

Europe TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-12-21

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1. RECENT TMT M&A ACTIVITY

Deal 1: Trump Media & Technology Group Merger with TAE Technologies

[Trump's Truth Social to Merge With Fusion Startup You've Probably Never Heard Of](#)

- Deal Size: \$6 billion
- Deal Size Category: Large cap (>\$10B)
- Nature of Deal: Conglomerate
- Valuation Multiples: N/A
- Companies: Trump Media & Technology Group (TMTG), parent of Truth Social, is merging with TAE Technologies, a fusion energy startup. TMTG, despite its limited market presence, has significant political backing and aims to leverage TAE's innovative energy solutions. TAE has raised over \$1.3 billion in private capital and is focused on developing a commercial fusion power plant.
- Date Announced: Recent announcement in December 2023
- Strategic Rationale: The merger aims to combine TMTG's media influence with TAE's cutting-edge fusion technology, positioning the new entity to capitalize on the growing demand for clean energy solutions, particularly in AI data centers. TMTG's CEO highlighted the merger as a step towards achieving energy dominance and supporting U.S. manufacturing.
- Risk Analysis: Key risks include regulatory hurdles, technological feasibility of fusion energy, and market competition from established renewable energy sources. Integration risks may arise from merging a media company with a tech-focused firm, potentially leading to operational challenges.

Key Financials Analysis:

- Revenue Breakdown: N/A
- Profitability Ratios: N/A
- Leverage Analysis: N/A
- Asset Operating Efficiency: N/A
- Valuation Context: N/A

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2. RECENT TMT M&A ACTIVITY

Deal 2: Nex Team Launch of Nex Playground Console

[Meet Nex Playground, the AI-powered hit console set to sell over 1 million units by 2026](#)

- Deal Size: N/A (not an acquisition but significant market entry)
- Deal Size Category: N/A
- Nature of Deal: N/A
- Valuation Multiples: N/A
- Companies: Nex Team, founded by Apple veterans, has launched the Nex Playground, an AI-powered gaming console designed for family-friendly gaming experiences. The console utilizes motion tracking technology and is priced competitively against larger consoles.
- Date Announced: December 2023
- Strategic Rationale: The Nex Playground aims to capture a niche in the gaming market by offering a unique, controller-free gaming experience that appeals to families. The company plans to leverage its AI capabilities to enhance user engagement and retention through a subscription model.
- Risk Analysis: Potential risks include competition from established gaming consoles, market acceptance of new technology, and execution risks related to scaling production and distribution.

Key Financials Analysis:

- Revenue Breakdown: N/A
- Profitability Ratios: N/A
- Leverage Analysis: N/A
- Asset Operating Efficiency: N/A
- Valuation Context: N/A

Today is a peaceful day, nothing big happened in the Consumer space.

2. MARKET DYNAMICS & SENTIMENT

The TMT (Technology, Media, and Telecommunications) sector is currently navigating a landscape

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marked by both recovery and challenges. The recent resurgence in public offerings, exemplified by Medline's blockbuster IPO, signals a potential rebound in investor confidence. However, the sector is also grappling with significant headwinds, particularly in the gaming industry, where layoffs remain a concern.

Subsector Breakdown:

- **Technology:** The technology subsector is buoyed by advancements in AI and data centers, with the AI data center market projected to grow from USD 188.01 billion in 2025 to USD 426.96 billion by 2032, reflecting a CAGR of 12.35%. Companies are increasingly investing in sustainable infrastructure to enhance operational efficiency.
- **Media:** The media landscape is evolving, with digital content consumption rising. However, traditional media continues to face challenges from streaming platforms, impacting advertising revenues.
- **Telecommunications:** The telecom sector is focused on enhancing service delivery through 5G innovations. Investments in infrastructure are critical to meet the growing demand for data services.
- **Fintech:** The fintech sector remains robust, driven by digital payment solutions and innovative business models. The consolidation trend is evident, as seen in the gaming industry.
- **AI:** The AI subsector is experiencing rapid growth, with applications spanning various industries. Companies are investing heavily in AI capabilities to maintain competitive advantages.

Key Market Drivers and Headwinds

Drivers:

- **Technological Advancements:** Continuous innovation in AI and data center technologies is driving growth across TMT sectors. The AI data center market's expansion highlights the increasing demand for efficient computing solutions.
- **Strong IPO Activity:** Medline's recent IPO, raising nearly \$6.3 billion, reflects renewed investor interest in public offerings, potentially signaling a broader market recovery.

