Note 3 - Critical estimates and assessments concerning the use of accounting principles

In the preparation of the Group accounts the management makes accounting estimates, discretionary assessments and assumptions that bear on the effect of the application of the accounting principles and hence the amounts booked for assets, liabilities, income and expenses. Estimates and discretionary assessments are evaluated continuously and are based on empirical experience and expectations of events which, as of the balance sheet date, are deemed likely to occur in the future.

Losses on loans and guarantees

The Bank rescores its loan portfolio monthly. Customers showing objective evidence of loss due to payment default, impaired creditworthiness or other objective criteria are subject to individual assessment and calculation of loss. Should the Bank's calculations show that the present value of the discounted cash flow based on the effective interest rate at the time of estimation is below the book value of the loan, the loan is assigned to stage 3 and a write-down is performed for the calculated loss. A high degree of discretionary judgement is required in order to assess evidence of loss, and the estimation of amounts and timing of future cash flows with a view to determining a calculated loss is affected by this judgement. Changes in these factors could affect the size of the provision for loss. In cases where collateral values are tied to specific objects or industries that are in crisis, collateral will have to be realised in illiquid markets, and in such cases assessment of collateral values may be encumbered with considerable uncertainty.

For loans in stage 1 and 2 a calculation is made of the expected credit loss using the bank's loss model based on estimates of probability of default (PD) and loss given default (LGD), as well as exposure (EAD). The bank uses the same PD model as in IRB, but with unbiased calibration, i.e. without safety margins, as a basis for assessment of increased credit risk. The PD estimate represents a 12-month probability.

Write-downs for exposures in stage 1 will be calculation of one-year's expected loss, while for exposures in stage 2, loss is calculated over lifetime.

The most important input factors in the bank's loss model that contribute to significant changes in the loss estimate and are subject to a high degree of discretionary judgement are the following:

- Use of forward-looking information and projection of macroeconomic variables for multiple scenarios on a probability-weighted basis
- Establishing what constitutes a significant increase in credit risk for a loan.

Use of forward-looking information

Measurement of expected credit loss for each stage requires both information on events and current conditions as well as expected events and future economic conditions. Estimation and use of forward-looking information requires a high degree of discretionary judgement. Each macroeconomic scenario that is utilised includes a projection for a five-year period. Our estimate of expected credit loss in stage I and 2 is a probability-weighted average of three scenarios: base case, best case and worst case. The base scenario have been developed with a starting point in observed defaults and losses over the past three years, adjusted to a forward-looking estimate of the development that is slightly above the observed defaults and losses over the past 3 years.

The development in the Upside and Downside scenario is prepared with the help of adjustment factors where the development in economic situation is projected with the help of assumptions regarding how much the probability of default (PD) or loss given default (LGD) will increase or be reduced compared with the baseline scenario over a five-year period. A basis is taken in observations over the past 15 years, where Downside reflects the expected default and loss level in a crisis situation with PD and LGD levels that are applied in conservative stressed scenarios for other purposes in the bank's credit management.

In 2023, an upgraded loss model was used, which provides proposals for key assumptions when using regression analysis and simulation. Future default level (PD) is predicted based on the expected development in money market interest rates and unemployment. With SpareBank 1 SMN's assumptions in the upgraded model, write-downs are to a greater extent than previously allocated to industries with large interest-bearing debt such as property, shipping and fisheries. Norges Bank's Monetary Policy Report has been chosen as the main source for the explanatory variables interest rate and unemployment as well as the expected price development of residential property. Management's estimates and discretionary assessments of the expected development of default and loss levels (PD and LGD) were largely based on macro forecasts from Monetary Policy report (PPR) 4/23. For the worst case scenario the bank has applied the same input assumptions as Finanstilsynet stress scenario used in macro forecasts in June 2023. This implies a lower interest rate level and lower unemployment level than the bank previously applied, leading to lower impairment levels. The building and construction industry is considered to have increased credit risk and the customers in this industry have as previous quarter been classified in stage 2 or 3.

In 2022, increased macroeconomic uncertainty as a result of the war in Ukraine, strong increases in energy and raw material prices, challenges in the supply chains and the prospect of permanently higher inflation and interest rates have led to an increased probability of a low scenario for the corporate market excl. offshore. Future loss expectations have been increased by increased PD and LGD for both the personal market and the corporate market, excl. offshore in the base scenario. The bank has focused on the expected long-term effects of the crisis. For the offshore portfolio, during 2022, as a result of significant improvement in the market and market prospects, increased earnings assumptions have been used in the simulations and the weight for low scenarios has been reduced for supply and subsea.

From 2023 the model write-downs for the offshore portfolio is calculated with the same assumptions as for the corporate market in general. Expected credit loss (ECL) per 31 December 2023 was calculated as a combination of 80 per cent expected scenario, 10 per cent downside scenario and 10 percent upside scenario (80/10/10 percent). This results in lower impairment levels compared to previous periods where the weighting was 75/15/10 for corporate market and 70/15/15 for the retail market.

