

Ekspress Grupp

Hold

Transfer of coverage

Price: EUR 1.58 Price target: EUR 1.80 (From EUR 1.82)

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Due to a change in analyst responsibilities, we transfer coverage of Ekspress Grupp with a HOLD rating and a 12M price target (PT) of EUR 1.80/share, or 14% upside. Following its 2Q22 results, we have revised our top line, by increasing our revenue estimates by 4-7% over 2022-24E, to account for: i) the buoyant performance of the digital media segment ytd (2Q22 sales up 26% yoy, and 1H22 sales +23% yoy); and ii) our expectations of a solid peak advertising season in 4Q22E. At the same time, considering the pressure on margins that is beginning to emerge, due to rising opex inflation, we have cut our gross, EBITDA and net profit margins, on average, by c.2ppts, c.1.4ppts and 0.8ppts, respectively, over 2022-24E. Given the deteriorating outlook, we keep a cautious stance on the upcoming 12M, while appreciating the mediumlong term growth prospects stemming from the digitalisation of the media segment (namely the growing adoption of subscription-based digital media content).

Our updated top-line estimates reflect the: i) strong 2Q sales in the advertising segment and our expectations of a solid (peak) 4Q22E season; and ii) group's successful expansion in its digital subscriber base ytd (along with improved pricing). Thus, we have raised our 2022-24E revenue forecasts, with a CAGR of 12.5% (vs. 10% before). That said, our estimates remain conservative, as we see the post-pandemic rebound in ad spending is set to fade in the coming quarters, along with slower growth in the digital subscription segment, amidst the deteriorating economic outlook. In the medium-to-long term, we see secular tailwinds as the key drivers i.e., the rising adoption of subscription-based digital media content in the Baltics (about half of its WE peers currently, on our estimates), the growing demand for digital advertising platforms (73% of total global advertising spending by 2027E expected in digital, from the current 67%, according to GroupM), and the post COVID-19 recovery and expansion of the highly profitable classifieds&ticketing platforms.

We are concerned about opex inflation risk, in the short term. We note that salaries constituted c.55% of the opex in FY21, while costs related to third-party services were c.25% of opex. Margins have eroded already: the EBITDA margin contracted by 3ppts yoy and the net margin by 0.7ppts yoy in 2Q22.

Positive dividend outlook. We are confident about Ekspress' willingness to distribute profits to compensate investors, while it searches for potential M&A opportunities, post the Printall AS disposal. Given its sound cash balance and strong cash flow generation outlook, we pencil in a 2022-24E 80% payout ratio (5-9% dividend yields), above its current minimum payout target of 30% and below its two-year average of 114%. Ekspress is continuing to look for acquisition opportunities in digital businesses in the media, ticketing, advertising and tech space, accelerating its digitalisation efforts and growth strategy further.

Valuation. The stock is trading currently at 2022-24E EV/EBITDAs of 5.2-6.9x, a c.20% discount vs. its peers, justified by its peers' superior 2021-24E EBITDA CAGR outlooks, in our view. We use a blend of a DCF (90%) and a peer valuation (10%) to reach a 12M PT of EUR 1.80/share, implying 14% upside potential.

Risks: low liquidity/size; a decline in ad spending; competition; and opex inflation.

Expected events

3Q22 sales	12 October 2022
3Q22 interim results	31 October 2022
4Q22 sales and results	January 2023

Key data

EUR 49m
27%
EUR 4.7k
31m
Hans H Luik: 73%
EEG1T ET
1793

Price performance

52-w range	EUR 0.96-1.80
52-w performance	57%
Relative performance	67%

Ekspress Grupp 12M share price performance



EQUITY RESEARCH

	Revenues	EBITDA	EBIT	NI	EPS	DPS	P/E	EV/EBITDA	Div.	ND/EBITDA	ı
	EURm	EURm	EURm	EURm	EUR	EUR	x	x	yield	x	ı
2020	45	7	3	3	0.08	0.10	8.5x	5.2x	14.7%	2.3x	ı
2021	54	9	5	2	0.07	0.08	14.1x	4.8x	7.7%	1.2x	ı
2022E	63	8	4	3	0.11	0.09	14.1x	6.9x	5.7%	1.2x	ı
2023E	71	9	6	5	0.15	0.12	10.8x	6.1x	7.4%	0.9x	
2024E	76	11	7	6	0.18	0.14	8.8x	5.2x	9.1%	0.6x	

