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Prevention of pickpocketing within the EU – policy & practices

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Prevention of pickpocketing within the EU – policies & practices

Preface

The eleventh toolbox in the series published by the EUCPN Secretariat focuses on the main theme of the Maltese Presidency, which is 'Prevention of Pickpocketing'. The first part of the toolbox presents an overview of the existing policies and legislative measures on the international level, with a particular focus on the EU. In the second part, we zoom in on advice provided by experts in the field of pickpocketing and/or mobile organised crime groups. The third part focusses on the good and promising practices of which some were submitted by Member States in reply to the questionnaire sent out by the EUCPN Secretariat.

Therefore, this toolbox will help the reader to understand what is happening at EU and national level in regards to pickpocketing and mobile organised crime groups. Additionally, this toolbox provides policymakers and practitioners with a pragmatic guide full of tips and tricks on how to start a successful pickpocketing prevention campaign or project. During the preparation of this toolbox, it became clear that there are two main tracks that deserve attention in order to come to a complete and effective prevention. The first track consists of a pickpocketing prevention campaign that is thoroughly prepared; it is important to think through the message. The second track is all about cooperation. Cooperation across borders, and cooperation across police and judicial entities. Without a consequent and effective policy against pickpocketing, a sense of impunity will prevail which strongly attracts mobile OCGs.

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Introduction

Pickpocketing often appeals to the imagination and is in some circles even referred to as an art. Nevertheless, one should realize that a victim of pickpocketing suffers a financial loss in the form of a stolen smartphone or bare cash and additionally faces a tedious process of replacing the identity card, driving license, banking cards... In a similar manner countries and more specific certain cities suffer from a bad image when they are faced with high pickpocketing prevalence. This crime phenomenon seems to be very much alive in the world of tourism. When searching the internet for prevention of pickpocketing, all first results are websites related to travelling. These websites, such as [tripadvisor.com](https://www.tripadvisor.com), [lonelyplanet.com](https://www.lonelyplanet.com), [thesavvybackpacker.com](https://www.thesavvybackpacker.com), warn tourists who are planning to visit Europe and give them tips. As we will discuss later on, research has also proven this connection between tourism and pickpocketing.

Even though some countries have to cope with rising prevalence numbers, pickpocketing as a specific crime phenomenon is often not considered as a priority within the world of criminal policy and legislation. The mobile organised crime groups (OCGs), who are deemed to be responsible for a big part of the committed pickpocketing, do get proper attention from policymakers and law enforcement agencies. It must be made clear that these groups are committing a wide variety of crimes, of which pickpocketing is just one and not even the most common form of theft committed. Therefore in this toolbox we focus on both mobile organised crime groups in general and on pickpocketing more specifically.

Another important part of the toolbox consists of recommendations for a successful approach to the prevention of pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs. During the workshop, it became clear that there are two main tracks that deserve attention in order to come to a complete and effective prevention. The first track consists of a pickpocketing prevention campaign that is thoroughly prepared; it is important to think through the message. The goal should be to raise awareness and to learn the public how not to fall victim to this crime. The second track is all about cooperation. Cooperation across borders, and cooperation across police and judicial entities. Without a consequent and effective policy against pickpocketing, a sense of impunity will prevail which strongly attracts mobile OCGs. A first step to a consequent and effective policy is to recognise pickpocketing as the organised crime that it is. We should keep in mind that almost always there is an entire professional network behind a single pickpocket.

Finally, the toolbox concludes with some good practices of pickpocketing prevention measures as they were shared by the Member States with the EUPCN Secretariat.

Part 1

PICKPOCKETING – EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION, POLICY AND COOPERATION

PICKPOCKETING – EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION, POLICY AND COOPERATION

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC OF PICKPOCKETING AND MOBILE ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS

1.1. Introduction

In this part we will zoom in on the crime phenomenon pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs itself and the concerning policies and legislation existing on European or international level. First, before we will focus on the phenomenon ‘pickpocketing’ and how it relates to tourism, we take a look at the mobile OCGs. Second, we will present a recent image of pickpocketing in the EU Member States; the dark number problem, prevalence and characteristics such as hotspots and the profile of the perpetrator. Third, we will sketch the need for an international plan and the steps that were taken in the EU in the fight against organised crime and itinerant crime groups. After finally, we will run through the most important supra- and international legislation regarding these groups.

For additional information regarding mobile OCGs and the phenomenon of pickpocketing we would like to refer you to ***EUCPNs theoretical paper n° 11 concerning pickpocketing***². In this paper the prevalence of mobile OCGs and their characteristics such as mobility, nationality, protective measures, use of minors and offender characteristics are further discussed. Here, pickpocketing is also further dissected with regards to the history, geographical distribution and statistics.

1.2. What is pickpocketing?

a. Pickpocketing

Pickpocketing can be described as the unnoticed theft of items that are carried on the body of the victim. Pickpockets are especially active in heavily crowded areas such as shopping streets, markets or public transport. Pickpockets work alone or in group and often use recurring scenarios such as asking for directions, spilling a drink... whilst stealing the targets valuables. Typically victims do not notice the theft until they want to use the stolen item. By then the pickpocket is long gone.

As mentioned before, one dares to romanticize the phenomenon of pickpocketing. It is one of the oldest and most widespread crimes in the world. It is often described as an ‘art’. The crime requires considerable dexterity and a knack for misdirection. However, the consequences are severe. Pickpocketing has the potential of causing widespread feelings of insecurity. On an individual level this form of theft leads to a financial loss because often small yet high value items are stolen. Smartphones, watches, wallets... are popular items to steal³.

Additionally, on a community level the consequences are severe. As tourists often carry large amounts of cash money, they are an attractive target for pickpockets. According to police information, tourists can carry up to €20 000 cash.⁴ Large cities that are popular tourist destinations can suffer from a bad reputation with consequences for the attraction of tourists.

² EUCPN (2018), *Thematic paper no. 11 - Pickpocketing* [WWW]
<http://eucpn.org/document/eucpn-thematic-paper-no-11-pickpocketing>

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

b. Mobile Organised Crime Groups

Pickpocketing is a very attractive action domain for mobile OCGs.⁵ Some of these crime groups even primarily focus on pickpocketing. Because ***pickpocketing and mobile OCGs are intrinsically linked*** to each other, it is important to focus on that too. Although single offences committed by members of these groups do not fall into the category of serious organised crime, the accumulated offences have a significant impact on the security of EU citizens and legitimate businesses.

Across some Member States within the EU different traits of these groups are emphasised. In Germany, mobility is not really considered a determining issue. In the Netherlands it is mobility and the use of hit-and-run techniques that are indicating. As a consequence of different emphasised traits, also the terminology used to name these groups differs. For example “mobile banditism” in The Netherlands, “itinerant crime” in France, and “Eastern European criminal groups” in Germany.⁶

Because these groups cross borders and spread their activities across several countries, the chance of getting caught is reduced. Unfortunately, information about crime is not easily shared between countries, so this information about mobile OCGs remains fragmentary and scattered. This is a consequence of the fact that each country has its own organisations, legislation, procedures and competences regarding investigation and prosecution.⁷ As we will discuss further, the Europol Information System (EIS) is a promising effort in this problematic domain.

The observations of this phenomenon across Europe do have some characteristics in common. These are brought up by law enforcement perception as well as by empirical data. Firstly, these groups systematically commit property offences and are mainly active in the area of ‘ordinary’ property crimes.⁸ Secondly, their nationality: these groups are most often of Eastern European origin.⁹ Of course this is subject to a sensitive debate. As we will see further in this toolbox regarding the profile of the perpetrator, of course not all pickpocketing can be attributed to East European mobile OCGs. Thirdly, a high degree of mobility seems to be a common factor.¹⁰

As stated in the thematic paper on pickpocketing, we want to emphasize to be careful linking itinerancy with criminality: while for some groups itinerancy is a way of life, other may travel because they function as what has been called criminal commuters. Linking itinerancy with criminality is rather controversial, just as linking criminality with nationality.¹¹

⁵ FGD of the Interior (2010), *Tackling of Itinerant Criminal Groups. New Challenges.*, 6.

⁶ VAN DAELE, S. & VANDER BEKEN, T. (2010). Exploring itinerant crime groups. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 16(1), 1-13

⁷ VAN GESTEL, B. & KOUWENBERG, R.F., (2016) [WWW].

WDOC: https://www.wodc.nl/binaries/Cahier%202016-8_Volledige%20tekst_nw_tcm28-228343.pdf

⁸ VAN DAELE, S. & VANDER BEKEN, T. (2009). Out of step? Mobility of ‘itinerant crime groups’. In P. VAN DUYNE, S. DONATI, J. HARVEY, A. MALJEVIC & K. VAN LAMPE (eds.), *Crime, money and criminal mobility in Europe* (pp. 43-70). Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers.

⁹ VAN GESTEL, B. (2017), Is daar nog werk voor zakkenrollers? Over mobiele bendes en de betekenis van criminaliteit, *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 59(4), 360-375.

¹⁰ VAN DAELE, S. & VANDER BEKEN, T. (2010)., *Ibid.*

¹¹ CANTER, D. & LARKIN, P. (1993). The environmental range of serial rapists, *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 13(1), 63-69.

To be complete, we should mention that research has concluded that the itinerant crime group does not exist. Case file analysis shows large degrees of variation with regards to level of organization, offender characteristics, types of property crime, fencing, risk management and mobility.¹² For an in-depth analysis of this variation, we like to refer the reader to EUCPN's thematic paper no. 11 on pickpocketing.

c. Pickpocketing and tourism

Europe is the world's number one tourist destination.¹³ In general, according to the Eurobarometer, tourists in Europe feel safe and are very satisfied. Survey respondents from EU Member States expressed a high degree of satisfaction about their holidays in 2014, especially safety (95%) and the quality of their accommodation (95%). In 2013, the World Economic Forum published a report in which five of the ten highest-ranking countries in security and safety are European (WEF 2013).¹⁴

Even though traditionally tourism was often neglected as a crime attracting actor, there is a connection between tourism and crime. Nevertheless, travel and tourism become more significant aspects of modern day living. As such, the tourism sector does pay attention to crime and deviance. As pointed out in the introduction: the majority of internet search results regarding pickpocketing concern travelling websites that warn tourists who plan to visit Europe.¹⁵ Some hotspots are Barcelona, Madrid, London, Brussels, Amsterdam, Rome, Florence, Paris, Athens, Prague and Lisbon.¹⁶

Within victimology tourists are known as vulnerable targets. This can be partially explained by their more relaxed attitude in combination with a lack of knowledge of the local crime hotspots. This statement is confirmed by Michalko (2008), as he learned that trends in criminality are closely related to numbers of tourists arriving and staying in a certain city.¹⁷ According to Inciardi in his early 1976 study, for which 20 pickpockets were interviewed, the professional pickpocket admitted to specifically target tourists, who he identified through their attitude, dress and behaviour.¹⁸

As we will see further on, when discussing the prevalence data, it is undeniable that pickpocketing numbers skyrocket during 'tourist season'.

d. Impact of pickpocketing on victims

The consequences of becoming a pickpocketing victim surpass the level of losing valuables such as a smartphone or bare cash. The victim will have to go through the tedious process of replacing all stolen goods such as the smartphone, identity and banking cards. Applications for replacing these items will have to be made at several institutions and will cost the victim time and money.

