

Ekspress Grupp

Hold

Downgraded from Buy

Price: EUR 1.70 Price target: EUR 1.82 (from EUR 1.79)

Taking profits after a stellar performance

Since our most recent update on Ekspress Grupp, in December 2021, the company is up 20% (total return), outperforming both the TALSE index and the MSCI FM index. We have raised our 12M price target (PT) to EUR 1.82/share but, given the upside potential of just 7%, we have downgraded the stock to HOLD (from Buy). We like that it disposed of its low-margin printing business in 2021, which has strengthened its digitalised media-based business foundations; and that it is in the process of selling the loss-making Express Post. The combination of a soaring cost base (2.1ppt yoy EBITDA margin erosion on our 2022E figures), the weakening economic outlook (posing a threat to marketing revenues), and the increasing risk free rate, encourage us to take more cautious stance towards the company, however. We note also that the valuation does not seem to be cheap enough to command a BUY rating currently, on our 2022-24E EV/EBITDAs of 7.0-5.2x, implying a 15% premium/7% discount to its peers.

Stronger foundations. Within the past 12 months, Ekspress Group has disposed its printing business (Printall); is in the process of selling the loss-making Express Post (newspaper home delivery); and has acquired Elta (a small news agency). Since the value of Express Post on the company's balance sheet is EUR 0m, and the acquisition price of Elta has not been announced, we do not pencil these into our model. Moreover, we believe that focusing on the high margin media business, with an increasing share of online media revenues is a reasonable strategy, as it should be supportive of the company's profitability in the long term (it is targeting a 2026E EBITDA margin of >15% vs. the 14% average for 2019-2020).

Economic outlook deteriorating. We note that the company generated 67% of its 2021 top line from advertisements, but acknowledge that this type of income is dependent on the economic outlook. Since we see a downgrade in the pace of GDP expansion (yoy EU growth forecasts ytd have been cut by 1.6ppt to 2.6% for 2022E and by 0.4ppt to 2.1% for 2023E, according to the Bloomberg consensus), we prefer to take a more cautious stance on the company's top line growth potential. Moreover, we see a risk of opex inflation, driven mainly by wage growth, and pencil in 2.1ppt yoy EBITDA margin erosion in 2022E. Nonetheless, between 2022E and 2024E, we expect EBITDA margin expansion of 0.8ppt on the back of the growing online business.

Dividends and the buyback programme are sweeteners. As an additional positive element in Ekspress Grupp's core equity story, we see profit distributions. In 2022, a EUR 0.08 DPS was paid (5% yield). On top of that, the AGM has approved a small buyback programme which assumes that up to EUR 1m (i.e. 2% of its Mcap) may be spent on the repurchase of stocks, with a maximum price of EUR 1.90/share (12% upside to the current stock price).

Valuation. Our DCF (90% weight) gives us a 12M PT of EUR 1.84/share (8% upside); while our peer valuation (10% weight) produces a 12M PT of EUR 1.68/share (-1% downside). Given the 7% upside potential we now rate Ekspress Grupp as a HOLD.

Risks: GDP growth; competition; employee turnover; low liquidity.

Expected events

2Q22 sales data	12 July
2Q22 results	29 July
3Q22 sales data	12 October
3Q22 results	31 October

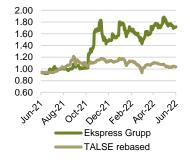
Key data

Market cap	USD 55m
3M ADTV	USD 8k
Free float	37%
Shares outstanding	31m
Major shareholder	Hans H Luik: 73%
Bloomberg code	EEG1T ET
TALSE Index	1,801

Price performance

52-w range	EUR 0.92-1.89
52-w performance	101%
Relative performance	94%

12M share price performance



EQUITY RESEARCH

EBITDA EBIT NI **FPS** DPS P/E **EV/EBITDA** Div. ND/EBITDA Revenues **EURm EURm EURm EURm EUR EUR** X X yield X 2020 44.5 7.0 3.1 2.5 0.08 0.00 21.0 9.5 0.0% 2.3 2021 53.5 9.0 4.9 2.2 0.07 0.10 23.3 7.1 5.8% 1.2 2022E 60.5 8.9 4.9 3.8 0.12 80.0 13.8 7.0 4.6% 1.1 2023E 65.9 9.8 5.9 4.6 0.15 0.06 11.5 6.1 3.6% 0.7 2024E 71.2 7.3 5.8 0.18 0.07 9.3 5.2 4.2% 11.1 0.3

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Closing Prices as of 14 June 2022

