

Note 2 - Critical estimates and assessments concerning the use of accounting principles

When it prepares the consolidated accounts the management team makes estimates, discretionary assessments and assumptions which influence the application of accounting principles. This accordingly affects recognised amounts for assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses. Last year's annual accounts give a closer explanation of significant estimates and assumptions in Note 4 Critical estimates and assessments concerning the use of accounting principles.

Pensions

The banking and financial industry has established an agreement on contractual early retirement (AFP) for employees reaching the age of 62. The Bank's contribution comprises the National Insurance Scheme's accumulation of disbursed pension for employees availing themselves of AFP. From age 62 to 64 the Bank's liability is 100%.

The Act relating to state subsidies in respect of employees who take out contractual pension in the private sector (AFP Subsidies Act) entered into force on 19 February 2010. Employees who take out AFP with effect in 2011 or later will receive benefits under the new scheme. The new AFP scheme represents a lifelong add-on to National Insurance and can be taken out from age 62. Employees accumulate AFP entitlement at an annual rate of 0.314% of pensionable income capped at 7.1 G up to age 62. Accumulation under the new scheme is calculated with reference to the employee's lifetime income, such that all previous working years are included in the qualifying basis.

For accounting purposes the new AFP scheme is regarded as a defined benefit multi-employer scheme. This entails that each employer accounts for its pro rata share of the scheme's pension obligation, pension assets and pension cost. If no calculations of the individual components of the scheme and a consistent and reliable basis for allocation are available, the new AFP scheme will be accounted for as a defined-contribution scheme. At the present time no such basis exists, and the new AFP scheme is accordingly accounted for as a defined-contribution scheme. The new AFP scheme will only be accounted for as a defined-benefit scheme once reliable measurement and allocation can be undertaken. Under the new scheme, one-third of the pension expenses will be funded by the State, two-thirds by the employers. The employers' premium will be fixed as a percentage of salary payments between 1 G and 7.1 G.

At the end of first quarter no provision was made for the Group's de facto AFP (early retirement scheme) liability. The reason is that the Joint Office for the LO/NHO Schemes has not done the required calculations. Similarly, the year's AFP cost of the new scheme has not been booked. This is in keeping with the recommendation of the Norwegian Accounting Standards Board.

Takeover of shares in Polaris Media ASA

On 28 March 2011 SpareBank 1 SMN took over 18.81% of the shares of Polaris Media ASA. The shares, which had been posted as security for debt, were acquired by the Bank as a result of the debtor's bankruptcy. The SpareBank 1 SMN Group accordingly holds 23.45% of the shares of Polaris Media ASA, with voting rights up to 20%. The Group consequently classifies this ownership interest as an affiliate and accounts for the investment using the equity method.

The shares were taken over at a value of NOK 27 per share, plus dividend of NOK 1.50. Dividend payout is received in the second quarter.

A purchase analysis has been prepared in accordance with IFRS 3 in which identifiable assets and liabilities are measured at fair value at the time of acquisition. The difference between the Group's acquisition cost and the book value of net assets in Polaris Media ASA is allocated in the consolidated accounts to the shares of Finn.no AS, Avisa Nordland AS, business properties and future pension liabilities. The analysis builds on valuations conducted by external parties.

SpareBank1 SMN recognises its portion of the financial result of Polaris Media ASA with effect from the date of acquisition. Polaris Media ASA's quarterly financial statements have not been available to the Bank when preparing the accounts for SpareBank 1 SMN. The Bank's profit share is therefore estimated against the background of assessments made by external brokers and is consequently encumbered with uncertainty. In addition, amortisation effects from the purchase analysis are taken into account.

SpareBank 1 Næringskreditt AS

Together with the other owners of SpareBank 1 Næringskreditt, SpareBank 1 SMN has in the second quarter signed an agreement to establish a liquidity facility for SpareBank 1 Næringskreditt. Under this agreement the banks commit to purchasing residential mortgage bonds limited to the overall value of 12 month maturities at SpareBank 1 Næringskreditt. Each owner is principally liable for his share of the required amount, subsidiarily for twice the primary liability under the same agreement. The bonds may be deposited with Norges Bank and accordingly entail no significant risk for the bank.