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NOTE

from :	Commission services
to :	Police Cooperation Working Party

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Subject :	Vehicle crime – Towards an EU policy to combat vehicle crime (theft and misappropriation)
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Sub-objective 1: Prevention of theft and misappropriation of vehicles

Measures:

1. Implement techno-preventive measures

- a) Make Directive 95/56/EC concerning immobilisers mandatory not only for passenger cars (category M1), but also for light commercial vehicles (category N1) and lorries;
- b) Ensure the involvement of law enforcement interests in the development of an EU standard for tracking and tracing systems of vehicles and develop after-alarm procedures for the private security branch and the police (currently this subject is discussed in the CEN);

- c) Oblige vehicle manufacturers to install tracking and tracing equipment in theft-prone vehicles;
- d) Oblige insurance companies to impose to their customers markings of essential vehicle parts as a condition to accept coverage against theft (e.g. windscreen engravings, microdots on motor-block, gear-box, chassis and body-parts).
- e) Investigate the possibility to introduce an Electronic Vehicle Identification chip in each vehicle which would make it easier to detect stolen vehicles.

2. Prevent ringing of vehicles (unauthorised replacement of vehicle identification numbers (VIN) and vehicle documents from a total loss vehicle into a stolen vehicle)

- a) Insurance companies must establish a data-base on total-loss vehicles. They must notify the vehicle registration authorities when vehicles are total-loss (so that VINs/registration documents of the wrecks can not be misused; NB some 15 % of stolen vehicles are ringed);
- b) It is recommended that all EU Member States adopt Eucaris;
- c) All relevant authorities (registration authorities, police, customs) must inform each other via Eucaris¹ when vehicles are total-loss.

3. Raise the risk awareness of the vehicle owners

- a) Promote means to prevent vehicle theft (car key handling, safe parking, installation of immobilisers in older cars) at all levels (EU, national and local, public as well as private);

¹ Eucaris is a communication system that makes it possible to access on-line information in the national vehicle registration databases of the member countries. (see also annex 1).

- b) Make vehicle owners aware of the need to rapidly inform police/insurance companies of theft.

4. Avoid abuse of blank vehicle registration forms

- a) Member States to assure adequate protection of storage/handling of blank forms
- b) Report stolen blank registration forms to the SIS.

Sub-objective 2: Make sure that stolen vehicles do not leave EU territory

Measures:

1. Ensure that border control services (police, customs, border-police) check if vehicles leaving EU territory are stolen;

- a) Border control services must have access to and make use of SIS², ASF³, Eucaris and Euvid⁴;
- b) Establish procedures on which action is to be taken by whom when vehicles at border Control are identified as stolen.

² SIS (Schengen Information System) is a communication system in which all participating countries must report, amongst others, stolen vehicles and stolen vehicle registration documents (used and blank); law enforcement authorities can query SIS in order to check if vehicles or documents are stolen.

³ ASF is the Automated Search Facility of Interpol, in which the participating countries report, amongst others, stolen vehicles. Law enforcement services can query it like SIS. (see also annex 2)

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Sub-objective 3: Impede the trade in stolen vehicles.

Measures:

- 1. Ensure the full and quick implementation of Directive 99/37 on vehicle registration documents;**
- 2. Member States should do a pre-registration control via Eucaris in the country of origin of the vehicle to prevent the registration of stolen vehicles and the use of forged or invalid vehicle documents.**
- 2. Prevent the registration of stolen vehicles outside the EU**
 - a) The EU should promote the use of ASF and Eucaris in third countries to prevent the import and re-registration of vehicles that were stolen in the EU;
 - b) The EU should make arrangements with third countries about clear and explicit procedures regarding stolen vehicles, such as
 - how and whom to inform that a stolen vehicle has been recovered
 - a clear procedure for the recovery of the vehicle and costs involved
 - the registration of the vehicle in the third country, in case the (former) owner decides not to repatriate the vehicle.

Sub-objective 4: Additional controls and more effective law enforcement

- 1. Improve controls to detect if vehicles are stolen**
 - a) Amend the 1996 EC Directive on the Approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to roadworthiness tests for motor-vehicles and their trailers to include verification of the identity of the vehicle by checking VIN, vehicle documents and (certain information in) the vehicle registration database;

- b) Ensure the interconnection of databases on the registration of vehicles with databases on stolen vehicles.

2. Improve the intelligence on vehicle crime in the Union so as to more effectively dismantle criminal networks

- a) Member States' law-enforcement services should feed information into and consult the Europol Information System (in a decentralised way, to provide incentives to local police forces to deliver information to the EU level); third-countries' liaison officers at Europol must also provide information;
- b) An AWF on vehicle crime should be opened at Europol and Member States should feed it with the necessary information;
- c) Member States and Europol should hold regular joint operations focusing on criminal networks (e.g. at the Union's external borders, to disrupt trafficking and improve intelligence; intelligence must be transmitted to Europol for further analysis).

