

Information gaps

PoI-PRIMETT II - the follow on project - will focus on fillings the information gaps identified during the first project including:



- The level of involvement of organised crime groups specifically:
 - ⇒ The structure of organised crime groups which are involved in metal theft
 - ⇒ Establishing the value of the organised crime industry and the profit levels for organised crime groups
 - ⇒ Identifying the organised crime groups which control the metal theft supply chain from theft to export
 - ⇒ Identifying individuals who are part of organised crime groups but that are not involved in metal handling
 - ⇒ Links to other criminalities including drug and hazardous waste smuggling
- Variations in the sentencing of metal thieves across Member States
- Understanding the export levels of stolen metal including:
 - ⇒ The destination of stolen metal
 - ⇒ The quantity of stolen metal exported from Member States
 - ⇒ The methodology used to export stolen metal unnoticed

PoI-PRIMETT II will be led by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (UK) and will include representatives from the UK, Italy, Portugal, France, Spain, Greece, Bulgaria and Poland.



Research findings

The PoI-PRIMETT research paper has been compiled over the past three years.

The content of the research paper has been collated from participants at PoI-PRIMETT meetings and through stakeholder questionnaires.



The PoI-PRIMETT research exercise has:

- Confirmed the transnational dimension of metal theft
- Identified the need for cross-border cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the private sector
- Facilitated cooperation to achieve a global understanding of metal theft and a plan of how to tackle it effectively
- Identified the increasing importance of scrap metal 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

It became apparent that the methodology and areas targeted by metal thieves are similar across the Member States which took part in the research .

PoI-PRIMETT is an EU co-funded project tackling metal theft via a transnational public - private sector partnership.


PoI-PRIMETT began in September 2010 and will operate for three years.

The PoI-PRIMETT expert user group membership includes representatives from 12 EU Member States.

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For more information, or to keep updated with PoI-PRIMETT events and activities please visit

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A country profile: Italy

PoI-PRIMETT partner Agenfor Lombardia, led the research activity for the project. Agenfor is a non-Government organisation based in Italy.

Agenfor collected a wide range of information on metal theft within Italy including:

- Italy is the sixth largest copper consumer and as a result has focused on recycling to satisfy demand. Recycled copper covers 40.5% of Italy's domestic consumption
- Analysis shows that the volume of metal theft follows the scrap value of the metal - decreases when the price drops and increases when it rises
- Italy's railways are one of the main industries affected by metal theft. From 2009 to 2010 cable thefts on the railways quadrupled and despite implementing security measures the volume of thefts have remained
- All regions in Italy experience metal theft to some degree however Sicily and Puglia are the regions most affected due to their known links to organised crime
- In 2010, the Ministry of Home Affairs launched the National Monitoring Centre on Copper Theft - a national police - private partnership to tackle metal theft
- Recently thieves have begun to target other metal items including street furniture, artwork, memorials, drain covers, road signs, church roofs and monuments
- Metal theft has become a permanent feature of the criminal scene and requires a collaborative effort to tackle this crime



Offender profile

- **Organised crime groups:** Consisting of Italians with others from Eastern Europe; led by Italians with local knowledge; group members have previous criminal records involving property crime, but do not have a manufacturing or metal related background
- **Individual perpetrators:** Approximately 50% are Italians with previous convictions for theft; others are foreign citizens including Romany, Romanians and Bulgarians
- **Receivers and recyclers of stolen metals** who knowingly receive stolen metals directly from criminal organisations engaged in metal theft

PoI-PRIMETT partners



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Metal theft across the EU

Comprehensive profiles have been developed for the five partner Member States - Italy, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Greece and Spain.



United Kingdom

- Metal theft has been a significant problem for many years
- The cost of metal theft to the UK economy is estimated at £770 million a year
- It affects all public services including railways, utilities and telecommunication in both urban and rural areas
- Metal theft is a national issues but historically Yorkshire and Humberside, the West Midlands and the South East are the worst hit regions
- Metal is also stolen from faith buildings, heritage sites and war memorials which is causing social and community problems

Bulgaria

- Metal theft is not an emerging crime in Bulgaria - it has been prevalent for a number of years
- A serious concern is the high rate of re-offending amongst metal thieves with 12% of offenders having been prosecuted for more than five offences
- Strict legislation has been proposed to regulate the scrap metal industry however this has been met with protest from the industry. The legislation includes:
 - A ban on the sale of non-domestic metal to discourage the theft of commercial metal
 - Production of a certificate of origin and a written contract for each transaction
 - Proposal to introduce cashless transactions
 - Limitation on the number of scrap metal dealerships

Greece

- A key government focus is to reduce the negative impact on the environment – i.e. burning cable in residential areas
- A range of initiatives have been trialled in order to reduce the environmental damage caused by metal theft specifically in urban areas
- It has been identified that a high number of offenders are economic migrants
- Cable thieves are waiting for telecommunication companies to reinstall cable before stealing it again

Spain

- Protocols have been redefined to make it easier for police to inspect recycling sites
- Analysis and information processing systems have been implemented within the police
- Police staff have received training on the complexities of metal theft and the organised crime networks
- Research has been undertaken to document the control processes of metal across its lifetime
- Silent warning systems have been implemented which send an alert to the local police when cabling has been compromised