ACTION AGAINST METAL THEFT PUTS 271 PEOPLE BEHIND BARS

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Press Release

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European law enforcement authorities have sent a strong signal to the gangs of organised metal thieves who operate all over Europe, and the many scrapyards that accept all kinds of metal with 'no questions asked'.

In a two-day operation, authorities in 20 European countries, supported by Europol, made 271 arrests, identified 146 cases of theft and checked 8300 scrap metal dealers. Checks were carried out at scrapyards, on construction sites, along border roads, railway tracks and other hot spots for metal theft. Specific scrapyards suspected of handling stolen goods were also checked. During the action days, cross-checks were made in real time with Europol's databases.

"Metal theft is not a victimless crime - it can have a devastating impact on individuals, communities and businesses. The overall damage caused by metal theft far exceeds the value of the stolen metal itself and can severely affect key infrastructure and services such as railways, traffic controls and telecoms networks. This crime phenomenon can only be tackled through consistent cross-border law enforcement cooperation, and the use of Europol's information systems and analysis capabilities," says Rob Wainwright, Director of Europol.

The operation, which saw the Belgian Federal and Judicial Police as the main driver, took place at the end of May 2014, and was the result of an initiative launched during the 2nd conference on metal theft held at Europol at the end of April this year. The operation is part of an ongoing EMPACT programme focusing on Organised Property Crime, which is a current priority within the EU.

Intelligence confirms that stolen metal is often transported across several borders and sold as scrap, or for recycling, far away from the scene of the crime. Information gathered during this operation will be further analysed by Europol in order to pinpoint the main modus operandi and the people and gangs involved in this illegal trade.

1 Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
European Multidisciplinary Platform against Criminal Threats.

CRIME AREAS
Organised property crime

TARGET GROUPS
General Public • Law Enforcement • Academia • Professor • Students • Researcher •
Press/Journalists • Other

GENERAL TERMS
EU Police Cycle (EMPACT) • Operation