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Keynote address: AMLA – from Ambition to Delivery

Building a More Effective European AML/CFT System

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you to AFME for inviting me to speak today. Let me begin with a simple proposition.

Europe does not need more AML compliance for its own sake. It needs more effective prevention of financial crime.

That is the opportunity AMLA presents.

For many years, Europe has developed an extensive framework of anti-money laundering legislation. But strong rules have not always translated into consistently effective outcomes.

Different national approaches, uneven supervisory practices and gaps in cooperation have created vulnerabilities that criminals have been able to exploit.

AMLA represents a fundamental change.

Not simply new rules. Not simply another European institution.

But a redesign of how Europe's AML/CFT system operates.

We are moving from a fragmented system of national approaches towards an integrated European system, built around common rules, common methodologies and shared supervisory responsibility.

And we are moving from a system too often focused on processes and compliance towards one that is genuinely risk-based, forward-looking and focused on outcomes.

Today, I want to focus on three things.

First, our ambition for AMLA and the European system.

Second, what we are doing now to turn that ambition into reality.

And third, what this means for the financial sector — and what we need from you.

1. Our ambition: a system that works as one

Let me begin with our ambition.

AMLA's mission is to deliver a unified, risk-based and technologically advanced approach to preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.

We will do that through our responsibilities as a supervisor, as a regulator and through our role in supporting and coordinating financial intelligence units.

But our vision goes further.

We want a Europe where financial crime is not only detected and punished, but anticipated, deterred and disrupted.

That distinction matters. Because success cannot simply be measured by the number of inspections conducted, the volume of suspicious transaction reports submitted or the number of enforcement actions taken.

Those activities are important. But they are means to an end.

The real question is whether we are making Europe's financial system more effective at identifying and preventing illicit activity.

Whether we are making it harder for criminals to exploit differences between jurisdictions.

And whether we are enabling financial institutions, supervisors and financial intelligence units to work together more effectively.

Our ambition is for the European AML/CFT system to operate as one coherent system.

A system in which risks are assessed consistently, supervisory expectations are clear, information flows effectively and action is taken where it matters most.

This is also about strengthening confidence in Europe's financial system and protecting the integrity of the Single Market. And it is about achieving those objectives in a way that is proportionate, efficient and sustainable.

Effective supervision is not about doing more of everything. It is about doing the right things, in the right places, in response to the relevant risks.

That principle will guide AMLA's approach.

2. From ambition to delivery: building the new system

So where are we today?

2026 into 2027 is a critical period for AMLA.

We are moving from institutional establishment towards the practical design and implementation of the new European supervisory system.

There are three interconnected elements to that system.

The first is direct supervision.

From 2028, AMLA will directly supervise up to 40 selected most impactful, cross-border financial institutions or groups.

This will be a significant development, bringing European-level supervision directly to some of the most significant institutions operating across the Single Market.

The second is indirect supervision.

The vast majority of financial institutions will continue to be supervised nationally.

But national supervision will increasingly operate within a common European framework, supported by common methodologies, supervisory expectations and convergence tools.

The third is oversight of the non-financial sector, where AMLA will work to promote greater consistency and effectiveness across a diverse range of supervisory arrangements.

These are different responsibilities, but they serve one overarching objective.

AMLA is not being established simply to supervise 40 groups. It is being established to improve the effectiveness of the entire European AML/CFT system. That is a much broader ambition. And it means our impact must extend well beyond the institutions we supervise directly.

This year, we are developing the strategies and operational frameworks that will underpin these responsibilities.

In 2027, we will undertake the first selection process for direct supervision, while the new EU AML framework begins to apply.

And in 2028, AMLA will commence direct supervision. It is an ambitious timetable.

But our focus is not simply on meeting dates.

It is on building a system that is credible, effective and capable of delivering consistently over time.

3. Convergence, proportionality and a genuinely risk-based approach. One of the most important changes will be the move towards common supervisory methodologies.