Analysts: Aidar Ulan; Piotr Raciborski, CFA

E-mail: aidar.ulan@wood.cz, piotr.raciborski@wood.com

Prague: +420 222 096 111 Website: www.wood.com

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Closing Prices as of 15 September 2022

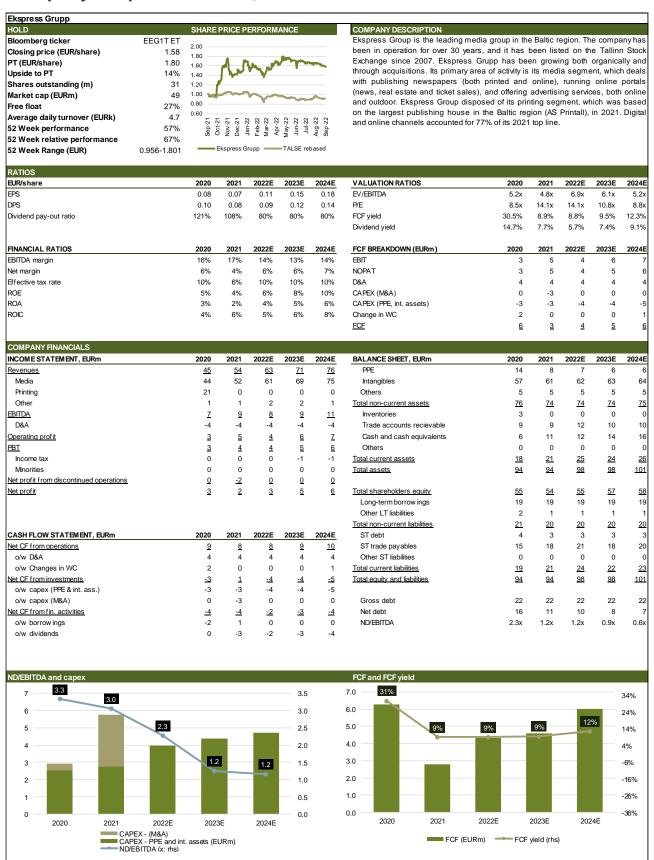
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WOOD & Company Financial Services a.s. Palladium, Namesti Republiky 1079/1a, 110 00 Prague 1 – Czech Republic tel.: +420 222 096 111 fax: +420 222 096 222 http://www.wood.cz

Company snapshot - HOLD, PT EUR 1.80



Valuation

Due to a change in analyst responsibilities, we transfer coverage of Ekspress Grupp, maintaining our HOLD on the stock, with a new 12M price target (PT) of EUR 1.80/share, yielding 14% upside potential. We assign a much larger weight to our DCF valuation (90%), which is unchanged vs. our previous report and offers a PT of EUR 1.79/share (13% upside), than to our peer group analysis (a 10% weight, PT EUR 1.84, 17% upside), 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%	1.79	1.58	13%
Peers-based valuation	10%	1.84	1.58	17%
Weighted PT	100%	1.80	1.58	14%

Source: WOOD Research

DCF: 12M PT at EUR 1.79/share

We base our DCF valuation on the following assumptions:

- ✓ A long-term WACC of c.11.5%, mainly on the back of our higher risk-free rate (2%), an unlevered beta of 1.3x, and an equity risk premium of 7%.
- ✓ A terminal growth rate of 1.0%.

DCF valuation implies 12M PT of EUR 1.79/share

EUR m		2022E	2023E	2024E	2025E	2026E	2027E	2028E	2029E	2030E	2031E	Terminal
Revenues		63	71	76	82	86	90	94	97	99	100	101
yoy		17%	12%	8%	7%	6%	5%	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%
EBIT		4	6	7	8	10	11	9	9	8	8	7
EBIT margin		7%	8%	9%	10%	11%	12%	10%	9%	8%	8%	7%
Cash tax (10%)		0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
NOPAT		4	5	6	7	9	10	8	8	8	7	6
(+) D&A		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4
(-) CAPEX		-4	-4	-5	-5	-5	-6	-6	-6	-6	-7	-5
(-) Working Capital growth		0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net investment		0	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
FCF		4	5	6	7	8	9	7	7	6	6	6
Terminal growth [g(t)]	1.0%											
PV TV	19											
PV FCF 2022-2031E	39											
Enterprise value (EURm)	59											
Net debt (end 2021)	11											
Minorities	0											
Investment in associates (2021)	2											
Equity value (EURm)	49											
Number of shares (m)	31											
Value per share (EUR)	1.61											
12M PT (EUR)	1.79											
Upside	13%											

