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AUTORITÉ  
DES MARCHÉS  
FINANCIERS

# REINSURANCE RISK MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE

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## Preamble

The *Autorité des marchés financiers* (“AMF”) establishes guidelines setting out its expectations with respect to financial institutions’ legal requirement to follow sound and prudent management practices. These guidelines therefore cover the ~~execution~~, interpretation, [execution](#) and application of this requirement.

The AMF favours a principles-based approach rather than a specific rules-based approach. As such, the guidelines provide financial institutions with the necessary latitude to determine the requisite strategies, policies and procedures for implementation of such management principles and to apply sound practices based on the nature, size and complexity of their activities as well as their risk profile. [In this respect, a guideline provides guidance on how to comply with the principles set out therein.](#)

The AMF considers governance, [integrated](#) risk management and compliance (GRC) as the foundation stones for sound and prudent management of financial institutions and, consequently, as the basis for the prudential framework provided by the AMF.

This guideline is part of this approach and sets out the AMF’s expectations regarding sound and prudent reinsurance risk management practices.

## Introduction

Reinsurance is one of the most important risk management tools used by insurers. An insurer can use reinsurance to reduce its insurance risks and the volatility of its financial results, stabilize its solvency, use its available capital more efficiently, improve its ability to withstand disasters, increase its underwriting capacity and draw on the reinsurer's expertise with respect to product development. However, reinsurance exposes an insurer to other risks, including residual insurance risks, legal risks, counterparty risks ~~and~~ liquidity risks and operational risks. The interrelation of these risks can make reinsurance a complex matter. Consequently, inadequate reinsurance management can threaten an insurer's financial soundness and, ultimately, sully its reputation.

This guideline addresses reinsurance solely as an insurance risk management tool. It therefore applies to transactions whereby an insurer transfers a portion of the underwritten insurance risks by in turn buying insurance from one or more other insurers, under conditions set out in a contract, or through the use of other coverage methods. Thus, the guideline deals with management of the risks of reinsurance ceded,<sup>1</sup> including retrocession, as well as management of the risks of alternative risk transfer mechanisms.

For purposes of this guideline, "alternative risk transfer mechanism" refers to an arrangement allowing for the transfer ~~or mitigation~~ of insurance risks ~~without necessarily resorting to reinsurance. Such arrangements primarily involve a transfer of risk to the capital markets. Such an arrangement does not necessarily require that the financial institution resort to reinsurance. These mechanisms can take a variety of forms,~~ such as the securitization of policy liabilities or the issuance of disaster bonds, and they can be highly complex; several of them involve the creation of dedicated entities, also referred to as "Special Purpose Entities" or sociétés ad hoc (SAH).<sup>2</sup> Given the particular nature of alternative risk transfer mechanisms, they may exacerbate certain traditional reinsurance risks.

Transactions carried out by insurers that do not cover insurance risks are not addressed in this guideline. For example, such transactions may involve reinsurance that only covers financial risks (sometimes referred to as financial reinsurance), interest rate hedging risks or financial market risks.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, activities related to assumed reinsurance are not subject to this guideline. Accordingly, the use of the generic term "reinsurance" in this guideline refers to reinsurance ceded and alternative risk transfer mechanisms related to insurance risks.

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<sup>1</sup> Covers both registered and unregistered reinsurance.

<sup>2</sup> The *Securitization Risk Management Guideline* deals in greater detail with special purpose entities, their operation and the sound management of related risks.

<sup>3</sup> The *Derivatives Risk Management Guideline* and the *Integrated Risk Management Guideline* provide guidance regarding sound risk management pertaining to these activities.

The core principles and guidance published by the International Association of Insurance Supervisors ("IAIS")<sup>14</sup> explain the need for insurers to implement sound reinsurance management practices. Moreover, regulators are encouraged to provide financial institutions with the regulatory framework to do so.

The AMF adheres to the principles and guidance published by the IAIS that foster sound and prudent management practices. Pursuant to the authority conferred upon it under the *Act respecting insurance*,<sup>2,5</sup> the AMF is issuing this guideline to explicitly inform insurers of its expectations regarding reinsurance risk management.

This guideline sets out the principles of reinsurance risk governance and the practices for managing these risks. ~~The~~<sup>As for the</sup> effects of reinsurance on capital adequacy requirements, they are covered by the guidelines on capital adequacy.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> International Association of Insurance Supervisors, Insurance Core Principles, Standards, Guidance and Assessment Methodology, ICP 13 - Reinsurance and other forms of risk transfer, 1 October ~~2003-2011~~.

International Association of Insurance Supervisors, Supervisory Standard on the Evaluation of the Reinsurance Cover of Primary Insurers and the Security of their Reinsurers, January 2002.