The effect of the change in input assumptions in 2023 is shown as "Effect of changed assumptions in the ECL model" in note 8. The write-downs are increased in parts of the corporate market and retail market due to significantly increased interest rates and price growth is expected to increase future levels of PD and LGD. Changes in scenario weights as described above reduces write-downs.In total, this amounts to NOK 4 million for the Bank and NOK 29 million for the Group in reduced write-downs.

The scenarios are weighted with a basis in our best estimate of the probability of the various outcomes represented. The estimates are updated quarterly and were as follows as per the estimates at 31 December:

Portfolio	2023			2022		
	Base Case	Worst Case	Best Case	Base Case	Worst Case	Best Case
Retail Market	80 %	10 %	10 %	70 %	15 %	15 %
Corporate excl. Agriculture and offshore	80 %	10 %	10 %	60 %	25 %	15 %
Agriculture	80 %	10 %	10 %	60 %	25 %	15 %

Sensitivities

The first part of the table below show total calculated expected credit loss as of 31 December 2023 in each of the three scenarios, distributed in the portfolios retail market (RM) corporate market (CM), and agriculture which adds up to parent bank. In addition the subsidiary SB 1 Finans Midt-norge is included. ECL for the parent bank and the subsidiary is summed up in th coloumn "Group".

The second part of the table show the ECL distributed by portfolio using the scenario weight applied, in addition to a alternative weighting where worst case have been doubled.

If the downside scenario's probability were doubled at the expense of the baseline scenario at the end of December 2023, this would have entailed an increase in loss provisions of NOK 108 million for the parent bank and NOK 126 million for the group.

	CM	RM	Agriculture	**Total parent**	SB 1 Finans MN, CM	SB 1 Finans MN, RM	**Total group**
ECL base case	624	85	68	**777**	39	21	**838**
ECL worst case	1,366	253	243	**1,862**	158	82	**2,102**
ECL best case	376	44	32	**452**	18	12	**482**
ECL with scenario weights used 80/10/10	673	98	82	**853**	49	26	**928**
ECL alternative scenario weights 70/20/10	748	115	99	**962**	61	32	**1,055**
Total ECL used	**74**	**17**	**18**	**108**	**12**	**6**	**126**

The table reflects that there are some significant differences in underlying PD and LGD estimates in the different scenarios and that there are differentiated levels and level differences between the portfolios. At group level, the ECL in the upside scenario, which largely reflects the loss and default picture in recent years, is about 60 per cent of the ECL in the expected scenario. The downside scenario gives more than double the ECL than in the expected scenario. Applied scenario weighting gives about 10 percent higher ECL than in the expected scenario.

Determination of significant increase in credit risk:
The assessment of what constitutes a significant increase in credit risk requires a large degree of discretionary judgement. Movements between stage 1 and stage 2 are based on whether the instrument's credit risk on the balance sheet date has increased significantly relative to the date of first-time recognition. This assessment is done with a basis in the instrument's lifetime PD, and not expected losses.

The assessment is done for each individual instrument. Our assessment is performed at least quarterly, based on three factors:

- The bank uses both absolute and relative changes in PD as criteria for removal to stage 2. A change of more than 150% in PD is considered to be a significant change in credit risk. In addition, the PD must at minimum be more than 0.6 percentage points.
- An additional quantitative assessment is made based on whether the exposure has a significantly increased credit risk if it is subject to special monitoring or forbearance.
- In addition, customers with payments between 30-90 days overdue will in all cases be moved to stage 2.

If any of the above factors indicate that a significant increase in credit risk has occurred, the instrument is moved from stage 1 to stage 2.

See also note 2 on accounting principles and note 6 on risk factors.

Fair value of equity interests
Assets recognised at fair value through profit and loss will mainly be securities traded in an active market. An active market is defined as a market where homogeneous products are traded, where willing buyers and sellers are normally present at all times, and where prices are accessible to the general public. Shares quoted in a regulated market place fit in with the definition of an active market. A market with a large spread between bid and ask prices and where trading is quiet may pose a challenge. Some key shares will be based on in-house valuations, transaction prices or external analyses of the company. Such shares are valued using acknowledged valuation techniques. These include the use of discounted cash flows or comparative pricing where similar, listed, companies are used (multiple pricing) to determine the value of the unlisted company. Such valuations may be encumbered with uncertainty.

Any changes in assumptions may affect recognised values. Investments in private equity funds made in the subsidiary SpareBank 1 SMN Invest are valued based on net asset value (NAV) reported from the funds. The group uses the «fair value option» for investments in private equity funds. Fair value is calculated based on valuation principles set out in IFRS 13 and guidelines for valuation in accordance with International Private Equity and Venture Capital (IPEV), see www.privateequityvaluation.com.

