

Seminar on the implementation of the anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism legislative package

Polish Presidency, Council of the European Union

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Keynote Speech: Inaugural Session

AMLA's Role: Vision, Collaboration, and Strategic Partnerships for Effective AML/CFT Implementation

Opening

Distinguished guests, esteemed colleagues, and partners,

It is a great honour to address you today as the first Chair of the European Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA). This inaugural session marks not only the first time I speak to an audience in my new role but is also part of the beginning of AMLA's journey.

We are at a defining moment in Europe's commitment to combat financial crime. The establishment of AMLA signals a new era for stronger, more coordinated efforts in the fight against money laundering and terrorism financing (AML/CFT).

Today, I want to recall the importance of this fight for our European Union, highlight the critical role AMLA will play, the priorities that will shape our work and the collaboration needed to achieve this.

1. Macro-Level Impact of Money Laundering

Fighting money laundering and terrorism financing is crucial for many reasons: for countering criminal activity and its detrimental effects on our economy and society; for maintaining the integrity, the resilience of and the trust in our financial system. More broadly, it matters for Europe's competitiveness and growth.

Although quantifying the size and impact of illicit activity relies on estimates **let me mention one of the most prominently used figures**. On a global level, according to the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, **it is estimated that between 2% and 5% of global GDP** circulates through illicit financial channels annually.

In the EU alone, **Europol reports that 70% of criminal networks operating in Europe engage in some form of money laundering** to hide the origins of illicit profits. These networks are becoming increasingly sophisticated, leveraging new technologies, including cryptocurrencies, to move funds across borders undetected.

Money laundering erodes public trust in institutions, facilitates organized crime, corruption, and tax evasion, and undermines fair competition. It also fuels human trafficking, drug trade, and terrorist organizations, ultimately endangering lives and democratic institutions.

Strong AML systems make it harder for criminals to benefit from their profits. This is why we must act firmly and jointly to disrupt these illicit financial flows.

2. The Role of AMLA in Strengthening Europe's AML/CFT Framework

AMLA has been established to help addressing these challenges head-on by creating a harmonized and effective AML/CFT supervision and FIU coordination across the EU. Historically, fragmented approaches and inconsistent enforcement have created vulnerabilities that criminals have exploited. With AMLA, we now have a dedicated authority to help closing these gaps and enhance cross-border cooperation.

Our mission is threefold:

First, ensure the AML single rulebook is completed and promote its effective and uniform interpretation and application throughout Europe. By enforcing the same rules and standards across all member states, we will prevent any single country from becoming a weak link in the chain. This is particularly important in a single market, where the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people can be exploited by criminals.

By working closely with national authorities, AMLA will also be able to harmonize AML practices and working methods across the EU for both supervisors and FIUs. Ensuring supervisory convergence and more effective action by FIUs will prevent criminals to take advantage not only of regulatory but also of supervisory loopholes.

Second mission, strengthen collaboration: AMLA will act as a hub fostering cooperation between EU institutions, national authorities, FIUs, and law enforcement agencies. International bodies and non-EU authorities will also be crucial, as well as involving the private sector, both financial and non-financial.

This also will make it harder for criminals to hide their illicit activities and profits.

Third, direct Supervision of High-Risk Financial Entities: Starting from 2028, AMLA will have direct supervisory tasks over 40 financial institutions that pose the highest

risks to the AML EU market, ensuring that robust and consistent measures are in place to prevent and detect financial crime.

3. AMLA's Short-Term Priorities

Today's discussions are particularly important. The EU's AML Package was adopted last year. AMLA was legally created shortly after, and we have hired our first staff this year. The EU Commission is providing invaluable support to AMLA in this building phase. Other authorities and institutions, like EIOPA, EBA and ECB are providing precious support as well. **The priorities we set in this stage will guide the development of AMLA for the coming years.**

We are currently focusing on some parallel courses of action, which I group into three areas.