<sup>2,5</sup> *An Act respecting insurance*, R.S.Q., c. A-32, ss. 325.0.1 and 325.0.2.

<sup>36</sup> *Autorité des marchés financiers, Guideline on Capital Adequacy Requirements ("MCT"), Property and Casualty Insurance.*

*Autorité des marchés financiers, Guideline on Capital Adequacy Requirements ("CAR"), Life and Health Insurance.*

## Scope

This Reinsurance Risk Management Guideline is intended for the following legal persons or associations governed by *An Act respecting insurance*:

- insurers of persons (life and health);
- damage insurers (property and casualty);
- mutual insurance associations;
- federations of mutual insurance associations;
- mutual benefit associations; and
- professional orders, as regards their insurance funds.

In this guideline, the generic term “insurer” refers to all entities covered by the scope of this guideline.

This guideline applies to insurers operating independently as well as to insurers operating as members of a financial group.<sup>47</sup> As regards mutual insurance associations that are members of a federation, the standards or policies adopted by the federation should be consistent with—and even converge on—the principles of sound and prudent management ~~prescribed by law and~~ detailed in this guideline.

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<sup>47</sup> For purposes of this guideline, “financial group” refers to any group of legal persons composed of a parent company (financial institution or holding company) and legal persons affiliated therewith.

## Coming into effect and updating

~~This~~The Reinsurance Risk Management Guideline ~~will come~~came into effect on April 1<sup>st</sup>, ~~1~~1, 2010.

With respect to the legal requirement of insurers to follow sound and prudent management practices, the AMF expects each insurer to ~~develop~~have developed strategies, policies and procedures based on its nature, size, complexity and risk profile, to ensure ~~the adoption of~~ the principles underlying this guideline were adopted by April 1<sup>st</sup>, ~~2012~~2012. ~~Where an insurer has already implemented such a framework~~1, 2012.

In connection with its role of establishing sound and prudent management practices, the AMF may verify whether such a framework exists and whether it enables the insurer to satisfy the requirements prescribed by law.

This Reinsurance Risk Management Guideline has been revised in order to take into account recent developments originating from the International Association of Insurance Supervisors. Moreover, the AMF's expectations with respect to guarantee instruments introduced within the scope of this update are set forth in the Guide Respecting the Use of Guarantee Instruments<sup>8</sup> and are effective as of January 1, 2013.

Although the revised Guideline is effective as of January 1, 2013, the financial institutions will have a transitional period of one year to allow them to make the necessary changes by January 1, 2014.

As stated in the initial version of this guideline, the guideline will be updated based on developments in reinsurance and in light of the AMF's observations in the course of its supervision of insurers.

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<sup>8</sup> Autorité des marchés financiers, Guide Respecting the Use of Guarantee Instruments (Project in consultation), September 2012.

## 1. Reinsurance risks

Notwithstanding the advantages reinsurance provides insurers, it can expose them, at varying degrees, to various risks inherent in its use. For example, a new or continuing reinsurance contract could give rise to ~~any~~one or more of the following risks:

- residual insurance risk may arise from discrepancies between reinsurance needs and the actual coverage provided for in the contract, resulting in the insurer retaining greater risk than anticipated. Similarly, an insurer may face a basis risk related to alternative risk transfer mechanisms where the amounts obtained by the insurer through the mechanisms do not match the losses incurred by the insurer;
- legal risk may arise when the terms of the contract do not accurately reflect the intent of the insurer or when the contract cannot be legally enforced;
- counterparty risk may result from the inability or potential refusal of the reinsurer, or a stakeholder in the case of an alternative risk transfer mechanism, to honour its obligations towards the ceding insurer;
- liquidity risk may arise from the possible lag time between the payment of a claim by the insurer to its insured and receipt of the reinsurance recoverable;
- operational risk may result from inadequate contractual arrangements or from insufficient technological or administrative capacity to manage and collect sums owed by reinsurers.

In short, it is important that an insurer apply sound and prudent management practices when using reinsurance. In this regard, ~~the AMF~~this guideline sets out the ~~following~~ principles the AMF expects insurers to follow.

## 2. Reinsurance risk management governance

### Principle 1: Roles and responsibilities of board of directors<sup>59</sup> and senior management

The AMF expects a reinsurance risk management framework to be supported by effective governance.

The AMF considers the board of directors and senior management to be ultimately responsible for decisions made and actions taken with respect to reinsurance, and, as such, given the risks inherent in this type of activity, they should adequately oversee reinsurance activities.