Source: WOOD Research

WACC assumptions

WACC of 11.5%, and cost of equity of 15%

	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	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3
Levered beta	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8
Equity risk premium	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%	7%
Cost of equity	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%	15%
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	31%	31%	31%	31%	31%	31%	31%	31%	31%	31%
%E	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%	69%
WACC	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%	11.5%

Source: WOOD Research

Peer group valuation

	Country	Market cap ND/ Revenue EBITDA (EURm) EBITDA CAGR CAGR EV/EBITDA		DA .	Dividend yield			P/E						
				21-24E	21-24E	2022E	2023E	2024E	2022E	2023E	2024E	2024E	2022E	2023E
Eskpress Grupp	Estonia	49	1.2x	12%	6%	6.9	6.1	5.2	5.7%	7.4%	9.1%	14.1	10.8	8.8
Sanoma Oyj	Finland	2,218	1.8x	5%	6%	8.7	7.4	7.1	4.2%	4.3%	4.4%	19.0	16.7	15.6
Baltic Classifieds Group	Britain	833	6.0x	17%	17%	n.a	n/a	n.a.	0.8%	1.4%	1.7%	n.a.	n.a.	n.a
Promotora De Informaciones-A	Spain	326	11.6x	7%	33%	9.6	7.9	6.9	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	29.3
Alma Media Corp	Finland	743	2.7x	5%	7%	9.0	9.9	9.1	4.4%	4.8%	5.4%	13.2	14.0	12.9
Wirtualna Polska Holding Sa	Poland	610	0.5x	8%	6%	8.5	8.1	7.0	1.2%	1.9%	2.0%	15.5	15.1	13.4
Arnoldo Mondadori Editore	Italy	444	2.0x	6%	16%	5.0	3.2	3.2	5.9%	6.5%	6.6%	8.4	7.6	7.4
Roularta Media Group Nv	Belgium	230	-4.0x	0%	23%	3.8	3.5	n.a.	5.7%	5.7%	5.7%	7.1	6.9	6.8
Vocento Sa	Spain	80	0.5x	3%	-2%	4.1	3.1	2.2	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	4.3	5.4	4.0
Median				6%	12%	8.5	7.4	7.0	4.3%	4.6%	4.9%	10.8	10.8	12.9
Ekspress Grupp vs peers median				6.9pp	-5.8pp	-19%	-19%	-26%	1pp	Зрр	4pp	30%	0%	-32%

Source: WOOD Research, Bloomberg

Peer valuation

Historically, Ekspress Grupp has been trading at a c.15-20% discount to its peer group on EV/EBITDA multiples. Thus, we assign a 20% discount rate to the median EV/EBITDA for comparative valuation purposes.

Peer valuation implies 12M PT of EUR 1.84/share, or 17% upside

	EV/EBITDA				
	2022E	2023E	2024E		
Total weighted median (with a 20% discount)	6.8	6.0	5.6		
EBITDA (EURm)	8	9	11		
Implied enterprise value	58	56	60		
Ekspress Grupp: implied Equity value	48	48	53		
Ekspress Grupp: implied Equity value per share (EUR)	1.48	1.56	1.55		
Weight (%)	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%		
Implied weighted equity value per share (EUR)		1.61			
12M Price Target (PT)		1.84			
On the MOOD Bear and Bleach					

