



BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
OF THE  
**FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM**  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20551

ADDRESS OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE  
TO THE BOARD

July 12, 2013

Laura J. Schisgall, Esq.  
General Counsel  
Société Générale Americas  
1221 Avenue of the Americas  
New York, New York 10020

Subject: Request for a transition period under section 716(f) of the Dodd-Frank Act

Dear Ms. Schisgall:

This responds to the request filed by the uninsured New York branch of Société Générale (“SGNY”) for a transition period under section 716(f) of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (the “Dodd-Frank Act”). SGNY is an uninsured state branch of Société Générale, Paris, France. Société Générale provisionally registered with the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (the “CFTC”) as a swap dealer on December 31, 2012.

Section 716 of the Dodd-Frank Act generally prohibits the provision of “Federal assistance” to any swaps entity, subject to certain exceptions for insured depository institutions.<sup>1</sup> A swaps entity generally includes any swap dealer, security-based swap dealer, major swap participant, or major security-based swap participant that is registered under the Commodity Exchange Act or the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as applicable, with certain exceptions.<sup>2</sup>

Section 716(f) provides that the appropriate Federal banking agency “shall permit” an insured depository institution that qualifies as a swaps entity a transition period of up to 24 months to comply with the provisions of section 716. The Board is the appropriate Federal banking agency for state member banks and uninsured state branches and agencies of foreign banks.<sup>3</sup> The Board issued an interim final rule that, among other things, clarified that uninsured U.S. branches and agencies of foreign banks, such as SGNY, are treated as insured depository

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<sup>1</sup> See 15 U.S.C. § 8305(a). “Federal assistance” is defined in section 716(b)(1) as “the use of any advances from any Federal Reserve credit facility or discount window that is not part of a program or facility with broad-based eligibility under section 13(3)(A) of the Federal Reserve Act, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation insurance or guarantees. ...” 15 U.S.C. § 8305(b)(1).

<sup>2</sup> See 15 U.S.C. § 8305(b)(2).

<sup>3</sup> See 12 U.S.C. § 1813(q)(3).

institutions for purposes of section 716.<sup>4</sup> The interim final rule also established a process for state member banks and uninsured state branches and agencies of foreign banks to apply to the Board for the compliance transition period provided in section 716.<sup>4</sup> Section 716(f) requires the Board to consult with and consider the views of the CFTC and the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC”), as appropriate, when determining an appropriate transition period.<sup>6</sup>

## **Background**

Section 716 is contained in Title VII of the Dodd-Frank Act, which establishes a comprehensive new regulatory framework for swaps, security-based swaps, and the markets for such instruments. An orderly restructuring of swaps-dealing activities as a result of the application of section 716 is related to and affected by regulatory actions to implement Title VII. Development of the regulatory structure under Title VII is ongoing. The CFTC and the SEC, which have primary regulatory authority for Title VII, are actively issuing proposed and final rules, as well as guidance and exemptive orders, to implement Title VII. Although the Title VII regulatory structure is still being implemented, section 716 goes into effect on July 16, 2013.<sup>7</sup>

In granting a transition period under section 716(f), the Board is required by statute to take into account and make written findings regarding the potential impact of divestiture or cessation of swaps-dealing activities on the insured depository institution’s (1) mortgage lending, (2) small business lending, (3) job creation, and (4) capital formation versus the potential negative impact on (1) insured depositors and (2) the Deposit Insurance Fund (“DIF”) of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (“FDIC”) (the “Statutory Factors”).<sup>8</sup> The Board may also consider other factors as may be appropriate.<sup>5</sup> The Board has delegated authority to the Director of the Division of Banking Supervision and Regulation (“Director”) or his or her designee, in consultation with the General Counsel, to establish a transition period of up to 24 months for institutions requesting transition-period relief.

## **Consideration of the Statutory Factors and Findings**

In establishing the appropriate transition period for SGNY to effect divestiture or cessation of swaps-dealing activities, the Director has considered the Statutory Factors as well as the extent to which the length of the transition period would affect the potential for operational

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<sup>4</sup> See 78 Federal Register 34545, “Prohibition Against Federal Assistance to Swaps Entities (Regulation KK)” (June 10, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> See Id.