In light of the shared roles and responsibilities incumbent upon them under the Governance Guideline,<sup>610</sup> the board of directors and senior management should, in particular:

- as part of the integrated risk management framework, develop, approve and implement a reinsurance strategy tailored to the insurer's overall risk profile, based on the nature, size and complexity of its activities. To this end, they should:
  - ❑ regularly identify, assess, document and review the insurer's appetite and risk tolerance levels in respect of reinsurance;
  - ❑ define the objectives of reinsurance use, such as managing insurance risks, managing capital and mitigating the volatility of the insurer's financial results;
  - ❑ develop, approve and implement a reinsurance risk management policy;
  - ❑ ensure ~~there is sufficient staff, with appropriate experience and expertise, that~~ staff in charge of applying the reinsurance policy; have the necessary skills in light of the complexity of the risk management tools used;
  - ❑ clearly define limits of responsibility and monitoring for all matters involving reinsurance;
- adequately monitor reinsurance transactions, in particular, through :
  - ❑ activity management reports; and
  - ❑ internal audit reports;

<sup>59</sup> A reference to the board of directors can also include a board committee, such as a board committee established to examine specific issues.

<sup>610</sup> Autorité des marchés financiers, Governance Guideline, April 2009.

- ensure that the reinsurance strategy is being applied adequately;
- review the reinsurance strategy and policy on a regular basis and as required, in particular when the situation of the insurer or its reinsurers changes;
- ensure that reinsurance transactions with affiliated legal persons or associates<sup>711</sup> are conducted in the same manner as those carried out at arm's length.

## **Principle 2: Incorporation of reinsurance risk management in the insurer's integrated risk management**

The AMF expects reinsurance risk management to form an integral part of the insurer's integrated risk management framework.

Given the importance of reinsurance as an insurance risk management tool, the insurer should make sure its use is fully integrated in its overall risk management process. As such, reinsurance risk management should, among other things:

- ~~take into account the insurer's overall risk appetite and risk tolerance levels;~~
- be integrated into the strategic and financial planning process. This process should take the following into consideration:
  - ❑ anticipated reinsurance needs and the nature and adequacy of the reinsurance offered;
  - ❑ reinsurance not only as a risk management tool, but also as an additional source of risk, in the scenarios used and stress tests performed when quantifying risks ~~(including in the Dynamic Capital Adequacy Test)~~;
  - ❑ the impact of reinsurance on capital management, such as decisions regarding the allocation of capital and analyses with respect to the issuance or repayment of capital;
- be considered when developing or renewing products offered by the insurer.

<sup>711</sup> *An Act respecting insurance*, R.S.Q., c. A-32, ss. 1.3 and 1.6.

### 3. Reinsurance risk management practices

#### Principle 3: Reinsurance risk management policy

The AMF expects an insurer to adopt a reinsurance risk management policy that includes procedures for selecting risk transfer methods and reinsurers as well as procedures for implementing, monitoring, reviewing, amending and documenting reinsurance contracts.

While taking into account the particular nature, size and complexity of the insurer's activities and its risk profile, the reinsurance risk management policy and related procedures should, in particular:

- define retention limits in light of the insurer's risk appetite and its risk tolerance levels set out in the reinsurance strategy;
- define the conditions for using alternative risk transfer mechanisms, including their intended use, their anticipated impact on profitability, solvency and capital requirements as well as the specific controls to which they should be subjected;
- ~~address~~provide for the possible use of intermediaries, such as reinsurance brokers. For example, the policy could discuss the criteria for selecting intermediaries, such as experience and expertise, the tasks to be handled by intermediaries and the important contractual terms, such as the duration of intermediary contracts;
- determine the reinsurer selection process, including selection criteria. The process should generally consider diversification of reinsurance sources as well as the financial position of the reinsurers;
- ~~address~~provide for reliance on unregistered ~~reinsurers.~~ reinsurance. In general, the policy should discuss the choice of guarantee instruments, ~~including trust deeds, letters of credit and reinsurer deposits, as well as the risks related to such instruments, such as their cost and counterparty risk;~~<sup>12</sup> It should also:
  - discuss the risks and costs of these instruments as well as the optimum conditions for their use;
  - specify limits and risk management practices and procedures pertaining to collateral;
  - ensure that periodic reports are prepared setting out the market value of the assets subject to each guarantee instrument;

<sup>12</sup> See the Guide Respecting the Use of Guarantee Instruments for the minimum criteria.

