

Sir David Tweedie
International Accounting Standards Board
30 Cannon Street
UK – London EC4M 6XH

Brussels, March 7, 2011

Subject:

Comment letter in response to IASB ED/2010/13: Third E.D. on Hedge Accounting

Association of Corporate Treasurers in Belgium (ATEB)

ATEB (www.atebforum.com) is the Association of Corporate Treasurers in Belgium, an association of professionals in the field of treasury. It is a not-for-profit organization. Our main goals are sharing experience, practical cases and workable solutions amongst our members based on full trust and confidentiality. We represent the profession in Belgium. Our association has around 180 members. ATEB is member of the European Associations of Corporate Treasurers (www.eact.eu) and of the International Group of Treasury Associations (www.igta.org).

Our contact details are provided on the final page of this document.

ATEB response

1. General remark

ATEB welcomes the IASB's project to simplify IAS 39. We agree with IASB overall objectives of this ED, being to align hedge accounting more closely with the risk management practices, establish a more objective based approach of hedge accounting and address identified inconsistencies and potential weaknesses in the current hedge accounting standard. IAS 39 has widely been regarded as extremely complex and often leading to unrepresentative accounting outcomes. We believe that hedging activity and hedge accounting should be designed to reflect the economic reality of risk management strategies. IAS 39 hedging was rules based whereas IFRS 9 should be more principles based.

The treasury community has experienced a worrying trend in last years, of risk management activities often being structured sub-optimally to fit within the strict guidelines of IAS 39. In addition, compliance requires significant time and effort which is disproportional to the benefit obtained. Although we recognize that there have to be controls over the application of hedge accounting, we believe that this control would best be accomplished through use of professional judgment rather than rigid rules.

Notwithstanding the comments above ATEB agrees with the objectives of IFRS 9. IASB had taken the right approach in not starting 'with a blank page' but focusing on patching up the current framework. In general the changes proposed are bringing accounting closer to the risk management strategy of non-financial companies and simplify hedge accounting rules.

We hope that the IASB will consider that the concerns expressed in this comment letter are essential, to allow the hedge accounting part of the new IFRS 9 standard to be better tailored to meet the requirements of practical financial risk management approaches and strategies of corporate preparers.

2. Qualifying for hedge accounting

2.1 *Voluntary de-designation prohibited*

ATEB does not agree with the proposed prohibition on de-designation, for different reasons:

- This is not in line with current risk management common practices, for example when a company enters into a cash flow hedge for forecasted sales in foreign currency. As the aim of risk management strategy is to protect its cash flows, the hedging horizon would be until settlement of the invoice. However, hedge accounting would only be applied until the moment the sales invoice becomes an on-balance sheet item, after which the company obtains a natural offset in the income statement through the revaluation of both hedged item and hedging instrument.
- We feel that this rule could be circumvented by applying the strategy of taking an opposite derivative position, and applying hedge accounting on the whole structure. Hence we do not see the benefit of this prohibition.
- ATEB members have some difficulties in applying this concept to situations of net investment hedges. Voluntary de-designation should be permissible for net investment hedges if a partial/total reduction of hedge occurs. If a corporate has an investment in a company and, for whatever reason, the amount of the investment is partially or totally reduced, and then the hedge should be de-designated and unwound in order to avoid profit and loss effects. Furthermore, if the risk management objectives change and the company decides to reduce the amount of net investment hedges in place, these hedges should be de-designated and then unwound.
- There is a general consensus among our members that de-designation flexibility is needed and required to more closely align hedge accounting to the risk management strategy. It is also important to state that de-designation is allowed when changes in the risk management

policies take place; therefore reinforcing the idea that voluntary de-designation is closely tied to risk management, which is dynamic and therefore should be permitted.

a. Mandatory rebalancing

ATEB is pleased that the arbitrary 80-125% rule is to be removed; however it is felt that it is unnecessary to introduce mandatory rebalancing, for the following reasons:

- This represents a lack of confidence in risk management, whereas the risk management strategy and results need to be disclosed in the financial statements and defended towards auditors and investors
- Rebalancing is the core responsibility of risk management, which is a serious profession with applicable standards and controls in place
- This will not be equal for every company, as each of them has to deal with different circumstances
- If a company were to rebalance, this would mean in practice a need to recognize ineffectiveness into profit and loss, which would yield the same result
- If a company were to set the optimal ratio incorrectly, the resulting ineffectiveness would need to be recorded in the income statement anyway

We believe that this would not reduce complexity but would instead increase it. For example, how to define the optimal ratio? Different risk managers will reach different conclusions, as this is not a matter of fact but rather based on interpretation and differing models or views of the market. Another example would be how to deal with a gradual change in hedging ratio. Gradual changes in the hedging ratio can imply de-designation when the hedge has to be adjusted to a lower ratio, whereas when the hedge has to be increased this can be done entering into new hedges.

2.2 Calculation of ineffectiveness using discounted spot

ATEB agrees with the need to include time value in the ineffectiveness calculations; however this should not be made mandatory. We consider that this would give rise to unnecessary ineffectiveness in some circumstances (e.g. when using short term rolling forward contracts, whereby the intent is to hedge the undiscounted spot component but not the interest component or with currencies with very high interest rates, for example emerging markets currencies), the ineffectiveness amount tends to be larger. Therefore, ATEB would rather propose to allow the use of undiscounted spot in some circumstances.

