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We interview Adam Roslewski, President of Know How, the largest hospital privatisation group in Poland, about his company and how he sees the Polish market.

HCE: Tell me a bit about Know How. You started up in 1992 in Szczecin, isn't that right?

AR: Yes, the business has grown organically, from a consultancy advising public sector healthcare organisations. About ten years ago, we started to own outpatient clinics, and then we moved into hospital privatisation.

Today, we have 25 consultants advising the public sector and a separate privatisation division. We have three outpatient clinics and 7 companies with 8 hospitals, ranging from 120 to 300 beds, in which we own stakes ranging from 51% to 100%. We work almost entirely in the state sector – 90% plus of our income is from the state national health insurance fund.

HCE: How big is the company now?

AR: In total, our sales last year came to nearly PLN 150m.

HCE: We heard recently from Marcin Ajewski at Healthcare Consultants Poland, who reckons that hospital commercialisation, where municipalities are made into limited companies and ran professionally, was likely to be big business this year. Do you agree? And what about privatisation?

AR: I'd expect 50 hospitals to be commercialised within a year, possibly sooner. Sometimes that might involve some privatisation, but not often. I wouldn't like to guess how many hospitals will be privatised this year, probably not very many. Privatisation is still politically very difficult in Poland. It is a dirty word.

HCE: Yet you have managed it. What sorts of hospitals are privatised?

AR: Typically, it is done by municipalities in small cities, who have low lobby power and not much ability to get concessions from the national health fund. Quite early on they recognised that there was no choice.

HCE: And is it working for you? Can you make money from these hospitals.

AR: Yes, all eight have got positive figures. We change the management, group purchase and make many other changes. It works.

HCE: Do you think that the recession will have a big impact on Poland? In Germany, when municipal tax receipts fall, this leads to a wave of privatisation.

AR: It is a little early to say, but no, not so far. Poland will not be that badly affected, so it is hard to forecast what will happen with privatisation. Some of the commercialised hospitals may become private - we cannot say at this stage. But we feel a growing western interest in this market.

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