

offer. The messages posted on the company website referring to this offer are poorly represented and often linguistically murky. In addition, in spite of a company report that 'Carlyle International now either directly or indirectly controls more than 98% of the company's shares', no contact details other than an address have been supplied for the illusory investor. Even more remarkable is the company's given address: 420 Madison Avenue, NY, almost uncannily similar to The Carlyle Group's New York address at 520 Madison Avenue. In February 2005, Cobracrest's management, headed up by former Nokia manager Richard Häusler, forecast revenues in excess of €35m for the five year-old company during the approaching financial year. In fact, the company achieved preliminary figures for the period of €4.2m according to reports. Definitive revenue figures have been delayed until after a planned listing of the company on AMEX in the US, however, suspicions are rising that this may be a further tactic to divert attention from the company's unlawful activities. Cobracrest is under investigation from the German financial regulator Bafin for attempting to manipulate its share price. The maximum penalty for this offence is five years' imprisonment plus a fine in excess of €1m. Financial investor The Carlyle Group, which has played no part in Cobracrest's affairs, is currently considering whether to take action against the group. Possible related charges could include passing off using the financial investors' corporate identity.

Linde's forklift division on the block

ACCORDING TO PRESS reports, Wiesbaden-based industrial supplier Linde is preparing to sell its forklift division, Gabelstapler-Sparte. The company has reportedly appointed US investment bank Morgan Stanley to run the process. The news follows the group's €12bn acquisition of specialist industrial gas supplier BOC, based in the UK. Linde's forklift division is valued by financial commentators at more than €3bn, generating revenues of €3.6bn in 2005.

FHP study reports strong mid-market trend

A STUDY OF 33 leading European midmarket buyout funds produced by private equity consultants FHP (Fleischauer, Hoyer & Partner) reports strong dealflow in the European mid-market. The study concentrated on funds targeting the majority acquisition of companies valued below €250m. Identifying huge potential for the mid-cap segment of the market, FHP reports that over 200,000 small and mid-sized companies with revenues in excess of €25m exist in Europe. Europe-wide, close to 500 family-owned enterprises were sold to private equity in 2005, a 22% increase compared to the previous year according to a recent study by CMBOR. The value of relationship-driven deal origination is noted in the survey, with formal auction-processes less common in this segment of the market. The research forecasts increased activity in this segment going forward into 2006,

with three new deals expected to complete on average per fund. The study also notes that of the 33 funds surveyed, 22 of these will be fundraising during 2006-7, with an average increase of 20% in overall fund volumes for the next generation. Further information about the study can be obtained from Uwe Fleischauer or Götz Hoyer at the following address:

Fleischauer, Hoyer & Partner
FHP Private Equity Consultants
Nördliche Auffahrtsallee 25
80638 Munich / Germany
Tel +49 89 159279 0

German leadership signals private equity reform

SPEAKING AT THE eighth German private equity conference organised by the BVK (German venture capital association), Secretary of State to the German Ministry of Economics, Joachim Würmeling signalled improvements to the structural framework of private equity funds in Germany. 'We plan to develop the Unternehmensbeteiligungsgesellschaftsgesetz (UBGG) into a private equity law,' commented Würmeling in response to extensive lobbying from the BVK for a renewal of the way that private equity funds in Germany are structured for tax purposes. 'Germany needs to become a better environment to attract new funding for private equity', commented the official. According to reports, the BVK is currently holding intensive negotiations with the German government aimed at renewing the legal framework for private equity funds operating in Germany.

Change of office address for DEWB

FINANCIAL INVESTOR DEWB AG has moved its offices. As of 1 May the new contact details for the group, including new phone numbers, are as follows. Email addresses will remain as before:

DEWB AG
JenTower
Leutragraben 1
07743 Jena

Tel: +49 3641 573 3600
Fax: +49 3641 573 3610