

American Express Global Business Travel Will Buy Finnish TMC Partner from Finnair Group

BY JAY BOEHMER

American Express Global Business Travel agreed to acquire Finnish travel management company SMT from Finnair Group. The transaction is expected to close by the end of September.

Already serving as GBT's partner in Finland, SMT operates in corporate travel management and also provides meetings and event management. With around 200 employees, SMT formed in 2013 through the merger of "the two largest Finnish-owned business travel agencies," Area Travel Agency and Finland Travel Bureau, according to GBT.

Finnair chief commercial officer Juha Järvinen cited Finnair's strategy "to focus on its core airline business" in its decision to divest SMT. For 2015, Finnair's travel

services business, including SMT, represented about 9 percent of Finnair Group's revenue, according to the company's 2015 annual report. Its airline business represented the remainder.

Though revenue in 2015 fell 4 percent year over year for the travel services division, which also included leisure tour operator Aurinkomatkat Sun-tours, the group highlighted "sales growth and excellent profitability" for SMT last year.

In December, SMT sold its majority stake in Baltic subsidiary Estravel to an Estonia-based partner. ■