The first is addressing AMLA operational needs. This involves defining logistics, our organizational structure, our governance framework, internal processes and procedures. However, **there are two top issues on my mind:** recruitment and IT. These are two key success factors for any firm or institution, and I think they will be for AMLA as well.

On recruitment and management policies, it will be important to attract and retain top talents from across the EU and be far reaching in terms of skills. It will also be important to build an inclusive and supportive working environment, able to take the best out of people and ensure they can express all their potential.

On technology, AMLA IT needs will be highly relevant, covering both the FIU and the supervisory pillars. We started working on building the AMLA IT system, but it will obviously take time. We also need to understand the deep changes that technology is bringing about in both the financial and criminal industries, and the new business cases that can emerge.

My wish for the years to come – so not for the immediate future – would be to see AMLA being in the forefront with efficient and secure IT tools and Suptech solutions. This would allow AMLA to maintain a strong grip on technological innovation. Making such tools available to national authorities would also speed up convergence in supervision and FIU action, helping smaller and less equipped authorities to overcome the existing gaps.

The second short term priority is building AMLA's capacity as a supervisor and an FIU coordinator. The Commission, the EBA and the FIU platform are already working on some key tools that AMLA will be able to adopt and then implement, but some others also will have to be tackled with priority.

Overall, the issues to be dealt with are many, and the schedule is very tight. Just focusing on the regulatory side, more than 40 L2 or L3 products will have to be delivered in the next years by AMLA.

This requires **careful planning** – it needs to be feasible and credible – giving priority where there are the greatest gaps. But we are not alone. We are working on a workplan, to deliver all this with the essential contribution of national authorities.

In fact, my third short term priority is to build **the European AML Community**. AMLA is not just an authority - it is the cornerstone of a broader European AML system. As already mentioned, fostering a culture of cooperation is essential for our success. The fractures and gaps between different countries have too long offered opportunities for exploitation. But even within Member States, the lack of a coordinated approach creates the same risks.

I think addressing these priorities will lay a solid foundation for AMLA, enabling us to tackle existing challenges and adapt to emerging threats enhancing Europe's resilience against financial crime.

4. Vision, Collaboration, and Strategic Partnerships for Effective AML/CFT Implementation

I began this speech with an inward focus, addressing our short-term priorities and outlining how collaboration and strategic partnerships with many stakeholders are important for the successful implementation of the AML legislation.

Let me add two more thoughts on what I already highlighted.

One of the lessons learnt from past AML scandals is the close link between AML and prudential supervision. Indeed, AML/CFT and prudential risks are deeply intertwined, and AML/CFT and prudential tasks complement each other. Close cooperation and information exchange with the ECB for significant banks, and with national prudential supervisors for other financial institutions, is key both from a macro and from a micro perspective.

Another lesson learnt is the importance of the non-financial sector. The novelties contained in the AML package are significant in this area. They range from applying AML obligations to many new categories of non-financial entities to reinforcing and harmonizing AML supervision at national level and entrusting AMLA with oversight functions. While reorganization of the non-financial sector supervision is likely to occur in many Member States, I think it would be useful to start raising awareness of these new categories of obliged entities on their AML duties and on how they should prepare themselves in order to be sure that they will be able to be effectively compliant.

Closing

Let me conclude by saying that the road ahead is not without challenges.

Diverging practices, rapid technological change, and the need to build a strong reputation for the European AML system are just a few of the challenges we must navigate. Currently, AML approaches vary widely across Europe, with different rules, working methods, capacities, and institutional structures. At the same time, technological innovation is evolving rapidly, requiring deep expertise and adaptability. And, as with all fundamental changes, building trust in a new approach and player takes time.

Despite these challenges, we must act decisively. Our timeline is tight, and the issues to address are numerous. Therefore, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Polish Presidency for organizing this important event. Bringing together key stakeholders to discuss the future of AML is not just valuable - it is essential.