¹² VAN DAELE, S. & VANDER BEKEN, T. (2010). Exploring itinerant crime groups. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 16(1), 1-13

¹³ European Commission (2010), *Europe, the world's no. 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe* [WWW] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0352&from=EN>

¹⁴ EFUS (2017), *Security and Tourism: concerted local policies* [WWW] https://issuu.com/efus/docs/publication_s_t_eng

¹⁵ MAWBY, R.I., BARCLAY, E. & JONES, C. (2010) Tourism and Victimization. In S.S.G. HOHAM, P. KNEPPER & M. KETT (eds.), *International Handbook of Victimology* (pp 319-346), CRC Press.

¹⁶ EUCPN (2018), *Thematic paper no. 11 - Pickpocketing* [WWW] <http://eucpn.org/document/eucpn-thematic-paper-no-11-pickpocketing>

¹⁷ MICHALKO G. (2008) Tourism Eclipsed by Crime. The Vulnerability of foreign tourists in Hungary, *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 159-172.

¹⁸ MAWBY, R.I., BARCLAY, E. & JONES, C. (2010), *Ibid.*

For a tourist there are however additional concerns. Finding a police station and reporting the crime is not easy because of barriers such as language and a limited knowledge of the city map. Also the loss of identity papers will have ramifications for the travel back home. Finally, and evidently, the loss of banking cards will impede the rest of the holidays because of a limited access to financial resources.

Following these insights, it should be clear that an incidence of pickpocketing has a more severe impact as one would expect from a 'petty theft'.

1.3. Image of pickpocketing in the EU Member States

To address the question of the various policy and legislative measures taken by the EU Member States, the EUCPN Secretariat sent out a questionnaire to all Member States. The analysis below is based on the information obtained through this questionnaire filled in by 13 of 27 EUCPN National Representatives. In order to present a more complete image of this topic, we enriched the results with insights found in available literature.

a. Dark number

We will shine a light on the prevalence of pickpocketing in the EU in order to get an image of the crime phenomenon. However before going deeper into prevalence data, it is important to know that the dark number for pickpocketing is immense, as the crime is typically characterised by a high rate of non-reporting. It is estimated that half stays unreported.¹⁹ A Bulgarian example even shows a much bigger difference. Here, a victimization survey counted 135 000 pickpocketing victims in 2003 while the official police statistics only reflected 4 140 registered pickpocketing thefts.²⁰

Two possible manners to deal with the problem of dark numbers is to do **victimization surveys** or try to **increase the willingness to report** pickpocketing to the law enforcement agencies. Most Member States who answered the questionnaire are currently not doing victimization surveys, or have no data on pickpocketing specifically in their victimization surveys. The questioned Member States are aware of the low willingness to report pickpocketing to law enforcement agencies. Consequently, promotion of reporting pickpocketing crimes is often a regular feature of preventive campaigns. Greece for example uses the social networks Facebook and Twitter to which the victim can turn to report pickpocketing.

Besides the dark number, pickpocketing is unfortunately a crime that often finds itself **hidden in crime statistics** underneath other phenomena such as 'theft' or 'loss of property'. As a consequence, it is not easy to envision the volume of pickpocketing in the EU, as not all Member States are able to distillate relevant prevalence data from their criminal statistics.

¹⁹ EUCPN (2018), *Thematic paper no. 11 - Pickpocketing*
[WWW] <http://eucpn.org/document/eucpn-thematic-paper-no-11-pickpocketing>

²⁰ BEZLOV, T. & GOUNEV P. (2005), *Crime Trends in Bulgaria: Police statistics and victimization surveys*, Center for the Study of Democracy, 22-23.

The involvement of organised crime groups in property crimes remains under-investigated. In many cases, incidents of property crime are still classified as petty criminality **without recognising the organised crime aspect**.²¹ This is similarly the case for pickpocketing. The true prevalence is hard to know as incidents of pickpocketing are often classified as a mere loss of property or petty theft without recognising the organised crime aspect. Nevertheless, the scale and level of organisation of pickpocketing across the EU Member States suggest that mobile OCGs are involved.

b. Prevalence of pickpocketing

Two different trends have been captured for European Member States. While in Western Europe there has been a growth of pickpocketing, in Eastern European countries like Bulgaria and Poland it has been on the decline.²² In 2001 the Member State ranking number one was Poland with 4% of respondents stating they have been a victim of pickpocketing. The runner up, Bulgaria, ranked second with 3,5%.

However, over the period of 2001-2003 a noticeable drop to 1,9% was noted in Bulgaria. Part of the explanation for this fact is the presumption that major organised groups of pickpocketing had left Bulgaria, as a consequence of the establishment of a visa-free regime with most European Member States.²³ As Eastern European Member States are often pointed out as important countries of origin, the visa-free regime is a plausible explanation for the difference in prevalence data between Western and Eastern European Member States with regards to pickpocketing. The 90s – early 2000s is the time period for the uprising of mobile OCGs from Eastern Europe. In EUCPN's thematic paper no. 11, it was mentioned that mobile OCGs operate in prosperous EU Member States in Western and Northern Europe.²⁴

²¹ BEZLOV, T. & GOUNEV P. (2005), Crime Trends in Bulgaria: Police statistics and victimization surveys, Center for the Study of Democracy, 22-23.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ EUCPN (2018), Thematic paper no. 11 - Pickpocketing [WWW] <http://eucpn.org/document/eucpn-thematic-paper-no-11-pickpocketing>

The tables below represent the prevalence numbers regarding pickpocketing for the most recent years. The data handled hereafter is what we could collect from the EU Member States. **Table A** shows the absolute numbers, **table B** shows the data recalculated pro capita in order to get a representative prevalence image of pickpocketing in the different Member States.²⁵

Table A: absolute prevalence numbers

Table A	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Belgium	-	9919	8993	7077	5620
Luxembourg	-	-	884	624	577
Malta	1313	1469	1538	2030	2447
Netherlands	-	40639	-	29000	-
Slovakia	1939	2004	1746	1664	1787
Greece	8161	7408	9288	11264	12183
Denmark	37659	42687	34597	31772	-
Hungary	-	-	-	-	6727
Romania	-	-	9114	11337	12066

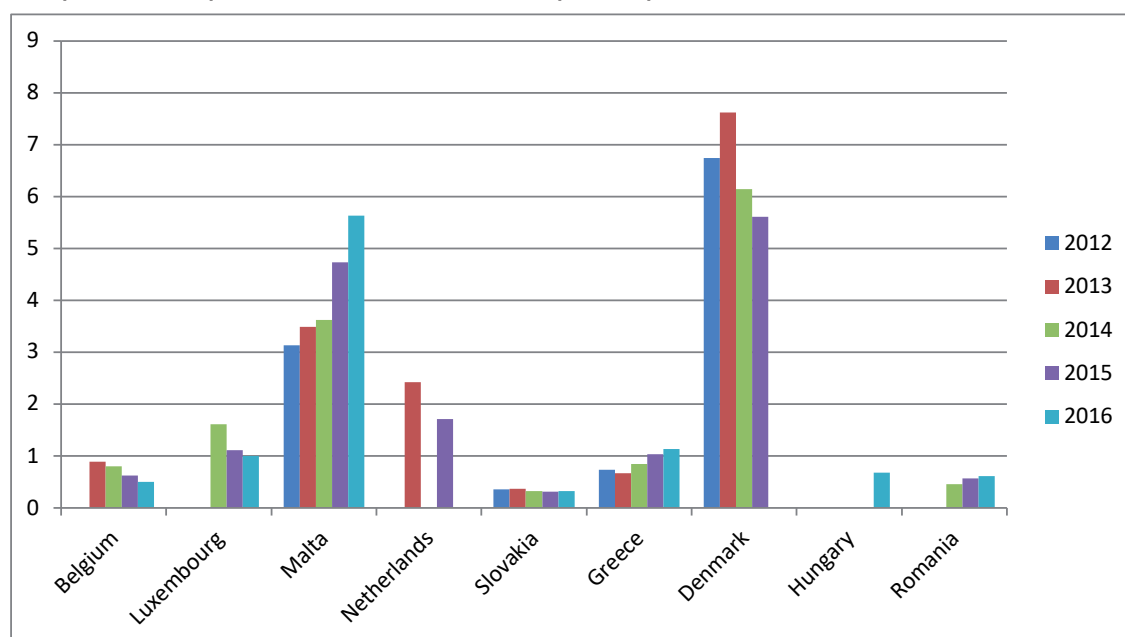
Table B: prevalence numbers pro capita

Table B	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Belgium	-	0.89	0.80	0.63	0.50
Luxembourg	-	-	1.61	1.11	1.00
Malta	3.14	3.49	3.62	4.73	5.63
Netherlands	-	2.42	-	1.71	-
Slovakia	0.36	0.37	0.32	0.31	0.33
Greece	0.74	0.67	0.85	1.04	1.13
Denmark	6.75	7.62	6.15	5.61	-
Hungary	-	-	-	-	0.68
Romania	-	-	0.46	0.57	0.61

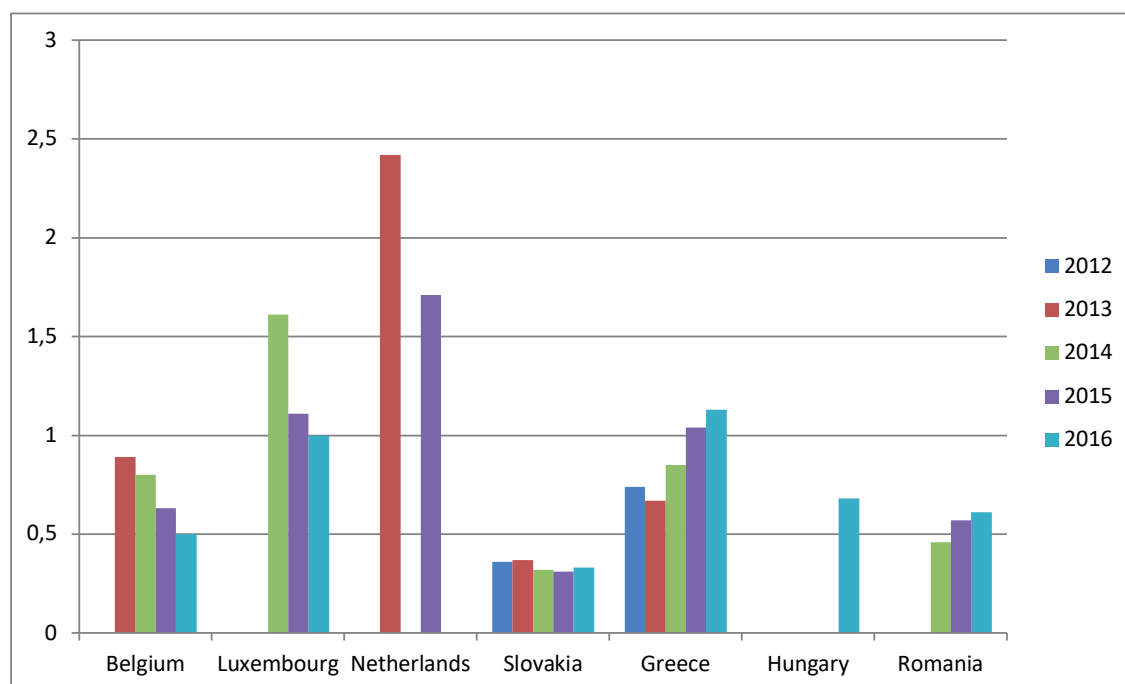
²⁵ EUROSTAT (2017) [WWW] <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/population-data>

