrast, there were lower expenses for partial amounts of contingent considerations identified as remuneration (see note (29)). For the development of the personnel expenses relating to share-based payment programs, see note (10).

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

Total employees	2023	2022
Salaried employees	14,852	14,539
Editors	3,148	3,402
Wage-earning employees	242	264
Total employees	**18,242**	**18,205**

In the financial year 2023 there has been an increase in the number of employees mainly in the Stepstone Group and AVIV Group. This was offset by a reduction in the number of employees in the News Media US business unit and a decline in the News Media Germany division due to restructuring measures.

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(21) Depreciation, amortization, and impairments

Depreciation, amortization, and impairments broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Impairment losses in goodwill	68.1	76.3
Amortization of other intangible assets	286.8	252.7
Impairment losses in other intangible assets	8.7	7.1
Depreciation of property, plant, and equipment	127.8	120.9
Impairment losses in property, plant, and equipment	0.9	2.7
Depreciation, amortization, and impairments	**492.4**	**459.5**

Depreciation of property, plant and equipment included depreciation of right-of-use assets from leases of € 68.9 million (PY: € 68.5 million) (see note (5)). For impairment losses in goodwill, see note (4).

Impairment losses in investments are included in the income from investments (see note (23)).

(22) Other operating expenses

The other operating expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Advertising expenses	380.9	403.5
Expenses for non-company personnel	325.7	292.7
Consulting, audit and legal fees	68.2	74.9
Mailing and postage expenses	65.5	67.0
Maintenance and repairs	40.7	38.9
Commissions and gratuities	38.8	37.4
Travel expenses	30.3	26.0
Allowances for receivables	28.6	24.1
Training of employees	22.9	21.9
Incidental rental costs	16.6	13.0
Other taxes	15.8	16.5
Foreign exchange losses	9.6	14.9
Lease expenses	9.6	10.9
Services provided by related parties	7.6	5.4
Subsequent valuation of contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	7.3	19.3
Miscellaneous operating expenses	79.5	74.7
Other operating expenses	**1,147.3**	**1,141.3**

For expenses from the subsequent valuation of contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests, see note (29). The miscellaneous operating expenses included expenses for other insurance policies, expenses from payment transactions and other operating expenses.

Lease expenses included expenses for short-term leases (€ 8.0 million; PY: € 8.9 million), expenses for leases of low-value assets (€ 1.1 million; PY: € 1.0 million) as well as expenses for variable lease payments (€ 0.5 million; PY: € 1.0 million).

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The following professional fees for the services rendered by the auditor EY GmbH & Co. KG (previously Ernst & Young GmbH) were recognized:

€ millions	2023	2022
Audits of financial statements	2.6	2.5
Tax advisory services	0.0	0.2
Other services	0.2	0.0
Total professional fees	**2.9**	**2.8**

The professional fees for audits 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, as well as IFRS sub-group consolidated financial statements. In the prior year tax advisory fees were a result of support services regarding specific tax questions. In the reporting year other services were related to support services in connection with business transactions.

(23) Income from investments

The result from investments accounted for using the equity method amounted to € 46.4 million (PY: € –33.9 million). Besides our share in the investee's net result (see note (6a)), it consisted mainly of income from the transitional consolidation of ScreenOnDemand of € 48.4 million and cmmrcl.ly of € 7.1 million (see note (2c)). In the previous year income of € 15.4 million from the transitional consolidation of No Fuff Jobs was included (see note (2c)). Furthermore, income in the amount of € 8.6 million was related to the disposal of the investment in Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG. The impairment losses recognized in the previous year mainly related to the investment in Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG in the amount of € 11.1 million.

The other investment income of € –66.1 million (PY: € –13.3 million) included mainly results from the revaluation of other investments in the amount of € –69.3 million (PY: € –30.4 million). As in the previous year, these were mainly related to the investment in Vox Media Holdings, Inc., and additionally the investments in Lakestar II LP and Zumper, Inc., in the reporting year.

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(24) Financial result

The financial income broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Interest income from loans and securities	4.3	4.6
Interest income from bank accounts	1.3	0.4
Interest income from taxes	0.3	1.9
Miscellaneous interest income	2.9	5.5
Interest income	**8.8**	**12.5**
Other financial income	14.6	14.8
Financial income	**23.4**	**27.3**

The financial expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Interest expenses on liabilities due to banks and on promissory notes	81.4	31.3
Interest expenses from leases	10.7	9.7
Net interest expense due from pension accounting	0.6	1.2
Interest expense from compounding	2.0	0.1
Miscellaneous interest expenses	14.6	3.1
Interest expenses	**109.3**	**45.5**
Other financial expenses	72.9	30.4
Financial expense	**182.2**	**75.9**

Interest expenses on liabilities due to banks and on promissory notes included interest income from financial derivatives designated as hedging instruments in the amount of € 4.1 million (PY: interest expenses in the amount of € 0.6 million) (see note (31)). Miscellaneous interest expenses included interest expenses for commercial papers in the amount of € 12.4 million (PY: € 1.2 million) (see note (13) und (28)).

With respect to financial assets and liabilities not carried at fair value through profit or loss, interest income and expenses amounting to € 5.9 million (PY: € 5.2 million) and € –110.5 million (PY: € –43.3 million), respectively.

Other financial income as well as other financial expenses included gains and losses from currency translation of € 12.5 million (PY: € 13.7 million) and € –10.0 million (PY: € –15.2 million), respectively. In addition, other financial expenses included losses from the revaluation of convertible loan receivables amounting to € –61.6 million (PY: € –11.1 million). In the reporting year, these resulted in the amount of € –60.4 million from the revaluation of the existing convertible loans to Homeday due to the transitional consolidation (see note (2c)).

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(25) Income taxes

The income tax expenses broke down as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Current taxes	140.5	138.3
Deferred taxes	2.8	–31.1
Income taxes	**143.3**	**107.2**

The change in deferred taxes was mainly related to impairment of deferred tax assets.

The reconciliation of the tax expenses expected when applying the tax rate of Axel Springer SE to the income taxes actually recognized in the income statement is shown as follows:

€ millions	2023	2022
Result before income taxes	–25.2	82.5
Tax rate of Axel Springer SE	31.0%	31.0%
Expected tax expenses	**–7.8**	**25.6**
Differing tax rates	–0.1	–4.6
Changes in tax rates	–0.6	0.6
Permanent differences	32.9	40.7
Adjustments to carrying amounts of deferred taxes	67.1	28.2
Current income taxes for prior years	5.3	6.7
Deferred income taxes for prior years	6.9	–4.9
Non-deductible operating expenses	68.2	21.2
Tax-exempt income	–36.6	–8.1
Trade tax additions/deductions	8.4	3.6
Other effects	–0.4	–1.8
Income taxes	**143.3**	**107.2**

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 result is assigned to the shareholder for purposes of corporate income tax. The group tax rate remains un-changed 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 internal reorganization, contingent considerations (see note (29)), as well as other consolidation effects that are not considered for tax purposes. The adjustments recorded to the carrying amounts of deferred taxes of € 39.8 million (PY: € 16.4 million) were attributable to the non-recognition of deferred taxes on tax loss carryforwards as well as in the amount of € 27.1 million to impairment of deferred tax assets. In the previous year, the effects of the recognition of deferred tax assets had an offsetting effect on tax loss carryforwards. Non-deductible operating expenses as well as tax-exempt income mainly resulted from internal reorganization.

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

	12/31/2023		12/31/2022	
€ millions	Deferred tax assets	Deferred tax liabilities	Deferred tax assets	Deferred tax liabilities
Intangible assets	22.9	376.3	23.0	325.4
Property, plant, and equipment	9.0	110.5	6.0	127.8
Non-current financial assets	0.0	1.6	0.0	2.8
Inventories	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0
Receivables and other assets	68.6	8.6	60.4	5.3
Pension provisions	3.0	64.4	3.9	75.3
Other provisions	34.7	0.9	43.9	5.0
Liabilities	142.3	7.9	161.5	5.3
Temporary differences	**280.5**	**570.2**	**299.2**	**546.9**
Tax loss carry-forwards	43.8	0.0	47.8	0.0
Total	**324.3**	**570.2**	**347.0**	**546.9**
Offsetting	–293.7	–293.7	–307.2	–307.2
Amounts as per balance sheet	**30.6**	**276.5**	**39.8**	**239.7**

The increase of deferred tax liabilities related to intangible assets resulted mainly from initial consolidations (see note (2c)). Deferred tax liabilities related to property, plant, and equipment as well as deferred tax assets related to liabilities resulted mainly from lease accounting (see note (3d)). The decrease in deferred tax assets on other provisions and liabilities are mainly related to impairments.

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

€ millions	2023	2022
Deferred tax assets as of January 1	39.8	64.1
Deferred tax liabilities as of January 1	–239.7	–257.8
Net tax position as of January 1	**–199.9**	**–193.7**
Deferred tax of current year	–2.8	31.1
Changes in deferred taxes recognized in other comprehensive income	20.2	–32.0
Changes due to currency translations	1.2	–0.8
Changes in consolidation group	–64.6	–4.5
Net tax position as of December 31	**–245.9**	**–199.9**
Deferred tax assets as of December 31	30.6	39.8
Deferred tax liabilities as of December 31	–276.5	–239.7

Of the deferred tax assets and deferred tax liabilities an amount of € 29.2 million (PY: € 24.6 million) and € 9.3 million (PY: € 19.7 million) can be realized in the short term.

The amount of deferred tax assets to be disclosed in accordance with IAS 12.82 was € 0.9 million (PY: € 1.8 million). It is expected that this amount can be realized by utilization against the available operating income.

Deferred taxes in the total amount of € 35.5 million (PY: € 14.9 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 reporting year, no deferred tax assets were recognized with respect to corporate income tax loss carry-forwards amounting to € 500.2 million (PY: € 328.6 million), and with respect to trade tax loss carry-forwards amounting to € 240.1 million (PY: € 138.5 million), because it did not appear probable that sufficient taxable income will be generated for these amounts in the near future. Of the unrecognized tax loss carry-forwards an amount of € 182.2 million (PY: € 179.9 million) can be carried forward for a limited period of up to ten years. The utilization of tax loss carry-forwards that had not previously been recognized as deferred tax assets caused a reduction in income tax expenses of € 0.3 million (PY: € 0.1 million). In the reporting period, there were corrections of recognized tax loss carry-forwards due to tax audits or differing tax assessments in the amount of € –14.4 million (PY: € –9.4 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. due to profit retention. Deferred tax liabilities were not recognized on differences in the amount of € 104.3 million (PY: € 57.6 million) as realization is not planned from today's perspective. 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 may be incurred.

In certain countries in which the Group operates, regulations on global minimum taxation (Pillar 2) have been issued. In Germany, this was enacted shortly before the end of the 2023 financial year. Axel Springer falls within the scope of this legislation. The Group is currently analyzing the impact on income taxes. The result of the analysis is not yet available. The legislation is applicable from the financial year 2024.

Notes to the Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

(26) Other income/loss

The other income/loss broke down as follows:

	2023			2022		
€ millions	Before tax	Tax effect	Net	Before tax	Tax effect	Net
Actuarial gains/losses from defined benefit pension obligations	–69.4	18.1	–51.3	98.7	–29.7	69.0
Currency translation differences	–52.3	0.0	–52.3	66.5	0.0	66.5
Changes in fair value of derivatives used to hedge cash flows	–11.8	2.5	–9.3	7.4	–2.3	5.1
Other income/loss from investments accounted for using the equity method	–0.1	0.0	–0.1	0.3	0.0	0.3
Other income/loss	**–133.6**	**20.6**	**–113.0**	**172.9**	**–32.0**	**140.9**

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

(27) Other disclosures

The cash and cash equivalents were composed of short-term-available cash in banks, cash on hand, checks as well as short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to cash, and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value. If investments in short-term financial funds did not meet these requirements, they were reported under other financial assets (see note (8)).

Additions in both intangible assets and property, plant, and equipment of € 1.5 million (PY: € 2.2 million) had not been paid yet.

The total cash outflow for leases amounted to € 96.8 million (PY: € 91.1 million).

In the previous year, cash flow from investing activities included income taxes paid of € 7.1 million. These resulted from the disposal of La Centrale Group in the financial year 2021. 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 € 188.1 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	2023	2022
Intangible assets	242.0	18.0
Property, plant, and equipment	6.3	0.1
Trade receivables	32.1	0.3
Other assets	8.6	0.3
Deferred tax assets	2.2	0.5
Cash and cash equivalents	47.5	9.7
Trade payables	−26.1	−0.3
Financial liabilities	−5.7	−0.6
Provisions and other liabilities	−28.8	−1.6
Deferred tax liabilities	−66.7	−3.8
Net assets	**211.4**	**22.7**
Acquisition cost	599.0	54.1
Thereof paid	*343.3*	*24.6*

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 Screen-OnDemand, Bayard as well as Neuraum (see note (2c)) and, in addition to the cash payments and acquired cash and cash equivalents listed above, also included payments for acquisitions of the previous years, in particular payments from contingent consideration of € 29.8 million (see note (29)).

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

€ millions	2023	2022
Goodwill	1.2	0.0
Other intangible assets	1.1	0.0
Property, plant, and equipment and non-current financial assets	2.4	0.0
Trade receivables	8.5	5.0
Other assets and deferred tax assets	7.2	0.1
Cash and cash equivalents	8.6	0.7
Financial liabilities	–2.2	0.0
Trade payables	–5.8	–3.0
Provisions and other liabilities	–9.4	–2.0
Deferred tax liabilities	–1.0	–0.1
Disposal net assets	**10.5**	**0.8**
Net realizable value	8.8	1.0
Thereof paid-up	*7.6*	*0.2*

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.

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. In addition, in the previous year, there were changes resulting from the non-cash-effective deferral of financing-related transaction costs and from the initial consolidation of a subsidiary. The change of the lease liabilities included repayments and interest payments (see note (24)) as well as non-cash-effective changes of the lease liabilities due to additions and disposals.

The cash inflows from other financing activities in the previous year mainly related to other non-current loans and corresponded to their change within the other non-current financial liabilities in the statement of financial positions.

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Other disclosures

(28) 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. Although there is no target level of debt, we are aiming to return to the level of debt before the acquisition of POLITICO in fall 2021 in the medium term.

We can utilize the funds derived from the promissory notes (€ 794.5 million) and the term loan (€ 410.0 million) 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 in the financial year 2021 exclusively for the purpose of financing acquisitions. For interest-optimizing satisfaction of short-term capital requirements, we can issue certain forms of short-term bearer bonds (commercial paper) with a maximum volume of € 750.0 million. For further information on financial liabilities, see note (13).

The term of the long-term credit lines, that had been refinanced end of December 2022, has been extended in December 2023 for another year based on an extension option. The credit lines allow us to utilize funds of up to € 1,500.0 million, and their utilization is due for repayment in July 2028. In the reporting year term loans in the amount of € 275.0 million with an initial term until July 2024 have been refinanced ahead of schedule and increased by € 110.0 million. The term has been extended until July 2027. Other term loans are due for repayment in July 2024 (€ 25.0 million) and July 2026 (€ 500.0 million). The utilizations of the credit lines and the term loans are tied to compliance with covenants. We have fully complied with all loan covenants to date.

In addition, as of December 31, 2023, there existed promissory notes amounting to € 794.5 million with maturities until May 2024 (€ 384.5 million), February 2026 (€ 118.5 million), December 2026 (€ 150.0 million), February 2027 (€ 28.5 million) and February 2028 (€ 113.0 million). Promissory notes in the amount of € 410.0 million were issued in the reporting year, thereof in February 2023 promissory notes amounting to € 260.0 million with three maturities and two tranches which are due for repayment in the period from February 2026 until 2028. In addition, a promissory note amounting to € 150.0 million with maturity until December 2026 was issued in December 2023. The promissory notes issued in the reporting year were used to refinance the promissory notes that are due for repayment in May 2024.

As of the reporting date, the commercial paper program had not been utilized. It was only used within the reporting year (see note (13)).

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. 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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(29) Financial assets and liabilities

The carrying amounts of the items in the statement of financial position as of December 31, 2023, 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 12/31/2023	At fair value through profit or loss	At amortized cost	Other*
ASSETS				
Investments	142.7	142.7		
Loans	37.2	2.7	34.5	
Other non-current financial assets	179.9	145.4	34.5	
Trade receivables	1,041.8		1,041.8	
Receivables due from related parties	0.7		0.7	
Derivatives designated as a hedging instrument (positive fair value)	2.6			2.6
Remaining other assets	175.6		62.7	112.9
Other assets	178.2		62.7	115.5
Cash and cash equivalents	233.9		233.9	
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Financial liabilities	2,989.4		2,482.4	507.0
Trade payables	694.7		694.7	
Liabilities due to related parties	41.6		7.9	33.7
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	221.9	221.9		
Derivatives designated as a hedging instrument (negative fair value)	7.6			7.6
Remaining other liabilities	603.2		74.9	528.3
Other liabilities	832.7	221.9	74.9	535.9

* No valuation categories according to IFRS 9, derivatives designated as a hedging instrument, as well as non-financial assets and liabilities.