- ~~specify~~define the types of reinsurance contracts that are most suitable for managing the insurer's risks, in light of its risk tolerance levels;
- establish limits on the amounts and types of insured risks that are automatically covered by reinsurance;
- define the conditions and criteria for use of facultative reinsurance;
- determine the conditions to be included in reinsurance contracts, such as an insolvency clause (which defines the applicable terms and conditions in the event of the ceding insurer's bankruptcy) or ~~a~~an offset clause (pursuant to which the reciprocal debts of the insurer and the reinsurer cancel each other in certain circumstances) or a clause whereby the contract constitutes the final or entire understanding between the parties (the contract is not subject to collateral agreements);
- provide a process for ceding insurance and putting into place alternative risk transfer mechanisms;
- establish an information and training procedure for staff affected by changes ~~in the scope or coverage level of~~to the reinsurance program ~~or its coverage~~;
- outline the process for monitoring the application of the policy. The process is intended to see to it that the insurer complies with the policy. It could address the following, among other things:
  - ❑ assessing compliance with the established retention limits;
  - ❑ assessing the financial position of reinsurers;
  - ❑ monitoring concentration limits for single counterparty exposure per reinsurer;
  - ❑ monitoring reinsurance claims recoveries;
  - ❑ ensuring that actual risk transfers are as expected;
  - ❑ the availability, accuracy and adequacy of reinsurance documents to satisfy the insurer's needs;
  - ❑ producing and maintaining adequate documentation for assessing the risk level transferred as well as the appropriateness of transactions in light of established strategies and objectives.
- include a policy review and updating process ~~that is integrated into the auditing and internal control mechanisms.~~

#### Principle 4: Reinsurance process management

The AMF expects an insurer to put into place a process to implement the reinsurance risk management policy.

When an insurer is in the process of ceding insurance or putting an alternative risk transfer mechanism into place, it should have ~~a prior~~an in-depth understanding of the nature, limits and inherent risks of the type of contract it wishes to conclude. Accordingly, it should establish a process for ceding insurance and putting into place alternative risk transfer mechanisms. Before entering into a contract, the process should, in particular:

- ensure the proposed contract complies with legislative requirements;
- consider the effect of the contract on insurance risk exposures and on the underwriting policy;
- ensure that all underlying material risks related to the contract have been identified and that mitigation measures have been set up to manage these risks. Such risks are usually more significant when ~~the contract is~~dealing with an unregistered ~~reinsurer~~reinsurance agreement or when alternative risk transfer mechanisms are put into place. ~~For example, the contract could give rise to risks such as residual insurance risks, legal risks, counterparty risks and liquidity risks;~~
- carry out a prior analysis or examination of the reinsurer's financial position and ensure that the necessary verifications have been completed;
- ensure that a legal review of the contract clauses, particularly the insolvency clause, has been carried out.

Once the contract has been entered into, the insurer should:

- follow a proper signing procedure that usually provides for an acceptable lag time between the coming into effect of the contract and its date of signing;
- forward in a timely manner, accurate and complete documents required by the ~~reinsurer in a timely manner~~counterparties to the transaction;
- ensure that the reinsurer continues to satisfy the selection criteria set forth in the reinsurance policy ~~if~~when the contract is renewed or reviewed.

### **Supervision of sound and prudent management practices**

In fostering the establishment of sound and prudent management practices within financial institutions, the AMF, as part of its supervisory activities, intends to assess the degree of compliance with the principles set forth in this guideline in light of the specific attributes of each insurer. Similarly, it will examine the effectiveness and relevance of the strategies, policies and procedures adopted by insurers as well as the quality of supervision and control exercised by their boards of directors and senior management.

## **APPENDIX A: REGISTERED AND UNREGISTERED REINSURANCE**

*Registered reinsurance:* A reinsurance contract is considered to be registered (registered reinsurance) if it has been accepted by a reinsurer constituted under the laws of Québec or another province or territory of Canada, or under the federal laws of Canada and, in such a case, if the reinsurer holds a licence issued by a regulator of at least one province. A reinsurance contract is also considered to be registered if it has been accepted by a branch office of a foreign company that has been authorized by the federal authorities, holds a licence issued by a regulator of at least one province or one territory and maintains assets allowing it to guarantee the performance of its obligations under the contract.

*An unregistered reinsurance contract* which does not meet the above conditions may be considered to be registered reinsurance if all the policies reinsured under the contract have been issued outside Canada and if the subsidiary or branch of the insurer having issued the policies is subject to requirements imposed by a solvency regulator of a country that is a member of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (“OECD”) with respect to reinsurance business and the reinsurance contract is recognized by that country’s solvency regulator.

In this situation, the reinsurance contract would normally be expected to be recognized by the solvency regulator based on conditions similar to the AMF’s, namely, that the reinsurer is regulated and subject to meaningful solvency controls in respect of its insurance risks under the contract or that the reinsurer has fully guaranteed the contract through a guarantee instrument. A reinsurance contract that does not satisfy this condition will require the prior authorization of the AMF in order to be recognized as registered reinsurance.

*Unregistered reinsurance:* A reinsurance contract is considered to be unregistered if it does not satisfy the conditions set out above with respect to registered reinsurance. Alternative transfer mechanisms are also deemed equivalent to unregistered reinsurance.