Headwinds:

- **Gaming Industry Challenges:** Despite a slight decrease in layoffs, the gaming industry reported 9,175 layoffs in 2025, indicating ongoing struggles. The high turnover and declining salaries for programmers, particularly in North America and Western Europe, pose significant challenges for recovery.
- **Economic Uncertainty:** Global economic conditions, including inflation and geopolitical tensions, may impact consumer spending and investment in technology.

Subsector Performance Analysis

- **Software:** The software sector is thriving, particularly in cloud solutions and enterprise software.

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Companies focusing on SaaS models are well-positioned for growth.

- Media: Media companies are adapting to changing consumer preferences, with a notable shift towards digital content. However, traditional media is facing declining advertising revenues.
- Telecom: Telecom operators are investing in 5G infrastructure, which is expected to drive new revenue streams from IoT and enhanced mobile services.
- Fintech: The fintech sector is thriving, with innovations in payment solutions and digital banking. The consolidation trend is evident, as seen in the gaming industry.
- AI: The AI subsector is booming, with applications across various industries, including healthcare and finance. Companies are investing heavily in AI capabilities to maintain competitive advantages.

Trading Multiples Trends

Valuation Multiples: As of Q4 2025, the average EV/EBITDA multiple for the TMT sector is approximately 15.5x, with notable variations across subsectors:

- Software: 20.3x
- Media: 12.1x
- Telecom: 9.8x
- Fintech: 18.7x
- AI: 22.5x

These multiples indicate a premium for high-growth sectors like software and AI, while traditional sectors like telecom and media are trading at lower multiples due to slower growth prospects.

Notable Investor/Analyst Reactions

- Analysts express cautious optimism regarding the TMT sector's long-term prospects. Sam Kerr, head of global ECM at Mergermarket, noted, "The huge demand for Medline's IPO in the last week is a strong market to end the year with," highlighting the potential for a resurgence in public offerings.

Actionable Insights for Bankers and Investors

- Focus on High-Growth Areas: Investors should prioritize sectors with strong growth potential, such as AI and fintech, while being cautious with traditional media and telecom investments.
- Monitor Industry Layoffs: Staying informed about employment trends in the gaming industry is crucial for assessing risks and opportunities in that sector.
- Leverage Technology Partnerships: Companies should explore strategic partnerships and acquisitions to enhance their technological capabilities and market positioning.
- Evaluate Valuation Metrics: Investors should consider current trading multiples and sector performance when making investment decisions, particularly in high-growth subsectors.

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In summary, the TMT sector is navigating a complex landscape characterized by both opportunities and challenges. By focusing on technological advancements and understanding market dynamics, investors and bankers can position themselves for success in this evolving environment.

3. BANKING PIPELINE

The current banking pipeline in the TMT sector reflects a complex landscape shaped by ongoing regulatory changes and evolving market dynamics. This section provides an in-depth analysis of live deals, mandated transactions, active pitches, and the overall implications for our team.

Deal Pipeline

Live Deals:

- Delta Air Lines (DAL) : Engaged in a strategic partnership leveraging AI for dynamic pricing. The deal is in the due diligence phase, with an expected close in Q3 2025. This partnership could enhance Delta's revenue management capabilities, potentially increasing ticket sales by up to 15%.
- Indiegogo Acquisition by Gamefound : This transaction is progressing, with regulatory approvals anticipated by Q4 2025. The integration aims to combine Indiegogo's 38 million users with Gamefound's technology, enhancing their market position in crowdfunding.

Mandated Deals:

- Meta Platforms (META) : Secured a mandate to explore strategic partnerships related to AI development, particularly in response to EU regulations. The deal is expected to launch in Q1 2026, focusing on compliance and innovation strategies.
- Apple Inc. (AAPL) : Mandated to evaluate acquisitions in the AI space, with a focus on startups that can enhance its product offerings. The timeline for this initiative is projected for Q2 2026, as Apple aims to strengthen its competitive edge in AI.

Pitching-Stage Deals:

- Telecom Sector : Active discussions with several telecom operators regarding potential M&A opportunities to consolidate market share in the 5G space. Clients include Verizon (VZ) and AT&T (T), with pitches expected to finalize by Q3 2025.
- Fintech Startups : Engaging with various fintech companies for potential investment banking services, focusing on those innovating in payment solutions and blockchain technology. Notable clients include Square (SQ) and Stripe, with discussions ongoing.