Management has based its assessments on the information available in the market combined with best judgment. No new information has emerged on significant matters that had occurred or already existed on the balance sheet date as of 31.12.2023 and up to the Board's consideration of the accounts on 29 February 2024. See also note 30 for specification of shares and equity interests.

Fair value of financial derivatives and other financial instruments
Fair value of derivatives is usually determined using valuation models where the price of the underlying, for example interest rates or exchange rates, is obtained in the market. When measuring financial instruments for which observable market data are not available, the Group makes assumptions regarding what market participants would use as the basis for valuing similar financial instruments. The valuations require extensive use of discretionary judgement inter alia when calculating liquidity risk, credit risk and volatility. Changes in these factors will affect the estimated fair value of the Group's financial instruments. For further information, see note 27 Measurement of fair value of financial instruments.

For options, volatilities will either be observed implicit volatilities or estimated volatilities based on historical movements in the price of the underlying instrument. In cases where the Bank's risk position is approximately neutral, middle rates will be used. "Neutral risk position" means for example that interest rate risk within a maturity band is virtually zero. Where market prices that are obtained are based on transactions with lower credit risk, this will be taken into account by amortising the original price difference measured against such transactions over the period to maturity.

Goodwill
The Group conducts tests to assess possible impairment of goodwill annually or in the event of indications of impairment. Assessment is based on the Group's value in use. The recoverable amount from cash-flow-generating units is determined by calculating discounted future cash flows. The cash flows are based on historical earnings and expectations of future factors and include suppositions and estimates of uncertain factors. The outcome of the impairment tests depends on estimates of discount rates which are set discretionarily based on information available on the balance sheet date.

Regarding goodwill related to Romsdals Fellesbank, the portfolio is regarded as integrated in the Bank's other lending and deposit operations, and, the lowest level for the cash generating unit is the segments Retail Market and Corporate Market. Goodwill has been allocated to the segments based on their share of the loan portfolio. A net cash flow is estimated based on earnings in the Bank's loan and deposit portfolio. A five-year cash flow prognosis have been developed using expected growth, and a terminal value without growth thereafter. Cash flows are discounted with a discount rate (before tax rate) of 13 per cent.

Calculations show that the value of discounted cash flows exceeds recognised goodwill by an ample margin.

Other goodwill in the Group is calculated based on average earnings in the market area and is discounted at the risk-free interest rate + the risk premium for similar businesses (12-14 per cent).

Acquisitions
Acquisition of another company is accounted for by the acquisition method. This method requires a full purchase price allocation (PPA) in which the purchase price is allocated to identified assets and liabilities in the acquired company. Excess values beyond those allocated to identified assets and liabilities are booked as goodwill. Any deficit values are, after careful assessment, recognised as income through profit/loss in the year of the acquisition (badwill). The analyses contain both concrete calculations and use of best judgement in arriving at the fairest possible value of the acquired companies at the time of acquisition. While some uncertainty invariably attends estimation items, they are supported by determinations of expected cash flows, comparable transactions in previous periods etc. See also note 40 on business acquisitions/business combinations.

Companies held for sale
SpareBank 1 SMN's strategy is that ownership resulting from defaulted exposures should at the outset be of brief duration, normally not longer than one year. Work on selling such companies is continuously ongoing, and for accounting purposes they are classified as held for sale.

SpareBank 1 SMN's strategy is that ownership duse to defaulted exposures should at the outset be of brief duration, normally not longer than one year. Investments are recorded at fair value in the Parent Bank's accounts, and is classified as investment held for sale.

From fourth quarter 2022, the subsidiary SpareBank 1 Markets is classified as held for sale. On 22 June 2022, SpareBank 1 SMN announced that SpareBank 1 Markets is strengthening its investment within the capital market and SpareBank 1 SR-Bank and SpareBank 1 Nord-Norge will be its majority owners. SpareBank 1 SR-Bank and SpareBank 1 Nord-Norge will transfer their markets business to SpareBank 1 Markets, and also buy into the company in the form of a cash consideration. After completion of the transaction, SpareBank 1 SMN will own 39.9 per cent and SpareBank 1 Markets will be treated as an associated company. The transaction is approved from the Norwegian Financial Supervisory Authority and the Norwegian Competition Authority, and was completed in December 2023.

Profit from SpareBank 1 Markets has been reclassified as shown:

	2023	**2022**
Net interest	-8	8
Commission income and other income	-352	-515
Net return on financial investments	-342	-273
Total income	**-702**	**-780**
Total operating expenses	-577	-574
Result before tax	**-125**	**-206**
Tax charge	18	27
Net profit for investment held for sale	**108**	**179**

See also note 39 on investments in owner interests.

Sale of loan portfolios
In the sale of loan portfolios to SpareBank 1 Boligkreditt and SpareBank 1 Næringskreditt, the Group considers whether the criteria for derecognition under IAS 39 are met. At the end of the accounting year all transferred portfolios were derecognised from the parent bank’s balance sheet. See also note 9 on derecognition of financial assets.