<sup>6</sup> Board staff consulted with the CFTC and the SEC. Neither agency offered comment on the request.

<sup>7</sup> See Guidance on the Effective Date of Section 716 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, 77 Federal Register 27456 (May 10, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> 15 U.S.C. § 8305(f).

<sup>9</sup> Id.

risk problems and other risks associated with restructuring swaps activities. In its request for transition-period relief, SGNY represented that it would be required to divest or cease a portion of its current swaps activities in order to limit the swaps activities to those that would be permissible under section 716(d) of the Dodd-Frank Act after the expiration of the transition period.

### ***Mortgage Lending.***

While SGNY has represented that it does little or no mortgage lending, divestiture or cessation may pose challenges to SGNY's counterparties—including those that are active in the mortgage market as investors, servicers, and originators—by complicating the routine implementation of risk-management strategies, such as hedging financial and commercial risks. For example, the restructuring of swaps activities in the short run might require SGNY's counterparties to face new Société Générale entities. To the extent that the regulatory requirements applicable to these entities are not fully clarified, counterparties may not be able to rely on full netting of positions across entities. These complications may adversely affect the availability of mortgages.

Near-term cessation or divestiture of SGNY's swaps activities may also increase operational risk for SGNY and its counterparties, particularly if other swap market participants also are required to cease their activities simultaneously as a result of section 716. Operational risk problems in swaps markets could disrupt broad financial markets since swaps are widely used by corporations, institutional investors, and other financial market participants. A disruption to broad financial markets could indirectly disrupt mortgage-lending markets.

A 24-month transition period could significantly mitigate operational risk by providing reasonable time for SGNY to develop and implement an orderly transition plan. Lower operational risk, in turn, could decrease the probability of a financial market disruption that could adversely affect mortgage lending, as discussed above.

### ***Small Business Lending.***

While SGNY has represented that it does little or no small business lending, near-term cessation or divestiture of SGNY's swaps may pose challenges to its clients and counterparties that affect the availability of small business loans and increase operational risk for SGNY and its counterparties, particularly if other swap market participants are also required to cease their activities simultaneously as a result of section 716. Operational problems in the swaps market in general could also have a negative effect on small business lending.

A 24-month transition period could mitigate these risks and, therefore, mitigate the risk of a financial market disruption that could impair small business lending. Lower operational risk, in turn, could decrease the probability of a financial market disruption that could adversely affect small business lending, as discussed above.

### ***Job Creation.***

In evaluating the effects of divestiture or cessation of swaps dealing on job creation, the Director has considered the direct relationship between immediate cessation of derivatives activities and the loss of revenues and jobs.

The near-term cessation or divestiture of SGNY's swaps activities has the potential to result in job losses if SGNY reduces its lending and financial intermediation activities.

A 24-month transition period could mitigate the potential for general market disruptions, including disruptions to credit and capital markets that could weaken job growth and have other negative macroeconomic consequences.

### ***Capital Formation.***

In evaluating the effects of divestiture or cessation of swaps dealing on capital formation at SGNY, the Director has considered, among other things, lending activities, the loss of netting efficiencies, and costs associated with the modification of business practices and compliance procedures.

Negative impacts on lending described above may have a negative effect on capital formation of counterparties, especially in the short term, if counterparties are forced to replace swaps at SGNY with swaps with other counterparties. Loss of netting efficiencies and modifications to business practices and compliance procedures may also negatively affect capital formation and cause a disruption in capital markets. The potential hazard of a disruption in capital markets may be more immediate than in other markets because capital markets may react quickly to operational problems. This would be especially true for a financial institution that encounters any serious operational problems from section 716-related restructuring because of the relationship between derivatives activities and capital markets activities.

A 24-month transition period could mitigate the potential for capital market disruptions. Thus, by granting a sufficient transition period, risks to individual financial institutions and to the banking system as a whole would be decreased. The benefits of mitigating the risk of capital market disruption favor granting a 24-month transition period to SGNY.

