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## EANS-News: VILLEROY & BOCH AND RÖDL & PARTNER AGREE ON STRATEGIC COOPERATION IN THE IT SECTOR

» Villeroy & Boch and Rödl & Partner set up joint venture to offer SMEs IT consulting services » Rödl & Partner takes over operation of Villeroy & Boch IT infrastructure » International data processing centre in Mettlach to undergo further expansion

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### Joint Ventures/Cooperation/Collaboration

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Mettlach/Nuremberg, September 30, 2010 (euro adhoc) – The ceramics manufacturer Villeroy & Boch and the international consulting and auditing company Rödl & Partner have agreed on long-term strategic cooperation in the information technology sector. A joint venture was set up in Mettlach today with the following objectives: to provide a comprehensive consulting service for SMEs to optimise their business processes and apply company-wide SAP solutions, and to transfer the operation of the worldwide Villeroy & Boch IT infrastructure to Rödl & Partner.

Villeroy & Boch and Rödl & Partner will introduce previously independent organisational units into the joint venture 'Rödl System Integration' (RSI). In the medium term the venture pro-poses to employ a workforce of 100 and open up new markets in IT consulting. RSI has the relevant expertise to implement and operate software solutions on an SAP basis, such as Enter-prise Resource Planning (ERP), Application Management, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Branch Networks and E-Business.

"Today our global IT systems are on the threshold of a new era" declares Manfred Finger, CFO of Villeroy & Boch. "The high quality of our IT and telecommunications infrastructure constitutes a crucial strategic competitive advantage for us. Our cooperation with Rödl & Part-ner guarantees this quality, enables new synergies and allows us to offer the potential of our IT expertise to other companies. This creates new prospects for development which will affect our entire workforce. We also have the benefit of an ongoing dynamic IT development with lower costs and flexibility to adjust to constantly changing requirements."

On the basis of a long-term and comprehensive performance agreement, the newly established Rödl & Partner subsidiary 'Rödl IT Operation' (RIO) will operate the worldwide Villeroy & Boch IT infrastructure. RIO is assigning 22 of the company's employees specialised in the op-eration of SAP infrastructures for this purpose. The Villeroy & Boch Group data processing centre, located in Mettlach, which controls the Group's worldwide IT and telecommunications operations is being transferred to RIO to be integrated into the IT network of the Rödl & Part-ner Group, which has its data processing centres in Nuremberg and Selb.

"Villeroy & Boch has a state-of-the-art data processing centre and extensive experience in op-timising and standardising all the key business processes of an internationally operating manu-facturing and trading company on the SAP platform. We plan to use these resources effectively and, through the Rödl & Partner Group, offer our know-how on the market" states Thomas Ochs, CIO and IT Director of Villeroy & Boch. "We have found an ideal partner in Rödl & Partner. The company is bringing its full range of expertise into the joint venture."

"We are breaking new ground with Villeroy & Boch by taking advantage of the enormous po-tential of the IT competence of a leading manufacturing company in order to provide consulting services. This is an investment in the future to the advantage of both sides", underlines Wolf-gang Kraus, Managing Partner of Rödl & Partner.

"We guarantee Villeroy & Boch a modern and qualitatively high-value IT infrastructure with low costs and greater flexibility and we are creating new opportunities for business develop-ment" says Axel Knobe, CEO of Rödl Consulting AG. "There is, in fact, great demand amongst SMEs for individualised IT consulting services. And the experience gained in the field will again be of direct benefit to Villeroy & Boch. Through the combination of IT know-how accumulated by RSI, the IT infrastructure set up by RIO and the competence in the IT plat-forms Microsoft Dynamics and Datev of the Rödl Group, a full service has been created for SMEs, which is unique in this form, and which is further supplemented by the legal, fiscal and accounting expertise of Rödl & Partner."

The business model has been deliberately conceived as an alternative to the trend of outsourc-ing IT structures abroad in order to save on costs. For most SMEs effective IT technology is a strategic success factor, and it must therefore meet standards of the highest quality and security. A data processing centre operated directly in Germany creates trust because all the data and technical infrastructure are governed by a transparent legal framework. "It would be difficult to find a family business prepared to transfer its IT to India or China for the sake of minimal cost savings" assert Knobe and Ochs. "Our service is based on an SME to SME structure. We speak their language and engage in dialogue with the management of our customers on an equal foot-ing. This strategy creates excellent opportunities for us in the IT consulting and service mar-ket."

The conclusion of the agreement today marks a breakthrough in the IT sector for Rödl & Part-ner. Considering the high eight-

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