A voluntary 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 position as of December 31, 2022, 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 12/31/2022	At fair value through profit or loss	At amortized cost	Other*
ASSETS				
Investments	211.4	211.4		
Loans	94.6	63.4	31.2	
Other non-current financial assets	306.0	274.8	31.2	
Trade receivables	919.2		919.2	
Receivables due from related parties	8.1		8.1	
Derivatives designated as a hedging instrument (positive fair value)	7.4			7.4
Remaining other assets	197.7		75.8	121.9
Other assets	205.1		75.8	129.3
Cash and cash equivalents	204.1		204.1	
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Financial liabilities	2,606.9		2,044.7	562.3
Trade payables	623.6		623.6	
Liabilities due to related parties	37.5		12.7	24.8
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests	213.0	213.0		
Remaining other liabilities	600.0		50.5	549.6
Other liabilities	813.0	213.0	50.5	549.6

* No valuation categories according to IFRS 9, derivatives designated as a hedging instrument, as well as 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)):

	12/31/2023			12/31/2022		
€ 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	5.2		137.5	5.2		206.2
Loans			2.7			63.4
Derivatives designated as a hedging instrument (positive fair value) as part of other assets		2.6			7.4	
Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests			221.9			213.0
Derivatives designated as a hedging instrument (negative fair value) as part of other liabilities		7.6			0.0	

For further information on the procedure for determining fair values, see note (3f).

The development of investments mainly related to additions amounting to € 2.6 million, disposals amounting to € 1.3 million as well as fair value changes from the valuation affecting profit or loss recognized in income from investments amounting to € –69.3 million.

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The development of loans mainly related to the revaluation of existing convertible loans due to the transitional consolidation of Homeday (see note (2c) and (24)).

In the reporting year and the previous year, interest rate derivatives in the form of interest rate swaps were used to hedge interest rate risks (see note (31)). At the balance sheet date, derivatives designated as a hedging instrument with a positive fair value amounted to € 2.6 million (PY: € 7.4 million) and were presented under other assets (see note (8)). In addition, derivatives designated as a hedging instrument with a negative fair value amounted to € 7.6 million (PY: € 0.0 million) as at the balance sheet date and were presented under other liabilities (see note (14)).

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	2023	2022
Balance as of 01/01	**213.0**	**222.1**
Acquisitions or granting of option rights	157.7	20.6
Payment	–39.6	–2.3
Subsequent valuation affecting net result	–55.9	–0.1
thereof other operating income	*–63.2*	*–19.4*
thereof other operating expenses	*7.3*	*19.3*
Compound	–1.5	–5.5
Other	–51.8	–21.9
Balance as of 12/31	**221.9**	**213.0**

The additions in the reporting year mainly related to ScreenOnDemand (see note (2c)). The payments in the reporting year resulted primarily from the acquisition of non-controlling interests in Appcast and Morning Brew and also included the partial amounts identified as remuneration. The other operating income from subsequent valuation was mainly related to contractual adjustments to the contingent considerations for Morning Brew due to the financial performance and the accompanying adjustment of the medium-term planning. The other changes related in particular to partial amounts of contingent considerations identified as remuneration, mainly for Appcast and Morning Brew, some of which were recognized directly in personnel expenses or will be recognized over the term of the option agreement (see note (8)).

Contingent considerations and other put options for purchase of non-controlling interests as of December 31, 2023, mainly related to contingent considerations for purchase of non-controlling interests in ScreenOnDemand (PY: Morning Brew and Appcast).

The fair value measurement of contingent consideration essentially depends on estimated financial performance measures 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 financial performance measures used as a basis for measurement are generally revenues, resp. EBIT or EBITDA figures adjusted for material non-recurring effects as well as effects from lease accounting. In case of an increase of the relevant estimated financial performance measures by 10 %, the value of the contingent considerations would increase by approximately 8 %. A decrease of the relevant financial performance measures by 10 % would result in a reduction of approximately 8 %.

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

	12/31/2023		12/31/2022	
€ millions	Carrying amount	Fair value	Carrying amount	Fair value
Financial liabilities	502.9	502.3	393.1	382.1

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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)).

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	2023	2022
Financial assets and liabilities measured at fair value through profit or loss	–80.8	–23.3
Financial assets measured at amortized cost	–19.6	–13.8

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 considerations.

The net losses in the category of "financial assets measured at amortized cost" are mainly valuation effects for trade receivables and other assets as in the previous year.

(30) 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 were used to hedge risks. The use of financial derivatives was 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.

As in the previous year, we mainly employed fixed interest agreements and interest rate hedges to hedge the interest rate risk. The degree of hedging ranged between 37.6 % and 56.5 % (PY: 22.0 % and 37.6 %) of the underlying net transaction volume. On average for the year, a hedging ratio of 45.2 % (PY: 30.2 %) was achieved in relation to net indebtedness (promissory notes and liabilities to banks less cash and cash equivalents).

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 € 6.1 million (PY: € 6.8 million). Assuming a decrease of the interest level by 50 basis points, the financial result would have increased by € 6.1 million (PY: € 6.8 million).

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, 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 23 % (PY: 31 %).

Currency risks from foreign currency receivables 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.

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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 financial 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 2028), by three term loans in the total amount of € 910.0 million (until 2024, 2026 and 2027) as well as by promissory notes (€ 794.5 million). Note (15) 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 € 20.8 million (PY: € 10.7 million).

Investments in securities are mainly made only in instruments with first-class ratings (investment grade) 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).

(31) Financial derivatives designated as hedging instruments

In the financial year and the previous year, agreements were concluded to hedge the interest rate risk. The hedging relationships served in particular to hedge interest rate risks of long-term financial liabilities (see note (13)). The cash flows were hedged through interest rate swaps. The interest rate swaps were concluded for the same term and nominal amount as the corresponding parts of the variable-interest financial liabilities (hedged items). Variable-interest promissory notes, parts of our term loans and parts of our long-term credit lines in the total amount of € 766.0 million (PY: € 300.0 million) were hedged.

The interest rate swaps were recognized at fair value (level 2 of the measurement hierarchy, see note (3f)). Fluctuations in fair value were recognized in accumulated other comprehensive income until the hedged item was realized. The valuation of the interest rate swaps resulted in a positive fair value of € 2.6 million (PY: € 7.4 million) and a negative fair value of € 7.6 million (PY: € 0.0 million) at the balance sheet date (see note (29)). During the reporting period, a loss (after tax) of € 9.3 million (PY: gain (after tax) of € 5.1 million) was recognized in other comprehensive income (see note (26)). Unrealized results initially recognized in other comprehensive income in the amount of € 4.1 million (PY: € –0.6 million) were recognized in the financial year under interest expenses on liabilities due to banks and on promissory notes (see note (24)).

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In addition, hedging relationships existed in the reporting year to hedge currency risks from purchase price payments for a company acquisition in foreign currency (see note (2c)). Unrealized losses of € 1.9 million from forward exchange transactions realized during the year to hedge the purchase price payments were initially recognized in other comprehensive income and included in the calculation of the acquired non-financial assets.

As in the previous year, there were no other derivatives with a hedging relationship on the balance sheet date.

(32) Relationships with related parties

In the reporting and the previous year, 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"). 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.

Related parties for the Axel Springer Group were Dr. Mathias Döpfner as well as his immediate family members, the companies controlled, jointly controlled and or that are subject to significant influence by him, as well as companies in whose management he holds a key position. Furthermore, the subsidiaries, joint ventures, and associates of the Axel Springer Group were related parties, as well as the companies controlled, jointly controlled, and significantly influenced by KKR and 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	**12/31/2023**			**12/31/2022**		
Loans	6.6	6.1	0.5	64.8	61.6	3.2
Receivables	0.7	0.1	0.6	8.1	7.5	0.6
Thereof trade	*0.5*	*0.1*	*0.4*	*1.4*	*1.0*	*0.4*
Provisions	23.0	1.5	21.5	21.0	2.6	18.4
Liabilities	41.6	0.4	41.1	37.5	5.6	31.9
Thereof trade	*3.1*	*0.4*	*2.7*	*2.8*	*0.6*	*2.2*
Income statement	**2023**			**2022**		
Goods and services supplied	1.3	0.4	0.8	3.3	3.0	0.3
Goods and services received	63.8	1.3	62.5	44.4	0.9	43.5
Financial result	−2.3	−2.2	−0.1	3.7	3.7	0.0

As in the previous year, no valuation allowances were recognized for receivables from related parties.

Loans relating to associates and joint ventures mainly refer to loans to Media Pioneer. In the previous year, there were additionally convertible loans to a joint venture through which we held the investment in Homeday included (see note (2c)). As of December 31, 2023, impairment losses of € 2.1 million (PY: € 5.5 million) were recognized on loans to associates and joint ventures.

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In the previous year, the receivables attributable to associates and joint ventures mainly related to the joint venture through which we held the shares in Homeday (see note (2c)).

Provisions mainly related to pension provisions to members of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE. Liabilities due to other related parties mainly included obligations in connection with the share-based compensation program granted to members of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE in the amount of € 33.7 million (PY: € 24.8 million) (see note (10)).

Goods and services provided to associates and joint ventures mainly included IT and advertising services (in the previous year mainly advertising services). In the reporting period and in the previous year, goods and services provided to other related parties related in particular to revenues from digital media offerings.

As in the previous year, goods and services received from other related parties related in particular to Supervisory and Executive Board members. The fixed compensation of members of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE amounted to € 13.1 million (PY: € 13.6 million) in the reporting period 2023. The variable compensation amounted to € 4.4 million (PY: € 5.2 million). In the previous year, compensation of € 3.7 million was paid to members of the Board of Management following the termination of service. The measurement of the share-based compensation granted to the Executive Board (see note (10)) resulted in personnel expenses of € 35.1 million (PY: € 11.7 million) in the reporting period. Guaranteed pension payments to members of the Executive Board resulted in personnel expense of € 0.7 million (PY: € 1.0 million). The compensation of the members of the Supervisory Board amounted to € 3.0 million (PY: € 3.0 million). Furthermore, as in the previous year services received mainly included other services of related parties.

An amount of € 2.6 million (PY: € 2.4 million) was paid to former Executive Board members and their survivors and a total amount of € 29.1 million (PY: € 28.5 million) was deferred for their pension obligations.

At the balance sheet date, there were payment commitments towards associates and joint ventures of € 18.2 million and € 4.7 million respectively (PY: € 0.0 million and € 8.6 million respectively). In addition, loan commitments were granted to associates amounting to € 7.8 million (PY: € 11.9 million) and financing guarantees were given amounting to € 1.5 million (PY: € 2.1 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 and converted the loan into shares in the company in December 2019. The company developed future mobility concepts and had been in liquidation since the end of the reporting year. Our shareholding remained unchanged at 27.3 % as of the balance sheet date. The related party of a Supervisory Board member continued 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 in the previous year, there were no payment obligations in these investment funds as at the balance sheet date. The related party of the Supervisory Board member received a compensation of € 0.2 million (PY: € 0.4 million) for the management services provided. In the previous year an additional payment of € 1.0 million was made due to the achievement of performance targets.

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, 2023, amounted to € 108.0 million (PY: € 110.9 million). Lease payments in the reporting year amounted to € 6.4 million (PY: € 6.4 million). For further information on plan assets, see note (11).

(33) Contingent liabilities

As of December 31, 2023, contingent liabilities from guarantees existed in the amount of € 2.8 million (PY: € 9.4 million), which related to associates in the amount of € 1.5 million (PY: € 2.1 million) (see note (32)).

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(34) Other financial commitments

The other financial commitments broke down as follows:

€ millions	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Purchase commitments for		
- intangible assets	0.1	0.2
- property, plant, and equipment	1.4	2.9
- inventories	29.6	56.3
Future payments from unrecorded leases	7.5	8.5
Other obligations	313.3	495.3
Other financial obligations	**351.9**	**563.2**

Future lease payments from unrecorded leases included obligations under short-term leases (€ 4.8 million; PY: € 3.8 million), leases from low-value assets (€ 0.5 million; PY: € 0.6 million) and contracts that have already been concluded but start after the reporting date (€ 2.2 million; PY: € 4.2 million). All other leases have been accounted for as financial liabilities already (see note (13)).

Extension and termination options are not included in the measurement of lease liabilities if the exercise of the options is not reasonably certain. As of December 31, 2023, the potential future cash outflows from non-certain extension and termination options amounted to € 363.7 million (PY: € 370.1 million). These options related almost exclusively to leases for rented office spaces, particularly the new Axel Springer building in Berlin.

As of December 31, 2023, other obligations included license obligations in connection with live broadcasting rights for various types of sport in the amount of € 116.4 million (PY: € 117.6 million). Commitments to associated companies and joint ventures were also included in the amount of € 30.7 million (PY: € 20.5 million) (see note (32)). In addition, other commitments mainly included contracts for TV productions and TV rights, as well as other services.

In the previous year, other obligations also included expected payment obligations in the amount of € 183.6 million to acquire shares in investments accounted for using the equity method as of December 31, 2022. The acquisition of the shares was completed in the reporting year and resulted in the full consolidation of the companies concerned (see note (2c)) or the payment obligations no longer applied.

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

		12/31/2023		12/31/2022		
No.	Company	Share-holding	Via No.	Share-holding	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	AVIV Group GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	11	100.0 %	11	5)
4	AWIN AG, Berlin	80.0 %	12	80.0 %	12	
5	Axel Springer All Media GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
6	Axel Springer Audio GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
7	Axel Springer Auto-Verlag GmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
8	Axel Springer Corporate Solutions GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	6)
9	Axel Springer Deutschland GmbH (previously BILD GmbH), Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	5)
10	Axel Springer Digital Classifieds GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	12	100.0 %	12	5)

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.	12/31/2022 Share-holding	12/31/2022 Via No.	
11	Axel Springer Digital Classifieds Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	10	100.0 %	10	5)
12	Axel Springer Digital GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	5)
13	Axel Springer Digital Ventures GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	12	100.0 %	12	5)
14	Axel Springer Digital Ventures US GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	
15	Axel Springer Digital Ventures US II GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	
16	Axel Springer Druckhaus Spandau GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	6)
17	Axel Springer hy GmbH, Berlin	55.7 %	13	55.7 %	13	
18	Axel Springer hy Technologies GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	17	100.0 %	17	
19	Axel Springer INSIDER Ventures GmbH, Berlin	80.1 %	13	80.1 %	13	
		19.9 %	143	19.9 %	143	
20	Axel Springer International GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0 %	1	
21	Axel Springer International Holding GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0 %	20	
22	Axel Springer Kundenservice GmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
23	Axel Springer Media for Equity GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	5)
24	Axel Springer Medien Accounting Service GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	5)
25	Axel Springer National Media & Tech GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	6)
26	Axel Springer Offsetdruckerei Ahrensburg GmbH & Co. KG, Ahrensburg	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	6)
27	Axel Springer Offsetdruckerei Kettwig GmbH & Co. KG, Essen	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	6)
28	Axel Springer Print Management GmbH, Ahrensburg	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	
29	Axel Springer Security GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	5)
30	Axel Springer Services & Immobilien GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	5)
31	Axel Springer Sport Verlag GmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
32	Axel Springer Syndication GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	34	100.0 %	34	5)
33	Axel Springer Teaser Ad GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	5	100.0 %	5	5)
34	"Axel Springer Verlag" Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
35	B.Z. Ullstein GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	34	100.0 %	34	5)
36	BlockFin GmbH (previously Einhundertsechste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH), Karlsruhe	78.0 %	51	-	-	
37	Bonial Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	12	100.0 %	12	5)
38	Bonial International GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	37	100.0 %	37	5)
39	bp fulfillment & service GmbH & Co. KG (previously Buch- und Presse GmbH & Co. KG), Hamburg	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	6)
40	Business Insider Deutschland GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	5)
41	Buzz Technologies GmbH, Berlin	51.0 %	1	51.0 %	1	
42	Cammio GmbH, Berlin	-	-	100.0 %	120	
43	cmmrcl.ly GmbH, Hamburg	50.1 %	5	-	-	9)
44	comparado GmbH, Luneburg	100.0 %	57	100.0 %	57	
45	COMPUTER BILD Digital GmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
46	Content Factory TV-Produktion GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	96	100.0 %	96	5)
47	Dyn Media GmbH, Cologne	75.2 %	1	75.2 %	1	
48	Dyn Productions GmbH (previously Einhundertdreizehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH), Cologne	100.0 %	47	-	-	
49	Einundneunzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	5)
50	eprofessional GmbH, Hamburg	-	-	100.0 %	5	

