

# Research findings

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# Overview

- Transnational dimension of metal theft confirmed
- Identified the need for cross-border cooperation between LEAs and private sector
- Facilitated cooperation to achieve a global understanding of metal theft and to tackle it effectively
- Scrap metal has become increasingly important due to the cost of extracting raw materials

E.g. Recycled copper does not require special processing and can be reused without essential characteristics being altered

**RESEARCH**



# Overview - Italy

- Focused on exploiting recycling, that now covers 40.5% of Italy's domestic consumption
- Metal theft follows the price trends - decreases when price drops; increases when it rises
- Metal theft on railways quadrupled in 2010 compared to 2009
- In 2010, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched the National Monitoring Centre on Copper Theft - a partnership between police and the private sector to tackle metal theft



# Overview - Italy

- Targeting street furniture, artwork, memorials, drain covers, road signs, church roofs and monuments
- All regions experience metal theft
- Regions most affected are Sicily and Puglia with known links to organised crime
- There is a supply chain linking metal thieves to organised crime within the recycling industry
- The phenomenon of metal theft has become a permanent feature of the Italian criminal scene



# Offender profile - Italy

- **Organised crime groups**
  - Mainly Italians with some non-Italians usually from Eastern Europe
  - Led by an Italian national(s) with knowledge of the area
  - Group members have previous criminal records involving crimes against private property
  - Members do not have a manufacturing or metal related background
- **Individual perpetrators**
  - Approximately 50% are Italian citizens with previous convictions for minor theft
  - Remainder are foreign citizens including Romany, Romanians and Bulgarians
- **Receivers and recyclers of stolen metals**
  - Knowingly receive stolen metals directly from criminal organisations engaged in metal theft



The Italian Parliament is aware of the continuing problem of metal theft

No specific parliamentary action has been undertaken and no changes to the legislation are under discussion



## Example of private sector responses - Italy

- Telecom Italia:
  - Installation of “SecurVox” equipment
  - GPS devices on telephone cables
  - Supervision of cables on ADSL users
  - Micro-marking of electrical cables and cataloguing



# Overview - UK

- Significant problem in the UK for many years
- Affects all public services including railways, utilities and telecommunication in both urban and rural areas
- Also stolen from faith buildings, heritage sites and war memorials causing social and community problems
- Cost of metal theft to the UK economy is estimated at £770 million a year
- UK wide problem, but historically Yorkshire and Humberside, the West Midlands and the South East worst hit regions



# Offender profile - UK

- **Level 1 – Local, small scale criminality**

- Driven by the need to generate cash
- Reside in areas with a high level of unemployment / social deprivation
- Not forensically aware and take few precautions
- White British males - aged from teens to 50's
- Mainly from travelling communities or with a rail industry background
- Offend up to approximately 7 miles from home address
- Work as individuals or in small groups (up to 5) with minimal planning

- **Level 2 – Mobile, highly organised large-scale criminality**

- Split into 2 sub-groups - travellers and industry based
- Highly organised with an in-depth knowledge of the scrap metal industry
- Will travel in excess of 200 miles to offend and dispose of stolen goods
- Research target by visiting locations and via the internet



# Overview - Bulgaria

- Not an emerging crime in Bulgaria
- Metal theft has been prevalent for a number of years
- A serious concern is the high rate of re-offending amongst criminals
- Scrap metal industry has protested against the proposed legislative changes



- Sale of non-domestic metal banned - discouraging theft of commercial metal
- A certificate of origin and a written contract must be produced for each transaction
- Cashless transactions have been proposed
- Limitation on the number of scrap metal dealerships
- It is felt legislation changes will only impact on licensed SMDs
- Judiciary is not aware of the impact of metal theft consequently criminals receive lesser punishments
- SMDs are perceived as criminals when most of are legitimate businessmen



- 82% are under 30 years old - 88 % of offenders are male
- Uneducated, unemployed Bulgarian citizens
- Reside in the poorer regions
- Willing to travel up to 30 km to carry out the thefts
- Large proportion are Gypsy Roma
- 73% of offenders have previously been involved two or more incidents of metal theft
- 12% of offenders have previously been involved in five or more incidents of metal theft



# Overview - Greece

- A key government focus is reducing the negative impact on the environment – i.e. burning cable in residential areas
- Offenders are split into 2 groups:
  - Opportunist thieves
  - Organised crime groups
- A high number of offenders are economic migrants
- Cable thieves are waiting for telecommunication companies to reinstall cable before stealing it again



- **OTE (telecommunications):**

- Lobbying Government to encourage information sharing between public and private sectors
- Taking legal actions against all metal theft perpetrators
- Installing alarms CCTV, access control systems, electric fencing, security guards and patrols and exterior lighting at substations
- Encouraging cooperation between police, authorities and the private sector to enable the exchange of expertise and good practice
- Analysing crime hotspots to focus security measures efficiently
- Using different types of cable which have a steel core and a copper outer casing, creating an effective but less valuable cable
- Using forensic marking solutions



## Valencia Local Police:

- Redefining protocols to assist officers inspecting recycling sites
- Implementing new systems of analysis and information processing
- Establishing communication channels within specialised police units
- Training police staff to understand the complexities of metal theft and the organised crime networks involved
- Participating in projects such as PoI-PRIMETT to establish the transnational picture of metal theft and to share good practice
- Documenting the control of metal from origin across its lifetime
- Implementing a silent warning system which raises an alarm to the police and provides surveillance in hotspot areas



## Valencia Local Police:

- Implementing a cable marking system to track cable
- Monitoring cable peeling machine purchases in order to track thieves
- Specifying in police reports and administrative complaints:
  - Value of goods stolen
  - Damage to the facilities where the crime has been committed
  - Risk or damage caused by the criminal actions
- Increase awareness of the impact and the severity of the penalty
- Conducting surveillance in areas with a high risk of theft
- Controlling shipments of export
- Conducting inspections of illegal scrap metal yards





## Research

### WP5

Identifying gaps in knowledge and intelligence

Work package leader: Agenfor Lombardia



- The level of involvement of organised crime groups:
  - The structure of OCGs involved in metal theft
  - Establishing the value of the OCG industry and the profit levels for OCGs
  - OCGs which control the metal theft supply chain from theft to export
  - Identifying individuals who are part of OCGs but that are not involved in metal handling
  - Links to other criminalities including drug and hazardous waste smuggling
- Variations in sentencing of metal theft offenders
- Export of stolen metal – destination, quantity, methodology



# Q&A

