

Two globally leading eyewear manufacturers join forces: Equistone to sell Eschenbach Optik to Inspecks Group plc

Munich, 19 November 2020 – Funds advised by Equistone Partners Europe (“Equistone”) have agreed to sell their majority stake in Nuremberg-based Eschenbach Holding GmbH (“Eschenbach”). Eschenbach is a German leader in eyewear and low vision products, offering correction frames, and ready to wear sunglasses, with further strong positions in Europe and the US. Eschenbach will be an even stronger player together with the British Inspecks Group plc (“Inspecks”) based in Bath and listed in London. The financial terms of the transaction are undisclosed and the transaction remains subject to approval from the relevant competition authorities and fulfilment of conditions precedent.

Founded in 1913, Eschenbach Optik has developed into a global market leader for optical vision aids and one of the globally leading designers of branded glasses and optical products. Eschenbach combines award winning design with reliable quality, whether with distinctive eyewear brands, magnifying vision aids or binoculars. This commitment to quality and design is also demonstrated by the multiple “Red Dot Awards” that Eschenbach has received for its eyewear collections in the past three years alone. According to Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK), the largest German market research institute, since the end of 2019, Eschenbach has become leading in the German market for frames across all price segments.

Barclays Private Equity, the predecessor organisation of Equistone, acquired Eschenbach from the founding family and a financial investor in July 2007, together with the company’s management team. Since then, Eschenbach’s turnover has increased from an initial Euro 100 million to 143 million in 2019. The strategic sale of its technical optics division in 2014 and the important acquisitions of British eyewear business International Eyewear Limited (2008) and US-based eyewear brand Tura (2009) also fall within this ownership period.

Inspecks was founded by Robin Totterman (CEO) in 1988 and is a designer, manufacturer and distributor of eyewear frames and lenses. The Group produces a broad range of frames, covering optical, sunglasses and safety, which are either “Branded” (either under licence or under the Group’s own proprietary brands), or “OEM” (including private label on behalf of retail customers and un-branded). As one of only a few companies that can offer this one-stop-shop solution to global retail chains, Inspecks is well positioned to continue to take market share in the globally expanding eyewear market. Inspecks customers include global optical and non-optical retailers, global distributors and independent opticians, with its distribution network covering over 80 countries and reaching approximately 30,000 points of sale. Inspecks has operations across the globe: with offices in the UK, Portugal, Scandinavia, the US and China (Hong Kong, Macau and Shenzhen), and manufacturing facilities in Vietnam, China, the UK and Italy.

“The successes we achieved during our partnership as well as a very positive 2019 financial year and a new five-year growth strategy form an ideal basis for Eschenbach’s continued, successful development. Joining forces with Inspecks will provide Eschenbach with an additional boost of momentum to reliably strengthen its global market position and to write a new chapter of its success story”, says Dr Marc Arens, Managing Director and Partner at Equistone’s Munich office.

“During our successful partnership, Equistone has always proved to be a reliable and growth-oriented investor and partner for more than a decade”, says Dr Jörg Zobel, CEO of Eschenbach Optik. “Together with Equistone we found in Inspecks the right strategic partner for our new five-year growth vision. We have ambitious goals that we can achieve together in the new

group. Our dedication to German engineering and quality and the best combination of design and function will remain key pillars.”

“We have followed Eschenbach’s progress for some time and are pleased to be welcoming Germany’s No.1 eyewear company and its great people into the Inspecs Group. Joining these two industry leading businesses together will create the 6th largest eyewear company in the world and enable the enlarged Group to further penetrate key global markets while also diversifying our combined customer and product portfolios. This is an exciting time for the industry and I look forward to working together”, commented Robin Totterman, CEO of Inspecs.

Michael H. Bork, Dr Marc Arens and Julia Lucà led the transaction on behalf of Equistone. Equistone / Eschenbach was advised by Lincoln International (M&A), Ashurst (Legal), E&Y Parthenon (Strategy) and E&Y (Financial & Tax). INSPECS was advised by Livingstone (M&A), Gleiss Lutz (Legal) and KPMG (Financial & Tax).

About Equistone Partners Europe

Equistone Partners Europe is one of the most active European investment firms with a team of more than 40 investment professionals operating from seven offices in Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France and the UK. Equistone invests in established mid-sized businesses with favourable market position, above-average growth potential and enterprise values of between Euro 50 and 500 million. Since its founding, Equistone has invested in about 150 transactions in the DACH region and the Netherlands, mostly in mid-market buy-outs. Its portfolio currently comprises over 40 businesses across Europe, among them around 20 active investments in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Equistone is currently investing its sixth fund, which held a final closing at its Euro 2.8 billion hard cap in March 2018.

Equistone is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Further information can be found at www.equistonepe.de / www.equistonepe.com.

About Eschenbach

Further information can be found at www.eschenbach-optik.com.

About INSPECS

Further information can be found at <https://inspecs.com>.

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