Source: WOOD Research, Bloomberg

Financial forecasts changes

		2022E			2023E			2024E	
	New	Old	Diff.	New	Old	Diff.	New	Old	Diff.
Revenues	63	61	4%	71	66	7%	76	71	7%
Gross Profit	14	15	-4%	17	17	-1%	19	19	-1%
EBITDA	8	9	-5%	9	10	-3%	11	11	-4%
Operating profit	4	5	-10%	6	6	-6%	7	7	-8%
Net profit	3	4	-9%	5	5	-2%	6	6	-5%
Gross profit margin	23%	25%	-2.0pp	24%	26%	-2.0pp	25%	27%	-2.0pp
EBITDA margin	14%	15%	-1.2pp	13%	15%	-1.5pp	14%	16%	-1.6pp
Operating margin	7%	8%	-1.1pp	8%	9%	-1.1pp	9%	10%	-1.5pp
Net margin	6%	6%	-0.8pp	6%	7%	-0.6pp	7%	8%	-0.9pp

Source: WOOD Research

Risks

- ✓ A drastic cutback in ad spending (marketing budgets, planned campaigns) from the group's largest clients, i.e., e-commerce, retail, FMCGs and SMEs.
- ✓ A decline in discretionary spending adversely affecting the pricing power of Ekspress Grupp in the subscription-based media content business.
- Growing competition in the media business from existing market players in the subscription segment, through pricing and content quality, e.g., no paywall for news media content.
- ✓ Low liquidity of the stock: 3M ADTV at EUR 4.7k.
- ✓ Opex inflation, rising wage costs.

Financials

P&L

EUR m	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
Revenues	45	54	63	71	76
Cost of sales	-34	-40	-48	-54	-57
Marketing expenses	-2	-2	-3	-3	-3
Administrative expenses	-7	-7	-8	-9	-10
Other	1	1	1	1	1
EBITDA	7	9	8	9	11
EBIT	3	5	4	6	7
Profit before tax	3	4	4	5	6
Tax	0	0	0	-1	-1
Minorities	0	0	0	0	0
Net profit	3	2	3	5	6

Source: WOOD Research, company data

Margins

	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
EBITDA margin	16%	17%	14%	13%	14%
Net margin	6%	4%	6%	6%	7%
ROA	3%	2%	4%	5%	6%
ROE	5%	4%	6%	8%	10%
ROIC	4%	6%	5%	6%	8%

Source: WOOD Research, company data

Balance sheet

EUR m	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
PPE	14	8	7	6	6
Intangibles	57	61	62	63	64
Others	5	5	5	5	5
Total non-current assets	76	74	74	74	75
Inventories	3	0	0	0	0
Trade accounts receivables	9	9	12	10	10
Cash and cash equivalents	6	11	12	14	16
Others	0	0	0	0	0
Total current assets	18	21	25	24	26
Total assets	94	94	98	98	101
Total shareholder's equity	55	54	55	57	58
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	21	18	20
Other ST liabilities	0	0	0	0	0
Total current liabilities	19	21	24	22	23
Total equity and liabilities	94	94	98	98	101
Gross debt	22	22	22	22	22
Net debt	16	11	10	8	7
ND/EBITDA	2.3x	1.2x	1.2x	0.9x	0.6x

Source: WOOD Research, company data

Cash flow

EUR m	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
Net CF from operations	9	8	8	9	10
D&A	4	4	4	4	4
Changes in WC	2	0	0	0	1
Other	3	4	3	5	6
Net CF from investments	-3	1	-4	-4	-5
o/w capex (PPE & int. ass.)	-3	-3	-4	-4	-5
o/w capex (M&A)	0	-3	0	0	0
Other	0	7	0	0	0
Net CF from fin. activities	-4	-4	-2	-3	-4
o/w borrowings	-2	1	0	0	0
o/w dividends	0	-3	-2	-3	-4
Other	-2	-2	0	0	0
Net change in cash	3	5	1	1	2
Cash at the beginning of the year	4	6	11	12	14
Cash at the end of the year	6	11	12	14	16

Source: WOOD Research, company data

Multiples

	2020	2021	2022E	2023E	2024E
P/E (x)	8.5x	14.1x	14.1x	10.8x	8.8x
EV/EBITDA (x)	5.2x	4.8x	6.9x	6.1x	5.2x
Dividend yield (%)	14.7%	7.7%	5.7%	7.4%	9.1%
FCF yield (%)	30.5%	8.9%	8.8%	9.5%	12.3%

