



Press Release from FöreningsSparbanken

Swedbank

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Green light for Norwegian-Swedish bank alliance

The Norwegian Ministry of Finance gave the green light today to the strategic alliance between Norway's SpareBank 1 Group and Swedbank.

The alliance is based on an agreement between the banks providing for enhanced mutual collaboration aiming at strengthening local banking operations in both countries.

Today's go-ahead from the Norwegian authorities will now trigger a directed NOK 720 million initial share issue to purchase 25% of the SpareBank 1 Group. In addition, Swedbank, in collaboration with the SpareBank 1 banks, will opening a branch in Oslo for overseas, capital and money-market service, as well as for cultivating and serving larger or nationwide Norwegian companies.

The SpareBank 1 Group is a holding company for four regional and sixteen local savings banks' joint product companies. The SpareBank 1-banks have nearly 1.2 million private customers and over 100,000 corporate customers. The total number of branch offices in the Group is over 380.

"It is gratifying to have received this favourable decision from the authorities so quickly. Now, we can get down to the concrete implementation of our alliance and collaboration plans", says Reinhold Geijer, President and CEO, Swedbank. "The broad coverage and strong local presence we both enjoy provide an excellent base for our playing an increasingly active role in the development of business between Norway and Sweden, as well as on a broader, Nordic level. From a Norwegian-Swedish perspective, our alliance will give us jointly what is clearly the strongest coverage of the banking market", Mr Geijer continues.

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