Graphic A below shows all data received. In **graphic B**, without the outliers of Denmark and Malta, we can zoom in closer on the other Member States and their pickpocketing prevalence data pro capita in graphic B. As we can see below, this data confirms the earlier statement that pickpocketing is less present in East European countries such as Romania, Hungary and Slovakia.²⁶

Graphic A: all prevalence data receive pro capita



Graphic B: Prevalence data without the outliers of Denmark and Malta



²⁶ EUCPN, questionnaire on pickpocketing among EU Member States (2017).

As mentioned earlier, victimisation surveys can shine another light on the prevalence of pickpocketing. Estonia has learned that people are increasingly afraid of becoming targeted by pickpockets. The number of respondents that stated to be afraid increased from 44% in 2015 to 57% in 2016. Romania knows thanks to their victimisation survey in 2015 that 2,3% of the adult population had been victim of pickpocketing during the past 12 months.²⁷

The level of police-recorded theft in general, and thus not only pickpocketing specifically, seems to have remained stable during 2010-2015 across the EU Member States.²⁸

c. Hotspots and prominent timing

Overall, the most common hotspots for pickpocketing are those locations where big groups of people are present such as **public areas**; more specifically tourist attractions, escalators and queues, public transport, shopping malls, shops, restaurants and bars. In the questionnaire it is also pointed out that larger cities are popular locations to target. Finally, in many cases a central geographical location of a country plays an important beneficial role for the pickpocket, as it allows the perpetrator to quickly cross borders when needed.

Timing-wise, the same rule is at play as for hotspots. **Big public events**, such as sport games, concerts, religious celebrations..., which gather a large number of people are attractive for pickpockets. The questionnaire also shows that rush hour is a prominent timing for pickpocketing. Further we will see that the summer months attract more tourists. As we have learned before, tourists are attractive targets for pickpockets because of their more relax attitude and the possibility that they are carrying a lot of cash. However, also during winter months pickpocketing numbers can rise, because the heavier clothing of both victim and perpetrator helps covering up the quick movements of pickpockets.²⁹

d. Profile of the pickpocketing perpetrator

Clearly most, but not all, Member States refer to East European mobile OCGs as the most important group of perpetrators regarding pickpocketing in their country according to our survey. These groups seem to be very active in the Netherlands. Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and Hungary are mentioned as countries of origin for these mobile OCGs. Furthermore it is stated, that when pickpockets operate in group, it often involves Roma.

Of course not all pickpocketing can be attributed to East European mobile OCGs. Young drug users between the age of 20 and 35 years old are likewise mentioned as a common group of perpetrators. Especially in the Member States Estonia and Lithuania these East European itinerant crime groups seem to play a smaller role. In Estonia pickpockets are most often young Estonian men between 18 and 30 years old. While in Lithuania pickpocketing is usually committed by lone wolfs or by a small group not linked to mobile OCGs.³⁰

²⁷ EUCPN, questionnaire on pickpocketing among EU Member States (2017).

²⁸ EUROSTAT (2017) [WWW] http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=crim_off_cat&lang=en

²⁹ EUCPN, *Ibid.*

³⁰ EUCPN, questionnaire on pickpocketing among EU Member States (2017).

e. *Pickpocketing and trafficking in human beings*

In some cases, pickpocketing is also closely linked with the trafficking of human beings (THB). THB often presents itself in a mixture of several forms of exploitation. Of these several forms, exploitation of beggary is often the most visible activity in cases of THB. In some cases children are forced to beg and steal. Pickpocketing is an important form of these thefts. The children are recruited abroad by international networks. They are required to pickpocket in several European cities, report about it and hand over their gains to the exploiter. From this perspective, it is important to keep in mind that pickpockets, especially minors, are in some cases the victim of THB themselves.

2. EU LEGISLATION REGARDING ORGANISED (PROPERTY) CRIME AND MOBILE ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS

2.1. A common EU approach regarding organised crime

a. Need for an international plan of attack

As mentioned before, pickpockets are often part of a mobile OCG. Regarding mobile OCGs there have been developments during the past decennium in the EU. The phenomenon of itinerant crime groups is nothing new, however the problem is getting more substantial. The public interest is growing, especially since the expansion of the EU. Since the Middle and Eastern European countries have joined the EU, citizens of these Member States no longer have a visa requirement. As a consequence, it is easier to travel across borders within Europe.

By crossing borders and by spreading their activities across multiple Member States, the chance of getting caught is reduced. One reason for this is that each Member State has its own organisations with its own legislation and procedures and competences with respect to investigation and prosecution. As a result, information about crime is not automatically shared between Member States, so that information about itinerant crime groups remains fragmentary and scattered across various organisations.

There is a strong need for more involvement and pro-active action in the countries of origin regarding this criminal phenomenon. However, these needs could only be met if the problem of mobile OCGs is put on the international agenda.

³¹ dEN BREEJEN, M. (2014), Straatcrimineel of slachtoffer, *Blauw* nr.7, 52-55.

³² dEN BREEJEN, M. (2017), Stelen en bedelen op bevel, *Blauw* nr.1, 48-53.

³³ MYRIA (2016), *Jaarrapport 2016. Mensenhandel en mensensmokkel. Bedelaars in de handen van mensenhandelaars*. [WWW] http://www.myria.be/files/MYRIA_Rapport_2016_TRAITE_NL_AS.pdf

³⁴ vAN GESTEL, B. & KOUWENBERG, R.F. (2016)

[WWW]. WDOC: https://www.wdoc.nl/binaries/Cahier%202016-8_Volledige%20tekst_nw_tcm28-228343.pdf

b. First European coordinated approach

The Belgian Presidency of the EU in 2010 took the opportunity to increase the recognisability of 'itinerant crime groups' on an international level, which was the start of a new cooperation. The three main objectives were to:

1. form a uniform international definition of itinerant crime groups;
2. stimulate the mapping process;
3. cooperate on an international level.³⁵

The uniform European definition of 'itinerant crime groups':

"A mobile (itinerant) criminal group is an association of offenders, who systematically acquire wealth through theft of property or fraud (e.g. theft, residential and non-residential burglaries, organised shoplifting, pickpocketing, cargo thefts, metal thefts, thefts on construction sites and skimming) having a wide ranging area of operations and are internationally active."

Following the conclusions of The Hague Programme (2004), the **European Crime Intelligence Model** (ECIM), should become a core concept and methodology to tackle organised crime. The model moves away from reactive policing and towards a problem solving approach based on analysis, by developing action plans and involving multiple actors.³⁶ Over the last decade, a lot of initiatives have been undertaken at European level to improve the fight against organised crime. Although most of these initiatives contribute to the implementation of the ECIM, there is a lack of commitment and coherence among Member States, which in its turn affects the effectiveness and the efficiency of the fight against organised crime. Therefore, the Belgian Presidency wanted, in close cooperation with Europol, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands to streamline and integrate the already existing EU instrument. This is the origin of project Harmony.

The goal was to produce a European policy cycle regarding action against organised and serious transnational crime. The main objectives of **project HARMONY** were to identify the most important transnational crime phenomena based on a substantial methodology, to create a long-term strategy to tackle these phenomena and to work project based with annual action plans to fulfil the objectives.³⁷

The first coordinated European approach to mobile OCGs has its origin within the first policy cycle. This cycle started in 2011 and foresaw a project based approach for the years 2012 and 2013 with Belgium as Driver and France as Co-Driver. At that time the project counted 16 participating Member States.

The objectives were to give more publicity to the phenomenon, to reach a qualitative European image, to stimulate information sharing, to strengthen the operational cooperation and to take a closer look at the juridical voids.

³⁵ VAN GESTEL, B. & KOUWENBERG, R.F., (2016) [WWW].

WDOC: https://www.wodc.nl/binaries/Cahier%202016-8_Volledge%20tekst_nw_tcm28-228343.pdf

³⁶ FRANS, B. (eds.) (2011), Harmony

[WWW] https://euro-police.noblogs.org/files/2011/03/Harmony_FinalDraft.pdf

³⁷ Ibid.

This approach was maintained during the EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) policy cycle of 2014-2017. The EU Policy Cycle is based on the Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA) by Europol. This led to nine priority crime areas. For each one, a multi-annual strategic plan (MASP), an EMPACT-project and four operational action plans are implemented (one for each year).³⁸

Continued effort was put into the information sharing and international cooperation so that different cases regarding itinerant crime groups could be linked to one another. Also the magistrates of different Member States were warmed to the idea of cross border cooperation. By the end of 2014 the project involved 21 participating Member States. Especially the participation of Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland, as important countries of origin for these itinerant crime groups, was unmistakably a strong benefit for the project.³⁹

One of the nine priorities for the 2014-2017 policy cycle was the combat against organised property crime committed by mobile OCGs, such as robberies (including armed robberies), burglaries, organised shoplifting and pickpocketing, cash-machine and cash-in-transit attacks and the theft of a range of high-value items.⁴⁰ This priority was retained for the new EU policy cycle of 2018-2021.

c. Results

The most important results that were reached at the end of this policy cycle were the realisation of a first European image on the activities, structures and modus operandi of the itinerant crime groups, doubling of information sharing between Member States and an input increase by 75% in the Europol database.

