

Press release

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Francis Birkeland appointed Head of Fortis's Oslo branch

Fortis is pleased to announce that Francis Birkeland has been appointed Head of the Norwegian Branch of Fortis and Head of Shipping Scandinavia. He succeeds Lars Solbakken who will become CEO of a publicly listed shipping company.

Francis Birkeland (37) started his banking career in 1992 with Société Générale and was Vice President Finance of the Norwegian industrial group Kvaerner between 1998 and 2000. Since joining Fortis in 2000, he has been a Senior Relationship Manager at the Oslo Branch, in charge of shipping and offshore clients. Francis Birkeland graduated from the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration (NHH) and Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales in Jouy-en-Josas (HEC, France), and has a post-graduate degree from the University of Mannheim (Germany).

Harris Antoniou, Global Head of Shipping at Fortis Bank comments: 'We are very happy that Francis has accepted to take over Lars's responsibilities. Francis has been instrumental in developing innovative and value-creating solutions for the bank's shipping clients since he joined Fortis in 2000. We are therefore convinced that the Branch will continue on its successful path under the new leadership of Francis.'

Fortis is an international financial services provider engaged in banking and insurance. We offer our personal, business and institutional customers a comprehensive package of products and services through our own channels, in collaboration with intermediaries and through other distribution partners. With a market capitalisation of EUR 38.7 billion (30/04/2006), Fortis ranks among the twenty largest financial institutions in Europe. Our sound solvency position, our presence in 50 countries and our dedicated, professional workforce of 57,000 enable us to combine global strength with local flexibility and provide our clients with optimum support. More information is available on www.fortis.com

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