Sub-objective 5: Enhance the operational value of information about stolen vehicles

Measures:

1. Ensure that databases are up to date (SIS, ASF, national vehicle registers)

- a) Databases should be updated within two hours after reported theft/recovery of stolen vehicles/registration forms;
- b) Insurance companies must directly notify the police about theft and recovery of vehicles;

Sub-objective 6: Ensure a co-ordinated implementation of the above measures in each Member State and in the EU

Measures:

- 1. Establish a national platform in each Member State of relevant public and private actors in the fight against stolen vehicles (police, customs, vehicle registration authorities, insurance companies, manufacturers).⁵**
 - 2. Organise twice per year within a Council Working Group a meeting of representatives of the national platforms, report about the progress made and to exchange experiences.**
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⁵ In this connection it is interesting to look at the experience in the Netherlands with the 'National Platform for Crime Control and the Foundation for Tackling Vehicle Crime (see also Annex 5). In Great Britain there is a similar Public-Private organisation: the Vehicle Crime Reduction Action Team was established in 1999.

Eucaris

What it is

Eucaris is a communications network which allows participating countries to exchange data relating to motor vehicles and driving licences. It is not a central system where data can be stored and subsequently retrieved. Eucaris allows members to consult on-line motor vehicle and driving licence data kept in the national registers of countries affiliated to Eucaris. The register shows the original and up-to-date details.

Why Eucaris was developed

Vehicle registration authorities took the initiative to develop Eucaris, in order to prevent the re-registration of vehicles that had been stolen in another country and to prevent several kinds of fraud with vehicles. The registration authorities have no access to stolen vehicle databases that are owned by the police. Moreover, to prevent all kinds of fraud with vehicles and vehicle documents, more information is needed, e.g. document numbers, information about the validity of the documents and the registration in the country of origin, about scrapped and damaged vehicles, etc. Vehicle documents, driving licences and cars from abroad are checked before re-registration. The Eucaris procedure corresponds with the purpose of EU Directive 99/37.

Availability and security

The registers (vehicle- and in some cases, driving licences) of most Eucaris participants are available around the clock 7 days a week. Countries cannot alter the data recorded in the registers of other participant countries. Data are exchanged in accordance with stringent European rules governing the protection of privacy.

To obtain information on a vehicle, the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) or the vehicle licence number is entered; this might vary from one country to another. Information is received on: make and type of vehicle, date of original registration/licence, document number, colour, fuel type, VIN or registration number and any endorsements regarding the vehicle such as "stolen" or "scrapped", "inspection needed", "registration invalid", etc.

Who can participate

Eucaris is intended for governmental authorities that are responsible for the registration of motor vehicles and issue vehicle documents and driving licences. The system can also be used by governmental organisations responsible for tracing stolen vehicles, theft and fraud prevention, as well as prosecuting authorities, the police and customs and excise. Participants may choose to join the multilateral treaty, or to limit the exchange of information by concluding bilateral agreements with one or more countries.

Current participants

At this moment Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, Sweden, Latvia, Luxembourg and The Netherlands are parties to the multilateral Eucaris-treaty.

Moreover, Eire, Northern Ireland, Gibraltar, Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Hungary, Iceland, Estonia and Romania use the Eucaris-system for limited applications, such as bilateral and unilateral exchange of vehicle information.

Italy, Norway, Finland and Greece have expressed their interest for participation in the near future.

Interpol Automated Search Facility (ASF)

The first ASF server was put into operational service by Interpol in June 1992. It has been developed with a view to establishing a computer-based system that allows Interpol National Central Bureaus (NCBs) and official services of Interpol members with a police mission to automatically query Interpol's central database with information provided by the NCBs, via a server located at the General Secretariat of OIPC Interpol.

The NCBs of Interpol are interlinked via INTERPOL's worldwide telecommunications network. ASF facilitates police-to-police interaction on all types of criminal investigations ranging from simple criminal history checks to complex matters including drugs and weapons/explosives trafficking; fraud and economic crimes; murder; terrorism; the location, apprehension, and return of fugitives; theft; victim identification; and weapons and explosives tracing.

All information transmitted via the INTERPOL network is for police and judicial use only. Access to ASF information is controlled strictly. The ASF allows NCB's to query INTERPOL's central database of information provided by the NCB's. Information in INTERPOL's ASF is available only to law enforcement. Access to such information is stringently controlled.

The following data/image bases have been implemented:

- _ international fugitives and suspects (some 260,000 names and about 50,000 images)
- _ stolen works of art (with colour images)
- _ stolen vehicles (with a maximum capacity of 10 million vehicles).

Information sent in by the NCBs is - with the prior consent of the country providing the data - introduced into the different databases and updated as and when necessary.