Other important results regarding pickpocketing were:

- a first ISEC⁴¹-project, governed by Germany and focused on itinerant crime groups originating from the Baltic States or ex-USSR countries has led to the dismantling of 14 criminal networks;
- a second ISEC-project, led by Austria and focusing on the West Balkan, led to ceasing 1 million euros in luxury watches, cash and other stolen goods;
- 25 GPS beacons were purchased and made available for police investigations with a cross-border dimension;
- a budget for rewarding informant work was established;
- a first conference took place with the goal of a better sharing of information regarding Automatic Number Plate Recognition data (ANPR);
- creation of an European network of investigators specialized in family clans in big cities and in pickpocketing;
- financial support of coordinating meetings regarding crime groups from the Eurasia-region, ex-USSR countries, the Baltic states and the Western Black Sea-region.⁴²

³⁸ EUROPOL, *EU Policy Cycle - EMPACT* [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/eu-policy-cycle-empact>

³⁹ WECKHUYSEN, K., De Europese samenwerking in de strijd tegen rondtrekkende daders actief in eigendomsriminaliteit. De progressieve opbouw als startpunt voor een concrete operationele samenwerking, *Politiejournaal*, 2016, 22-26.

⁴⁰ EUROPOL, *Ibid.*

⁴¹ ISEC stands for the Prevention and Fight against Crime.

2.2. Supra- and international legislation regarding mobile OCGs

a. Legislative events leading up to Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JA

Before discussing the **Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA** on the fight against organised crime (hereinafter the Framework Decision), we will discuss the legislative events leading up to it.

It was an essential task to define and clarify the mandate of EU criminal justice bodies such as Europol and Eurojust. Also, there were significant differences between EU Member States in their criminal law treatment of organised crime. A number of Member States even lacked an inclusion of organised crime-specific offences in their national criminal law. It became clear that there was a need for defining organised crime activities and treating them as criminal offences in order to combat this phenomenon. The solution to these issues came in 1998 in the form of a **third pillar Joint Action 98/733/JHA** 'on making it a criminal offence to participate in a criminal organisation in the EU'.^{43 44}

With regards to a comprehensive criminal law framework against organised crime on world level, the EU always has had a leadership role. The fight against organised crime has been at the forefront of the EU Justice and Home Affairs agenda, as evidenced by the two Action Plans to fight organised crime in 1997 and 2000, and the 1999 Tampere Conclusions and the 2004 The Hague Programme.⁴⁵ The pioneers role also shows in the fact that the solution of the EU (Joint Action), had influence on the 2000 United Nations Convention on Transnational Organised Crime, known as the 'Palermo Convention'. Similar to as to what the EU Joint Action did, this convention specifically criminalises the participation in an OCG.⁴⁶

In a later step the **2008 Framework Decision** was created to amend the 1998 Joint Action in order to align it with the provisions of the Palermo Convention.

b. Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA on the fight against organised crime

The 2008 Framework Decision on the fight against organised crime provides a sophisticated framework of criminalisation on participation in a criminal organisation. Its **aim** is to:

- **criminalise** offences linked to participation in a criminal organisation;
- **harmonise** EU Member States' laws on the criminalisation of these offences and lays down penalties for them.

⁴² WECKHUYSEN, K., De Europese samenwerking in de strijd tegen rondtrekkende daders actief in eigendomscriminaliteit. De progressieve opbouw als startpunt voor een concrete operationele samenwerking, Politiejournaal, 2016, 22-26.

⁴³ Joint action of 21 December 1998 adopted by the Council on the basis of Article K.3 of the Treaty on European Union, on making it a criminal offence to participate in a criminal organisation in the Member States of the European Union [WWW] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:63c93028-6fe8-494c-a805-c061ad3058df.0008.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

⁴⁴ MITSILEGAS, V., (2011) The Council Framework Decision on the Fight Against Organised Crime: what can be done to strengthen EU legislation in the field? [WWW] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201206/20120627ATT47779/20120627ATT47779_EN.pdf

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The Framework Decision defines a criminal organisation as “a *structured association, established over a period of time, of more than two persons acting in concert with a view to committing offences which are punishable by deprivation of liberty or a detention order of a maximum of at least four years or more serious penalty, to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit*”.

There are two types of conduct of which EU Member States must recognise at least one as an offence:

- active participation in an organisation’s criminal activities, with the knowledge of its aim or of its intention to commit crimes
AND / OR
- an agreement on the perpetration of crimes without necessarily taking part in committing them

This dual approach, offering choice between two types of conduct, was retained from the Joint Action 98/733/JHA and the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (the Palermo Convention). However, this **dual approach is not free of criticism**. According to the Commission the dual approach fails to achieve the objectives sought by the Commission in relation to the earlier Joint Action and to the Palermo Convention. In contrary to what the Commission had proposed, the Framework Decision does not lead to a common approach. The Framework Decision even enables the Member States to continue to apply existing national criminal law instead of introducing the concept of criminal organisation.

c. Future of the fight against organised crime: recommendations following the evaluation of the Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA

There was a void in recent comparative research with a focus on organised crime legislation in the EU. In 1999 the UN Centre for International Crime Prevention collected legislation relating to participation in a criminal organisation. In the meantime, however, there have been many changes in the world of organised crime. As well regarding the fast growth and change of money laundering as to the evolution of crime legislation.

In February 2015 a report was presented consisting of an evaluation of the practical application of legal and investigative tools stemming from the Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA on the fight against organised crime, other EU and international regulations and national legislation. The study has two main objectives. First, to assess the impact of the Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA and other relevant EU and national legislation on the fight against organised crime through comparative legal analysis.

⁴⁷ Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA of 24 October 2008 on the fight against organised crime [WWW] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008F0841&from=EN>

⁴⁸ European Commission (2015), *Study on paving the way for future policy initiatives in the field of fight against organised crime: the effectiveness of specific criminal law measures targeting organised crime*, DI NICOLA, A., GOUNEV, P., LEVI, M., RUBIN, J. and VETTORI, B. (project coordinators) [WWW] <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a1183e4b-1164-4595-a742-fb4514ddd10d>

⁴⁹ The study was conducted by RAND Europe, University of Trento and the Centre for the Study of Democracy and financed by the European Commission.

Second, to provide a comparative analysis of investigative tools and other measures used at the national and EU level for the purpose of fighting organised crime and with a focus on operational results.⁵⁰

Issues related to the current regime according to the “Study on paving the way for future policy initiatives”

While the rationale behind the Framework Decision was to provide higher standards in the EU regarding offences linked to a criminal organisation, the provisions of all three instruments (the 1998 EU Joint Action, the Palermo Convention and the Framework Decision) are very similar.

A 2011 report prepared for the European Parliament noted that the Framework Decision could be further improved in terms of its legal certainty, its scope and the level of harmonisation it has achieved. This report also pointed out that the definition of a criminal organisation in the Framework Decision may lead to over-criminalisation, as ‘the elements of a criminal organisation are defined very broadly and with flexible, ambiguous criteria’. As a result, there may be substantial differences across Member States, which could jeopardise an effective approximation of national legislation, and reduce the domestic and international cooperation added-value of the Framework Decision. Similar criticism has been made in relation to the definition of an organised criminal group in the Palermo Convention, which has been described both as ‘overly broad’ and ‘under-inclusive’ because it includes valid elements while not specifying others such as violence and corruption, which are seen as important features of organised criminal groups’ activities by some authors.

While these are important considerations, there is a need for further research into the implementation of these elements in national organised crime legislation and to understand the extent to which this ‘functional equivalence’ is a problem in practice, and whether the criticisms of the Framework Decision are justified in practice as well as on more conceptual grounds. This gap in understanding formed part of the impetus behind the European Commission commissioning the present study.

⁵⁰ European Commission (2015), Study on paving the way for future policy initiatives in the field of fight against organised crime: the effectiveness of specific criminal law measures targeting organised crime, DI NICOLA, A., GOUNEV, P., LEVI, M., RUBIN, J. and VETTORI, B. (project coordinators) [WWW] <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a1183e4b-1164-4595-a742-fb4514ddd10d>

d. Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Brussels in 2010 on itinerant crime groups

During the Council meeting (2-3 December 2010) the Council has adopted conclusions on the fight against crimes committed by mobile or itinerant criminal groups. The goal of these conclusions is to raise awareness about and combat the activities of criminal groups who systematically acquire wealth through theft of property or fraud, having a wide range operations and are internationally active.⁵¹ The Council of the EU states to be *'aware that the principle of free movement of persons not only offers opportunities to citizens acting in good faith, but may also be used by (...) offenders for unlawful purposes'*.

Additionally, the Council recalls that *'according to the Stockholm programme focus should be placed on cross-border wide-spread crime that has a significant impact on the daily life of the citizens of the EU, with regards hereto the Council also refers to the Internal Security Strategy which identifies cross-border crime as a significant common threat for the European Union's internal security'*.

Furthermore, it was considered that experience has shown that mobile OCGs are mainly active in certain property crime phenomena, of which organised pickpocketing is one of them.

e. European Network on the Administrative Approach tackling serious and organised crime (ENAA)

In the **Council conclusions on the administrative approach to prevent and fight serious and organised crime of June 2016**, the Council of the EU recognises that Member States are affected by OCGs that use the legal administrative infrastructure to further their illegal activities. The Council also emphasises that this calls for more effective prevention measures and the use of a **multidisciplinary approach that includes administrative measures**, in addition to criminal law measures, at national and European level, and in cross border situations between two or more Member States. Furthermore, the Council calls upon the Member States and the European Commission to establish a separate and independent secretariat support for the Informal Network as of 1 October 2016. This separate and independent secretariat is linked to the EUCPN secretariat and takes into account the tasks that were given to the Informal Network in the Council Conclusions⁵² on the Administrative approach of 2010.⁵³

As this toolbox is being written, the Informal Network is transforming into the formal ENAA.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Council of the EU (2010), *Press Release 3051st Council Meeting*, [WWW] <http://blogs.eliamap.gr/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/3051st-JUSTICE-and-HOME-AFFAIRS-Council-meeting-provisional-version-Brussels-2-and-3-December-2010.pdf>

⁵² Council of the EU (2010), *Draft Council Conclusions on the fight against crimes committed by mobile (itinerant) criminal groups*, [WWW] <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15875-2010-INIT/en/pdf>

⁵³ Council of the EU (2016), *Council conclusions on the administrative approach to prevent and fight serious and organised crime*, [WWW] <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9935-2016-INIT/en/pdf>

⁵⁴ For more information on ENAA please direct your questions to enaa@ibz.eu

Council Conclusions on the fight against crimes committed by mobile (itinerant) criminal groups

In the Draft Council Conclusions (5 November 2010 – Council Conclusion Nr. 15875/10) on the fight against crimes committed by mobile (itinerant) criminal groups, an Informal Network on the administrative approach in the fight against serious and organised crime is established. These Draft Council Conclusions were adopted during the 3051st Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Brussels, 2 and 3 December 2010.

The goal is to stimulate and facilitate an informal network of contact points, competent in the field of administrative measures to tackle the phenomenon of mobile (itinerant) groups and where necessary also other relevant crime areas, taking into account national needs and particular circumstances, and to nominate, when appropriate, at least one contact point. Other partners (like private partners and third countries) may be invited by the informal network.