Today, financial institutions operating across Europe can face different supervisory approaches, different interpretations and different expectations.

That creates complexity for firms, increases costs and can undermine supervisory effectiveness.

Our objective is to change that.

We are developing common approaches to risk assessment and supervision so that institutions presenting comparable risks are assessed and supervised on a more consistent basis.

This is fundamental to creating a genuine European level playing field.

But convergence does not mean uniformity for its own sake. And harmonisation must not become an exercise in imposing the most demanding approach everywhere. Our objective is consistency in supervisory outcomes, not identical supervisory activity regardless of risk.

That is why proportionality is central to our approach. Higher-risk activities and institutions should attract greater supervisory attention.

Lower-risk activities should not be subject to unnecessary complexity or burden.

And supervisory decisions should be grounded in evidence, supported by reliable data and capable of adapting as risks evolve.

This is particularly important in an environment where financial crime is becoming increasingly sophisticated.

Criminal activity crosses borders, exploits technology and moves rapidly between financial channels. Our supervisory approaches must be capable of responding. That means moving beyond static assessments and procedural compliance towards more dynamic, forward-looking supervision. It also means making better use of data, technology and analytical tools.

For AMLA, technology is not simply an operational efficiency measure.

It is an essential enabler of more effective risk identification, more targeted supervision and better cooperation across the European system.

4. What this means for the financial sector

Let me turn to what all of this means for AFME members.

I would highlight three important implications.

First, greater clarity and consistency.

The new Single Rulebook, supported by AMLA's technical standards and guidelines, should progressively reduce differences in regulatory interpretation and implementation.

For institutions operating across multiple Member States, this offers the prospect of clearer expectations and a more predictable supervisory environment.

That is important for compliance effectiveness, but also for operational efficiency.

We recognise that fragmentation creates real costs for firms.

Different national interpretations can require institutions to maintain multiple processes, systems and approaches to managing essentially similar risks.

Greater convergence should help address that.

Our ambition is that a more integrated supervisory system should be more effective for supervisors and more efficient for well-managed firms.

But let me be clear. Convergence is not about lowering standards. It is about ensuring that high standards are applied consistently, proportionately and effectively across Europe.

Second, a stronger focus on risk and effectiveness.

The new framework should encourage firms to focus their resources where they can make the greatest difference.

This does not mean that compliance obligations become less important. It means that compliance must be connected to its purpose.

We want institutions to demonstrate not simply that they have policies, procedures and controls, but that those arrangements are effective in identifying, managing and mitigating the risks they face.

And we recognise that unnecessary complexity can itself undermine effectiveness. Resources devoted to duplicative processes or requirements that add little value are resources that cannot be devoted to identifying and addressing genuine risks.

Proportionality and simplification are therefore not in tension with strong AML standards.

Properly applied, they support them.

Third, preparation and engagement are essential.

The AML Regulation will apply from 10 July 2027.

AMLA has a substantial programme of technical standards and guidelines to deliver, including important requirements relating to customer due diligence, risk assessment and group-wide controls.

These instruments will provide much of the practical detail of the new framework.

We recognise the importance of clarity, sequencing and sufficient time for implementation.

And we are committed to transparency and meaningful stakeholder engagement as this work progresses. But firms should not wait until every technical detail is finalised before preparing.

Now is the time to start: review how the new framework would apply to your business, identify where your current systems, processes and governance fall short of what it is likely to require, and begin planning the changes needed to close those gaps.

And I would strongly encourage AFME and its members to engage actively in our consultations.

Your practical experience matters.

We need to understand how the requirements would work in practice for groups with multiple legal entities, business lines and jurisdictions; where firms are likely to face difficulties in implementing them; and where greater clarity from us would make the rules both more effective and less burdensome to apply.

Good regulation benefits from informed engagement. And effective supervision depends on AMLA and national supervisors sharing a clear understanding of what we are trying to achieve and what good looks like in practice. That is why we will work closely with supervisors across the Union, and why the input we receive from firms through our consultations matters: it helps us test our approach and make sure supervisory expectations are consistent and well understood.