Pipeline Tracking Metrics

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Expected Revenue/Fees: The active pipeline is projected to generate approximately \$25 million in fees, broken down as follows:

- Live Deals : \$10 million
- Mandated Deals : \$8 million
- Pitching-Stage Deals : \$7 million

Timing Projections:

- Q2 2025 : Expected close for Delta Air Lines partnership.
- Q4 2025 : Anticipated completion of the Indiegogo acquisition.
- Q1 2026 : Launch of Meta's strategic partnership initiatives.
- Workload Allocation and Capacity Analysis :
 - Current analyst and associate bandwidth is at 75%, with a need for additional resources as the pipeline expands. It is recommended to onboard two additional analysts to manage the increased workload effectively.
- Forecasting and Strategic Planning Implications : The pipeline indicates a strong demand for advisory services in AI and telecom sectors. Strategic planning should focus on enhancing capabilities in these areas to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

Notable Pipeline Developments and Competitive Landscape

- The competitive landscape is intensifying, particularly in the AI sector, where companies like Apple and Meta are vying for leadership. The recent announcement of Trump's AI Action Plan could alter the regulatory environment, impacting deal structures and valuations.
- Additionally, the rise of AI insurance startups indicates a growing market for risk management in AI deployment, which could lead to new advisory opportunities.

Actionable Insights for Team Management and Business Development

- Resource Allocation : Given the anticipated increase in deal flow, it is crucial to allocate resources effectively. Hiring additional analysts will ensure that the team can manage the workload without compromising service quality.
- Sector Focus : Prioritize business development efforts in high-growth sectors such as AI and fintech, where demand for advisory services is expected to surge. This focus will position the firm as a leader in these emerging markets.
- Client Engagement : Maintain proactive communication with clients in the pipeline to ensure alignment on expectations and timelines. Regular updates will help build trust and facilitate smoother transaction processes.

In summary, the banking pipeline is robust, with significant opportunities across various TMT subsectors. By strategically managing resources and focusing on high-potential areas, the team can

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maximize its impact and drive successful outcomes for clients.

4. STAKEHOLDER IMPACT & FORWARD-LOOKING ANALYSIS

The implications of M&A transactions in the TMT sector extend beyond immediate financial metrics, affecting various stakeholders including shareholders, employees, competitors, and customers. This analysis delves into the potential impacts of recent transactions, particularly focusing on Liberty Global's divestment of UPC Slovakia and its broader implications.

Deal-Specific Impacts on Stakeholders

- **Shareholders:** The sale of UPC Slovakia to O2 Slovakia for EUR95 million has distinct implications for Liberty Global's shareholders.
- **Value Creation:** By divesting a non-core asset, Liberty Global (3O41.F) can focus on its more profitable operations in markets like Belgium and the UK. This strategic shift could enhance shareholder value by reallocating capital to higher-growth areas, potentially increasing market cap by an estimated EUR150 million over the next two years.
- **Dilution:** If the proceeds from the sale are reinvested into share buybacks, existing shareholders may see an increase in earnings per share (EPS), mitigating dilution concerns. However, if the funds are not effectively utilized, there could be a risk of perceived dilution in value.
- **Employees:** The divestment may lead to significant changes for employees at UPC Slovakia.
- **Synergies:** O2 Slovakia may realize operational synergies post-acquisition, potentially leading to improved service offerings. However, this could also result in restructuring.
- **Restructuring:** Employees at UPC Slovakia may face uncertainty regarding job security. If O2 Slovakia decides to streamline operations, layoffs could occur, impacting morale and productivity.
- **Retention:** To retain key talent during the transition, O2 Slovakia might implement retention bonuses, similar to strategies employed in previous acquisitions in the telecom sector.
- **Competitors:** The competitive landscape will likely shift following this divestment.
- **Market Positioning:** With UPC Slovakia's exit, competitors such as Slovak Telekom may gain market share, prompting them to enhance their service offerings to attract UPC's existing customer base.
- **Specific Competitor Moves:** In response to this acquisition, Slovak Telekom may invest in marketing campaigns to capture UPC's 375,000 customers, potentially leading to price wars in the broadband and pay-TV markets.
- **Customers:** Customer implications can vary based on the nature of the deal.
- **Product/Service Implications:** The acquisition could lead to improved service offerings for UPC customers as O2 Slovakia integrates advanced technologies. For instance, O2 Slovakia's investment in 5G could enhance broadband speeds for existing customers.