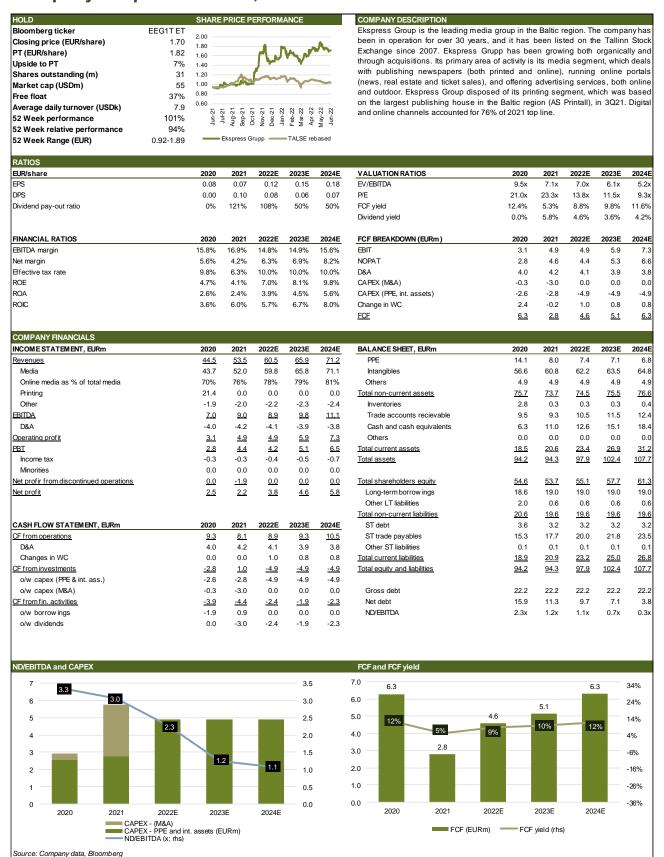
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Company snapshot - HOLD, PT EUR 1.82/share



Valuation

We have downgraded Ekspress Grupp from Buy to HOLD, with a new 12M price target (PT) of EUR 1.82/share, yielding 7% upside potential. We assign a much larger weight to our DCF valuation (90%), which offers a PT of EUR 1.84/share (8% upside), than to our peer group analysis (10%, PT EUR 1.68, -1%), as we believe that Ekspress Grupp's cash generation capacity (i.e., a combination of the company's growth and profitability profile) is an essential part of its equity story.

Valuation summary

	Weight	PT	Current price	Upside
DCF	90%	1.84	1.70	8%
Peer-based valuation	10%	1.68	1.70	-1%
Weighted PT	100%	1.82	1.70	7%

Source: WOOD Research

DCF: 12M PT at EUR 1.84/share

We base our DCF valuation on the following assumptions:

- ✓ A long-term WACC of c.11%, up from 10% previously, mainly on the back of the 1ppt-higher risk free rate we assume in our model.
- ✓ A present value of the discounted free cash flows of EUR 38m for 2022-31E.
- ✓ An end-2021 net debt of EUR 11m.
- ✓ A present value of the terminal value of EUR 23m.
- ✓ A terminal growth rate of 0.9%

DCF valuation

PLNm		2022E	2023E	2024E	2025E	2026E	2027E	2028E	2029E	2030E	2031E	Terminal
Revenues		60.5	65.9	71.2	76.9	82.3	87.2	90.7	93.4	96.2	98.1	99.0
yoy		13%	9%	8%	8%	7%	6%	4%	3%	3%	2%	1%
EBIT		4.9	5.9	7.3	7.8	8.7	8.7	8.4	8.7	8.9	9.1	8.1
EBIT margin		8%	9%	10%	10%	11%	10%	9%	9%	9%	9%	8%
Cash tax (10%)		0.5	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8
NOPAT		4.4	5.3	6.6	7.0	7.8	7.9	7.6	7.8	8.0	8.1	7.3
(+) D&A		4.1	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.5
(-) Capex		-4.9	-4.9	-4.9	-4.9	-4.8	-4.7	-4.6	-4.5	-4.5	-4.5	-4.5
(-) Working capital growth		1.0	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.3
Net investment		0.2	-0.2	-0.3	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.4	-0.5	-0.5	-0.7	-0.7
FCF		4.6	5.1	6.3	6.8	7.6	7.6	7.2	7.3	7.5	7.5	6.6
Terminal growth [g(t)]	0.9%											
PV TV	23											
PV FCF 2022-2031E	38											
Enterprise value (EURm)	61											
Net debt (end 2021)	11											
Minorities	0											
Investment in associates (2021)	2											
Dividend paid out on 20 May 2022	2											
Equity value (EURm)	50											
Number of shares (m)	32											
Value per share (EUR, 1 Jan 2022)	1.55											
12M PT (EUR)	1.84											