3 Hedge items – components of non-financial items

3.1 Separately identifiable and reliably measurable

We support the proposed changes, but at the same time believe that the Board should elaborate further the concept of separately identifiable and reliably measurable, setting a range of examples in order to avoid arbitrariness. In terms of the eligibility of the implicit risk, it is proposed that each company should be able to decide whether an implicit risk is an eligible hedge item, based on the link/correlation and overall risk management strategy; however it should also be required to provide sufficient disclosures on this in the notes to the financial statements, and therefore enable users to understand the nature of the strategy. Hence in cases where it is difficult to measure the implicit component, we would make the assumption that the hedge relationship would be 100% effective, and that to be consistent with the risk management strategy, the hedging result should be taken when the hedged item affects the income statement. This simple and pragmatic approach is proposed because it is difficult to imagine a way to determine any ineffectiveness on the hedged implicit risk.

3.2 Designation of a layer component of the nominal amount

We support the IABS's proposed changes.

3.3 Designated component must be less than or equal to the total cash flows

ATEB disagrees with this restriction. We believe that if the components are present, they should be entitled to the same hedging possibilities. In instances where a commodity is quoted or priced at a discount to the futures price, the exchange-traded amount should still qualify as a component that can be hedged.

4 Hedge items – groups and net positions

4.1 Income statement presentation

We do not agree with the proposed changes, as it believes this leads to misleading/meaningless numbers in the income statement as it represents only part of the profit and loss impact of those items being hedge accounted. We would propose to gross up the net resultant profit and loss impact in a manner similar to creating synthetic derivatives. This would be the only way to truly reflect the risk management rationale behind hedging sales and purchases on a net basis.

This approach furthermore ensures conceptual alignment with the hedging of a gross group of dissimilar items (which also includes opposite movements), where here it would be acceptable to gross up the result. For example, if we use a FTSE100 index option to hedge a portfolio of FTSE100 shares, which perfectly replicate the index, the portfolio shares will offset the option perfectly, although the individual shares in this portfolio might move in different directions. What should be recycled when one of the shares is sold? In our opinion, if you do not gross up the net result on the index option (i.e. allocation of hedging gains and losses to individual share according to how much they moved by) then you do not know how much to release when a single share is sold.

4.2 Same period

ATEB disagrees with the proposed changes, as from a risk management perspective treasurers generally hedge the cash flow in a defined period and not the profit and loss. Given the overall objective to align hedge accounting with the risk management strategy the ability to net hedge account even where items impact the profit and loss in different reporting periods should not be prohibited. Any restriction in periods would create a restriction on hedge accounting that in no way reflects the risk management strategy.

To conclude, ATEB welcomes the proposed changes, however it believes they do not go far enough as most cases of net position hedging are related to the hedging of sales and purchases in foreign currency, which typically does not occur in the same month.

5 Hedging with options

It is agreed that these are positive changes, as they bring IFRS closer to US GAAP. ATEB agrees with the fact that the premium has to be reflected in the underlying whether it is sales, purchases or interest. For period-related hedges, it was felt that the correct period for amortization should be the entire life of the underlying taking into account amortizing schedules. In terms of transition period, we would encourage more clarity.

6 Presentation and disclosures

6.1 Fair value hedge model

We do not see the benefits of grossing up OCI, for the following reasons:

- In spite of helpfulness of more comprehensive disclosures, it is not useful for investors to have this information on the face of the balance sheet
- This approach adds unnecessary complexity

6.2 Cash flow hedge model – mandatory basis adjustment

We do not agree that this should be made mandatory. Mainly for operational reasons it would be preferable to allow the current flexibility of choosing whether to make the basis adjustment or not (e.g. inventory systems are not designed to deal with this adjustment).

6.3 Cash flow hedge model – recycling out of equity

This is not considered a useful change, as it adds unnecessary complexity. Also, cash flow results should be considered as a higher or lower cost of the hedged item. According to our members, the perception is that equity is meant for transactions with owners and should hence not be mixed.

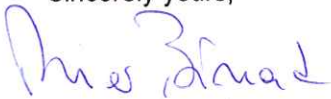
6.4 Disclosures

There is a general concern regarding the disclosure of commercially sensitive information. This issue is particularly prevalent in corporations reporting under IFRS and where key competitors are private companies and hence not required to provide detailed numerical of hedges in place impacting future periods and average hedged rates. Disclosing quantitative hedged amounts and rates is an area of commercial sensibility. Furthermore, we do not think such disclosures are compatible with the fiduciary duty of Directors to protect shareholder's interests. Many ATEB members believe such disclosures, including those on risk exposures, whether hedged or not, should be part of a broader project on risk management in more general terms, rather than financial risks only.

Eventually, we would like to re-emphasize the need for convergence between US GAAP and IFRS rules on financial instruments accounting. We keep thinking that they remain significant divergences with FASB proposed hedge accounting rules.

We thank you for considering these comments before finalizing IFRS 9 – Hedge Accounting part.

Sincerely yours,



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Chairman

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