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.	12/31/2022 Share-holding	12/31/2022 Via No.	
51	finanzen.net GmbH, Karlsruhe	90.0 %	13	75.0 %	13	10)
52	finanzen.net zero GmbH, Karlsruhe	100.0 %	51	100.0 %	51	
53	FRAMEN GmbH, Berlin	66.1 %	9	57.5 %	1	11)
54	Homeday GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	3	-	-	
55	Homeday Hyp GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	54	-	-	
56	Idealo International GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	57	100.0 %	57	
57	Idealo Internet GmbH, Berlin	74.9 %	12	74.9 %	12	
58	ImmoSolve GmbH, Bad Bramstedt	100.0 %	59	100.0 %	60	
59	Immowelt GmbH (since February 1, 2024: AVIV Germany GmbH), Nuremberg	100.0 %	3	100.0 %	61	5)
60	Immowelt Hamburg GmbH, Hamburg	-	-	100.0 %	61	
61	Immowelt Holding GmbH, Nuremberg	-	-	100.0 %	3	
62	infoRoad GmbH, Heroldsberg	90.0 %	7	90.0 %	7	
63	Ladenzeile GmbH, Berlin	96.0 %	57	96.0 %	57	
64	MAZ & More TV-Produktion GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	96	100.0 %	96	5)
65	Media Impact GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	100.0 %	5	100.0 %	5	6)
66	Media Impact Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	5	100.0 %	5	5)
67	Mediahouse Berlin GmbH (previously Axel Springer Mediahouse Berlin GmbH), Berlin	-	-	100.0 %	1	
68	meinestadt.de GmbH, Cologne	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	82	
69	meinestadt.de Vertriebs-GmbH, Cologne	100.0 %	68	100.0 %	68	
70	MS media systems GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	71	-	-	
71	Neuraum Ventures GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	59	-	-	
72	PACE Paparazzi Catering & Event GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
73	Panther Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	57	100.0 %	57	
74	Planoa Bauberatung GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	71	-	-	
75	pw-Internet Solutions GmbH, Mönchengladbach	100.0 %	71	-	-	
76	Sales Impact GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
77	SAMAS upday Investment GmbH, Berlin	51.0 %	1	51.0 %	1	
78	SoD ScreenOnDemand GmbH, Munich	50.1 %	5	-	-	9)
79	StepStone Management SE, Düsseldorf	100.0 %	11	100.0 %	11	
80	Studydrive GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	82	
81	The Stepstone Group Deutschland GmbH (previously StepStone Deutschland GmbH), Düsseldorf	100.0 %	83	100.0 %	82	
82	The Stepstone Group EMEA GmbH (previously StepStone Continental Europe GmbH), Düsseldorf	100.0 %	84	100.0 %	84	
83	The Stepstone Group Europe GmbH (previously Einhundertelfte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH), Berlin	100.0 %	82	-	-	
84	The Stepstone Group GmbH (previously StepStone GmbH), Berlin	100.0 %	85	100.0 %	11	
85	The StepStone Group Holding GmbH (previously Einhundertzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH), Düsseldorf	17.2 %	11	-	-	
		82.8 %	10	-	-	
86	TorAlarm GmbH, Düsseldorf	60.0 %	9	-	-	9)
87	TraderFox GmbH, Reutlingen	50.1 %	51	50.1 %	51	
88	Transfermarkt GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg	51.0 %	9	51.0 %	9	6)
89	Ullstein GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	34	100.0 %	34	5)
90	Umzugsauktion GmbH & Co. KG, Bötzingen	100.0 %	59	100.0 %	60	6)

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.	12/31/2022 Share-holding	12/31/2022 Via No.	
91	*Universum Employer Branding Services GmbH, Berlin*	*100.0 %*	*193*	*100.0 %*	*193*	
92	upday GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	77.6 %	1	77.6 %	1	6)
		22.4 %	77	22.4 %	77	
93	upday Holding GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	92	100.0 %	92	
94	Visoon Video Impact GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	51.0 %	5	51.0 %	5	6)
95	Wake Word GmbH, Aschheim	64.9 %	6	64.9 %	6	
96	WeltN24 GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9	100.0 %	1	5)
	Other countries					
97	Appcast, Inc., Lebanon, USA	95.4 %	84	87.4 %	84	9)
98	Appcast.IO LTD, Bristol, United Kingdom	100.0 %	97	100.0 %	97	
99	AWIN AB, Stockholm, Sweden	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
100	AWIN B.V., Amsterdam, Netherlands	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
101	AWIN Global Affiliate Network S.L., Madrid, Spain	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
102	AWIN Inc., Wilmington, USA	100.0 %	103	100.0 %	103	
103	AWIN Ltd., London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
104	AWIN ROMANIA S.R.L, Iaşi, Romania	100.0 %	4	-	-	
105	AWIN SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
106	AWIN Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
107	AWIN SRL, Milan, Italy	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
108	AWIN VEICULAÇÃO DE PUBLICIDADE NA INTERNET LTDA., São Paulo, Brazil	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
109	Axel Springer Beteiligungen Schweiz AG, Zurich, Switzerland	-	-	100.0 %	113	
110	Axel Springer España S.A., Madrid, Spain	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	
111	Axel Springer France S.A.S., Paris, France	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	1	
112	Axel Springer International Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	1	100.0 %	21	
113	Axel Springer Schweiz AG, Zurich, Switzerland	-	-	100.0 %	112	
114	Axel Springer USA Inc. (previously Axel Springer Services Inc.), Wilmington, USA	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	
115	Bayard Advertising Agency, Inc., New York, USA	100.0 %	116	-	-	
116	Bayard Intermediate Holdings, Inc., Wilmington, USA	100.0 %	97	-	-	
117	Bonial SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	38	100.0 %	38	
118	Business Insider Europe Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	143	100.0 %	143	
119	Cammio B.V., Den Hague, Netherlands	-	-	100.0 %	120	
120	Cammio Holding B.V., Den Hague, Netherlands	-	-	100.0 %	84	
121	Candidate Manager Ltd, Dublin, Ireland	100.0 %	178	100.0 %	178	
122	CaribbeanJobs Ltd, George Town, Cayman Islands	100.0 %	178	100.0 %	178	
123	City-Nav Sp. z o.o., Poznań, Poland	69.3 %	164	69.3 %	164	
124	Commission Factory Pty Ltd, Sydney, Australia	100.0 %	4	100.0 %	4	
125	Commission Factory Sdn. Bhd., Kuala Lumupur, Malaysia	100.0 %	124	100.0 %	124	
126	Coral-Tell Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0 %	3	100.0 %	3	
127	Digital Classifieds France SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	3	100.0 %	3	
128	Drive Innovation Insight SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	184	100.0 %	184	
129	eMarketer Inc., New York, USA	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	
130	Estascontratadocom S.A., Panama City, Panama	100.0 %	173	100.0 %	173	
131	Falguière Conseil SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	127	100.0 %	127	

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.	12/31/2022 Share-holding	12/31/2022 Via No.	
132	FinPack Sp. z o.o., Szczecin, Poland	100.0 %	154	100.0 %	154	
133	Framen FR SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	53	-	-	
134	FRAMEN UK LIMITED, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	53	100.0 %	53	
135	Grupa Morizon-Gratka Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0 %	154	100.0 %	154	
136	Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska AG, Zurich, Switzerland	50.0 %	1	50.0 %	112	3)
137	HOUSELL FINANCE ONLINE SERVICES SL, Madrid, Spain	100.0 %	138	100.0 %	138	
138	Housell Inmo Online Services, S.L., Madrid, Spain	99.8 %	3	99.7 %	3	
139	ICI Formations SAS, Paris, France	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	82	
140	ictjob SPRL, Brussels, Belgium	99.0 %	83	99.0 %	82	
		1.0 %	177	1.0 %	177	
141	Immoweb Financial Services SA, Brussels, Belgium	100.0 %	142	100.0 %	142	
142	Immoweb SA, Brussels, Belgium	100.0 %	127	100.0 %	127	
143	Insider Inc., New York, USA	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	
144	Interactive Junction Holdings Proprietary Limited, Rosebank/Johannes-burg, South Africa	100.0 %	158	100.0 %	158	
145	Jobcity Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0 %	126	100.0 %	126	
146	Jobmagnet Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	84	
147	Jobs LU Ltd, Dublin, Ireland	100.0 %	178	100.0 %	178	
148	Jobs.ie Ltd, Dublin, Ireland	-	-	100.0 %	178	
149	Jobsite UK (Worldwide) Limited, Havant, United Kingdom	100.0 %	171	100.0 %	171	
150	Lendi Care sp. z o.o., Szczecin, Poland	100.0 %	154	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 %	13	75.4 %	13	9)
153	My Web Ltd, Ebene, Mauritius	100.0 %	158	100.0 %	158	
154	MZN Property S.A., Warsaw, Poland	92.5 %	136	90.0 %	136	9)
155	NIJobs.com Ltd, Belfast, United Kingdom	100.0 %	178	100.0 %	178	
156	No Fluff Jobs Sp. z o.o., Gdansk, Poland	70.0 %	136	70.0 %	136	9)
157	PLATO SAS, Paris, France	-	-	100.0 %	3	
158	Pnet (Pty) Ltd, Johannesburg, South Africa	100.0 %	178	100.0 %	178	
159	Politico LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0 %	161	100.0 %	161	
160	Politico Media Group Holding Inc., Wilmington, USA	100.0 %	13	100.0 %	13	
161	Politico Media Group, LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0 %	160	100.0 %	160	
162	POLITICO SRL, Brussels, Belgium	100.0 %	184	100.0 %	184	
163	Protocol Media LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0 %	161	100.0 %	161	
164	Ringier Axel Springer Polska Sp. z o. o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0 %	136	100.0 %	136	
165	Saknai Net Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	80.2 %	126	80.2 %	126	
166	ShareASale.com Inc., Chicago, USA	100.0 %	102	100.0 %	102	
167	SingleView Tech Ltd., Manchester, United Kingdom	-	-	100.0 %	4	
168	SoD ScreenOnDemand AT GmbH, Vienna, Austria	100.0 %	78	-	-	
169	SoD ScreenOnDemand FR SARL, Paris, France	100.0 %	78	-	-	
170	Stepstone Online-Recruiting Inc., San Francisco, USA	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	84	
171	StepStone UK Holding Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	84	
172	Tecoloco El Salvador S.A. de C.V., San Salvador, El Salvador	100.0 %	173	100.0 %	173	
		0.0 %	178	0.0 %	178	7)

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.	12/31/2022 Share-holding	12/31/2022 Via No.	
173	Tecoloco International Inc, Panama City, Panama	100.0 %	178	100.0 %	178	
174	Tecoloco S.A. de C.V. Honduras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras	0.4 %	178	0.4 %	178	
		99.6 %	173	99.6 %	173	
175	Tecoloco.com Cybersearch S.A., Guatemala City, Guatemala	0.0 %	178	0 %	178	7)
		100.0 %	173	100.0 %	173	
176	Tecoloco.com S.A. de C.V. Nicaragua, Managua, Nicaragua	95.0 %	173	95.0 %	173	
		3.0 %	172	3.0 %	172	
		2.0 %	175	2.0 %	175	
177	The Stepstone Group Belgium NV (previously StepStone NV), Brussels, Belgium	100.0 %	83	100.0 %	83	
		0.0 %	179	0.0 %	179	7)
178	The Stepstone Group Ireland Recruit Limited (previously Saongroup Limited), Dublin, Ireland	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	84	12)
179	The Stepstone Group Österreich GmbH (previously StepStone Österreich GmbH), Vienna, Austria	100.0 %	81	100.0 %	81	
180	The Stepstone Group Polska Sp. z o.o. (previously StepStone Services Sp. z o.o.), Warsaw, Poland	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	82	
181	The Stepstone Group UK Ltd (previously Totaljobs Group Limited), London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	171	100.0 %	171	
182	Turijobs México S DE RL DE CV, Mexico-City, Mexico	100.0 %	173	100.0 %	173	
		0.0 %	178	0.0 %	178	7)
183	Turijobs Tourism Services S.L., Barcelona, Spain	100.0 %	82	100.0 %	82	
184	TYFP Europe, LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0 %	159	100.0 %	159	
185	Universum Business Consulting Shanghai Co. Ltd, Shanghai, China	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
186	Universum Communications Inc., New York, USA	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
187	Universum Communications Italy S.R.L., Milan, Italy	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
188	Universum Communications Ltd, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
189	Universum Communications Norway AS, Oslo, Norway	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
190	Universum Communications Pte Ltd, Singapore, Singapore	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
191	Universum Communications SA (PTY) Ltd, Johannesburg, South Africa	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
192	Universum Communications SARL, Paris, France	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
193	Universum Communications Sweden AB, Stockholm, Sweden	100.0 %	84	100.0 %	84	
194	Universum Communications Switzerland AG, Zurich, Switzerland	100.0 %	193	100.0 %	193	
195	upday France SARL, Paris, France	100.0 %	93	100.0 %	93	
196	upday Italia S.r.l., Milan, Italy	100.0 %	93	100.0 %	93	
197	upday Nederlands B.V., Amsterdam, Netherlands	100.0 %	93	100.0 %	93	
198	upday Nordics AB, Stockholm, Sweden	100.0 %	93	100.0 %	93	
199	upday Polska Sp. z o.o. Sp.k., Warsaw, Poland	100.0 %	93	100.0 %	93	
200	upday UK Ltd., London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	93	100.0 %	93	
201	upday US Inc., New York, USA	100.0 %	93	-	-	
202	Virtal Sp. z o.o., Gdansk, Poland	90.0 %	154	90.0 %	154	
203	WEBIMM SAS, Paris, France	65.0 %	127	65.0 %	127	
204	WORLD.MINDS MANAGEMENT AG, Baar, Switzerland	60.0 %	1	60.0 %	1	9)
205	WORLD.MINDS FOUNDATION, Zurich, Switzerland	0.0 %	-	0.0 %	-	8)
206	Y.S CREDIT ONE LTD, Bnei Brak, Israel	100.0 %	126	100.0 %	126	

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.	12/31/2022 Share-holding	12/31/2022 Via No.
207	YOURCAREERGROUP Schweiz GmbH, Kloten, Switzerland	100.0 %	83	100.0 %	82

No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	12/31/2023 Via No.
	Other subsidiaries[1]		
	Germany		
208	Achtundachtzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
209	AS Buchversand GmbH, Munich	100.0 %	34
210	Axel Springer Corporate Solutions Verwaltungs-GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
211	Axel Springer Freedom Foundation gGmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	1
212	Axel Springer National Media & Tech Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	9
213	Einhundertachte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
214	Einhundertachtzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	81
215	Einhunderterste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
216	Einhundertfünfzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
217	Einhundertneunte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
218	Einhundertneunzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
219	Einhundertsechzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	81
220	Einhundertsiebzehnte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	81
221	Einhundertste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
222	Einhundertzwölfte "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
223	Fünfundneunzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
224	Hammerich & Lesser Zeitschriften- und Buchverlag GmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	1
225	Informationsmedien Handels GmbH, Hamburg	100.0 %	1
226	kinkaa GbR, Berlin	50.0 %	73
		50.0 %	57
227	meinestadt.de Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Cologne	100.0 %	68
228	SCOUTASTIC GmbH, Bremen	50.1 %	88
229	Scubia GbR, Berlin	50.0 %	73
		50.0 %	57
230	Siebenundachtzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
231	Transfermarkt Verwaltungs GmbH, Hamburg	51.0 %	9
232	Umzugsauktion Verwaltungs GmbH, Bötzingen	100.0 %	59
233	upday Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
234	Varsavsky Axel Springer Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	13
235	Vertical Media GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	96
236	Vierundneunzigste "Media" Vermögensverwaltungsges. mbH, Berlin	100.0 %	1
237	Visoon Video Impact Management GmbH, Berlin	51.0 %	5
238	WORLD.MINDS Management GmbH, Berlin	100.0 %	204
	Other countries		
239	Axel Springer International Group Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	1
240	Axel Springer Media Italia s.r.l., Milan, Italy	100.0 %	65
241	Axel Springer Norway AS, Oslo, Norway	100.0 %	1
242	Axel Springer Publishing International Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	239

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	Via No.
243	Axel Springer Schweiz AG, Zurich, Switzerland	100.0 %	1
244	Axel Springer TV International Limited, London, United Kingdom	100.0 %	239
245	Business Insider Asia Pte. Ltd., Singapore, Singapore	100.0 %	143
246	Car Price List Yad2 Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0 %	126
247	Commission Factory Pte Ltd, Singapore, Singapore	100.0 %	124
248	Digitalni klik d.o.o., Zagreb, Croatia	60.0 %	59
249	ETSBA Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0 %	126
250	Immostreet ES, Barcelona, Spain	100.0 %	127
251	Politico Canada Corp, Arlington, USA	100.0 %	159
252	Politico International Services LLC, Arlington, USA	100.0 %	159
253	Saongroup Caribbean (Jamaica) Ltd, Kingston, Jamaica	100.0 %	122
254	Saongroup Caribbean (Trinidad) Ltd, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago	100.0 %	122
255	Saongroup.com India Pvt Ltd, Pune, India	100.0 %	178
256	SingleView Tech Ltd., Manchester, United Kingdom	100.0 %	4
257	upday Polska Sp. z o.o., Warsaw, Poland	100.0 %	93
258	Vooop GmbH, Vienna, Austria	100.0 %	64
259	Yad2 Internet Ads Ltd., Haifa, Israel	100.0 %	126
260	Yad2Pay Ltd., Tel Aviv, Israel	100.0 %	126