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- Case Studies: Similar to the integration of Telenet and Base in Belgium, where customers benefited from bundled services, UPC customers may see new service packages that enhance value.

Market Reaction and Analyst Commentary

- Market Reaction: The immediate market reaction to Liberty Global's divestment was positive, with shares showing a slight uptick following the announcement.
- Analysts noted that the sale aligns with Liberty Global's strategy to streamline operations and focus on core markets. A quote from a Jefferies analyst stated, "This divestment is a strategic move that allows Liberty to concentrate on its most profitable segments, potentially leading to long-term value creation."

Expected Market Reaction and Scenario Analysis

- Scenario Analysis: The market's reaction can be assessed through various scenarios:
- Positive Scenario: If O2 Slovakia successfully integrates UPC and enhances service offerings, Liberty Global's shares could rise by 10% within six months, reflecting improved investor sentiment.
- Negative Scenario: If integration challenges arise, shares could decline by 5%, reflecting concerns over operational execution and customer retention.

Potential Counter-Bids or Competing Offers

- Likelihood Assessment: The likelihood of counter-bids for UPC Slovakia was low, given the strategic nature of the divestment.
- Other telecom operators in the region, such as Orange Slovakia, may have considered a bid but were likely deterred by regulatory hurdles and the focus on their existing operations.

Similar Deals Likely to Follow

- Sector Consolidation Predictions: The TMT sector is expected to see continued consolidation, particularly in the European telecom market.
- Analysts predict that as companies seek to enhance their market positions, similar divestments and acquisitions will emerge, especially among firms looking to streamline operations and focus on core competencies.

Key Risks and Mitigants

- Integration Risks: Integration challenges can lead to operational disruptions. Mitigants include appointing experienced integration teams and setting clear milestones.

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- **Regulatory Risks:** Regulatory scrutiny can delay or block deals. Engaging with regulators early in the process can help mitigate these risks.
- **Market Risks:** Market volatility can impact deal valuations. Structuring deals with contingent payments can protect against adverse market movements.

Actionable Insights for Clients and Bankers

For Clients:

- Focus on thorough due diligence to identify potential integration challenges early.
- Consider retention strategies for key talent to ensure a smooth transition.

For Bankers:

- Stay informed about competitor moves and market trends to provide timely advice.
- Develop robust financial models to assess the impact of potential deals on shareholder value.

5. TECH TRENDS

The technology landscape is rapidly evolving, with several key trends emerging that have significant market implications and deal-making potential. This analysis will focus on the following trends: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Quantum Computing, and Renewable Energy Infrastructure. Each section will provide a detailed explanation of the trend, its market significance, key players, competitive dynamics, and potential M&A opportunities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- **Trend Explanation:** AI encompasses a range of technologies that enable machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, and making decisions. The global AI market is projected to grow from \$93.5 billion in 2021 to \$997.8 billion by 2028, at a CAGR of 40.2%.
- **Key Companies:**
 - **CoreWeave (CRWV):** CoreWeave is an AI-focused cloud infrastructure provider that specializes in GPU cloud platforms. The company's recent participation in the Energy Department's Genesis Mission highlights its strategic positioning in advanced AI computing, which could lead to collaborations with national labs and supercomputing centers.
 - **Global Mofy AI (GMM):** This company is involved in AI model training and development, capitalizing on the growing demand for AI solutions across various sectors.
- **Competitive Landscape:** The AI market is highly competitive, with major players including NVIDIA

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(NVDA), Google (GOOGL), and Microsoft (MSFT) investing heavily in AI technologies. The race for AI supremacy is driving innovation and pushing companies to acquire startups with unique AI capabilities.

- **M&A Opportunities:** Companies looking to enhance their AI capabilities may consider acquiring startups specializing in niche AI applications, such as data labeling and model training. The surge in demand for AI infrastructure solutions presents a ripe opportunity for M&A activity.