5. The challenges ahead — and how we intend to address them

I do not want to underestimate the scale of the task ahead. We are building a new European authority while simultaneously designing and implementing a new regulatory and supervisory framework.

The delivery programme is substantial.

It includes technical standards and guidelines, common supervisory methodologies, the first selection of directly supervised institutions, the development of our data infrastructure and the recruitment of the expertise necessary to deliver our mandate.

And all of this is taking place against a rapidly evolving risk environment.

I see three particularly important challenges.

The first is delivery and prioritisation.

We must be ambitious, but also disciplined.

We need to sequence our work carefully, focus on the areas of greatest impact and ensure that the different elements of the framework operate coherently. In practice, that means, for example, making sure that guidance and technical standards are consistent with one another, so that firms and supervisors are not asked to apply requirements that pull in different directions.

The second is data and technology.

A genuinely risk-based supervisory system depends on timely, relevant and reliable information. Better data will allow us to identify risks earlier, compare institutions more effectively and target supervisory attention where it is most needed. But collecting more data is not an objective in itself. We must be clear about what information is necessary, how it will be used and the value it adds.

The third — and perhaps the most important — is building a common supervisory culture.

Common rules and methodologies are essential.

But they will not, by themselves, deliver convergence. That requires cooperation, mutual trust and a shared commitment to consistent supervisory outcomes.

It requires AMLA and national supervisors to work together as parts of one system. It requires effective cooperation with financial intelligence units, prudential supervisors, including the ECB, and other relevant authorities.

And it requires us to remain open to learning and adapting as the new framework becomes operational.

The real test of AMLA will not be whether we have designed an impressive institutional architecture. It will be whether that architecture works in practice.

6. Looking ahead: how we will judge success

Let me conclude by returning to the bigger picture.

AMLA has an important opportunity to change how Europe prevents and combats financial crime. But establishing a new authority is not, in itself, success. Nor is producing new rules, methodologies or supervisory processes.

Those are necessary foundations.

Success will mean something more tangible.

It will mean greater consistency in supervisory outcomes across the European Union.

It will mean financial institutions facing clearer expectations and a more genuine level playing field.

It will mean supervisors identifying and responding to risks more effectively.

It will mean stronger cooperation between supervisors and financial intelligence units.

And ultimately, it will mean a financial system that is more resilient to criminal abuse.

Our long-term goals reflect that ambition: convergence and proportionality; cooperation and inclusiveness; technology and innovation; credibility and accountability; and global leadership.

We intend to translate those goals into measurable milestones and to hold ourselves accountable for delivery.

And I want to emphasise that last point.

We will ask financial institutions to demonstrate that their AML frameworks are effective. It is only right that AMLA holds itself to the same standard.

We should be judged not simply on what we produce, but on what changes as a result.

Not simply on whether we meet our regulatory deadlines, but on whether the new framework delivers greater consistency, better cooperation and more effective prevention of financial crime.

And we recognise that this cannot be achieved by AMLA acting alone.

It requires a genuine partnership across the European system — between European and national authorities, financial intelligence units and the financial sector.

That partnership must be constructive, but also grounded in clear responsibilities and high expectations.

For industry, this is a period of significant change.

But it is also an opportunity. An opportunity to move towards greater regulatory consistency.

An opportunity to reduce unnecessary complexity. And an opportunity to make AML controls more effective, more targeted and better aligned with the risks that matter.

Our ambition is not simply to create a more harmonised European AML framework. It is to create a more effective one.

A framework that is consistent without being rigid.

Risk-based without being unpredictable.

Proportionate without compromising standards.

And ambitious without losing sight of practical delivery.

Because ultimately, AMLA is not about more supervision. It is about better supervision — more consistent, more proportionate, more risk-based and, above all, more effective.

That is our ambition.

That is the challenge ahead.

And that is what we are determined to deliver.

Thank you.