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	Via No.	
	Associates and joint ventures accounted for using the equity method			
	Germany			
261	*Axel Springer Plug and Play Accelerator GmbH, Berlin*	50.0 %	13	
262	Axel Springer Porsche GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	50.0 %	13	
263	Heartfelt APX GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	49.0 %	13	
264	InterRed GmbH, Haiger	24.0 %	9	
265	Media Pioneer Publishing AG, Berlin	35.9 %	49	
266	Mediahouse Berlin GmbH (previously Axel Springer Mediahouse Berlin GmbH), Berlin	20.0 %	1	
267	Oskar.de GmbH, Karlsruhe	37.8 %	51	
268	Project A Ventures GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	26.3 %	12	
269	Radio Hamburg GmbH & Co. KG, Hamburg	36.8 %	6	
270	Varsavsky Axel Springer GmbH & Co. KG, Berlin	93.3 %	13	[4]
271	Xingu Advertising GmbH, Munich	25.1 %	5	
	Other countries			
272	Editions Reworld Axel Springer (ERAS) S.E.N.C., Montrouge Cedex, France	50.0 %	111	
273	GLC Group SAS, Paris, France	22.5 %	127	
274	WeCheck Ltd., Ramat Hasharon, Israel	42.9 %	126	
	Other associates and joint ventures[2]			
	Germany			
275	Axel Springer Porsche Management GmbH, Berlin	50.0 %	13	
276	Berliner Pool TV Produktion Gesellschaft mbH, Berlin	50.0 %	96	
277	Blitz-Tip Radio Hessen Beteiligungsges. mbH & Co. KG, Bad Soden at Taunus	33.3 %	6	
278	Dalim Software GmbH, Kehl	20.4 %	1	
279	D-FORCE-ONE GmbH (previously Press Impact GmbH), Hamburg	50.0 %	9	
280	Ges. für integr. Kommunikationsforschung mbH & Co. KG, Munich	20.0 %	1	
281	Ges. für integr. Kommunikationsforschung Verwaltungs GmbH, Munich	20.0 %	1	
282	Intermedia Standard Presse-Code GmbH, Hamburg	32.0 %	9	
283	ISPC Intermedia Standard Presse-Code GmbH & Co.KG, Hamburg	32.0 %	9	
284	LAUT AG, Konstanz	25.0 %	9	
285	Project A Management GmbH, Berlin	26.3 %	12	
	Other countries			
286	BULGARPRESS OOD i.L., Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria	25.5 %	1	
287	EMAS Digital SAS, Montrouge Cedex, France	50.0 %	111	
288	Inoveo Holding SA, Sugiez, Switzerland	20.0 %	127	
289	Real Estate Media S.A., Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg	40.0 %	142	
290	We Can Track B.V, Almere, Netherlands	25.0 %	4	

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No.	Company	12/31/2023 Share-holding	Via No.	Equity € million[13]	Net result € million[13]	
	Other significant investments					
	Germany					
291	ANTENNE BAYERN GmbH & Co. KG, Ismaning	16.0 %	1	-	-	[14]
		3.3 %	51			
292	Boerse Stuttgart Digital Holding GmbH, Stuttgart	6.7 %	1	6.5	–29.4	
293	RADIO/TELE FFH GmbH & Co. Betriebs-KG, Bad Vilbel	15.0 %	6	-	-	[14]
	Other countries					
294	Lakestar II LP, Guernsey, Gournsey	5.7 %	13	687.9	–146.0	
295	Lerer Hippeau Ventures V, LP, New York, USA	1.8 %	13	407.1	–37.9	
296	Lerer Hippeau Ventures VI, LP, New York, USA	2.5 %	13	349.1	–62.1	

[1] No full consolidation due to non-material impact (relation of net result and balance sheet total for the company to net result and balance sheet total of the Group).
[2] No at-equity consolidation due to non-material impact (relation of net result of the company to net result 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 returns.
[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] Control on the basis of contractual agreements in the reporting year, so that a shareholding of 100% was consolidated.
[9] Due to option rights in the reporting year and in the previous year a share of 100 % was consolidated.
[10] Due to option rights in the previous year a share of 89.99 % was consolidated.
[11] Due to option rights in the reporting year and in the previous year a share of 79.86 % (PY: 74.79 %) was consolidated.
[12] Applying rules of Section 357 (1) of the Companies Act 2014.
[13] Equity and profit for the year according to local annual financial statements for the financial year 2022. Values translated into foreign currency using the closing rate as of December 31, 2023.
[14] No statement of equity and profit for the year as the annual financial statements are not published.

Berlin, March 4, 2024

Axel Springer SE

Dr. Mathias Döpfner Jan Bayer Dr. Julian Deutz Niddal Salah-Eldin

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Combined Management Report

Introductory Remarks

The combined management report for Axel Springer SE and the Axel Springer Group are summarized. The current combined management report for Axel Springer SE and the Axel Springer Group contains statements concerning the economic situation and business developments of the Axel Springer Group (hereinafter also referred to as "Axel Springer" or "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

Structure

Axel Springer SE, parent company of the Axel Springer Group, is a European company (Societas Europaea) based in Berlin. We are also represented at other locations in Germany. In addition, there are numerous companies in Germany and abroad. The consolidated subsidiaries of the Group are shown in the Notes to the Consolidated Financial Statements.

Business model

Axel Springer is a media and technology company. With the broad range of information across its diverse portfolio of media brands (including BILD, WELT, Business Insider, POLITICO) and digital classified portals (Stepstone Group and AVIV Group), Axel Springer empowers people to make informed decisions for their lives. Axel Springer operates in more than 40 countries, with primary markets in Europe and the USA.

Business units

Since the reporting year, Axel Springer's business has been organized into the operating units Stepstone Group, AVIV Group, News Media Germany, News Media US and Other Business Units. In addition, there is the Holding division. *In the previous year, the Stepstone Group and the AVIV Group were allocated to the operating unit* Classifieds Media, while News Media Germany and News Media US were part of the News Media business unit. The Other Business Units division includes the Awin Group, which was allocated to the Marketing Media division in the previous year, as well as the Idealo Group, Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska, Finanzen.net Group, and Bonial Group, which were part of the News Media business unit. The following description of the business units and the presentation of the key financial figures are based on the allocation of the individual companies to the respective operating unit used in the reporting year.

The **Stepstone Group** operates digital recruiting platforms and offers profession-related services. The offering includes both the placement job advertisements and technology-based recruiting. With its various brands, Stepstone operates worldwide in over 20 countries, assisting companies in finding and hiring suitable employees. Stepstone's job portals include the portals of Totaljobs, Jobsite, and Saongroup, the programmatic recruiting platform Appcast, the regional portal meinestadt.de, the employer branding specialist Universum, as well as the content of Gehalt.de and Studydrive. The Stepstone Group generates most of its revenue from advertisers paying to advertise job vacancies.

The **AVIV Group** mainly operates digital real estate portals. These platforms serve as marketplaces where real estate can be searched, bought, sold, or rented. The offering is complemented by services that support the real

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estate trading process, including programs for real estate valuation, software solutions for the management of real estate and brokers, as well as additional services facilitating the buying, selling, or renting of real estate. Particularly in Europe, the AVIV Group operates with various brands. These include real estate portals such as Groupe SeLoger in France, Immowelt in Germany, Immoweb in Belgium, the online service provider specializing in real estate valuation Meilleurs Agents in France, the hybrid broker Homeday in Germany and Yad2, a general classifieds portal in Israel for real estate, car, and classified ads. 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. The Israeli portal Yad2 generates revenues from commercial car sellers, real estate agents, project developers and private individuals who primarily sell used goods through its marketplace.

The **News Media Germany** business unit encompasses Axel Springer's journalistic offerings in Germany and mainly includes the brands BILD and WELT with their respective digital, TV and print offers. BILD.de is a news and entertainment portal in Germany. BILDplus is a digital paid-content offering. BILD's digital offerings also include other themed portals such as fitbook.de, stylebook.de, techbook.de, travelbook.de and myhomebook.de. The TV station BILD discontinued its offering at the end of the reporting year. The print portfolio includes the national daily newspapers BILD and its regional editions as well as the national Sunday newspaper BILD am SONNTAG. 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 addition to the digital news portal WELT.de, WELT offers WELTplus, a digital paid-content service. In the TV sector, WELT is represented by the news and information channels WELT and N24 Doku. In the print sector, the company offers in particular the premium daily newspaper DIE WELT and the national premium Sunday newspaper WELT AM SONNTAG. The News Media Germany business unit mainly generates advertising and circulation revenues, as well as revenues from content exploitation with third parties such as social media platforms. Advertising revenues is generated through the marketing of online and print media reach while circulation revenues come from classic print products and digital subscriptions.

The **News Media US** business unit comprises Axel Springer's journalistic offerings in the USA. These include Business Insider, a digital offering for business, stock market and financial news, Insider Intelligence, a provider of paid analyses, studies and digital market data for companies and institutions, as well as Morning Brew, a newsletter provider focused on business news, and POLITICO, with its political news offerings. In addition to the US business, POLITICO also includes the activities of POLITICO EU. The News Media US business unit mainly generates advertising and circulation revenues. Advertising revenues is generated through the marketing of online media reach while circulation revenues come from digital subscriptions.

The business unit **Other Business Units** includes the Awin Group, the Idealo Group, the Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska, the Finanzen.net Group and the Bonial Group. The Awin Group operates a global affiliate marketing network, serving as an intermediary between advertisers and website publishers. Revenues are primarily generated through the placement of advertising either on a success-based or fixed commission rate. The Idealo Group primarily operates the price comparison portal Idealo and the product portal Ladenzeile, generating predominantly click- and transaction-based advertising revenues by providing reach for online retailers. In addition to news and entertainment portal Onet, Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska also includes Gratka.pl, a classified ads provider, Morizon.pl, a website for real estate ads as well as the IT recruitment advertising portal No Fluff Jobs. The Polish print offerings include the Polish newspaper FAKT. Advertising revenues are primarily generated from marketing the reach of online and print media while circulation revenues are generated from print and digital products. Finanzen.net Group is the operator of the financial portal finanzen.net and the neobroker finanzen.net zero, primarily generating commission and advertising revenues. The Bonial Group, operating in Germany and France, is a drive-to-store marketing partner. It specializes in delivering digitized retail advertising brochures from retail stores primarily through the consumer information portals kaufDA.de and MeinProspekt.de. These flyers are regionally targeted and mainly distributed through mobile devices, generating advertising revenue.

Superordinate Axel Springer Group services and holding divisions are reported in the **Holding** unit. The services are purchased by customers within the Axel Springer Group at normal market prices.

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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 of the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE were distributed as follows at the reporting period:

Dr. Mathias Döpfner is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO). In particular, he is responsible for strategy and editorial, the BILD Group, the WELT Group and Bonial. In addition, the areas of Public Affairs and Corporate Communications report to him.

Jan Bayer is Deputy Chairman of the Board and responsible for the News Media business in the USA. The US portfolio includes POLITICO, Business Insider, Insider Intelligence and Morning Brew.

Dr. Julian Deutz is Chief Financial Officer (CFO) as well as responsible for the operating business units Stepstone Group and AVIV Group. In addition to the Accounting and Controlling departments, the finance division includes, among others, M&A, Legal & Compliance (including data protection), Procurement, Financing, Taxes and Audit & Risk Management. He is also responsible for hy!, finanzen.net and APX/Early Stage.

Niddal Salah-Eldin has been an Executive Board member for Talent & Culture and is responsible for Global People & Culture and Diversity & Inclusion as well as the Free Tech Academy. She is also responsible for Idealo and Business Insider Germany.

Goals and strategies

Axel Springer's goal is to become the global market leader in the field of digital journalism and digital classifieds. Axel Springer is convinced that the future of journalism lies in digitalization and is actively working towards becoming a fully digital media company within the next three to five years. Axel Springer will continue to drive innovation to ensure that independent journalism remains a sustainable business model and a core element of free societies worldwide.

The **Stepstone Group** is one of the world's leading online job platforms. Through the implementation of new technologies and enhanced product offerings the Stepstone Group consistently facilitates improved advertisement placements of job seekers and companies. The focus is on enhancing the current market position in the core EMEA market in the classic advertising business and strengthening the programmatic business segment in North America, which has gained additional strategic significance through the acquisition of Bayard in the reporting year.

Across all brands, the **AVIV Group** 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, e.g. through the exchange of already existing technical components or algorithms.

In the **News Media Germany** business unit, Axel Springer wants to leverage the potential of the strong national brands BILD and WELT in digital and print media and further accelerate the digital transformation. The print area is about limiting the circulation decline and aligning our products even more consistently with the readers to consolidate the strong position of our titles. The digital sector, on the other hand, requires greater investment in technological innovations and offer extensions across brands. With the digital brand subscriptions BILDplus, WELTplus and Insider Premium, the basis of paying readers on the internet is being further expanded. The video formats and TV channels of WELT are another pillar of the business unit. Via the central marketer Media Impact and the marketer ScreenOnDemand the division offers advertisers a cross-media and far-reaching platform for advertising campaigns.

In the **News Media US** business unit, the journalistic offerings of the Insider Group and POLITICO Group are bundled. The long-term goal is to fully leverage the potential of international brands, with a clear focus on high-quality journalism. The further development of recurring subscription revenues is a central task for both groups. Additionally, Business Insider aims to sharpen its consumer target group by focusing on the core topics

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business, tech and innovation, aiming to become more attractive to advertising partners in these areas in the long term, positively impacting advertising revenues. With the ongoing expansion in Europe, the POLITICO Group aims to further develop and strengthen its presence in the key political markets of the European Union.

In the **Other Business Units** division, the individual companies pursue heterogeneous goals and strategies. The AWIN Group aims to successfully promote activities with new, innovative products and by expanding services and the publisher network. The Idealo Group is pursuing a strategy to expand its market leadership through increasing reach and internationalization, as well as increasing revenues through price increases. Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska aims to limit the decline in circulation of the FAKT newspaper and expand existing diversified digital business units by extending its range and products. The Finanzen.net Group aims to grow in its core business through product expansions. The neobroker finanzen.net zero is expected to achieve disproportionately high growth through strong market share gains. The Bonial Group aims to make its platforms even more attractive by increasing their reach, enabling the acquisition of further key accounts, and more efficiently monetizing existing key accounts.

In all units, 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 capital investments in new or existing business areas using recognized capital value methods, which take account of business-specific and country-specific risks.

Economic Report

Macroeconomic environment

In its outlook published in January 2024, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates real growth in the **global economy** at 3.1 % in 2023. This compares to real growth of 3.5 % in 2022.

According to calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, the **German economy** shrank by 0.1 % on a price adjusted basis in 2023. This compares with price-adjusted growth of 1.9 % in 2022. In price-adjusted terms, private consumption in 2023 was 0.8 % below the previous year's level and thus further below the pre-crisis level of 2019. Price-adjusted construction investments in 2023 were 2.1 % lower than in 2022, while positive signals were recorded in the finishing trade and investments in machinery, equipment, and vehicles. Both exports (–1.8 %) and imports (–3.0 %) shrank in 2023 on a price-adjusted basis.

Consumer sentiment according to the GfK Consumer Climate Index, reflecting the current consumption sentiment among private households in Germany, remained at a low level throughout the year 2023. However, it slightly improved towards the end of 2023 and in January 2024. Yet, a decline was already forecasted for February 2024. The income expectations also continued the downward trend in January 2024. According to GfK, these effects are caused by increased propensity to save and a renewed increase in inflation in December 2023.

According to calculations by the Federal Statistical Office, consumer prices rose by 5.9 % in 2023 compared to the previous year. In 2023, the Federal Employment Agency recorded an annual average of 2.6 million unemployed people. This represents an increase of 0.4 percentage points compared to the previous year, with the average unemployment rate standing at 5.7 % in 2023.

The IMF estimates that the **US** economy will grow by 2.5 % in real terms in 2023. For 2022, the IMF calculated a growth in economic output of 1.9 % in real terms. According to the IMF, the **UK** economy could only grow by 0.5 % in real terms in 2023 following recovery effects in 2022 (4.3 %). For **France**, the IMF estimates real economic growth of 0.8 % in 2023 after a recovery of economic output of 2.5 % in 2022.

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Industry-specific environment

The labor market trend was robust, especially in the OECD countries, due to long-term low unemployment rates in 2023, falling dismissal rates and a low number of job offers. Although the economic weakness in Germany, the Stepstone Group's core market, also reached the labor market in 2023, only a moderate increase in unemployment was recorded and at the same time the number of people in employment reached a historic high (45.9 million). Although the number of job vacancies at the end of the third quarter of 2023 was down on the same quarter of the previous year, it remained at a high level and was 21.6 % higher than before the Covid 19 pandemic at the end of the fourth quarter of 2019. Job vacancies in the UK were also down at the end of 2023 but, like in Germany, were above the level before the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. The US labor market was robust in 2023. With over 9.0 million job vacancies and a stable unemployment rate of 3.7 % at the end of December 2023, there were 1.5 job vacancies for every unemployed person. Nevertheless, overall developments on the labor markets in 2023 were not as favorable for the Stepstone Group as in the previous year.

In 2023, the core markets of the AVIV Group were characterized by rising interest rates, a resulting slowdown in demand for properties for sale and consequently a decreasing number of transactions in the real estate market. As a result, listings for sale remained on the portals for a longer period, leading to an increase in the number of advertisements on the platforms. In addition, there is a shift in demand towards rental properties.