This informal network is requested inter alia:

- *to promote the concept of administrative measures;*
- *to assess possibilities to strengthen the exchange of (...) information between administrative bodies and traditional law enforcement organisations of EU Member States, making use of existing instruments for international exchange of information and limitations stemming from national legislation;*
- *to encourage sharing of best practices;*
- *to propose new initiatives in developing administrative measures;*

f. Policy on pickpocketing in the EU Member States

When zooming in on the national level, whether or not pickpocketing is considered a priority in EU Member States is an important issue. There is no overall defining trend. For Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Greece and Malta pickpocketing specifically is considered as a prioritized crime phenomenon. For other Member States such as Belgium, Hungary and Romania pickpocketing is also a priority, however rather as being part of organised and/or property crime instead of as a phenomenon sui generis. For the remaining Member States pickpocketing is not considered a priority.⁵⁵

Most Member States do not have specific legislation concerning pickpocketing. This is most often categorised under 'theft'. In Romania however, pickpocketing is specifically named as a subcategory of theft in the criminal law.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ EUCPN, questionnaire on pickpocketing among EU Member States (2017).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

3. EUROPEAN COOPERATION AND ACTIVITIES WITH REGARDS TO PICKPOCKETING

a. EIS – Europol Information System

Europol is the EU's agency for law enforcement cooperation with a view to support cooperation amongst law enforcement authorities in the Union. Their mission is to support and strengthen actions by the competent authorities of the Member States and their mutual cooperation in preventing and combating serious crime affecting two or more Member States, terrorism and forms of crime which affect a common interest covered by a Union Policy.⁵⁸

EIS is a system for information on serious international crimes, suspected and convicted persons, criminal structures and offences and the means to commit them. The reference system can be used to check whether information on a certain person or object is available beyond national or organisational jurisdictions.⁵⁹ EIS is not Europol's main criminal information and intelligence database; the Analysis Work File (AWF) plays that part. The EIS is provided by Europol as a technical framework for the EU Member States to use. It is up to them to provide the database with relevant information about all field of crime, including pickpocketing.⁶⁰

How EIS works

Users in designated authorities in the Member States may run searches in the system. If their searches turn up initial results, users may request more information through their Europol National Unit. The EIS interfaces with SIENA, Europol's message-exchange system, for the follow-up to searches and hits found. For example, an investigator in Member State X wishes to share data via the EIS but, due to the sensitivity of the case, wants to limit direct access to it. The investigator applies the restriction by means of a handling code, which makes the data invisible to users in other countries, even though it remains searchable. In practice, this means that a user looking for this data will get a response indicating whether it is present in the system, but will not be able to view any details. Meanwhile, the owner of the data will get a notification that a search has been done for it, and can contact that user. These features enhance the security of the system without sacrificing the ability to coordinate efforts.

⁵⁷ Europol regulation, Art. 1 [WWW] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0794&from=EN>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ EUROPOL, Europol Information System (EIS). A system for information on serious international crime, [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/services-support/information-exchange/europol-information-system>

⁶⁰ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

As we will see further when discussing the informal Pickpocketing Expert Network, the EIS has its faults. Although the system itself is good and 24/7 accessible, the amount of supplied data by the Member States is unsatisfactory. Therefore the EIS is not viewed as the most important, but rather an additional source of information at operational level. The police investigator does not only need this information and intelligence from the EIS to build his case, but also to argue that it concerns organised crime, and not merely petty pickpocketing.⁶¹

b. 'Analysis Project Furtum' at Europol

Europol provides support on the level of expertise, operations and analytics for a range of crime phenomena: organised crime, money-laundering activities, robbery and aggravated theft and illicit trafficking in cultural goods, including antiquities and works of art.⁶² The organisation aims to provide law enforcement agencies with valuable intelligence and to highlight new trends. One of the tracks through which Europol wishes to do this are the Europol Analysis Projects (APs).⁶³ APs are units within the Europol Analysis System (an information processing system) and are specialised in certain crime areas from commodity-based, thematic or regional angles. For example drugs trafficking, Islamist terrorism, Italian organised crime... AP Furtum focusses on organised property crime and is therefore a relevant source for those concerned with pickpocketing.

AP Furtum

Organised property crime is one of the EMPACT priorities and Europol's operational activities in this field are carried out within Analysis Project Furtum. Its broad mandate covers all aspects of property crime such as major burglaries, armed robberies (banks, jewellery, money transporters and depots), motor vehicle crimes, cargo crime, metal theft and organised pickpocketing.

The support to law enforcement agencies by AP Furtum happens through:

- analysing related information and intelligence, to obtain as much structured and concrete information as possible for law enforcement authorities to "hit" targets with;
- facilitating operational meetings between partners involved in cases;
- providing expertise and training to law enforcement authorities to support cases and share knowledge;
- deploying Europol mobile offices to the field for operations, giving live access to Europol's secure information exchange network and databases;
- providing support for judicial cooperation and for the tackling of other related criminal activities uncovered in the course of investigations, such as money laundering.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

⁶² Europol regulation, Art. 3.1. [WWW] <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016R0794&from=EN>

⁶³ EUROPOL, *Crime areas & Trends. Keeping ahead of the criminals*, [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends>

⁶⁴ EUROPOL, *Europol analysis projects*, [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-trends/europol-analysis-projects>

Committed to tackling this rising criminal activity facilitated by cross-border mobility in recent years, Europol believes that cooperation amongst Member States is the key factor in the dismantling of international OCGs.⁶⁵ In 2016 these joint efforts led to great results. One investigation in May 2016 done by French and Romanian authorities has led to the dismantling of an organised crime network that was involved in the trafficking of minors who were forced to pickpocket. After 14 house searches in France and Romania, 18 individuals were arrested. The total criminal proceeds were estimated at nearly € 1 million.⁶⁶ In October 2016 Europol communicated about another successful joint effort by the German, Romanian and Irish police. The investigation uncovered 197 offences linked to 44 suspects. The effort also revealed crucial intelligence about their modus operandi and ways to transfer money and stolen goods back home.⁶⁷

c. Joint Actions against organised pickpocketing

Next to the joint investigations, police authorities from different Member States also cooperate through Joint Actions against organised pickpocketing. Director of Europol, Rob Wainwright, says:

“Organised crime has many faces. What sometimes seems just an example of petty crime is often part of a larger conspiracy orchestrated by international criminal networks. Europol has been pleased to support the EU countries involved in this case by using its intelligence capabilities and coordination services to identify the pan-European network behind these crimes committed all over Europe.”⁶⁸

Operation Festival was initiated and organised by Munich Police Headquarters. Until today, the Single Point of Contact for pickpocketing in Germany (SPOC Pickpocketing) is managed by Munich Police, which is responsible for the operation. OP Festival was presented at the 2014 International Pickpocketing Conference (see further). The operation served as a good example of the benefits of quick and multilateral exchange of intelligence, targeting specialised gangs who seek out festivals and other crowded venues to commit a crime. For big events it is very unlikely that a police force is big enough or has enough specialised police officers to be able to adequately handle an event of that size. Therefore one of the recommendations of Europol is to cooperate with other countries.

⁶⁵ EUROPOL (2016), *10 arrests in international pickpocketing case*,

[WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/10-arrests-in-international-pickpocketing-case>

⁶⁶ EUROPOL, *18 arrests in international human trafficking operation*,

[WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/18-arrests-in-international-human-trafficking-operation>

⁶⁷ EUROPOL (2016), *10 arrests in international pickpocketing case*,

[WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/10-arrests-in-international-pickpocketing-case>

⁶⁸ EUROPOL (2014), *International action against mobile phone thieves*,

[WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/international-action-against-mobile-phone-thieves>

⁶⁹ EUROPOL (2014), *Experts gather for conference on international pickpocketing gangs*,

[WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/experts-gather-for-conference-international-pickpocketing-gangs>

For example in Belgium, during the “Gentse Feesten”⁷⁰, the Ghent police department welcomes police officers from the Netherlands. Also from Belgian national level specialised teams are seconded. Another example is the Oktoberfest in Munich. Every year Munich Police welcomes police forces from Austria, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Spain, Hungary, Italy, France and other part of Germany. These forces support the local officers for two weeks during the event.

Festivals are an important topic to focus on. Because of its characteristics (large crowd, people standing close to each other, alcohol consumption, relaxed state of mind...), this hotspot is a paradise for pickpockets. A close cooperation is necessary to get an overview of what is happening with regards to pickpocketing in the world of festivals. Thanks to operational information sharing, police knows that rock concerts are targeted the most. Bands such as AC/DC and Slipknot seem to especially attract professional pickpocketing gangs.⁷¹

From this knowledge the early warnings were devised. Mobile OCGs dare to follow a band during their tour throughout Europe or simply attack one major music event after another during the festival season. In Norway, for example, police authorities caught a group of pickpockets that had tickets for the whole European tour of a rock music band. When police forces are faced with a wave of pickpocketing cases during a festival, they can warn the police authorities of the country where the band will be performing next. The early warnings can contain information such as photo's, identities and the used modus operandi.⁷²

Thanks to Operation Festival, police officers specialised in pickpocketing were able to create an outstanding information network (see infra). It is key to understand how pickpocketing gang members work together.

In March 2014 during a European day of action and under the auspices of Operation Ringtone, coordinated police operations have taken place in 8 EU Member States⁷³ against individuals and gangs behind the theft of smartphones. It resulted in the arrest of 213 individuals, the identification of 120 more. Also 2 401 mobile phones were seized.⁷⁴

An example of a pickpocketing technique at festivals

A pickpocket pretends to collect plastic cups in order to exchange them later for vouchers. However his real intention is to look around for easy and valuable targets. Under the pretence of collecting plastic cups, the pickpocket gets away with searching on the ground, mingling in a group of people... This information on easy targets is then shared with another gang member.

⁷⁰ The “Gentse Feesten” has grown to one of the biggest cultural festivals in Europe with national and international artists, free music on more than ten squares, animation for children and hundreds of activities inside building and in the outdoors. The total surface is 765 000 m².

Since the start in 1843, the “Gentse Feesten” have always been free to enter.

⁷¹ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Romania and the United Kingdom.

⁷⁴ EUROPOL (2014), *International action against mobile phone thieves*, [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/international-action-against-mobile-phone-thieves>

A last example is **Operation Spiderweb**, which was initiated in 2011 in response to the upcoming Olympic Games in London in 2012. The goal of the operation was to stop pickpocketing in and around public transport. The reasoning is that the public transport network would be busier than usual. A joint investigation team was established between the London Metropolitan Police and Bulgaria. During the Olympic Games, Bulgarian police officers assisted the Metropolitan Police.⁷⁵ According to police statistics, theft and pickpocketing on the London transport network have seen a 14% reduction in the six months following the launch of Operation Spiderweb.⁷⁶

d. Pickpocketing Expert Network

The Europol Information System (EIS), as described before, is very valuable and crucial in the fight against organised pickpocketing groups. When a pickpocket is caught in the act, it is important for the investigating police officer to have information from other Member States as soon as possible. At that moment in the investigation the officer needs to know whether the suspect is known in other cities around Europe under other names, whether the suspect has been arrested for pickpocketing in other Member States, whether the suspect is a minor or not and whether other police authorities might have proof of this, whether it is true when one individual claims not to know the other together with whom he was arrested, whether police authorities have information on used *modus operandi* and so on. The police investigator concerned with organised pickpocketing needs this information and intelligence to build his case, and not the least to argue to the prosecutor that it concerns organised crime, and not mere petty pickpocketing.

