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MeritaNordbanken Group launches the world's first WAP banking services

MeritaNordbanken customers will be the first in the world to be able to handle their banking business via WAP phones. Customers in Finland will be able to access the WAP service immediately using their existing Solo identification codes. In Sweden, WAP banking will be available in the first half of 2000.

The mobile banking services have been developed jointly by MeritaNordbanken and Nokia, the world's leading supplier of mobile phones. Thanks to the WAP banking service, the bank is now at its customers' disposal wherever they are. A WAP terminal can be used for account and credit card transaction monitoring, account-to-account transfers and bill payments. It also enables shopping at MeritaNordbanken's virtual marketplace, the Solo Mall, already familiar to Internet banking customers. All these services will be free of charge until the end of February 2000. Thereafter a monthly charge of FIM 4.00 will be introduced. Stock trading will be the next service to be made available via WAP phones.

The phenomenal success of MeritaNordbanken's Solo electronic services is based on easy use and the constantly growing range of products and access channels available.

"A phone providing access to such a wide range of banking facilities is highly useful for its users", says Bo Harald, Executive Vice President, MeritaNordbanken Group, Network Banking. "The threshold is low as the routines are already familiar to users of our Solo electronic banking service. With a terminal equipped with WAP capabilities, customers have a superior range of access channels at their disposal. They can log on to the service any time anywhere within the network service area."

"Our home markets Finland and Sweden have the world's highest mobile phone penetration rate: in Finland more than 60 per cent and in Sweden 50 per cent. We believe that mobile solutions will become an increasingly popular channel for banking and electronic commerce. Merita Bank's balance and transaction information service based on GSM text messages is already accessed more than 200,000 times per month."

MeritaNordbanken is clearly Europe's leading bank group in network banking. The introduction of WAP banking facilities further strengthens its position as a trend-setter and leader of service development. MeritaNordbanken has a total of 840,000 Internet customers with user identification

MeritaNordbanken, the leading bank group in the Nordic region, provides a broad spectrum of financial products and services to more than 6.5 million private individuals and 400,000 companies and institutions. The Group's service network comprises some 800 branch offices in Finland and Sweden, over 1,000 Swedish post offices and a wide range of effective telephone and Internet banking facilities. More than a million customers use the Group's electronic banking services. Household savings under management total almost EUR 45 billion. Outside the Nordic region, the Group has a presence in 19 countries. The two holding companies, Merita Plc and Nordbanken Holding AB (publ), are listed in Helsinki and Stockholm, respectively.

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codes set to activate also WAP phone access. The aim is to bring the number of Internet customers to more than one million by the end of this year.

”It has been a pleasure to work with MeritaNordbanken, a recognized leader in Internet banking and a visionary in the wireless arena, in implementing their mobile banking services built on the Nokia WAP Server”, says Gerhard Romen, Vice President, Nokia Wireless Software Solutions. ”We are impressed by the speed of the deployment of the services as well as pleased to have such a demanding service as banking being one of the first to be commercially launched.”

In July, MeritaNordbanken was the first Nordic banking group to be accepted as a member of the WAP Forum, in which Nokia is a founder member. The aim of the WAP Forum is to create an open environment for the development of Internet-based services and applications for digital handsets and other wireless terminals.

Services through data networks are deeply rooted in the MeritaNordbanken Group. They began in 1982 with automatic telephone payments and were expanded to PC services in 1984, GSM in 1992, the Internet in 1996 and TV in 1998. Today, almost all banking services can be carried out over the Internet. The Solo service brand is now being launched in Sweden. The aim is to make these services available to customers throughout the MeritaNordbanken Group’s home market area.

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Press material:

Presentation material and pictures suitable for printing are available from MeritaNordbanken’s website www.meritanordbanken.com. For further information on the service, see also www.merita.fi.