In terms of News Media Germany, circulation revenues in the digital business were still significantly lower than in the print business but are growing strongly. The print business continues to face the challenge of structurally declining print circulations. For advertising customers, the most important factor besides circulation is reach, from which BILD in particular continues to profit. In the crisis-ridden environment, the overall economy in Germany came under pressure, according to the Federal Statistical Office, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by 0.3 % in 2023 compared to the previous year. High inflation dampened the economic activity, along with high interest rates and reduced demand. Nevertheless, the net advertising revenues of German media still recorded a slight increase of 1.4 % in 2023 (ZAW forecast, December 2023). The main reason behind this positive trend was the disproportionate growth of digital advertising, which increased its share to 48 % (PY: 46 %).

The business of News Media US was particularly impacted in 2023 by the lack of advertising revenues in a challenging market environment, affecting both Business Insider and POLITICO. Legislative decisions in the US were constrained by reaching the permissible debt ceiling, impacting both political reporting and advertising revenues at POLITICO. Recurring subscription revenues were an important and reliable revenue driver for both units.

The performance of the AWIN Group and the Idealo Group closely correlates with the growth of e-commerce and also benefited from the global rise in e-commerce in 2023. In addition, Idealo benefited from rising inflation and the associated price sensitivity among the population in 2023. The Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska, Finanzen.net Group, and Bonial Group generate most of their revenues from advertising. Therefore, they are also highly dependent on the advertising market.

Business development

In February 2023, the BILD Group which belongs to the News Media Germany unit, acquired 60.0 % of **TorAlarm**. TorAlarm operates the soccer app of the same name and will enhance the sports portfolio of the BILD Group.

In June 2023, the News Media Germany division acquired an additional 25.0 % stake in **SoD ScreenOnDemand**, now holding 50.1 % of the shares. ScreenOnDemand is a marketer of digital advertising campaigns in Germany, Austria, and France.

In June 2023, the AVIV Group acquired further shares in **Homeday**, has controlled the company since then and is now the sole shareholder following the acquisition of the remaining shares at the end of August. Homeday operates in the German real estate market, focusing on valuation and brokerage.

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In July 2023, the Stepstone Group acquired 100.0 % of the shares in **Bayard**. Bayard is a technology provider for programmatic job ads in the USA. The acquisition expands the existing product portfolio as well as the customer base of Appcast.

In July 2023, Axel Springer launched a **strategic initiative** in the field of generative **Artificial Intelligence** (AI). A global team of experts with multidisciplinary backgrounds will consolidate measures in the field of generative AI across the Group and drive innovations.

In November 2023, the AVIV Group acquired 100.0 % of the shares in **Neuraum**. Neuraum operates several online platforms for house construction in Germany and Austria.

As part of its digitalization strategy, Axel Springer sold its stake in **Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz** to its joint venture partner Ringier in November 2023. Through the joint venture, Axel Springer held an interest in a portfolio of 20 magazines and magazine titles in Switzerland.

In December 2023, the News Media Germany business unit acquired an additional 25.0 % of the shares in **cmmrcl.ly**, now holding the majority of shares with 50.1 %. Cmmrcl.ly operates in the field of social media marketing.

In December 2023, a **strategic partnership** was entered into with the software company **OpenAI** to strengthen independent journalism in the age of Artificial Intelligence. The use of ChatGPT is intended to enrich current and reliable journalistic content from the Axel Springer media brands.

At the end of 2023, the maturity of the **long-term credit lines** with an unchanged total volume of € 1,500.0 million was extended until July 2028. Additionally, throughout the reporting year **term loans** totaling € 385.0 million were refinanced or newly arranged, with a maturity ending in July 2027. Furthermore, promissory note loans totaling € 410.0 million were newly concluded in the reporting year.

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

Digitalization continues to be the defining trend for the economic environment for media companies. This is also reflected in the development of Axel Springer Group's business units. The macroeconomic environment in the year under review was particularly affected by rising interest rates, high inflation, the war in the Middle East and the resulting general economic and political uncertainties. Especially, our business in the USA faced significant challenges due to the overall economic situation in 2023. Our strategy of consistent digitalization of our activities has enabled us to limit the impact of this environment. 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 units and thus achieve further organic growth.

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Financial performance, liquidity, and financial position

Financial performance indicators

*Our focus is on increasing both our profitability and our company value in a sustainable way. In terms of profit*ability, **pro forma revenues**, **adjusted EBITDA** (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization) and **adjusted EBIT** (earnings before interest and taxes) are the most important **financial performance indicators**. These financial performance indicators, as well as the adjusted EBITDA margin, adjusted EBIT margin, *free cash flow and net debt/liquidity are not defined under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)* and should be regarded as supplementary 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 sales, 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), 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 (including impairments and write-ups on 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 units. The 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 (CAPEX – 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/net liquidity is calculated as the balance of cash and cash equivalents and financial liabilities.

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

Financial performance

The continuing uncertain political and economic situation in 2023 and the weak advertising market, particularly in the US, had a negative impact on our activities in the past financial year. Business with job portals and with advertisements in our journalistic brands, particularly News Media US, declined again in the financial year 2023 following growth in the previous year. The AVIV Group was able to grow slightly in 2023. Business models such as those of the Idealo Group and Bonial Group were able to benefit from the inflation-related price sensitivity of consumers. The News Media Germany division was able to further expand the number of digital subscribers in 2023. Overall, revenues in the reporting year were € 3,855.3 million and thus 0.6 % above the previous year (PY: € 3,833.9 million).

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The **pro forma revenues** adjusted for acquisition effects amounted to € 3,920.2 million and were 1.9 % below the previous year's figure (€ 3,996.8 million). Pro forma revenues of the Stepstone Group decreased by 9.7 %; the AVIV Group grew by 2.1 %. The News Media Germany division also increased its pro-forma revenues by 1.7 %, while the pro-forma revenues of the News Media US division fell by 9.4 % compared to the previous year. The Other Business Units division increased its pro forma revenues by 8.0 %.

Advertising revenues decreased by 2.9 % to € 2,735.8 million (PY: € 2,818.8 million). **Pro forma advertising revenues** fell by 4.0 % to € 2,764.0 million (PY: € 2,879.2 million). The Stepstone Group and News Media US unit were the main contributors to this decline. At 70.5 %, the share of pro forma advertising revenues in pro forma revenues was slightly below the previous year's level (PY: 72.0 %).

Circulation revenues increased by 0.6 % to € 596.0 million (PY: € 592.2 million). The slight decline in **pro forma circulation revenues** of 0.5 % from € 597.5 million to € 594.3 million was achieved despite the structural decline in the circulation of printed newspapers and magazines thanks to a significant increase in digital subscriptions. The share of pro forma circulation revenues in pro forma total revenues rose slightly to 15.2 % (PY: 14.9 %).

Other revenues amounted to € 523,5 million. This corresponds to an increase of 23.8 % (PY: € 422.9 million) which mainly resulted from the AVIV Group and the News Media Germany unit. At € 561.9 million, **pro forma other revenues** were 8.0 % above the previous year's figure of € 520.1 million. Overall, pro forma other revenues accounted for 14.3 % (PY: 13.0 %) of pro forma revenues.

Other operating income amounted to € 181.3 million (PY: € 105.4 million). The increase in the reporting year was mainly due to income in connection with the revaluation of contingent considerations and income from the reversal of provisions for long-term company value-based remuneration programs.

The **change in inventories and other own work capitalized** amounted to € 150.9 million (PY: € 122.9 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 3.9 % to € 4,034.3 million (PY: € 3,884.0 million).

The **purchased goods and services** decreased by 6.2 % to € 521.8 million (PY: € 556.5 million). The main reasons for the decline were lower expenses for paper and lower purchased services, especially for the Stepstone Group. The ratio of purchased goods and services to total revenues fell slightly to 13.5 % (PY: 14.5 %).

Personnel expenses were € 1,872.8 million (PY: € 1,726.7 million), 8.5 % above the previous year's level. The main reasons for this development were the increased expenses for restructuring measures, particularly in the News Media Germany division, as well as higher expenses from long-term company-based compensation programs. The average number of employees in the Group rose by 0.2 % to 18,242 in 2023.

The increase in **depreciation** to € 492.4 million (PY: € 459.5 million) resulted primarily from higher scheduled amortization of intangible assets.

At € 1,147.3 million (PY: € 1,141.3 million), **other operating expenses** were on a par with the previous year. Higher expenses for external personnel were offset by lower expenses for advertising measures.

Income from investments amounted to € –19.6 million (PY: € –47.2 million) and included losses from the revaluation of financial assets in the amount of € 69.3 million (PY: € –30.4 million). In addition, income from the transitional consolidation of investments previously accounted for using the equity method of € 60.3 million (PY: € 15.4 million) was included, which related in particular to ScreenOnDemand (PY: No Fluff Jobs). In the previous year, impairment losses of € 11.1 million were also recognized on our investments in Ringier Axel Springer Schweiz AG accounted for using the equity method.

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The **financial result** amounted to € –158.7 million (PY: € –48.6 million). The decrease in the financial result was mainly due to higher interest expenses from liabilities to banks and higher write-downs on convertible loan receivables, which were almost exclusively related to the transitional consolidation of the investments in homeday, which were previously accounted for using the equity method.

The result from **income taxes** amounted to € –143.3 million in the reporting year (PY: € –107.2 million). The decrease was in particular due to valuation allowances on deferred tax assets.

The **adjusted EBITDA** rose by 1.8 % to € 790.0 million compared to the previous year (PY: € 775.8 million). The Group's adjusted EBITDA margin was 20.2 % (PY: 19.4 %). The adjusted EBITDA of the Stepstone Group fell by 2.1 % from € 367.4 million to € 359.6 million, mainly due to lower revenues. The adjusted EBITDA of the AVIV Group increased by 10.1 % from € 139.9 million to € 154.1 million, mainly due to higher revenues. In the News Media Germany unit, adjusted EBITDA rose by 31.7 % from € 109.9 million to € 144.7 million, which was mainly due to higher revenues and lower paper costs. The News Media US unit recorded a 36.0 %decline in adjusted EBITDA from € 77.0 million to € 49.3 million, which was mainly due to lower advertising revenues. In the Other Business Units division, adjusted EBITDA fell by 3.4 % from € 166.2 million to € 160.6 million, primarily due to the development of the new second-tier sports streaming platform DYN. In the Holding unit, adjusted EBITDA improved from € –84.7 million to € –78.2 million.

Adjusted EBIT fell by 3.1 % year-on-year to € 524.3 million (PY: € 540.9 million) as depreciation and amortization increased. At 13.4 %, the adjusted EBIT margin was slightly below the previous year's level (13.5 %). The adjusted EBIT of the Stepstone Group fell by 4.2 % from € 306.3 million to € 293.3 million. The AVIV Group recorded a slight decline in adjusted EBIT of 0.7 % from € 95.0 million to € 94.3 million, while the adjusted EBIT of the News Media Germany unit increased by 44.2 % from € 56.6 million to € 81.7 million, adjusted EBIT in the Other Business Units division fell by 5.6 % from € 118.7 million to € 112.1 million. Adjusted EBIT in the Holding unit improved in line with adjusted EBITDA from € –87.6 million to € –81.3 million.

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

€ million	2023	2022
Effects from business acquisitions	–2.3	–10.0
Effects from disposal of consolidated subsidiaries/real estate	–2.6	1.0
Subsequent measurement of contingent consideration	55.9	0.1
Company value-based compensation	–2.6	–32.5
Restructuring expenses	–160.5	–46.1
Pro-forma effects*	–21.0	–33.4
Income from investments	–19.6	–47.2
Other adjustments	–11.2	–17.1
Adjustments EBITDA	**–164.1**	**–185.2**
Depreciation, amortization and impairments from purchase price allocations	–228.7	–228.1
*Pro-forma effects**	1.9	3.5
Adjustments EBIT	**–390.8**	**–409.7**

* The pro forma effects of the previous year are subject to change due to acquisitions and disposals during the year under review.

Adjustments in connection with the subsequent measurement of contingent considerations related in particular to Morning Brew in the reporting year. In addition, expenses and income from the remeasurement of company value-based compensation programs were adjusted, in particular for the long-term management incentive plan as well as the compensation programs at Appcast, Insider and Morning Brew. Restructuring expenses in the reporting year related in particular to the News Media Germany unit. The pro forma effects of the reporting year and the previous year were mainly attributable to the acquisitions of ScreenOnDemand, Bayard and homeday. The complete adjustment of the income from investments includes mainly the current results from the at equity consolidation, effects from the transitional consolidation of investments previously accounted for using the

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equity method and revaluation effects on financial assets. The previous year also included impairments on *investments accounted for using the equity method*.

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

Reconciliation of adjusted EBITDA to net result

€ million	2023	2022
Adjusted EBITDA	**790.0**	**775.8**
Depreciation, amortization, impairments/write-ups (without adjustments and purchase price allocations)	–265.7	–235.0
Adjusted EBIT	**524.3**	**540.9**
Adjustment effects	–390.8	–409.7
Net financial result	–158.7	–48.6
Income taxes	–143.3	–107.2
Net result	**–168.5**	**–24.7**

Net result decreased by € 143,8 million to € –168,5 million (PY: € –24,7 million). **Earnings per share** decreased from € –0.42 per share to € –1.66 per share due to reduction of the positive share of profit attributable to minority interests.

Liquidity

Financial management

The funds in the Axel Springer Group are generally provided by Axel Springer SE. This arrangement ensures that the Axel Springer Group companies always have sufficient liquidity. The overriding goal of financial management is to provide cost-effective liquidity in the form of maturity-matched financing.

Net liquidity/debt

€ million	2023	2022
Cash funds	233.9	204.1
Financial liabilities	2,989.4	2,606.9
Net liquidity/debt*	**–2,755.6**	**–2,402.8**

** Including lease liabilities of € 507.0 million (PY: € 562.3 million).*

As of December 31, 2023, there were long-term credit lines in the amount of € 1,500.0 million. The term was extended by one year in the reporting year and ends in July 2028. At the balance sheet date, the credit lines amounting to € 777.5 million (PY: € 791.5 million) had been utilized. In addition, there were various term loans totaling € 910.0 million. Term loans amounting to € 275.0 million with an original term until July 2024 were refinanced early in the reporting year and increased by € 110.0 million. The corresponding term of the loans amounting € 385.0 million has been extended until July 2027. The remaining term loans are due in July 2024 (€ 25.0 million) and July 2026 (€ 500.0 million). There were also promissory note loans in the amount of € 794.5 million (PY: € 456.5 million) with terms until May 2024 (€ 384.5 million), February 2026 (€ 118.5 million), December 2026 (€ 150.0 million), February 2027 (€ 28.5 million) and February 2028 (€ 113.0 million). Promissory note loans in the amount of € 410.0 million were newly concluded in the reporting year.

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.

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The credit line, the term loan of € 410.0 million, the promissory notes and the short-term commercial paper program can be used both for general corporate purposes and to finance acquisitions. Term loans in the amount of € 500.0 million are used exclusively to finance acquisitions.

Cash flow development

Consolidated cash flow statement (condensed)

€ million	2023	2022
Cash flow from operating activities	308.5	464.4
Cash flow from investing activities	–499.0	–214.6
Cash flow from financing activities	220.9	–249.1
Effective change in cash and cash equivalents	**30.4**	**0.8**
Cash and cash equivalents as of December 31	**233.9**	**204.1**

Cash flow from operating activities amounted to € 308.5 million and was therefore significantly lower than in the previous year period (€ 464.4 million). The decline resulted in particular from higher payments for long-term compensation programs based on the company's value, higher net interest payments, higher payments for restructuring measures and the development of trade receivables and trade payables. This was offset by lower net tax payments.

Cash flow from investing activities amounted to € –499.0 million (PY: € –214.6 million). The reduction was mainly due to payments (less cash and cash equivalents acquired) for completed company acquisitions and mainly affecting the acquisitions of ScreenOnDemand (€ 24.8 million), Bayard (€ 246.1 million) and Neuraum (€ 19.7 million). In addition, investments in intangible assets and property, plant and equipment were included.

The cash flow from financing activities of € 220.9 million (PY: € –249.1 million) was characterized in particular by the net borrowing (PY: net repayment) of financial liabilities in the reporting year. This was offset by the repayment portion of rental and lease payments and the dividend to the shareholders of Axel Springer SE.

Financial position

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position (condensed)

€ million	12/31/2023	12/31/2022
Long-term assets	5,920.2	5,885.6
Short-term assets	1,497.8	1,340.1
Assets	**7,417.9**	**7,225.7**
Equity	2,096.9	2,500.9
Long-term borrowed capital	3,304.5	3,101.9
Short-term borrowed capital	2,016.5	1,622.8
Liabilities	**7,417.9**	**7,225.7**

The development of long-term assets was primarily characterized by the recognition of intangible assets as part of the first-time consolidation of the company acquisitions completed in the reporting year. This was offset primarily by scheduled and unscheduled depreciation and amortization as well as the elimination of the asset surplus from defined benefit pension plans. The increase in short-term assets was mainly related to the development of trade receivables.

Equity was reduced in particular by the consolidated net income for the reporting year and the dividend to the shareholders of Axel Springer SE. Equity was also reduced by the currency translation effects of consolidated

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financial statements and the recognition of actuarial gains and losses due to the decline in the discount rate for pension accounting (taking into account corresponding tax effects).