### ***Other Factors.***

As permitted by section 716, the Director has also considered other potential effects of requiring immediate conformance with section 716. Compliance with section 716 will require an uninsured branch of a foreign bank, such as SGNY, to (1) determine whether to terminate its swaps activities or transfer them to a third party or an affiliate; (2) identify and capitalize an affiliate, if appropriate, to accept the swaps; and (3) novate existing swaps to the affiliate. Terminating or novating existing swaps will require the parties to negotiate and enter into new or modified swap arrangements, which could change the parties' exposure with respect to the swaps. New agreements or modifications to existing agreements may require the parties to adjust related transactions, including existing hedges. If a branch were required to divest or



cease these swaps activities in a short time period, it may lead to a disorderly and inefficient unwinding that could present operational and risk-management risks for both the branch and its counterparties. These challenges and risks are significantly more complicated by the fact that they would occur simultaneously with many regulatory and structural market changes associated with the implementation of Title VII.

### ***Insured Depositors.***

SGNY's deposits are not insured by the FDIC. Therefore, SGNY's swaps activities do not, and providing SGNY with a reasonable transition period would not, directly expose insured depositors to the risks associated with cessation or divestiture.

### ***The Deposit Insurance Fund (DIF).***

The DIF bears the risks associated with resolving an insured depository institution, including one that has failed because of problems related to its swaps dealing. This risk includes payouts from the DIF to insured depositors of the institution. However, as noted, SGNY's deposits are not insured by the FDIC. Therefore, SGNY's swaps activities do not, and providing SGNY with a reasonable transition period would not, directly result in an exposure to the DIF.

### **Conclusion**

As set out above, the Director has evaluated the impact of divestiture or cessation of SGNY's swaps dealing on mortgage lending, small business lending, job creation, and capital formation versus the potential negative impact on insured depositors and the DIF in determining the appropriate length of the transition period. The Director also has considered the fact that SGNY is required to conduct affected derivatives activities in a safe and sound manner and is subject to prudential supervision and regulation. Overall, the Director has determined that the potential impact of granting a 24-month transition period is less adverse than the potential impact of denying the transition period or providing a significantly shorter transition period. The lesser impact associated with a 24-month transition period results from lowering the probability of operational problems and market disruption that could occur if SGNY does not have a sufficient opportunity to restructure its swaps dealing in an orderly manner.

The 24-month transition period would permit SGNY to better evaluate whether to transfer the swaps activities to a third party or an affiliate(s) and which affiliate(s) is best positioned to accept its swaps business. The 24-month transition period also would permit the creation of a new affiliate(s) and allow for appropriate capital planning for any affiliate that assumes swaps activities. This transition period would also allow SGNY to evaluate its decisions in the context of further development of the regulatory requirements of Title VII.

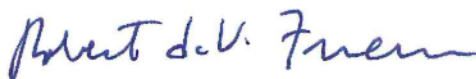
In contrast, no transition period or a significantly shorter transition period could result in disorderly termination or divestiture of swaps activities and considerable disruption to swaps markets and financial markets that could weaken lending markets and result in a similar negative impact on job creation and capital formation.

After considering the written findings set forth above, and after consulting with the CFTC and the SEC, the Director, in consultation with the General Counsel, acting pursuant to delegated authority, has determined to establish a 24-month transition period under section 716(f) for SGNY beginning on July 16, 2013.

This approval is conditioned on the facts and representations set forth in SGNY's correspondence. These representations are deemed to be conditions imposed in writing by the Board in connection with the findings and decision herein and, as such, may be enforced in proceedings under applicable law. Any change in the facts and representations presented could result in a different conclusion and should be reported to Board staff immediately.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact Victoria Szybillo, Counsel, at (202) 475-6325, or Michelle Kidd, Attorney, at (202) 736-5554, both of the Board's Legal Division.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert deV. Frierson".

Robert deV. Frierson  
Secretary of the Board

cc: Ivan J. Hurwitz, Vice President  
Federal Reserve Bank of New York