The EIS on itself is a database that is very fast to tap into and is accessible 24/7. However there are **two main problems** for law enforcement officers.

First, the **EIS receives insufficient data** by the Member States. The input from the several Member States happens according to national protocols that differ as a consequence one national police authority provides more information than another. Next to this, available technology leads to an unequal and incomplete input. Police authorities with automatic data loaders will be much faster than those who have to put in the data manually. Additionally, the intelligence shared with Europol, in the context of a request, can be coded and therefore not available for other police authorities. Last, but not least; **pickpocketing is not viewed as a priority, therefore information sharing efforts will be accordingly.**

Second, information from the EIS is requested through two official channels: a letter rogatory or SIENA. SIENA can be seen as a secure 'Outlook' for the police. This is not monitored 24/7, therefore receiving the answer to a request can take up to a few weeks. Consequently, tapping into the EIS **through SIENA or a letter rogatory is not suitable for fast information exchange** for example in the case of an arrest.

⁷⁵ DEN BREEJEN, M. (2014), Big brother in de bus, *Blauw* nr. 7, 44-47.

⁷⁶ Transport for London (2012), *Spiderweb reduces theft on London transport by 14 per cent*,

[WWW] <https://tfl.gov.uk/info-for/media/press-releases/2012/march/spiderweb-reduces-theft-on-london-transport-by-14-per-cent>

“Anyway, EIS is important to use for your investigations. However to get someone in jail after being caught red handed, in order to get a few days’ time for your investigation, SIENA⁷⁷ is too slow. In the weekend and after 5 pm you won’t get any information anymore. It is possible that you have to wait for five months to get all your required information.”⁷⁸

For the reasons mentioned above, the need for a **Pickpocketing Expert Network** rose: a network of experts in the field of pickpocketing from 20 different countries. Although most are EU Member States, also non-EU Member States participate in the network, whereof Switzerland is a much appreciated partner. There are **approximately a thousand police officers, all specialized in pickpocketing** active in the network. A police officer can spontaneously share information or can ask for information within the network. All the information send over the network is stored in a database in Munich. Consequently, each police officer, who is member of the network, can ask to tap into this information.⁷⁹

An important difference between EIS and the Pickpocketing Expert Network is that the focal point of the network is solely pickpocketing. The success of the network can be explained by the **common goal** that has a **high priority** for every member: sharing information on pickpocketing so that the OCGs can be brought to a stop. Every member is willing to cooperate. Another strong point of the network is that the police officer does not have to follow a slow hierarchical road. He is not contacting a Member State or a police department, but he has **direct contact** with the pickpocketing experts he needs. He is capable of sending a picture to a thousand specialised police officers who will come back to him with all relevant information such as used aliases, ID cards, known company... However, important to note is that the network and the information that it shares, are informal. The information in the official case file must be acquired through one of the official channels: SIENA or a rogatory letter.⁸⁰

e. International Pickpocketing Conferences

It is generally accepted that pickpocketing is no longer just a local phenomenon but is regularly organised by highly professional mobile OCGs that move from city to city and from country to country within a short period of time. Consequent to this fact the Munich Police in Germany initiated and invited Europol to host and support an international pickpocketing conference from 13 to 15 May 2013⁸¹ at its headquarters in The Hague. 19 countries⁸² were represented through their police authorities. The aim of this International Pickpocketing conference was to strengthen international cooperation to combat highly-organised pickpocketing.

⁷⁷ Secure Information Exchange Network Application, is a state-of-the-art platform that meets the communication needs of EU law enforcement. SIENA ensure the secure exchange of sensitive and restricted information. [WWW]

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/services-support/information-exchange/secure-information-exchange-network-application-siena>

⁷⁸ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ The event in 2013 was not the first in its kind, but was the first conference organised by Munich Police Headquarters at the venue of Europol, The Hague.

⁸² Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

All participants reported a strong increase in pickpocketing during major events, especially in metropolitan areas. And so the need for the conference was confirmed. Fruitful exchange of experiences, presentations of results of successful Joint Investigation Teams and a sharing of intelligence took place at the conference.⁸³

Follow-up conference took place in 2014, 2015 and 2016. During these conferences participants agreed to further strengthen their existing network for sharing intelligence (Pickpocketing Expert Network) and to broadly use simplified reporting templates involving Europol in the procedure. Finally it was generally emphasised and agreed that it is absolutely crucial to share data via Europol to get a full picture of the phenomenon. There are plans for another conference in 2018.

f. EUCPN as Co-Driver on the preventive action for organised property crime

As mentioned before, one of the nine priorities for the **2014-2017 EU policy cycle** was the combat against organised property crime committed by mobile OCGs, such as robberies (including armed robberies), burglaries, organised shoplifting and pickpocketing, cash-machine and cash-in-transit attacks and the theft of a range of high-value items.⁸⁴

Organised property crime is again one of the priorities during the **2018-2021 EU policy cycle**. Even more importantly, **crime prevention** has become a **horizontal goal across all priorities**. The EUCPN has offered its services and expertise for a preventive action for two priorities: organised property crime and trafficking in human beings. In addition to this, the EUCPN is also a partner for cybercrime (child sexual exploitation).

During the Board meeting of the EUCPN in December 2017, hosted by the Estonian Presidency in Tallinn, it was decided that the network will develop a **prevention campaign on pickpocketing**. The campaign will be aimed at **mass events**, since most Member States do not have a national campaign on this topic. The EUCPN will develop three awareness raising animation videos; for the World Cup, public transport and festivals. The campaign will be launched during the World Cup 2018.⁸⁵



⁸³ EUROPOL (2013), Europol hosts international pickpocketing conference, [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/europol-hosts-international-pick-pocketing-conference>

⁸⁴ EUROPOL, EU Policy Cycle – EMPACT, [WWW] <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/eu-policy-cycle-empact>

⁸⁵ EUCPN board meeting, December 2017, Tallinn.

4. CONCLUSION

Pickpocketing is the unnoticed theft of items that are carried on the body of the victim. Although it is often described as an 'art', the consequences are severe. On an individual level it leads to financial loss and a troublesome process of replacing the stolen items. On a community level pickpocketing leads to the increase of feelings of insecurity. On a national level the bad image of a big city might hurt tourism.

Getting an insight into the prevalence of pickpocketing is not easy because of the high dark number. The rate of non-reporting is high and pickpocketing often finds itself hidden in official crime statistics underneath other crime phenomena such as theft or loss of personal property. We have learned that the hotspots are the locations where big groups of people are present. Timing-wise, the same rule is at play. Rush hour and big public events such as sport games, music concerts or religious celebrations attract pickpockets. Except for two Member States, most point out that mobile OCGs are responsible for the largest part of pickpocketing incidences in their country.

It is important to keep in mind that pickpocketing and mobile OCGs are intrinsically linked. Behind every pickpocket, there is - more often than not - an entire pickpocketing gang. Because these groups cross borders and spread their activities across several countries there is a need for an international plan of attack.

The phenomenon of mobile OCGs is nothing new, however the problem is getting more substantial. During the last decennium there have been several developments on policy level in the EU regarding mobile OCGs. The Council Framework Decision 2008/JHA on the fight against organised crime was adopted. This Framework Decision aims to (1) criminalise offences linked to participation in a criminal organisation and to (2) harmonise EU Member States' laws on the criminalisation of these offences and lays down penalties for them.

Additionally, there are several activities and forms of cooperation that support the fight against pickpocketing such as the Europol Information System, the Analysis Project Furtum, the Pickpocketing Expert Network, the recurring International Pickpocketing Conferences and an EU-wide pickpocketing prevention campaign by the EUCPN.

We can conclude that efforts are made for an effective approach with the EU in the fight against pickpocketing mobile OCGs. However neither the EU, EU institutions nor Member States can rest on their laurels. Prevalence data show that some Member States are still facing high and even increasing numbers of pickpocketing incidences, which indicates that mobile OCGs have not ceased their alarming activities.

Part 2

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO PICK-POCKETING

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH TO PICKPOCKETING

1. TWO TRACKS TO FOLLOW TOWARDS A SUCCESSFUL APPROACH OF PICKPOCKETING

Pickpocketing is, just as other crime phenomena more complex than meets the eye. It is **overall not viewed as a priority**. It has the perception of being a petty crime, and the scale and damage done is underestimated. Indeed, one incidence of pickpocketing may be only a relatively small financial loss. However, professionally organised pickpocketing gangs make a lot of victims each day. As long as this organised crime aspect is not acknowledged, it will be very hard to fight pickpocketing in an effective way.

Additionally, these crime groups are not only well organised, they are also very mobile. With great ease one city after another is attacked and state borders are no barriers. Therefore **international cooperation is crucial**.

It might be surprising to discover an emphasis on police and the judicial side in this part of the toolbox. When taking a closer look to the phenomenon, it became clear that prevention in terms of **raising awareness is crucial**, however it is in itself not able to prevent pickpocketing because of its organised and mobile nature. An additional '**prevention through a good working repression**' makes the preventive approach complete. The workshop⁸⁶ resulted in the belief that a successful approach to the prevention of organised pickpocketing should therefore be situated on two tracks.⁸⁷

The first track consists of a pickpocketing prevention campaign that is thoroughly prepared. The goal should be to raise awareness and to learn the public how not to fall victim to this crime. The second track is all about cooperation. **Cooperation** across borders and cooperation across police and judicial entities. Without a consequent and effective policy against pickpocketing a sense of impunity will prevail and impunity has a strong attraction to mobile OCGs. A first step to a consequent and effective policy is to recognise pickpocketing as the organised crime that it is. We should keep in mind that - more often than not - there is an entire professional network behind a single pickpocket.

1.1. First Track: Concrete recommendations for a successful pickpocketing prevention campaign

a. Know what you are dealing with

The first step in approaching any topic, is getting to know it. It is important for European, national and local policymakers and practitioners to know what they are dealing with before making important decisions. Eventually, **this knowledge will guide policymakers and practitioners and will give form to the prevention project or campaign**.

⁸⁶ The EUCPN Secretariat organised a workshop to formulate recommendations on the prevention of pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs. The workshop took place in Brussels on 23 January 2018. Seven experts from police and municipality participated and shared their insights and experiences.

⁸⁷ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN dE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

In the case of pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs it is relevant to collect following information pieces of the puzzle, in order to get a rich image of the phenomenon.