The increase in long-term debt was mainly related to newly concluded promissory note loans, despite the reclassification of the promissory note loans maturing in the financial year 2024, and net pension obligation due to a lower discount rate. In addition, other liabilities from agreed option rights increased due to the acquisitions completed in the reporting year. The change in current liabilities was primarily characterized by the reclassification of the promissory note loans maturing in the financial year 2024. Trade payables also increased.

Comparison of forecast with actual performance

In the forecast published in the management report for the fiscal year 2022, we expected growth in **pro forma revenues** in the Axel Springer Group in the low to mid-single-digit percentage range for the fiscal year 2023. We expected the classifieds portals and our US media to make a disproportionately high contribution to group-wide revenue growth, although growth was expected to be significantly lower than in the previous year, primarily due to the economic situation and exchange rate factors. For the German media, we expected a slight decline, in particular due to the ongoing structural decline in the print business. In fact, the Group revenue forecast for the financial year 2023 was not achieved. The Group's pro forma revenues recorded a low single-digit percentage decline compared to the previous year. The classifieds portals lost a mid-single-digit percentage and the US media a high single-digit percentage, partly due to the significant decline in the advertising market in the US. German media, on the other hand, were more stable than expected and recorded slight pro forma revenue growth in the low single-digit percentage range.

We expected **adjusted EBITDA** to decline by a mid-single-digit percentage due to inflation-related rising costs and continued growth initiatives. We anticipated a decline in **adjusted EBIT** in a low double-digit percentage. In fact, expectations for adjusted EBITDA and EBIT were exceeded despite the missed revenue forecast. Adjusted EBITDA showed growth in the low single-digit percentage range, while the decline in adjusted EBIT was only in the low single-digit percentage range. This is primarily due to lower costs in connection with the decline in revenues as well as consistent cost management and increased restructuring measures.

If reference is made to the double-digit percentage range in our forecast, 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" refer to deviations from the previous year of more than 20 %.

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

The financial year 2023 was marked by macroeconomic uncertainty caused by high interest rates, continued relatively high inflation and the war in the Middle East. Our activities in the USA were particularly challenged in 2023. Against this backdrop, the financial year 2023 was a successful one for us. Although our pro forma revenues fell by 1.9 %, particularly due to the challenges in the US, adjusted EBITDA increased by 1.8 %. The business with our job portals was particularly affected by the challenges in the US market and the increasing reluctance of companies on the labor market due to the economic situation. The real estate portals were able to increase revenues again in 2023 and invest significantly in their transformation. In the News Media Germany division, structurally induced declines in print revenues were more than offset by higher revenues from digital media offerings and strong advertising revenues. At the same time, following the reorganization and implementation of the new strategy with a stronger focus on brands, profitability increased significantly again. In the News Media US unit, revenues declined due to the overall economic situation and the associated challenges in the US advertising market. In addition, investments were made in the future growth of POLITICO's business. In the Other Business Units division, sales increased significantly, particularly due to the good performance of Idealo, Finanzen.net, Bonial, RAS Poland and AWIN. At the same time, investments were made in the development of the new second-tier sports streaming platform DYN.

We are convinced that there is still significant growth potential, especially in the area of digital classified ads and digital journalism. We continued to drive forward our growth initiatives. Acquisitions and active portfolio

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management will remain a building block for the further development of the Axel Springer 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 units in order to continue to achieve organic growth in the future.

Selected key figures at the Axel Springer Group level

€ million	2023	2022
Revenues, pro forma	3,920.2	3,996.8
EBITDA, adjusted	790.0	775.8
EBITDA margin, adjusted	20.2 %	19.4 %
EBIT, adjusted	524.3	540.9
EBITDA margin, adjusted	13.4 %	13.5 %
Net result	–168.5	–24.7
Earnings per share (in €)	–1.66	–0.42
Dividend per share (in €)*	1.16	1.16
Total dividends*	125.2	125.2
Net debt/liquidity as of December 31	–2,755.6	–2,402.8
Free cash flow (FCF)	132.1	298.2
FCF without effects from real estate transactions and MIP/LTIP**	162.0	311.3

* The dividend for the financial year 2023 is subject to the condition of approval by the annual shareholders' meeting.
** FCF adjusted for effects from the sale of the new building, the Axel-Springer-Passage in Berlin and the buildings in Hamburg as well as the MIP and LTIP program for the Executive Board as well as selected executives.

Non-financial performance indicators

Employees

What makes Axel Springer tick are its **employees** - their diversity, their individual skills, their knowledge and their commitment. Axel Springer employed an average of 18,242 (PY: 18,205) employees in the reporting year (excluding trainees and journalism students/volunteers). An average of 9,375 of the employees were based abroad (PY: 9,334); this corresponds to a share of 51.4 % (PY: 51.3 %). The Group employed an average of 8,493 women, 9,725 men and 24 diverse employees. At 46.6 %, the proportion of women is above the previous year's level (PY: 44.1 %). The number of editorial staff fell by 7.5 % to 3,148 in the reporting period. The number of salaried employees increased slightly by 2.1 % to 14,852.

Employees by business unit

Annual average number	2023	2022	Change
Stepstone Group	3,913	3,640	7.5 %
AVIV Group	2,414	2,251	7.2 %
News Media Germany	4,314	4,559	–5.4 %
News Media US	2,395	2,542	–5.8 %
Other Business Units	4,862	4,870	–0.2 %
Holding	345	343	0.8 %
Axel Springer Group	**18,242**	**18,205**	**0.2 %**

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In 2023, employees increased mainly at Stepstone Group and AVIV Group. On the other hand, there was a decline in the News Media Germany unit due to restructuring measures and a reduction in staff in the News Media US unit.

Axel Springer's goal is to create a diverse and inclusive working environment in which all employees feel respected, valued and belonging. In order to anchor the topics of diversity and inclusion more deeply in the awareness of employees and in the business strategy, Axel Springer formulated a group-wide strategy in April 2022, which is to be implemented by the end of 2026. This includes efforts in five areas with a total of 15 commitments: Leadership Engagement, Credible Efforts, Inclusive Careers, Talent Experience, Data Leverage.

The promotion of women in management positions remains the focus of Axel Springer's holistic Diversity & Inclusion approach: By 2026, a gender ratio of at least 40 % women in top management positions is to be achieved throughout the Axel Springer Group. In the units, there are decentralized targets for greater gender diversity at the other management levels. The respective corridor is between 40 % and 50 %. Efforts are being made to include people with 'diverse' and non-binary gender identities in this goal. As of 31 December 2023, the Executive Board was composed of one woman and three men. At that time, the Supervisory Board had nine members, two of whom were women and seven men. The gender composition of Axel Springer's executives is shown below:

Executives by gender

Annual average number	2023	Share 2023	2022	Change
Female	811	39.3 %	906	39.8 %
Male	1,250	60.6 %	1,373	60.2 %
Diverse	1	0.0 %	0	0.0 %
Axel Springer Group	**2,062**	**100.0 %**	**2,279**	**100.0 %**

Research and development

Axel Springer does not operate a research and development department in the sense of an industrial company. 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 continually expanding our range of services through innovations in the digital business, developing editorial content and expanding our journalistic excellence. In doing so, we attach great importance to the early consideration of the changing use of media.

In addition to our investments in early-stage investments, we made our own contributions of € 151.1 million in the year under review (PY: € 122.9 million) in connection with IT development projects for the expansion and extension of our digital business models. A large proportion of our own contribution and the significant increase compared to the previous year is attributable to the AVIV Group in connection with the development of a uniform technological platform for its digital real estate portals.

Market-related performance indicators

The following non-financial performance indicators are relevant for the assessment of our customer, market and offer-related performance, 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 and digital subscriptions.

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Economic Position of Axel Springer SE

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 Axel Springer Group. These are presented in detail in the "Risk and Opportunity Report" chapter. Likewise, the expectations regarding the development of Axel Springer SE essentially correspond to the Axel Springer 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.

Business activity

In the 2023 financial year, Axel Springer SE transferred the BILD and WELT Group and the Axel Springer Academy of Journalism and Technology as a whole, including all rights and obligations, to its subsidiary Axel Springer Deutschland GmbH (formerly BILD GmbH), Berlin, by way of a carve-out. The carve-out took economic effect on January 1, 2023, and became legally effective at the end of September 2023. Since the carve-out, which encompassed almost all of Axel Springer SE's previous operating activities, Axel Springer SE has performed almost exclusively holding functions for the Axel Springer Group, manages the group-wide financial and liquidity management and provides other services to group companies. The economic framework conditions of Axel Springer SE essentially correspond to those of the Group and are described in the "Economic Report" section.

In order to ensure improved comparability, pro forma figures were used as reference values for the previous year in the presentation of the financial performance, as if the carve-out had already been effective in the previous year. The previous year's figures in the notes on the financial position have been adjusted for the carve-out.

Financial performance, liquidity, and financial position

Financial performance

Income statement (condensed)

€ million	2023	2022*
Revenues	117.2	114.7
Other operating income	59.1	62.1
Personnel expenses	–111.2	–137.0
Other operating expenses	–157.9	–195.2
Result from non-current financial assets	2,257.6	–149.8
Interest income	–187.3	–64.1
Income taxes	–1.7	3.1
Net result	**1,975.8**	**–366.2**

* Previous year's figures as pro forma figures, as if the carve-out in the reporting year (see section "Business activity") had already been effective in the previous year.

At € 117.2 million (PY: € 114.7 million), revenues in the reporting year were slightly higher than in the previous year. It resulted primarily from intra-group IT services and leasing of office space.

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Other operating income amounted to € 59.1 million in the year under review (PY: € 62.1 million) and resulted primarily from the merger of subsidiaries. The previous year mainly included income from the disposal of investments.

Personnel expenses decreased by € 25.8 million or 18.8 % to € 111.2 million. In the previous year, the measurement of pension obligations in particular led to increased expenses due to higher inflation expectations. The average number of employees in the reporting year was 864 (PY: 1.026). As a result of the carve-out in the reporting year (see above), 540 employees were transferred from Axel Springer SE to Axel Springer Deutschland GmbH at the end of September 2023.

At € 157.9 million, other operating expenses were € 37.3 million or 19.1 % below the previous year's figure, which was negatively impacted by higher expenses from the disposal of investments compared to the reporting year.

The result from non-current financial assets amounted to € 2,257.6 million (PY: € –149.8 million) and included in particular profit transfers from subsidiaries (€ 2,244.0 million; PY: € –132.1 million) which mainly comprised one-time effects from intra-group investment transactions. Other income from direct investments of Axel Springer SE and loans amounted to € 63.8 million (PY: € 11.1 million). In addition, the valuation of investments and loans resulted in a negative result of € 50.3 million (PY: € 28.7 million).

The net interest income for the year under review was € –187.3 million (PY: € –64.1 million) and essentially comprised interest expenses from utilized credit lines, promissory notes and short-term commercial paper issues as well as from the measurement of pension obligations. The increase in interest expenses was primarily due to the significantly higher interest rates compared to the previous year.

The financial year 2023 ended with a net income of € 1,975.8 million (PY: net loss of € 366.2 million).

Liquidity and financial position

Statement of financial position (condensed)

€ million	12/31/2023	01/01/2023*
Financial assets	8,846.5	7,547.8
Receivables from affiliated companies	100.5	217.0
Cash and cash equivalents	77.2	55.4
Other assets	70.4	79.7
Assets	**9,094.5**	**7,899.9**
Equity	3,836.6	1,986.0
Provisions	178.7	137.4
Liabilities to banks and promissory notes	2,490.3	2,055.3
Liabilities to affiliated companies	2,547.4	3,675.6
Other liabilities	41.5	45.6
Liabilities	**9,094.5**	**7,899.9**

* Previous year's figures as pro forma figures, as if the carve-out in the reporting year (see section "Business activity") had already been effective in the previous year.

Compared to January 1, 2023, the balance sheet total increased by € 1,194.6 million to € 9,094.5 million. Financial assets amounted to € 8,846.5 million as of December 31, 2023 (PY: € 7,547.8 million) and represented 97.3 % (PY: 95.5 %) of total assets. It was 43.4 % (PY: 26.3 %) covered by equity. The € 1,298.7 million increase in financial assets in the reporting year was mainly due to additions of € 3,953.2 million and disposals of € 2,604.4 million. The additions resulted mainly from the granting of loans to subsidiaries, which were used to finance investment transactions within the group and to refinance intra-group loans. The disposals were mainly due to the merger of subsidiaries.

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Receivables from affiliated companies (€ 100.5 million; PY: € 217.0 million) and liabilities to affiliated companies (€ 2,547.4 million; PY: € 3,675.6 million) resulted mainly from group-wide liquidity management.

Equity increased by € 1,850.6 million in the reporting year and amounted to € 3,836.6 million as of December 31, 2023 (PY: € 1,986.0 million). This increase was due to the net profit for the reporting year of € 1,975.8 million. This was offset by the dividend payment for the past financial year (€ 125.2 million).

Provisions grew by € 41.3 million compared with the previous year's balance sheet date to € 178.7 million (PY: € 137.4 million). The increase was mainly due to higher provisions for pension obligations as a result of lower plan assets. Pension provisions amounted to € 77.0 million (PY: € 36.2 million) after deduction of plan assets.

Net debt (liabilities to banks and promissory notes minus cash and cash equivalents) amounted to € 2,413.2 million as of December 31, 2023 (PY: € 1,999.9 million). In the course of the reporting year, liabilities to banks and the promissory note loans taken out increased by € 435.0 million to a total of € 2,490.3 million due to the financing of company acquisitions and group-wide financial and liquidity management. For further information on financial management in the Axel Springer Group, which is managed centrally by Axel Springer SE, see the section "Financial position" of the Axel Springer Group.

Dependency report

The Executive Board of Axel Springer SE submitted the dependency report prescribed by section 312 of the German Stock Corporations Act (Aktiengesetz – AktG) to the Supervisory Board and made 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 Group. 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

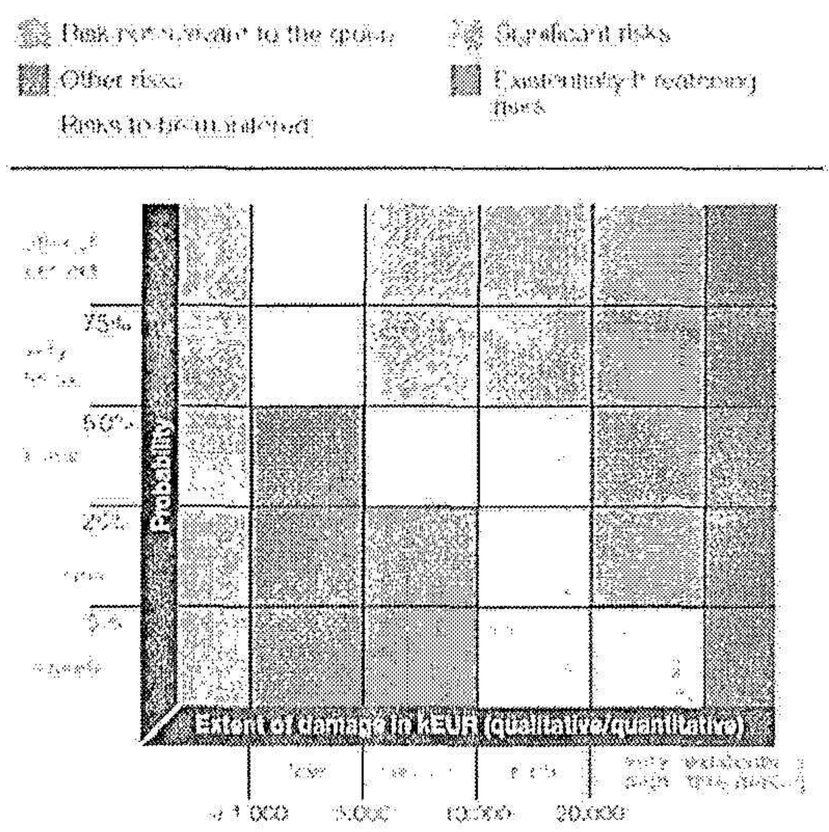
The risk management process is aligned to identify and assess all material risks and risks that are potentially existence-threatening as early as possible in order to be able to take appropriate countermeasures. The general form of structures and processes in the risk management system at Axel Springer are based on the internationally recognized "Enterprise Risk Management Framework", a framework developed by the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of Treadway Commission (COSO). Overall responsibility for an effective 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 holdings 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.

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In addition, the respective divisional heads and executive boards within the Axel Springer Group are obliged to participate in the regular, systematic and standardized risk surveys. 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 surveys 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. Insofar it is appropriate and quantifiable risks are assessed with reference to the parameters "loss amount" (impact) and "probability of occurrence", quantitatively or on the basis of qualitative criteria. 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.

Risk Matrix of Axel Springer SE



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

The risk-bearing capacity is regularly determined at Group level, which indicates the maximum level of risk that can be borne without jeopardizing the continued existence of the company.

Opportunity management system

Axel Springer pursues the goal of sustainably securing entrepreneurial success. Possible opportunities that arise in the course of business activities through positive developments should be recognized and used at an early stage. 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, for example, 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. The management of opportunities is the responsibility of the Executive 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 division, which is functionally subordinate to the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE and in disciplinary terms the CFO. It is subdivided into the teams Operational Audit and IT Audit, which are separated by organization and personnel from the team Corporate Risk Management.