Source: WOOD Research

WACC assumptions

	2022E	2023E	2024E	2025E	2026E	2027E	2028E	2029E	2030E	2031E
Risk free rate	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Unlevered beta	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23	1.23
Levered beta	1.67	1.65	1.63	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.62	1.61
Equity risk premium	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Cost of equity	14%	14%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%
Pre-tax cost of debt	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
Tax rate	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
After tax cost of debt	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%
% D	29%	28%	27%	26%	26%	26%	26%	26%	26%	26%
% E	71%	72%	73%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%	74%
WACC	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%

Source: WOOD Research

DCF sensitivity

		2022E WACC											
		8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%					
	0.0%	1.83	1.81	1.79	1.77	1.75	1.73	1.71					
Terminal	0.3%	1.85	1.83	1.81	1.79	1.77	1.75	1.73					
growth	0.6%	1.88	1.86	1.84	1.82	1.80	1.78	1.76					
rate	0.9%	1.90	1.88	1.86	1.84	1.82	1.80	1.78					
	1.2%	1.93	1.91	1.89	1.87	1.85	1.83	1.81					
	1.5%	1.96	1.94	1.92	1.89	1.87	1.85	1.83					
	1.8%	1.99	1.97	1.94	1.92	1.90	1.88	1.86					

Source: WOOD Research

Peer group valuation: 12M PT at EUR 1.68/share

Peer group comparison

	Country	Мсар	ND/		P/E		EBITDA CAGR	Е	V/EBITD	Α	Div	ridend yi	eld
		USDm	EBITDA	2022E	2023E	2024E	21-24E	2022E	2023E	2024E	2022E	2023E	2024E
Eskpress Grupp	Estonia	55	1.2x	13.8	11.5	9.3	7%	7.0	6.1	5.2	4.6%	3.6%	4.2%
Sanoma Oyj	Finland	na	1.9x	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	6%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Yelp Inc	US	1,968	-1.5x	13.2	11.0	7.5	41%	6.8	5.4	6.6	0.0%	0.0%	n.a.
Promotora De Informaciones	Spain	413	na	34.9	11.2	11.2	46%	9.9	8.0	6.8	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Alma Media Corp	Finland	857	1.9x	14.5	14.7	13.8	9%	10.4	10.4	9.6	4.0%	4.4%	4.9%
Wirtualna Polska Holding	Poland	546	0.3x	13.0	12.0	10.7	7%	7.5	6.6	5.6	1.7%	2.0%	2.2%
Arnoldo Mondadori Editore	Italy	487	2.7x	9.1	7.6	7.3	16%	5.2	4.4	4.0	5.1%	5.7%	5.9%
Rcs Mediagroup	Italy	352	na	6.5	6.5	6.5	-5%	2.5	2.4	3.0	9.2%	9.2%	9.2%
Bloomsbury Publishing	Britain	373	-0.9x	16.0	15.4	15.4	10%	10.1	8.3	7.5	79.1%	2.6%	2.6%
Roularta Media Group	Belgium	283	-4.0x	8.3	8.1	n.a.	n.a.	5.3	4.7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Cairo Communications	Italy	238	na	5.6	5.3	5.1	-3%	4.2	3.9	3.4	8.2%	8.2%	7.9%
Vocento	Spain	108	na	9.1	9.4	5.5	-2%	3.1	2.5	1.6	6.2%	4.1%	n.a.
Median				11.1	10.2	7.5	8%	6.1	5.1	5.6	6%	4%	5%
Ekspress Grupp vs. peers' n	nedian			25%	12%	25%	-0.8pp	15%	20%	-7%	-1pp%	-1pp	-1pp

Source: Bloomberg, WOOD Research

Peer valuation

		P/E (x)		EV/EBITDA (x)			
	2022E	2023E	2024E	:	2022E	2023E	2024E
Total weighted median (x)	11.06	10.21	7.47		6.05	5.05	5.63
EPS (EUR) for P/E and EBITDA (EURm) for EV/EBITDA	0.12	0.15	0.18		8.9	9.8	11.1
Implied enterprise value					54	50	63
Implied equity value	42	46	44		44	42	59
Implied equity value per share (EUR)	1.36	1.51	1.36		1.44	1.37	1.83
Weight (%)	16.7%	16.7%	16.7%		16.7%	16.7%	16.7%
Implied weighted equity value per share (EUR)				1.48			
12M price target (PT)				1.68			

Source: Bloomberg, WOOD Research

Financial forecast changes

(EURm)		2022E			2023E			2024E	
	New	Old	Diff.	New	Old	Diff.	New	Old	Diff.
Revenues	60.5	70.5	-14%	65.9	77.6	-15%	71.2	83.9	-15%
EBITDA	8.9	9.1	-2%	9.8	9.7	1%	11.1	10.6	5%
Operating profit	4.9	4.9	-1%	5.9	5.5	7%	7.3	6.4	14%
Net profit	3.8	3.4	12%	4.6	3.9	17%	5.8	4.6	27%
EBITDA margin	15%	13%	1.9pp	15%	13%	2.4pp	16%	13%	3.0pp
Operating margin	8%	7%	1.1pp	9%	7%	1.8pp	10%	8%	2.6pp
Net margin	6%	5%	1. 4 pp	7%	5%	1.9рр	8%	5%	2.7pp

Source: Company data, WOOD Research

Risks

- ✓ The macroeconomic environment.
- ✓ M&A.
- \checkmark Competition in the media business.
- ✓ The low liquidity of the stock.
- ✓ Employee turnover.