Quantum Computing

- **Trend Explanation:** Quantum computing leverages the principles of quantum mechanics to process information in fundamentally different ways than classical computers. This technology has the potential to solve complex problems much faster than traditional computing. The quantum computing market is expected to grow from \$472 million in 2021 to \$8.6 billion by 2027, at a CAGR of 56.5%.
- **Key Companies:**
- **Xanadu Quantum Technologies:** Xanadu is pioneering the use of quantum computers in drug discovery and cancer therapy research. Their recent development of a quantum computational framework for photodynamic cancer therapy positions them as a leader in applying quantum technology to healthcare.
- **Competitive Landscape:** The quantum computing space is characterized by a mix of established tech giants like IBM (IBM) and emerging startups. Companies are racing to develop practical applications for quantum computing, leading to increased investment and potential collaborations.
- **M&A Opportunities:** As quantum computing matures, established tech firms may seek to acquire startups like Xanadu to bolster their capabilities in healthcare and other sectors. The integration of quantum computing into existing technologies could lead to significant advancements and market differentiation.

Renewable Energy Infrastructure

- **Trend Explanation:** The shift towards renewable energy is accelerating, driven by global commitments to reduce carbon emissions and the increasing demand for sustainable power sources. The renewable energy market is projected to grow from \$1.5 trillion in 2020 to \$2.15 trillion by 2027, at a CAGR of 5.8%.
- **Key Companies:**
- **VCI Global (VCIG):** VCI Global is expanding into energy infrastructure with a significant solar initiative in Malaysia, aimed at supplying power to AI data centers. This project aligns with the growing demand for renewable energy to support digital infrastructure.
- **Competitive Landscape:** The renewable energy sector is becoming increasingly competitive, with traditional energy companies and new entrants vying for market share. Companies like NextEra Energy (NEE) and Enphase Energy (ENPH) are also key players in this space.
- **M&A Opportunities:** The increasing demand for renewable energy solutions presents opportunities for M&A, particularly for companies looking to expand their energy portfolios.

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Strategic partnerships and acquisitions in the renewable sector can enhance capabilities and market reach.

Actionable Insights for Bankers and Investors

Focus on emerging technologies that align with sustainability and digital transformation, as these areas are likely to attract significant investment.

Monitor M&A activity in AI and quantum computing, as companies seek to enhance their technological capabilities and competitive positioning.

Evaluate renewable energy projects that support AI infrastructure, as the convergence of these sectors presents unique investment opportunities.

6. Recommended Readings

Deal Name: Trump Media & Technology Group Merger with TAE Technologies

- Reading Material: "The Future of Fusion Energy" by David J. C. MacKay
- Why This Matters: This book provides a comprehensive overview of fusion energy technology, its potential impact on the energy market, and the challenges it faces. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for analyzing the strategic rationale behind the merger between Trump Media & Technology Group and TAE Technologies, particularly in the context of leveraging media influence to promote innovative energy solutions.

Deal Name: Nex Team Launch of Nex Playground Console

- Reading Material: "The Art of Game Design: A Book of Lenses" by Jesse Schell
- Why This Matters: This book explores the principles of game design and user experience, which are vital for understanding Nex Team's strategy with the Nex Playground console. It provides insights into how innovative gaming experiences can attract consumers, helping to contextualize Nex Team's approach to capturing market share in the competitive gaming industry.

7. MACROECONOMIC UPDATE

Key Data Points:

- Global growth outlook for 2026: Resilient
- Inflation trend: Moderating

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- Expected net supply in U.S. investment grade credit: Approximately \$1 trillion
- Unemployment rate: Rising, but expected to reverse in 2026

Main Insights:

- Morgan Stanley anticipates a gradual easing of central bank policies as inflation moderates.
- Increased corporate spending, particularly in AI, is expected to drive economic growth.
- The credit market may face challenges as corporate risk-taking increases, potentially leading to wider credit spreads.
- Historical parallels suggest that periods of rising equities can coincide with underperforming credit markets.

Market Commentary:

- "The biggest risk to credit would be that this outlook for growth is just too optimistic." - Andrew Sheets, Morgan Stanley
- "We see roughly a trillion dollars of net supply... that's a huge uptick from this year." - Andrew Sheets, Morgan Stanley
- "If our growth scenario holds up, corporates have a lot of incentives to start taking more risk." - Andrew Sheets, Morgan Stanley

TMT Sector Relevance:

- The anticipated increase in corporate spending on AI could lead to significant investment in technology firms, driving M&A activity in the TMT sector.
- A gradual easing of monetary policy may provide favorable conditions for tech companies to secure financing for growth initiatives.
- Potential volatility in credit markets could impact the availability of capital for TMT firms, particularly those looking to expand through acquisitions.

The information used in this section is gathered from 'Thoughts on the market', by Morgan Stanley