Searches for the identity of a suspected individual can be made on the basis of several criteria, including phonetic criteria, such as family name, forename, date of birth, and nationality. Particulars of known aliases, passports and identity documents are also stored.

The system also makes it possible to transfer an individual's photograph and fingerprints with the relevant international notice in Arabic, English, French or Spanish.

The various ASF servers can be accessed using different telecommunications links, including public switched telephone networks, packet-switching data networks (X.25) or an integrated services digital network (ISDN).

With the installation of X.400 equipment, the encryption system and the ASF servers, Interpol now has the necessary foundations on which to develop a comprehensive, worldwide network based on up-to-the-minute technology, capable of transmitting encrypted texts and images: a comprehensive range of electronic data to enhance the activities of law enforcement services across the world.

European Vehicle Identification Database (EuVID)

EuVID is a tool to help law enforcement officials to identify stolen vehicles. EuVID is a database also available on a CD-ROM containing all the relevant vehicle identification characteristics of the most important vehicle models.

The interactive electronic EuVID CD-ROM contains identification documents for the models of leading car manufacturers, as well as the real descriptions of the vehicle papers of many States. The database contains specific identification information, in text and in images, for a large number of cars manufactured for the European market as well as the official vehicle registration documents of almost 40 Countries.

Since checking of the identity of a car can be cumbersome, especially if the main ID elements have been tampered with, EuVID can help in investigating the secondary identification marks. As a tool, it can be integrated into a wider intelligence-driven, law enforcement policy. Vehicles are stolen to generate criminal revenues but also to serve as a tool for trafficking goods or even persons. The organised crime rings that specialise in trading stolen vehicles are increasingly sophisticated. EuVID is a potentially powerful tool to assist law enforcement authorities to stay abreast of these criminal developments.

Being confronted with ever more advanced criminal organisations that specialise in stealing vehicles for various reasons, German law enforcement authorities drew up compilations of identification hints as an aid for identifying stolen vehicles and made it available to criminal investigators. The original basis of EuVID was the *Motor Vehicle Identification Folder* of the Bavarian Border Police and the *Identification Catalogue* of the Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) in Wiesbaden.

In the autumn of 2000 the EuVID working group was set up on the initiative of the Bavarian Regional Office of Criminal Investigations to improve the production of this compilation. Specialised officials from Germany as well as from Austria took part in the EuVID WG.

Simultaneously, in the context of the Baltic Sea task force expert meeting on motor vehicle crime early 2000 (Finland as lead-country), Europol was requested to give operational support. This support involved the co-ordination of information exchange and provision of analytical assistance. Europol distributed a CD-ROM with the vehicle identification numbers (VIN) of all stolen vehicles of most of the Member States as well as Hungary and Lithuania. The objective was to identify international criminal organisations dealing with the trafficking of stolen vehicles, the gaps and problems in the registration of imported second hand cars and the flow of stolen vehicles.

Forces were merged, and the Europol co-ordinated the release of the international edition of EuVID on CD ROM in English, French, and German end 2001. Spanish and Italian editions are scheduled for release in 2002.

Under the same token, Europol published in January 2001 in collaboration with the Bavarian Regional Office of Criminal Investigations the handbook titled, *How to investigate motor vehicle crime* that describes all the necessary steps to be followed when investigating motor vehicle crime as well as all the international assisting tools available to tackle this field of crime. This guide is integrated into the EuVID.

Public-Private Co-operation in one EU Member State

The Foundation for Tackling Vehicle Crime is part of the National Platform for Crime control. Both organisations have public and private partners.

Partners in the Foundation are:**Public**

The Ministry of Justice
The Ministry of the Interior
The Ministry of Transport
The Department of Road Transport
The Police

Private

The Association of Insurers
Vehicle associations
Consumers' organisation)

The Targets of the foundation are:

Minus 10% theft per year
Minimum 50% retrieval

The foundation has an executive bureau with 4 project co-ordinators originating from:

Insurance company
National police force
Vehicle registration authority
Automotive branch

Some examples of successful projects:

Public-Private and Public-Public projects are carried out within the responsibilities and the privacy regulations of each partner. They are successful through co-operation.

Theft registration: matching registration by police and insurance companies;

Propaganda by insurers, police and automotive branch to install immobilisers into older Cars;

Car-kit: palm-top computers for police and parking wardens containing registration numbers of "suspect" vehicles;

After accident inspection of wrecked vehicles to prevent ringing: co-operation between insurance companies, police and vehicle registration authority;

Public-Private information desk: police, insurers, vehicle registration dept.;

Development of standards for tracking and tracing equipment, including the installation and the after-alarm procedures;

Joint inspections by customs and police, especially in the harbours.

Results

In 2001, the number of stolen vehicles dropped by 8.3% compared to the year 2000.
