

Herkules acquires New Store Europe

(Oslo, 24 March 2010) Herkules Private Equity Fund III has signed an agreement to become majority owner of New Store Europe. New Store Europe is one of the leading store interior and store designing companies in Northern Europe.

The New Store Europe Group (NSE) was established in 2007, through a merger of two of the leading store interior businesses in Scandinavia, the Norwegian company Grøn-Hansen Butikkinnredninger AS and the Swedish company Samuelsons Inredningar AB. Before the merger, the two companies had experienced a successful cooperation for more than 25 years. The company is located with sales offices in 10 countries and joinery production facilities in 4 of these, and a recently established sourcing office in China. Revenues were NOK 774 mill in 2009, and there are approximately 380 employees.

NSE is a “one-stop-shop” company that offers customers products and services from the early idea phase to fully completed and integrated turnkey solutions. Products and services offerings include interior design, concept development, store planning, interior manufacturing, installation, store maintenance and professional project management. The market for store interior is fragmented and characterised by many local and regional players, of which few has the size and geographical footprint as NSE.

After the acquisition Herkules III will hold a majority position in NSE. The remaining shares will be held by the company’s former owners; the founders and employees. Completion of the deal is expected following approval by the Norwegian competition authorities.

“Through our ownership in Nille, we have experienced the important value NSE has contributed to its customers in terms of lifting the like for like store growth. We believe this is an attractive market and investment opportunity” says Managing Partner of Herkules Capital Gert W Munthe, *“we are very pleased that Per Bjørgås, former EVP of Dixons, is joining the company as CEO. Together with the existing management team he will develop the company going forward”* he concludes.

Herkules consists of three funds, with a total capital base of NOK 12.25 billion in committed capital from Norwegian and international investors. Herkules has the financial strength to establish a strong ownership position in established companies with growth potential. Companies owned by Herkules funds are: Pronova BioPharma, Noratel, Handicare, European House of Beds, Beerenberg Corp., Nille, Micro Matic Norge, Tilbords, Hatteland Display, EFG European Furniture Group, Aibel, Nevion, Estrella Maarud, Gothia Financial Group, Projectiondesign and Bandak.

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