

# BRIO AB

## OVER 130 YEARS OF EXPERTISE IN WOOD



A GLIMPSE INTO THE LIFE OF A TOY SME

### FROM WOODEN BASKETS TO TOYS

The company's name, chosen in 1909, stands for the Brothers Ivarsson in Osby. (BRIO).

In 1884, Ivar Bengtsson and Sissa Persdotter settled in a village close to Osby and began producing wooden baskets. By 1907, their catalogue had expanded to 170 different products including the first ever BRIO toy, a small wooden horse. While Ivar's three sons continued to expand the family business with imported household goods and childcare articles, wooden toys started to play a central role in the company's evolution. After World War II, Ivar's grandson launched a series of innovative toys such as the miniature railway and the classic pull-along Dachshund. At this time, BRIO also began to operate internationally. Financial problems during the 2000s led to the new owner deciding to split BRIO into three different companies. Today, the 70 employees of BRIO AB perpetuate the company's tradition of wooden toys.



### INNOVATION FUELS COMPETITIVENESS



Each year, BRIO develops between 40 and 50 new toys that meet children's latest wishes and phases out a similar number of toys that are no longer at the top of children's wishlists. This is a uniquely toy sector challenge, which encourages companies to invest significantly to create innovative toys that meet children's ever-changing preferences. This peculiarity means that it is very important that the creative process is protected in order to prevent look-alike products and design infringement, which lead to unfair competition between companies and force reputable toy companies to bear the cost of innovation.

With over 1,000 tests conducted every year, safety and quality are of primary concern for BRIO.

### A GLOBALISED WORLD

The majority of BRIO's 2013 turnover was generated outside Sweden.

BRIO's toys are manufactured in its factories in the Czech Republic and in China and are sold in shops all over the world. Since the 1950s, BRIO has established subsidiaries and a strong network of distributors in Europe and worldwide. Beside the Nordic countries, Germany, France and the United Kingdom are the main European markets for the Swedish company, while Japan and the USA are the biggest markets outside Europe.



## COMMITTED TO THE COMMUNITY



BRIO is committed to the local community and future generations in all areas in which it is present. Although BRIO's head offices have now moved to Malmö, the former warehouses in Osby were transformed into the BRIO toy museum in 1984 and continue to attract many visitors. BRIO also partners with various Swedish universities to provide

courses on sustainable design, environmental business issues and play. For instance, together with BRIO, the University of Gothenburg offers a Master programme on children's play and its benefits to society.

## CONNECTING GENERATIONS THROUGH PLAY

BRIO's vision is based on the importance of play and creativity for children's development. It also recognises the importance of play in family life and therefore combines its older railway toys with newer ones to appeal to all family members, regardless of their age. Since 1992, the BRIO Prize is awarded annually to a researcher or a non-profit organisation for their work on children and play. For its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014, BRIO launched the 'Liberate any person from their adult lives' competition. This was an opportunity, financed by BRIO, for adults to rediscover their inner child by taking one day off work to play.

BRIO marked its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2014 by celebrating the value of play.

*'Innovation is key in a highly competitive sector like the toy sector. BRIO invests a significant amount of time and resources in developing quality toys that meet children's wishes. This means that intellectual property right need to be properly protected in order to avoid unfair competition from dishonest manufacturers.'*

Heikki Takanen, CEO



With around 1.6 million children under 15 (17% of the population), annual toy sales in **Sweden** reach around €420 million. There are around 230 toy companies in Sweden, all of whom are SMEs and provide around 2,000 jobs.

The **European Union** (EU) is the largest toy market in the world (27% of global sales), meeting the diverse and evolving demands of its 79 million children. Over 99% of the almost 5,000 toy companies are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). With over 220,000 people working in the sector in the EU, toy companies play a key role in Europe's economic fabric. The toy industry is highly international and is one of the most dynamic business sectors in Europe: around 60% of toys on the market each year are newly developed. The sector is also highly seasonal, with consumers making the majority of purchases during the Christmas period.

**Leksaksbranschen** is the trade association for all toy, hobby article and baby product companies on the Swedish market. Members include wholesalers, producers, importers and retailers. BRIO is a member of Leksaksbranschen.

**Toy Industries of Europe** (TIE) is the trade association for the European toy industry. Members include companies and national associations from across Europe, including BRIO and Leksaksbranschen.