What is the prevalence of pickpocketing? Official crime statistics based on police data give a general direction about the volume of pickpocketing cases. Although these official crime statistics are a reliable source, it is necessary to take into account some disadvantages. Pickpocketing is often hidden away in a more general category such as theft or is registered as loss of a personal item. Additionally, the dark number is quite high as explained before. Therefore, it is recommended to retrieve data from victim surveys, as this will give a more complete view on the size of the problem. Next to this, it might be very informative to compare the prevalence numbers with other similar cities in your country and abroad.

What is the damage caused? The damage done by pickpocketing is often underestimated because one incidence often only reflects a relatively small financial loss. However, when all estimated value of stolen cash, smartphones etc. is added up per month or year, this will lead to another perspective. For example, official statistics in Germany showed that in 2016 for approximately € 51,5 million financial damage was done by pickpockets. High numbers of financial damage may be an argument to convince potential partners of the gravity of organised pickpocketing.

Where are the hotspots and when are the prominent timings? The different kinds of public spaces in cities have various functionalities. The typical hotspot for pickpocketing is a location where space and time bring together a crowd of potential victims. Each city has its own characteristics and therefore their own typical hotspots and prominent timings. This information is crucial in the message of the prevention campaign.

Who is the perpetrator? Some characteristics of the perpetrator could be interesting to collect. It is of great importance whether he or she is a 'lone wolf' or a member of a mobile OCG. The preventive measures differ when taking an offender-oriented approach. Also when dealing with mobile OCG, a profound and cooperative approach across borders will be necessary, next to an awareness raising campaign at a more local level.

What are common *modus operandi*? Professional pickpockets often specialise in specific hotspots: escalators, public transport, festivals, pedestrian zone... Police authorities have already collected a wide repertoire of popular techniques implemented by pickpockets to steal from their targets. Some examples are the blocking trick⁸⁸, escalator trick⁸⁹, city map trick⁹⁰...⁹¹

Who is targeted? It is useful to get an idea of the profile of the victims. Try to comprehend why they are targeted, what 'weaknesses' are attractive for pickpockets.

⁸⁸ Blocking Trick: the pickpocket suddenly places himself directly in front of you blocking your way or hinders your entry onto public transport, such as a bus or train. A second and/or third accomplice presses up behind you and robs you.

⁸⁹ Escalator Trick: the thief hits the emergency button on an escalator so that it stops suddenly. Taking advantage of the confusion, you are pushed by the second and/ or third accomplice and robbed.

⁹⁰ City Map Trick: the pickpocket has a map and stops you to ask for directions. While you are focusing on the map and providing directions, he robs you.

⁹¹ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

This information is also very important to understand who your target group is for the prevention campaign (tourists, the elderly...).

b. Prevention is not a one-man-show

A common denominator for good practices of crime prevention is the **use of several partners or stakeholders**, and so it should be regarded as a golden rule.

First of all, it is important to identify as many stakeholders as needed. When you start a campaign, a cooperation between the several relevant actors must be established. When bundling the resources there is a synergy that could be reached. It is more desirable to have one campaign communicating the same message, and thus **avoiding several different pickpocketing prevention campaigns running parallel**, which all originate from a different actor. Across the prevention campaigns that we collected in this toolbox common partners were public transport, several government agencies, police, media, retail networks, catering industry, tourist offices and so on.

Moreover, **think outside the box** when looking for partners. There is much room for improvement when it comes to the **public-private cooperation**. Project Boefproof in the Netherlands is a textbook example of this. A first partnership with Samsung, quickly expanded to partnerships with several smartphone manufacturers.⁹² This public-private cooperation is important because the private sector might have priceless information to share thanks to their own technology and safety professionals. Additionally safety in and around restaurants, bars, shops, banks... is a good motivation to partner up, they will themselves benefit from a reduction in both pickpocketing as in general feelings of unsafety amongst customers.



Boefproof: a good example of a public-private cooperation

Boefproof is part of a national awareness campaign for prevention called 'Do not make it too easy'. Mobile phones were overrepresented when it comes to the loot of mugging and pickpocketing. The campaign focusses on activating or installing an anti-theft feature on a mobile device, making it remotely blockable. As a result the stolen device becomes worthless for thieves and impossible to sell. It started off initially as a collaboration with Samsung, but soon other private parties joined. The participating companies are both hardware manufacturers and providers. Participating manufacturers include: - Microsoft Netherlands - Samsung Electronics Benelux - Apple Inc., - Dell Technologies, - HP Netherlands, - Sony Mobile Communications, - Huawei Technologies (Netherlands) B.V.

⁹² EUCPN (2014), *ECPA entry by the Netherlands*, [WWW] http://eucpn.org/sites/default/files/content/download/files/gp_ecpa_2017_nl_boefproof.pdf

Next to this, partnering up with stakeholders has the benefit that each actor has its own strengths and perhaps **in-house expertise, resources and contacts** that can be applied to the prevention project.

“For example in Ghent we have someone with the function of ‘horeca-coach’⁹³ who works for the city. His job is to check if all bars, restaurants and hotels are following the regulations. For this prevention purposes this position is valuable, because he is a single point of contact for all these locations. When a wave of pickpocketing occurs in the weekend, the police warns the ‘horeca-coach’ who will in his turn warn all potential targets”.⁹⁴

Involving multiple stakeholders brings several added values. A good dissemination of the campaign is crucial. Some stakeholders can offer **otherwise unavailable or harder to reach locations** for posters. For pickpocketing, actors who operate at hotspots, such as public transportation, shop and bar owners... are interesting partners. Not only for physical locations, but also online it is important to find the right publicity space. Stakeholders may help to reach the target group through social media channels. The use of influence is a potential channel to reach a target group through social media.

Furthermore, **financing** is another more obvious benefit. Funding is often an obstacle for preventive measures. To start a campaign you either need a lot of funding or have a lot of partners to share the campaign with. If each partner contributes a little, their financial aid does not have to be much and could be limited to printing costs for example.

Finally, all stakeholders must have the same objective: preventing and reducing pickpocketing. It is therefore recommended to hold a kind of **kick-off meeting** with all stakeholders to align objectives and expectations. For evaluative purposes afterwards, it might be interesting to keep close contact with them. What were their experiences? What reactions did they receive from the public? Did they notice a change in behaviour, a reduction of pickpocketing incidences? What improvements could be made in the future?

⁹³ Which can be translated as a coach of the catering industry.

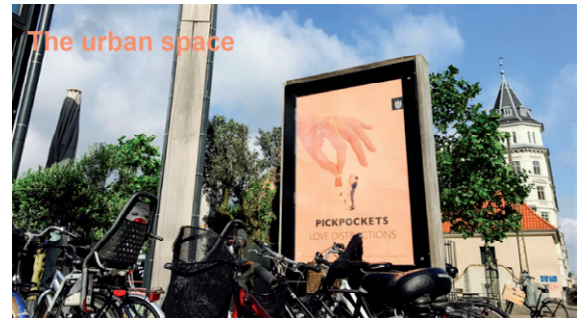
⁹⁴ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBIJCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

c. Get the right message across to your target group

The right message

According to the experts in the workshop, the content of the message of a pickpocketing prevention campaign ideally serves one or both of below purposes:

1. to **raise awareness** amongst the general public and amongst the targeted demographic group that professionally organised pickpocketing groups are indeed active in their social environment
2. to educate the public on how not to fall victim to pickpockets by **educating** them **on commonly used techniques** so that they can be aware of a potentially risky situation. For example spilling a drink on your cloths, asking for directions with a big map, hugging mugger, ...



It is essential that the message does comes across as **not too frightening**. This is a difficult balancing act that is worth doing for two reasons. First of all one does not want to increase feelings of insecurity, certainly not when the goal of the campaign is to prevent people from falling victim to pickpocketing. This would be an unwelcome side effect. Secondly, one would not like to damage the brand or general image of the city. This has a strong importance in the context of tourism. As mentioned earlier some European cities are branded as high-risk pickpocketing destinations.

A recommendation to make the message less frightening and more accessible, is to **apply a good sense of humour**. When handled correctly, it should not take away at the purpose of the message.

“At a previous pickpocketing conference a Dutch colleague told about their campaign during the Gay Pride, showing how humour is important. The catch phrase of that campaign was ‘Pickpockets love pikken’. In the Dutch language the word pikken has a double meaning of male genitalia and of stealing.”⁹⁵

Finally, it is recommended to make the campaign as visually attractive as possible. Dare to go for a look-and-feel that is modern and appealing. For example, in the ‘Pickpockets Love Distractions’-project in Copenhagen they worked with pink colours that show the feeling of summer and make it attractive.

However, it is also important to keep in mind that if it is expected from stakeholders to help distribute the pickpocketing prevention campaign, stakeholders must be willing to share. As mentioned, it should not be frightening and should be attractive, and additionally it is important to take into account that the pickpocketing prevention campaign should be **suitable for all locations**, also the more elegant or classy ones.

⁹⁵ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

“A few years ago we did a campaign against young people carrying knives in the night life. It is a more serious topic, and it was a barrier for pub owners to share the campaign because they do not want the image of being a dangerous place where a lot of people carry knives. We were very aware of the impact on the image of a place when creating the campaign.”⁹⁶

Get it across

The **classic paper medium** (poster, flyers...) still has its merits. This is especially true when it comes to pickpocketing because it is a crime that happens in broad daylight in the streets. For this, known hotspots are interesting to distribute campaign material.



Stakeholders willing to distribute the campaign material will increase the visibility, especially if they can open up otherwise unavailable or hard to reach locations. It might be rewarding to use uncommon items besides posters and flyers: post cards, balloons, smartphone-shaped tissue boxes, shopping bags, candy...

Another important channel to get the message across is **conversation**. The police officers, or any other actor, should be doing more than merely distributing flyers. It is important that also a short conversation is started about pickpocketing and how one can prevent becoming a victim. This will leave a greater impact than a flyer because there are so many handed out for so many reasons. An idea is to **use gadgets** such as the ones listed above as conversations starters.

In Berlin, police hands out little bells as a conversation starter. These bells should be attached to valuables such as a wallet, purse or smartphone. Another example is how in Warsaw, police attach stickers to the belongings that are carried in a careless way. The sticker reads ‘You have been caught by the police, do not get caught by a thief.’

Nowadays, it is impossible to imagine any prevention campaign without including **online publicity spaces and social media channels** (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram...). Again it is strongly recommended to use the stakeholders because their websites and social media channels can reach more people. Even better if these stakeholders are well known amongst your target group. When going digital, there are more possibilities than mere visuals such as posters. One can develop video’s, blogs...

A final recommendation are the **real-time warnings**. This deservedly already often used method consists of pre-recorded messages that warn travellers for active pickpockets in spaces for public transport. This idea of real-time warnings could also be implemented in the catering industry. As described before, the Ghent ‘horeca coach’ is a good practice for warning hotels, restaurants and bars.