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

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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.

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 financial-related risk management system and the associated internal control system, which are also based on the COSO framework, form an essential part of the internal monitoring system. 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 ensure that the Group's financial reports convey a true and fair view of the financial position, liquidity, and financial performance of Axel Springer SE and the Axel Springer Group, in compliance with all relevant laws, and standards. The financial-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 key elements of the financial-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 is 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 and the including management report using manual and system controls with regard to accounting-specific connections.
- 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 financial-related risk management system and the internal control system is monitored by means of process-integrated controls. As a process-independent body, Corporate Audit checks selected elements of the financial-related internal control system set up at the central level and in the group companies at regular intervals in order to identify weaknesses and thus contribute to improving legal compliance. In

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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

Unless otherwise stated, the risks and opportunities that could have a significant impact on the achievement of our corporate goals are explained below. Within the risk types presented, the risks and opportunities are generally classified according to their materiality for the Group.

The risks and opportunities identified as at the reporting date and presented below generally relate to the 2024 forecast period unless they relate to long-term targets.

Market and competition risks

*Geopolitical crises will probably continue to weaken the global economy in 2024. The global economy will con*tinue to be influenced by geopolitical uncertainties, including the war in Ukraine, the global political stance of major emerging economies and the acute conflict in the Middle East. Growth in the US, the eurozone and the UK is likely to slow further, as is inflation. In addition, the high cost increases of recent years, together with the rise in interest rates, could restrict Axel Springer's financial scope.

Information on economic trends and growth assumptions in 2024, particularly for our relevant sales markets, is described in detail in the "Forecast Report" section.

Market and competition risks generally relate to changes in sales and procurement conditions and the development of competing providers. As Axel Springer operates and acquires globally, a large number of current geopolitical and economic factors must be taken into account when determining market risks. Economic forecasts, especially for the key sales markets of Germany, Europe and the USA, serve as overarching indicators *for assessing market and competitive risks.*

The corporate activities in our operating divisions (see "Fundamentals of the Axel Springer Group" section) continue to be exposed to a highly dynamic market and competitive environment, which could lead to a loss of market share and thus to a decline in revenues and earnings. Competition, particularly from large international technology groups such as Alphabet (Google), Meta (Facebook) and Microsoft (LinkedIn), is constantly increasing and can be observed on an ongoing basis. These market-dominating companies not only concentrate specialized knowledge within their groups but are also global leaders in digitalization and the development of applications and services based on Artificial Intelligence (AI). In principle, technological dependence on the major international technology providers is increasing, which could lead to further market concentration and distortion of competition, among other things. Not only are they penetrating new market segments, but they are also competing with our corporate activities in some cases. New innovative or disruptive business models, missing out on (market) trends and new technologies, in particular the use of AI and, in general, the further and new *development of our products that does not meet customer needs, could also potentially jeopardize our existing* market and competitive position and result in a decline in sales and earnings.

To limit the aforementioned market and competitive risks, the relevant market and competitive environment, emerging trends and new technologies are systematically and continuously monitored. Control measures for the operational management of the company are derived based on this information. We improve the attractiveness of our business models by investing in innovative, increasingly AI-based product developments and adaptations, new high-quality services, the use of new technologies, especially AI, target group-oriented marketing and increasing brand awareness, among other things. The recruitment and further development of highly qualified specialist staff, the continuous development of AI expertise and the expansion and development of long-term customer relationships as well as strategic partnerships, such as our partnership with the software company OpenAI entered at the end of 2023, can also have a risk-reducing effect. With these measures, we aim to meet changing customer needs and at the same time maintain or extend our lead over the competition.

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A large number of our digital offerings are still permanently exposed to the risk of a sudden loss of visibility, which is primarily due to the dominance of the internet search engine Google. The constantly changing and sometimes non-transparent criteria of the search algorithms lead to unexpected losses of visibility and can therefore have a significant impact on current and future revenue. Even small upgrades and downgrades in visibility or placement on the results pages can lead to a significant loss of traffic for certain business models and an associated decline in traffic-related revenue. The use of AI could also have a significant impact on search engine optimization and search engine marketing. AI-driven tools can lead to over-optimization of content, which could be seen by search engines as an attempt at manipulation and result in ranking penalties. We counter these risks through professional search engine marketing, targeted search engine optimization, improving the online page structure, optimizing our content, investing in alternative traffic sources and building up specific AI expertise.

The economic development of some of our business models may depend on important customers. The loss of key customers could result in a significant drop in sales and weaken our market and competitive position. In order to minimize this risk, we focus on customer loyalty and satisfaction, work professionally with our customers and look for alternative contractual partners.

In our printed publications in the national media business, the ongoing shift in reading habits towards digital offerings continues to lead to considerable declines in revenue, which cannot yet be compensated for by revenues from digital offerings. A changing market environment characterized by product innovations and unpredictable market developments may further exacerbate the declines that have already been factored in. The loss of major advertising customers due to legal advertising restrictions or the switch by major retail customers to other advertising formats such as television, radio or other online media also continue to pose a risk.

Developments in the field of AI could pose a variety of challenges for our journalistic offerings. For example, new or existing competitors could serve certain customer groups more successfully than us with cost-effective AI-generated content. AI is also changing the skills required of our employees. It is therefore essential that we actively engage with the technological changes and continuously acquire further digital skills. If we are unable to adequately develop our AI expertise, this could potentially have a negative impact on our market and competitive position in the media markets relevant to us.

Dependence on strategically important cooperation partners, especially important traffic partners, can represent an increased risk for our recruiting platforms. The loss of a strategic cooperation partner could lead to falling traffic and possibly to a loss of market share. At the same time, customer satisfaction could decrease due to lower product performance. The conclusion of long-term contracts, legal support in the negotiation of contracts and continuous monitoring of our cooperation partners' business activities can help to reduce this risk. Continuously entering into additional traffic partnerships also spreads the risk and reduces dependence on individual partners. In this way, the possible loss of a strategic partner can be compensated for.

Our real estate portals continue to face persistently difficult market conditions. Interest rates have risen significantly in the AVIV Group's core markets in recent years, but the associated adjustment in price levels has so far been weaker than expected. This may lead to a further decline in supply and demand for existing properties and new construction projects, which could further reduce the overall transaction volume. This would result in stagnating or declining brokerage commissions and continued high customer fluctuation.

Market and competition opportunities

Uncertainties remain due to the geopolitical situation and with regard to inflation trends, and the momentum of a possible upturn in 2024 is likely to vary significantly between countries and individual economic sectors. If the global economy recovers faster and better than forecast, this could have a positive impact on our economic development.

With our investments in digital growth markets, Axel Springer continues to see itself in a good position to cope well with the current economic situation and to expand our market share in digital business models. Even a negative overall economic development can open up opportunities: competitors could exit the market, for

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example, while this strengthens our own position. There would also be the possibility of acquiring companies at advantageous prices, allowing us to further expand our position in existing markets and invest in new markets with growth potential.

AI can also have a positive impact on the economic development of our business areas. In 2023, Axel Springer has formed a multidisciplinary team to support our business units and brands across the Group in the development of innovative strategies and application areas for the use of generative AI. This is intended to strengthen Axel Springer's market and competitive position and create the basis for Axel Springer's future success in an environment increasingly characterized by AI.

The media industry is facing a revolution through generative AI, the effects of which will affect almost every aspect of the creation, distribution, and consumption of media content. This can open a wide range of opportunities for us. For example, AI can help to tailor content to the individual preferences and usage behavior of individual users. AI is also able to automatically create content, improve analytics and decision-making and generate targeted, interest-specific advertising so that resources can be used in a more targeted and efficient manner.

Our global partnership with OpenAI, entered into at the end of 2023, is a significant step towards using AI to improve content offerings and strengthen independent journalism in the age of AI. Through the partnership, ChatGPT users worldwide will receive summaries of selected news content from Axel Springer's media brands, including POLITICO, Business Insider, BILD and WELT. The partnership with OpenAI also supports Axel Springer's existing AI projects based on OpenAI's technology.

In the national news media sector, the dynamic further development of our established media brands BILD and WELT may result in additional business opportunities. Through the ambitious expansion of the digital platforms and the increased focus on the moving image segment, both brands are intensifying their presence and consolidating their position as leading media brands in Europe. The combination of different media channels - print, digital, TV and audio - and the establishment of a central sports competence center will enable us to consistently tap into new business and growth areas. This strategic orientation opens up new business opportunities and contributes to the development of new target groups. The significant number of paid content users - over 700,000 for BILDplus and around 220,000 for WELTplus (both in December 2023) - reflects our position as an innovative force in digital media offerings.

The media market in the USA is still in a state of upheaval. This offers our journalistic offerings the opportunity to expand their market position. Our US portfolio has four pillars: Business Insider, Insider Intelligence, Morning Brew and POLITICO. Business Insider offers digital services for business news and analysis with the aim of attracting and retaining an attractive target group, the so-called "disruptive go-getters". The content covers the topics of business, technology and innovation. In addition, Business Insider's premium advertising and B2C subscription business is to be further expanded.

Insider Intelligence, a B2B market research company formerly known as eMarketer, is expected to remain a leading source of forecasting, research and analysis for advertising and marketing strategies. As the advertising and marketing industry continues to evolve due to changing consumer, technology and market demands, Insider Intelligence could strengthen its market position with current and additional information offerings.

Morning Brew, another US subsidiary of Axel Springer, delivers informative and entertaining business news in a daily email newsletter and appeals particularly to young professionals and digitally savvy business leaders due to its unique editorial tone. In addition to its flagship newsletter, Morning Brew offers sector-specific business publications and the popular podcast series "Business Casual".

The 2021 acquisition of POLITICO, a news provider for US and EU politics and legislation, has enabled Axel Springer to further expand its position in the US media market. POLITICO has a diversified revenue model through public affairs marketing and B2B subscriptions. In the US, POLITICO will be further regionalized to meet the growing demand for regional political news coverage. In Europe, POLITICO plans to strengthen its news coverage in the UK, France and Germany. In addition, new formats are to be offered in the B2B

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subscription business, such as research and analysis in the area of EU politics, so that our market position could also be further expanded as a result.

Intelligent matching and recruiting technologies continue to be crucial for Stepstone to support its growth. The US company Appcast, which is part of the Stepstone Group and the world's leading provider of technology and services in the field of programmatic job advertising, has enabled the Stepstone Group to further expand its presence in North America. The strategic acquisition of Bayard, a pioneer in recruitment marketing, took place in 2023. This acquisition enabled Appcast to significantly expand its offering to optimize the entire recruitment marketing process for companies, increase its reach and participate even more extensively in the developments and market opportunities in this most important market for Stepstone.

Stepstone has been investing in AI for some time now and uses it to continuously improve existing products and develop new ones. For example, the conversational AI technology Mya, which significantly changes the way we communicate with job seekers, was acquired by Stepstone in 2021. With the help of Mya, Stepstone can interact even more with users via new channels to find out their preferences and skills and motivate them to submit more applications. This can increase the number of job seekers that can be reached and boost customer satisfaction. Both B2B and B2C applications benefit from this and position Stepstone as a tech-oriented partner for companies and candidates. The My-Job-Search Companion, the AI Cover Letter Generator and the AI Interviewer are application examples for the B2C sector, as are the Job Ad Creator, Interview Co-Pilot and Talent Recommender applications integrated into our new B2B platform Recruit.

We pursue a "one company" approach in the business area of our real estate portals. The portals have been brought together under the umbrella of the AVIV Group in the form of a matrix organization and are under uniform management. At the same time, we are investing significantly in new technologies that will gradually replace the existing platforms and be rolled out across all real estate portals. This can create competitive advantages and economies of scale. In addition, we are internationalizing the MeilleursAgents product, which helps agents to identify owners willing to sell and thus generate additional business and are launching it in Germany and Belgium. We are also examining the development and introduction of further real estate-related services, in some cases with transaction-based remuneration.

The use of AI can also bring considerable benefits to our real estate portals. Search algorithms can be improved, property offers can be personalized and market data can be analyzed efficiently. As a result, customer loyalty could be increased, and brokerage processes made more efficient.

Our business models could also benefit from the use of AI in their respective marketing activities. As AI systems can process huge amounts of data and recognize patterns, it is therefore possible to create personalized experiences for customers by tailoring recommendations and offers to their previous behavior. AI could also help to predict the future behavior of customers. This could make advertising campaigns more effective and have a positive impact on our marketing revenues.

Strategic risks

Significant strategic risks at Axel Springer result primarily from decisions to invest in new business areas and models as well as companies that develop differently than planned in the long term or are unable to sustainably assert themselves on the market or are displaced by new business models. AI could increase the fundamental significance and extent of strategic risks. This would result in unscheduled write-downs as part of the impairment tests to be carried out and lower profitability. Activities in all operating divisions are affected by this risk. Inadequate diversification also harbors a high-risk potential.

Overall, however, the business areas and models of our investments are diverse, so that diversification avoids so-called cluster risks. In addition, preventive management measures such as clear investment criteria, according to which we 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 developments are used to further minimize risk.

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In addition to the aforementioned risks, dependence on strategically important cooperation partners is also associated with risk. Active key account management, legal support in the negotiation and renegotiation of contracts and continuous monitoring of our cooperation partners' business activities help to reduce this risk.

Strategic opportunities

In a constantly changing environment, we are continuously developing our business activities in order to be able to meet global and industry-specific challenges in the future with innovative and needs-based solutions and to strengthen our position as a genuine transatlantic media group.

Axel Springer's strategy, which is aimed at further expanding the business along the existing core competencies, continues to offer good opportunities to build a high-growth and high-yield digital portfolio and to establish journalism as a successful business model in the digital world as well, due to the very positive development of the digital markets. In addition to the ongoing digital transformation and monetization of the established strong media brands and its own new/online developments, Axel Springer is taking advantage of market developments through strategically oriented acquisitions of and investments in new and forward-looking companies and technologies (including AI). Networking with the founding generation of digital start-ups and entering into new and expanding existing partnerships is also part of our international digitalization strategy.

The entry into new markets or the expansion of existing markets (e.g. USA) as well as the possible spin-off of business divisions could also open up growth options for us.

The acquisition of investments in companies with promising digital business models in the growth phases of their life cycle offers us the opportunity to establish contacts within the industry and with other founders and investors, as well as to gain access to and utilize 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 level of integration of information technologies in business processes and business models, Axel Springer relies on a high level of availability of IT components in order to avoid interruptions to business activities with far-reaching consequences for revenues and reputation. External factors in the form of cybercrime represent an increasing risk for the Group. Examples of this include infiltrated malware that prevents access to company data by encrypting it or threatening to publish company data (ransomware), targeted overload attacks (DDoS attacks) and CEO fraud (attempted fraud).

Events that could result in a breach of confidentiality of information or data integrity are classified as further IT risks. In light of the growing importance of digital payment content, pro-grammatic online advertising and the processing of personal data in accordance with the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), protection to prevent theft or loss of data is of great importance. For this reason, specific measures have been and are being taken to prevent or limit the effects of criminal acts and the failure of IT components as far as possible. Risk reduction measures include DDoS protection, backup data centers, vulnerability analyses, the use of encryption, network access controls, consolidation and standardization, searching for data leaks and hardening systems. These measures are continuously analyzed and, if necessary, expanded and improved.

Legal risks

The relevance of data protection and the social and political sensitivity to privacy, transparency, and data security, especially in the digital sector, have been steadily increasing for years and particularly affect Axel Springer's digital business areas. The use of AI systems could further increase the existing risk of personal data breaches and the loss of sensitive company information. In principle, there is a corporate accountability obligation under which the company responsible for the personal data in question must demonstrate GDPR compliance and the adoption and continuous adaptation of organizational data protection measures. In the event of violations, fines of up to € 20 million or, in the case of one company, up to 4 % of the total global annual turnover

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generated in the previous financial year can be imposed under the GDPR. In addition, breaches of the GDPR can result in claims for damages and reputational damage. To limit the aforementioned data protection risks, we have introduced appropriate guidelines and implemented technical and organizational measures. We regularly train our employees to the responsible and careful handling of personal data and the use of new technologies in compliance with data protection regulations.

According to the Act on Data Protection and the Protection of Privacy in Telecommunications and Telemedia (TTDSG), which came into force in Germany in 2021, the storage of information such as cookies and other tracking technologies in the end device or access to this information is only permitted with the sufficiently informed consent of the end user. This has particular implications for Axel Springer's media offerings, which are also financed by individualized advertising. The Conference of Independent Data Protection Supervisors (DSK) emphasizes that the use of cookies or subsequent tracking requires user consent in most cases. In this context, ensuring the data protection compliance of consent banners, in particular the lawful retrieval of consent and the adequate provision of the necessary information, remains a key data protection challenge for our digital online offerings. The data protection supervisory authorities generally demand the option of rejecting cookies and other technologies at the first level of the consent banner. For this reason, many Axel Springer websites have switched to a so-called PUR model, according to which users can either give their consent to advertising and data processing requiring consent (e.g. tracking) or pay a fee to use the website free of advertising and tracking. "PUR" is not an acronym but stands for "free of tracking and advertising requiring consent". According to the data protection supervisory authorities, some PUR models do not offer sufficient selection options for certain data processing categories and are therefore not compliant with data protection regulations. Axel Springer does not share this view and is considering a review by the administrative courts.