Financials

Profit and loss statement

EURm	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
Revenues	44.5	53.5	60.5	65.9	71.2
Online media as % of total revenues	70%	76%	78%	79%	81%
Cost of sales	-34.0	-39.7	-45.4	-48.8	-52.0
Marketing expenses	-1.9	-2.4	-2.7	-2.9	-3.1
Administrative expenses	-6.9	-7.4	-8.4	-9.2	-9.6
Other	1.4	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
EBITDA	7.0	9.0	8.9	9.8	11.1
EBIT	3.1	4.9	4.9	5.9	7.3
Profit before tax	2.8	4.4	4.2	5.1	6.5
Tax	-0.3	-0.3	-0.4	-0.5	-0.7
Minorities	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net profit	2.5	2.2	3.8	4.6	5.8

Source: Company data, WOOD Research

Margins

	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
EBITDA margin	15.8%	16.9%	14.8%	14.9%	15.6%
Net margin	5.6%	4.2%	6.3%	6.9%	8.2%
ROA	2.6%	2.4%	3.9%	4.5%	5.6%
ROE	4.7%	4.1%	7.0%	8.1%	9.8%
ROIC	3.6%	6.0%	5.7%	6.7%	8.0%

Source: Company data, WOOD Research

Balance sheet

EURm	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
PPE	14	8	7	7	7
Intangibles	57	61	62	63	65
Others	5	5	5	5	5
Total non-current assets	76	74	75	76	77
Inventories	3	0	0	0	0
Trade accounts receivables	9	9	11	11	12
Cash and cash equivalents	6	11	13	15	18
Others	0	0	0	0	0
Total current assets	18	21	23	27	31
Total assets	94	94	98	102	108
Total shareholders' equity	55	54	55	58	61
Long-term borrowings	19	19	19	19	19
Other LT liabilities	2	1	1	1	1
Total non-current liabilities	21	20	20	20	20
ST debt	4	3	3	3	3
ST trade payables	15	18	20	22	23
Other ST liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
Total current liabilities	19	21	23	25	27
Total equity and liabilities	94	94	98	102	108
Gross debt	22	22	22	22	22
Net debt	16	11	10	7	4
ND/EBITDA	2.3x	1.2x	1.1x	0.7x	0.3x

Source: Company data, WOOD Research

Cash flow statement

EURm	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
CF from operations	9	8	9	9	10
D&A	4	4	4	4	4
Changes in WC	0	0	1	1	1
Other	5	4	4	5	6
CF from investments	-3	1	-5	-5	-5
o/w capex (PPE & int. ass.)	-3	-3	-5	-5	-5
o/w capex (M&A)	0	-3	0	0	0
Other	0	7	0	0	0
CF from financing activities	-4	-4	-2	-2	-2
o/w borrowings	-2	1	0	0	0
o/w dividends	0	-3	-2	-2	-2
Other	-2	-2	0	0	0
Net change in cash	3	5	2	3	3
Cash at the beginning of the year	4	6	11	13	15
Cash at the end of the year	6	11	13	15	18

Source: Company data, WOOD Research

Valuation multiples

	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
P/E (x)	21.0	23.3	13.8	11.5	9.3
EV/EBITDA (x)	9.5	7.1	7.0	6.1	5.2
Dividend yield (%)	0.0%	5.8%	4.6%	3.6%	4.2%
FCF yield (%)	12.4%	5.3%	8.8%	9.8%	11.6%

Source: Company data, WOOD Research

Important disclosures

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WOOD&Co's ratings and price target history for Ekspress Grupp in the preceding 12 month period

15/12/2020	HOLD – initiation of coverage		
		04/06/2021	EUR 0.98
06/12/2021	BUY	06/12/2021	EUR 1.79
16/06/2022		16/06/2022	EUR 1.82

The history of all WOOD&Co's investment research disseminated during the preceeding 12-month period can be accessed via our website at https://research.wood.com

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Romgaz	5
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Shoper	1, 2, 3
Siauliu Bankas	5
STS	1, 2, 3
Ten Square Games	3,7
Transelectrica	5

Transgaz

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