



August 31, 2005

Bencis sells Carrières du Hainaut to its management, in a transaction backed by Verlinvest and Cobepa

Bencis Capital Partners and certain other Belgian industrial and financial institutions have sold their interest in bluestone quarry operator Carrières du Hainaut in a management buy-out backed by the Belgian holding companies Verlinvest and Cobepa.

Bencis Capital Partners supported management's previous acquisition of Carrières du Hainaut in October 2002 from ETEX Group. Bencis Capital Partners and management have subsequently pursued a successful growth strategy of the company through market development, expansion investments and product innovation, with a positive effect on employment.

"We are pleased to have received the support of Verlinvest and Cobepa for our long term industrial and marketing strategy. Our aim is to continue to strengthen our market leadership in the ornamental bluestone market through growth in Western Europe, by further investing in our brand Pierre Bleue du Hainaut®, and in the quality of service to our clients" says Fernando Galer, Chief Executive Officer of Carrières du Hainaut.

Founded in 1888, Carrières du Hainaut operates one of the largest open pit ornamental stone quarries in the World, located in Soignies (Belgium, Hainaut) and employs about 500 employees. Carrières du Hainaut is the market leader in semi-finished and finished bluestone products, and operates with the brand name "Pierre Bleue du Hainaut®". Carrières du Hainaut realized a total turnover of EUR 50 million in 2004.

Pierre Bleue du Hainaut® is mainly used for decorative purposes like wall coverings, window-and door frames, interior and exterior paving, interior decoration and urban landscaping. Its use goes back several centuries and, thanks to product innovation and development, Pierre Bleue du Hainaut® is used both in renovation and contemporary architecture.

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Press enquiries:

Carrières du Hainaut

Name: Fernando Galer
Tél : +32 (67) 34 78 00

Bencis

Bencis Capital Partners has offices in Amsterdam (the Netherlands) and Brussels (Belgium) and invests in medium size companies in the Benelux. Bencis focuses on profitable companies with growth potential in a variety of industry, manufacturing, food & beverages, logistics and services sectors. Bencis supports its investments by providing knowledge, network and experience with the aim to catalyse further profitable growth in partnership with management. Bencis does not assume a management role but rather acts as an active shareholder.

Bencis was established in 2004 after the spin out of the NeSBIC Buyout team from NeSBIC Group. Bencis manages two investment funds, NeSBIC Buyout Fund I and Bencis Buyout Fund II, with total funds under management of EUR 420 million. Bencis is a majority shareholder in Industria, Meneba, Quaron (including Van Eijk and Holvoet), Walkro and Biegelbaar/Neroc, Florimex and SBC Group.

Verlinvest

Verlinvest, based in Brussels, is a family controlled Belgian Holding Company, active in Europe and the United States, and investing principally in companies carrying recognized brands with high growth potential or stable cash flows with majority or minority participations in three sectors of activity: Consumer Goods, Wellbeing goods and services, and Technologies.

Cobepa

With offices in Brussels and Amsterdam, Cobepa (Compagnie Benelux Participations), is a leading Benelux private investment company, with a substantial diversified portfolio in international companies through minority participations alongside family investors or controlling stakes in LBO transactions.