In February 2023, the European Data Protection Board (EDPB) published "Guidelines on Technical Scope of Art. 5(3) of ePrivacy Directive", according to which new tracking technologies, such as URL and pixel tracking, local processing, tracking based on the IP address and unique identifiers, also require prior consent from users. It is not yet clear to what extent this could affect previous business models, e.g. of Idealo, for example with regard to so-called link tracking.

Legal opportunities

At European level, two important laws for providers of digital services came into force in 2022: the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Digital Markets Act (DMA). The main obligations under both laws will apply from the first quarter of 2024. The DMA is intended to ensure fair market conditions for the major digital platforms, from which Axel Springer would also benefit. For example, extended transparency obligations will be imposed on large AdTech providers such as Google, which will open up additional opportunities for our marketing activities to optimize programmatic advertising marketing. The DMA also prohibits the major digital platforms from favoring their own services over those of competitors on their platforms. This opens up opportunities for Idealo, for example, as a price comparison service that competes with Google Shopping. The DSA is also referred to as the "new basic law of the internet" and contains increased transparency and procedural obligations for digital service providers, especially online platforms. Since the end of August 2023, very large platforms and search engines with more than 45 million users per month in the EU have had to implement the first requirements, such as new transparency rules and complaints mechanisms, including for digital press providers.

The 11th amendment to the Act against Restraints of Competition (11th GWB amendment) came into force in November 2023. It contains important provisions for the effective public and private enforcement of the Digital Markets Act and introduces for the first time the authority of the Federal Cartel Office to take measures following sector inquiries in order to open up the markets under investigation to more competition ("New Competition Tool"). In addition to the European Commission's powers of investigation and enforcement, the possibility of judicial enforcement of the obligations under the Digital Markets Act is an important tool for ensuring that large digital platforms comply with the obligations under the Digital Markets Act.

In December 2023, the European Parliament and the European Council adopted the final version of the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) as the world's first comprehensive AI law. The European Parliament and the Member States still have to approve the agreement on the AI Act, which is of a more formal nature. There will be a

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transitional phase between the law being passed and coming into force. The AI Act divides AI systems into risk classes. All AI systems that fall into the highest category, e.g. systems for recognizing emotions in the workplace, are explicitly prohibited. AI systems with "significant potential for harm", e.g. to democracy, fall into the second category and are subject to numerous obligations, such as the creation of complaint mechanisms. Other systems, such as chatbots, are regulated only insignificantly. For the very important language models, such as ChatGPT, and other so-called basic models, the draft AI Act provides for transparency and documentation obligations. For content providers such as press companies, it is important that the draft AI Act requires AI providers to provide a detailed overview of which works, e.g. press publications, they have used for training purposes.

In December 2023, the European Council and the European Parliament agreed on a preliminary draft of the European Media Freedom Act (EMFA). The aim of the EMFA is to protect the freedom and diversity of the media. Publishers, including the BDZV Bundesverband Digitalpublisher und Zeitungsverleger, have considerable reservations about the EMFA, as it would place the independent press under the supervision of an EU authority, the "European Board for Media Services". This would threaten the freedom of the press, especially as the press is subject to national law and self-regulation in the respective EU states. Opportunities could lie in Art. 17 EMFA, according to which media providers are to be protected by procedural requirements against the very large platforms from deleting their content too quickly and extensively due to the platforms' terms of use.

Reputation risks

In addition to the aforementioned reputational risks in connection with data protection and information security, others may arise as secondary risks or secondary effects in connection with a primary risk. For example, due to Axel Springer's prominent position and its contribution to shaping public opinion, a breach of the law could attract a great deal of attention and damage our reputation. In particular, incorrect, not carefully researched or contradictory reporting by one of our journalistic brands, whether through internal fault or manipulative cyber-attacks, could have a damaging effect on our reputation. This would not only have a negative impact on the integrity and credibility of the respective brands but could also significantly impair access to necessary information.

Further reputational risks could arise, for example, from a breach of journalistic independence if journalistic work is jeopardized due to personal gain, inadequate research, incomplete information or a lack of care in dealing with sources. Any violation of country-specific laws and regulations, the disregard of programs for equal treatment and equal opportunities or social and ecological conflicts in the context of the procurement process for resources or in production could also result in reputational damage. Breaches of confidentiality agreements and incorrectly published information in the context of external reporting can have economic or legal consequences for Axel Springer. There is also a risk of damage to the image of the Group or its brands as a result of negative reporting or campaigns in social media channels, even if there is no violation of the law from a legal perspective.

The aforementioned reputational risks are countered by regularly raising employee awareness, e.g. through e-learning, guidelines and corporate principles, transparent internal and external communication and our Code of Conduct, which defines group-wide standards of conduct. In our new Supplier Code of Conduct, we disclose our minimum requirements regarding social and environmental standards to our business partners. The Supply Chain Due Dilligence Act (LkSG), which has been in force since January 2023, obliges Axel Springer to avoid human rights violations and environmental damage in its own business operations and in the supply chain. In order to comply with these due diligence obligations, Axel Springer has set up appropriate procedures and measures and disclosed them in a declaration of principles on human rights strategy. In it, we define our human rights and environmental expectations of our employees and business partners and thus also counteract potential reputational risks.

Personnel risks

The individual skills, professional expertise and commitment of our employees contribute significantly to the success of Axel Springer. The loss of specialists and managers and the associated loss of company-specific

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knowledge and expertise therefore represents a significant risk. We counteract this professionally and actively. One focus of our HR management is the targeted and forward-looking development of employees with the help of individual training and development measures, regular feedback meetings and attractive bonus programs. Department-specific measures such as coaching, training needs analyses and our group-wide talent management help us to first identify individual needs and then fill positions with the right talent and develop them in a targeted manner. There is a particular focus on filling top management positions with women (gender balance leadership). Systematic succession planning and development, particularly in the event of age-related fluctuation, supports the filling of key positions and is indispensable. In this way, the transfer of valuable experience and company expertise should be ensured, and personnel requirements covered in the long term. Flexible working conditions (e.g. hybrid work, workation program) and comprehensive offers for a better work-life balance have also gained in importance and also contribute to risk minimization.

The recruitment of junior staff as well as specialists and managers represent a continuously growing risk. As a result of demographic change and increasing competition on the labor market, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified personnel. In view of the Group's increasing digitalization, IT specialists in particular - including AI specialists - and employees with an affinity for technology continue to be in greater demand. We have therefore launched strategic HR initiatives, such as talent management and group-wide career opportunities, to ensure the long-term development of a shared talent pool with a focus on bottleneck and key functions. Our proactive recruitment approach, additional recruitment resources and competitive salaries in line with current market rates also make an important contribution to positioning Axel Springer as an attractive and innovative employer in the relevant target group.

Personnel opportunities

Axel Springer offers a modern, international and increasingly digital working environment that could increase our attractiveness as an employer and appeal to junior staff as well as specialists and managers. We create a diverse and inclusive work environment where all employees are respected, valued and feel a sense of belonging. Differences are welcome at Axel Springer, and innovation is encouraged through diversity of skills, perspectives, personal and social backgrounds, age and education, and other dimensions of diversity. A diverse and inclusive working environment can improve not only the working atmosphere but also performance and could therefore also contribute to the continued success and growth of our company.

In addition, initiatives such as networking with the founder generation of digital start-ups and the transformation of our journalism school into the "Academy of Journalism and Technology" are intended to make Axel Springer more attractive for young specialists and managers. With the "Academy of Journalism and Technology", we are pursuing the goal of linking journalism and technology through interdisciplinary projects in order to promote the development of disruptive innovations in journalism. At the same time, we are also responding to new requirements, in particular the technological changes in the media industry.

Financial risks and risks from 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 and currency risks. These risks are mainly managed by the Group Finance department on the basis of the guidelines laid down by the Executive Board of Axel Springer SE. Derivative financial instruments are used exclusively for hedging purposes. Currency risks are mainly avoided by incurring 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 financial statements in foreign currencies (translation risk) 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 receivables or liabilities with variable interest rates. However, due to firmly defined financing principles and regular monitoring of the variable interest portion, this risk is limited or, if necessary, minimized through the use of interest rate derivatives.

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The liquidity risk is monitored regularly on the basis of medium-term planning. The financing instruments used, in particular the long-term credit lines, promissory note and term loans (for details, see the section "Financial position" of the Axel Springer Group), provide a sufficient liquidity framework – even for unplanned payments.

The investment of liquid funds in the Group only generates low default risks. In order to counteract these risks, investments are made according to predefined criteria that are set out in a Group guideline.

The risks from financial instruments and hedging measures are explained in detail in Note (30) to the consolidated financial statements. Overall, the financial risks are considered to be low.

Other risks

As part of our sustainability management, we have developed a climate strategy (https://sustainability.axel-springer.com/strategy/) that provides for the continuous reduction of emissions. Our printing plants already operate an optimized energy management system and regularly take part in successful energy audits. Possible risks arising from global climate change have also been examined. However, there are currently no indications that climate change would have a direct impact on Axel Springer's business models.

The past few years have shown that even initially seemingly inconspicuous events pose significant risks for Axel Springer's business activities and for our society in general (e.g. Covid 19 pandemic, war of aggression in Ukraine, terrorist attack on Israel). Axel Springer therefore follows the all-hazards approach, in which all risks *from extreme events, e.g. natural hazards, accidents, terrorist attacks or criminal acts, are taken into account* equally. We counter these risks with increased security standards, crisis prevention and management as well as extensive information and training for security personnel. Security personnel are trained at many levels so that they can be deployed flexibly within the security organization, so that phases of heightened security awareness or staff shortages can be dealt with appropriately. The financial risk of possible property damage and business interruptions is covered by appropriate insurance policies.

As part of our international and journalistic activities, we are exposed to particular risks when traveling on business, especially with a journalistic background to war and crisis zones. In addition to possible physical or psychological harm, reporting on location could also become impossible for us, particularly in high-risk areas. However, due to increased geopolitical risks, not only war zones are now classified as high-risk areas and therefore not only our journalists are exposed to potential dangers, but every one of our employees who embarks on an essential trip can be affected by illnesses, incidents in the country of travel, etc. We significantly minimize the likelihood and impact of risks with automated pre-trip advisories that every traveler receives in our travel booking *tool for safety-specific preparation when booking, special training to prepare travelers for emergencies,* appropriate insurance and a 24/7 hotline to ensure medical and safety-related support on site. In addition to these measures, we also carry out risk assessments and open-source intelligence analyses on the risk situation in the destination country.

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 fully consolidated subsidiaries and the central divisions. There are currently no apparent risks that, either individually or aggregated, could jeopardize the continued existence of the Axel Springer Group or have a significant impact on the assets, earnings and financial position. This applies to the condition that there is no significant deterioration of the economy in our markets and the media industry and, consequently, a 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 digitalization.

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Forecast Report

Macroeconomic expectations

In its January 2024 outlook, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) expects the global economy to grow at the same rate as in 2023, forecasting **global economic** growth of 3.1 % in real terms by 2024. The current expectation already indicates a slight improvement compared to October 2023, which is due to minor adjustments in China, the USA and other growth markets. The global economy remains below the historical growth rates (2000 to 2019) of 3.8 %. This can be explained by the ongoing restrictive monetary policy and declining government support. Nevertheless, the global economy is expected to remain resilient in the long-term. In 2024, the IMF anticipates lower economic growth of 1.5 % in the industrialized countries compared to 2023, mainly constrained by the eurozone, while emerging and developing countries can maintain their growth at 4.1 %in 2024. In the UK, the effects of high energy prices hinder economic growth, with an expected growth of 0.6 % in 2024 (+ 0.1 percentage points compared to 2023). With regard to emerging and developing countries, China and India in particular are making an extraordinary contribution. China is expected to grow by 4.6 % in 2024, while India is forecast to grow by 6.5 %.

In December 2023, the ifo Institute forecasts a slight economic growth in **Germany** of 0.9 % (IMF: 0.5 %) for 2024. Despite the current stagnation in the German economy, various indicators point towards a recovery in 2024. These include decreasing inflation, potential interest rate reductions by the European Central Bank and declining credit and capital market interest rates, which are expected to have positive effects on the sales market and purchasing power. According to the ifo Institute, the number of people in employment is expected to increase by approximately 83,000 to 46.0 million persons on average throughout the year. The unemployment rate is expected to rise by 82,000 persons to 5.9 %. The ifo Institute expects an overall inflation rate of 2.2 %.

Industry-specific expectations

Despite a slight increase in unemployment rates in advanced economies in 2023 due to weaker economic conditions, the unemployment rate is expected to remain at a low level. Due to the shortage of labor, companies are willing to invest more in new hires. The labor shortage, coupled with the increased demand for personnel and the increasing digitalization and automation, is likely to increase companies' willingness to pay higher salaries as well as recruitment costs.

Due to persistently high interest rates and thus rising financing costs, a lower number of transactions in the European real estate market (real estate purchases and sales) is expected in 2024. Particularly, in the core markets of the AVIV Group, including Germany, France, and Belgium. To increase the transaction volume, prices would need to readjust to the real economic and monetary environment. However, interest in properties for sale remain high and the demand for rental properties has risen significantly due to high interest rates and the past increases in real estate prices. In addition, there is a considerable housing shortage in major cities.

Following the recession in the previous year, the IMF, expects in its January 2024 forecast, a slight growth of 0.5 % for the overall economy in Germany, the core market of News Media Germany. The Zentralverband der deutschen Werbewirtschaft e. V. considers the overall economic situation to remains tense. Positive economic forecasts and improvements in consumer confidence, driven by noticeable wage increases, present opportunities for the advertising market. However, challenges arising from strict advertising bans and disruptions in digital competition could nullify these opportunities and have a severe impact on entire sector. Positive effects on advertising revenues could result from major events such as the UEFA European Football Championship 2024 in Germany or the U.S. presidential elections, as well as an increasing consumer demand following the recent decline in the inflation rate. In the distribution sector, a structural decline in print circulation is expected in 2024, while the number of digital subscribers is anticipated to continue growing significantly.

In the USA, advertising expenditures are expected to increase by 6.4 % in 2024 (Statista Market Insights, November 2023). Consequently, both the Insider Group and the POLITICO Group anticipate a rise in advertising revenue. Similar to the News Media Germany business unit, the presidential elections in the USA, the European Parliament elections 2024, and numerous sports events are expected to have a positive effect on the demand

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for editorial content. Additionally, increasing subscription revenues are expected for the POLITICO Group, particularly through the expansion into new markets in the fiscal years 2023 and the following years.

It is anticipated that the globally operating AWIN Group will benefit from increases in advertising expenditures in its core markets (USA, UK, DACH, and France) in 2024. After a slight decline in eCommerce sales in Germany in 2023, a growth of 3 % is expected for 2024 (HDE). Since the revenues of the Idealo Group are strongly correlated with eCommerce growth, a positive development is assumed. However, declining inflation could reduce price sensitivity, from which the Idealo Group has benefited. Conversely, falling inflation may increase consumer willingness to spend, which could have a positive impact the Idealo Group. For Grupa Ringier Axel Springer Polska in Poland, the print market and thus revenues from the print business are expected to continue decline. However, a slowly recovering advertising market is anticipated, leading to revenue growth in this segment. The Finanzen.net Group continues to benefit from the strong growth of the Neobroker finanzen.net zero, which is also expected to increase its revenue volume in 2024.

Axel Springer Group forecast

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.

For the financial year 2024, we expect pro forma revenues in the Axel Springer Group in the low single-digit percentage range mainly due to the current challenging economic conditions. We expect our classifieds portals to grow overall in the low single-digit percentage range as well. While we expect a structurally driven decline in revenues for the German media in the mid-single-digit percentage range, we anticipate that our US media will outperform the overall revenue growth of the Group, growing again in the high single-digit percentage range after declines in the financial year 2023. Despite challenges on the revenue side, we expect adjusted EBITDA to increase in the mid-single-digit percentage range due to consistent cost management and the continuation of selected ongoing growth initiatives. We anticipate an increase in adjusted EBIT in the high single-digit percentage range.

Future dividend proposals to the annual shareholders' meeting will take into account the respective status of implementation of the growth strategy and the necessary financial resources.

We plan the future development of the financial performance, liquidity, and financial position based on 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 a moderate recession in Europe and the USA in the first half of 2024, the war in Ukraine will continue and not expand, inflation will continue to decrease throughout the year and a strong recovery will begin in the second half of 2024. 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, 2023, and the consolidated income statement, consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of cash flows and consolidated statement of changes in equity for the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31, 2023, 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, 2023.

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, 2023, and of its financial performance for the fiscal year from January 1 to December 31, 2023, 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 IFRS 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.

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,

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matters related to going concern. In addition, they are re-sponsible 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 con-ducted 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 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;

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- 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 5, 2024

EY GmbH & Co. KG
Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft

Mielke
Wirtschaftsprüferin
[German Public Auditor]

von Michaelis
Wirtschaftsprüfer
[German Public Auditor]