Source: WOOD Research, company data

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Date	Rating	Date	PT
22/11/2021	BUY	22/11/2021	EUR 2.01
16/06/2022	HOLD	16/06/2022	EUR 1.82
19/09/2022	HOLD – transfer of coverage	19/09/2022	EUR 1.80

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UK

London

CONTACTS

Czech Republic

namesti Republiky 1079/1a Palladium 110 00 Praha 1 Czech Republic Tel +420 222 096 111

Fax +420 222 096 222

Romania

Lamda Building 7A Bucuresti-Ploiesti Street 4th Floor

013682 Bucharest 1 Tel.: +40 316 30 11 81 **Poland**

Centrum Marszalkowska Marszalkowska 126/134 7th Floor 00 008 Warszawa

Poland Tel +48 22 222 1530

Fax +48 22 222 1531

16 Berkeley Street W1J 8DZ

Italy

20124 Milan Italy

Tel +44 20 3530 0691 Tel +39 02 36692 500

Kristen Andrasko Via Luigi Settembrini, 35 Head of Equities +420 222 096 253

kristen.andrasko@wood.com

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WUCO

www.wood.com

Research

Co-Head of Research/ Head of Research

Marta Jezewska-Wasilewska

+48 22 222 1548 marta.jezewska-wasilewska@wood.com

Head of Turkey Research

Atinc Ozkan +90 542 202 3632 atinc.ozkan@wood.com

Head of Financials Can Demir

+44 20 3530 0623 can.demir@wood.com

Consumer/Real Estate Jakub Caithaml +420 222 096 481 jakub.caithaml @wood.com

Can Yurtcan +420 222 096 780 can.yurtcan@wood.com

Financials Miguel Dias +420 735 729 418 miguel.dias@wood.com Co-Head of Research/Head of Greek

Alex Boulougouris +30 216 200 5261 alex.boulougouris@wood.com

Head of Russia Research **Ildar Davletshin** +44 203 530 0631 ildar.davletshin@wood.com

Head of TMT Piotr Raciborski +48 22 222 1551 piotr.raciborski@wood.com

Energy/Utilities Ondrej Slama +420 222 096 484 ondrej.slama@wood.com

Fani Tzioukalia +30 216 200 5260 fani.tzioukalia@wood.com

Real Estate Peter Palovic + 420 222 096 486 peter.palovic@wood.cz Head of Consumer/Industrials Lukasz Wachelko

+48 22 222 1560 lukasz.wachelko@wood.com

Head of Romania Research Iuliana Ciopraga +40 316 30 1185 iuliana.ciopraga@wood.com

Energy Jonathan Lamb +44 20 3530 0621 jonathan.lamb@wood.com

Metals/Mining Artem Bagdasaryan +420 222 096 710 artem.bagdasaryan@wood.com

Dmitry Vlasov +44 750 714 6702 dmitry.vlasov@wood.com Macroeconomics Raffaella Tenconi

+44 20 3530 0685 raffaella.tenconi@wood.com

Macroeconomics Alessio Chiesa +44 75177 06102 alessio.chiesa@wood.com

Utilities/Mining/Pharma **Bram Buring** +420 222 096 250 bram.buring@wood.com

Gaming/Mid-caps Maria Mickiewicz +48 602 450 718 maria.mickiewicz@wood.com

Aidar Ulan +420 739 627 170 aidar.ulan@wood.cz

Sales

Head of Sales

Kristen Andrasko +420 222 096 253 kristen.andrasko@wood.cz

Grzegorz Skowronski +48 22 222 1559 grzegorz.skowronski@wood.com

Jan Koch +48 22 222 1616 ian.koch@wood.com

Jarek Tomczynski +44 203 530 0688 iarek.tomczynski@wood.com Piotr Kopec +48 22 222 1615 piotr.kopec@wood.com

Tatiana Sarandinaki Brasil Plural in association with WOOD&Co. 1 212 388 5613 tsarandinaki@wood-brasilplural.com

Ioana Pop +44 20 3530 0693 ioana.pop@wood.com

Sales Trading and Execution Services

Ermir Shkurti Zuzana Mora +420 222 096 283 +420 222 096 847 zuzana.mora@wood.com ermir.shkurti@wood.com Vladimir Vavra +420 222 096 397 vladimir.vavra@wood.com

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