⁹⁶ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018⁹⁶ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

To your target group

Finally, it is suggested to **think outside the box to reach the target group** and adapt the message and the medium accordingly. Of course, to be able to do this, it is crucial that the first step (1. Know what you are dealing with) is executed. For example, in Copenhagen (project 'Pickpockets Love Distraction') they learned during the preparations that an important target group were young (female) Copenhageners. Therefore, they used popular bloggers, and of course their strong social media networks such as Instagram with the many followers to successfully reach this public. An additional criteria used for selecting the right **influencers** was that these women themselves have fallen victim to pickpocketing before, so that they could tell a personal story and show genuine involvement. This is a good example of how to reach the target group in a better way than the classic and sometimes rather chippy posters and flyers.

Danish project 'Pickpockets Love Distractions'

Social media: Our bloggers

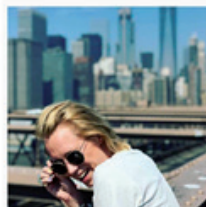
Between 20,000 and 50,000 followers on blogs as well as Instagram and Facebook



BitteBitte



Amalie Wessel



LauLauBauBau



Most of the projects discussed here and further are victim oriented. A suggestion made by our experts is to deviate from this classic target group and to **warn potential offenders** to stay away and to be aware of the consequences of being caught. In many cases, a way to do this is to send a message to the news channels of the country of origin that a pickpocketing mobile OCG or a member thereof is convicted. By **spreading the word that pickpocketing will no longer be tolerated**, pickpockets may be deterred.

d. Be aware: a big event is paradise for pickpocketing gangs

Big events, such as music concerts and sports events, attract a large crowd and at the same time attract professional pickpocketing gangs. Police authorities have learned through their operational intelligence that some mobile OCGs actually specialise themselves in attacking music festivals. These pickpockets understand the context of these events and have **perfected their modus operandi accordingly**. Additionally, one should keep in mind that especially hard rock music concerts seem to be very popular amongst pickpockets. Police authorities have learned that mobile OCGs buy tickets for the entire European tour, and thus follow a certain band from one European city to another. This knowledge clearly underlines the risk and thus the need to be extra cautious when big events such as the 'Gentse Feesten' in Belgium, Munich's Oktoberfest in Germany... are organised.

A first, more general, piece of advice is that for event organisers, and sometimes also for police authorities, **pickpocketing should be higher on their agenda**. It is important for these actors to think broader than the classic description of safety and security, such as fire safety, crowd control, intoxication... during mass events because pickpockets also pose a real threat.

Unfortunately, the threat is often not top of mind when there is not a **specialised pickpocketing team** in the police force. Police forces who lack specialisation on the topic, because of their size or because of being located at areas where big events are rather exceptional, should not hesitate to ask for cooperation from police groups from bigger cities who might have a specialist team on pickpocketing. These specialist teams have their value. Their knowledge regarding modus operandi and known perpetrators is very important.

An idea to have pickpocketing higher on the agenda is by adding a chapter ‘What to do with criminal offences?’ in the script for big events. If possible actions and reactions to crime during the event are talked through, it will lead to a more effective approach. This is especially the case if a **cooperation** is established between several actors, such as **private security agents, the police force and the judicial side**. (See the second track for more about this cooperation.)

As mentioned before, these pickpockets are often professional and thus repeated offenders. As a consequence, their identity and faces are often known to the police. So another idea to prevent pickpocketing during mass events, it to **prevent** these **known pickpockets from entering the event** in the first place. A first option is to use a **picture book** of all known pickpockets. This picture book can be ideally created with the input from several police forces from several European countries. These picture books have their value because pickpockets are professional and will seldom look suspicious, therefore event organisers would not notice them. Now they can be recognised and sent away, or followed inside at the event. Another option is to use ‘**super recognisers**’. Scientific research has shown that 1-2% of the population, and thus also of any given police force, are exceptionally good at recognising faces. These people can be used at the entrance of a mass event. It is estimated they work up to a 100 times more efficient than facial recognition software.⁹⁷ Another benefit is that these people are already part of the police force, they just have to be ‘discovered’. There are online assessment tests to find out whether or not someone is suited. The Munich police has started a ‘super recogniser’ project in their police force.⁹⁸ The disadvantage of **facial recognition software** is not only that it is less effective, it is also a much more expensive and thus less likely to be implemented for pickpocketing which is not at all viewed as a priority crime in each Member State.

Finally, another idea is a **cashless event**. By taking away one of the main targets for pickpockets, the incidence or at least the damage done will decrease. The idea is that visitors can buy a payment card specially dedicated to that event. Money is uploaded to that card and can only be spent at the event itself. This will allow visitors to carry little to no cash, which is not attractive for pickpockets.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ BOBAK, A., HANCOCK, P. and BATE S. (2015), Super-recognisers in Action: Evidence from Face-matching and Face Memory Tasks, *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, [WWW] <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/acp.3170/full>

⁹⁸ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

e. Other remarks

A good pickpocketing prevention project **can be relatively cheap**. The main thing is to think about potential partners and to pay a lot of attention to the message and how to communicate it. An example of this can be found in the Belgian university city of Leuven. There is a particular street full of bars which is evidently a hotspot for pickpocketing. The police of Leuven cooperated with the bar personnel. The waiters of each bar in that street wore a t-shirt with the inscription: 'Pickpockets love to go out, and preferably on your expenses'. It was a very successful and effective campaign because bar visitors, the target group, read the message and were made aware of the potential risk. Additionally, the message contains humour. All of this was achieved with the limited cost of printed t-shirts.¹⁰⁰

However, having said that a good preventive measure can be cheap, it is a **pitfall** to **create a last minute project** just because the budget must be spent in order to receive a full new budget the next year. It remains important to be cautious not to have potential negative side effects, such as frightening the target group and damaging the brand of the city on account of not thoroughly thinking through the campaign. A good prevention project always requires a good preparation.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

PICKPOCKETING

How to set up a successful prevention campaign



STEP #1 *Know what you are dealing with*

- Prevalence
- Damage caused
- Hotspots and prominent timing
- Perpetrator profile
- Modus Operandi
- Victim profile



STEP #2 *Prevention is not a one-man-show*

- Use several partners or stakeholders
- Think outside the box to find them
- Public-private cooperation



STEP #3 *Get the right message across to your target group*

- Raise awareness
- Educate on commonly used pickpocketing techniques
- Classic paper medium
- Gadgets as conversation starters
- Websites and social media channels
- Real-time warnings
- Think outside the box to reach them
- Warn potential offenders



STEP #4 *Be aware: a big event is paradise for pickpocketing gangs*

- Some pickpocketing gangs are specialised in big events
- Put pickpocketing higher on the event organiser's agenda
- Specialised pickpocketing team in police force
- Cooperation between private security, police and justice
- Prevent known pickpockets from entering the event

1.2. Second Track: Crucial need for a cross-border and cross-entity cooperation and information sharing

The common thread of the second track is one of prevention through a good working repression that is established by strong cooperation. Experts warn to ***never let the perception of impunity prevail***. If mobile OCGs know that getting caught for pickpocketing will have no repercussions, the word gets out quickly and many pickpocketing gangs will be active in that area. Also the opposite is true: news spreads quickly amongst pickpocketing networks about where it is dangerous for pickpocketing activities because the punishments are severe and/or because the police is very active and thorough when it comes to pickpocketing. The use of the deterring effect of a strict criminal policy seems to work in the case of pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs.

For example, among Romanian pickpockets, news travelled quickly that Denmark is coming down hard on pickpockets. The pickpocket is arrested on the basis of being a foreigner that committed a crime, imprisoned and later expelled from the country. Another example is the city of Munich that has a strict judicial punishment for pickpocketing. It might be called prevention from judicial side; when a professional pickpocket with ties to a mobile OCG is found guilty, he will go to jail. As a consequence, professional pickpockets even stay away from Oktoberfest, which should be paradise for them.

“But we do have a different kind of prevention. [...] Berlin has 3.5 million people and about 44.000 cases every year. In Barcelona: 120 000-140 000 cases and has about 1,5 million habitants with a lot of tourists of course. Munich also has about 1,5 million habitants. [...]. We have Oktoberfest with 6 million visitors in just two weeks, that is a paradise for pickpockets [...] and we also have the most frequented pedestrian zone from all over Germany. And even so, in Munich we only have 3 500 cases of pickpocketing each year. The reason for this is very simple, not only police work and prevention, but [...] we have a different kind of prevention and that is prevention from the judicial side.”¹⁰²

An unfortunate consequence of some places in Europe carrying the perception of impunity and others carrying the perception of coming down hard is the ***waterbed effect***. This is the theory that by exercising pressure at one location will lead to a decrease there, but to an increase elsewhere and resulting in the same volume of incidences.¹⁰³ An ***ideal solution*** to prevent the waterbed effect and to effectively prevent and reduce pickpocketing by mobile OCGs is to present ***a united European front*** that recognises it as the organised crime that it is and makes efforts to establish an effective repression.

There are arguments for ***harmonisation*** of policy in EU Member States regarding OCGs. In a globalised world, where borders and barriers amongst different Member States, with different legal systems increasingly fade out, organised crime may take advantage of the new opportunities that these changes provide. By investing in the harmonisation of criminal legislation the creation of safe havens for mobile OCGs may be prevented.

¹⁰² Workshop organised by EUCPN with pickpocketing experts BELLING, B., FÖRDER, P., JØRUM, T., ŞERBAN, C., VANKEIRSBILCK, A., VAN DE WYNKELE, P. and VILLANUEVA GUIJARRO, M.A., Brussels, 23 January 2018.

¹⁰³ BERNASCO, W., ELFFERS, H. & BRUINSMA, G. (2006), Het waterbedeffect. Ruimtelijke neveneffecten van plaatsgebonden maatregelen tegen criminaliteit consulted, *Tijdschrift voor Criminologie* 48(3), 243-258
[WWW] <http://www.wimbernasco.nl/Manuscripts/Nederlands/BernascoElffersBruinsma2006b.pdf>

Harmonisation is crucial to effectively counter organised crime and to avoid its displacement toward Member States where the criminal law system (police and judicial side) are less capable or less prepared to tackle it because of the set priorities.¹⁰⁴

It is self-explanatory that cooperation is needed **across borders** in order to tackle internationally organised crime groups because they move effortlessly from country to country. We have mentioned some efforts regarding this cross-border cooperation and information sharing: Europol Information System, Analysis Project Furtum, Joint Actions, Pickpocketing Expert Network, International Pickpocketing conferences,... However, what is less evident and fewer examples thereof are to be found is the **cooperation between police and the judicial side**. Nevertheless, this plays a key role in an effective repression and prevention because the endeavours regarding pickpocketing do not end at an arrest. Prosecutors must find it worthwhile to continue the case and bring it in front of a judge and the judge must find it worthwhile to impose a strict enough punishment. Unfortunately pickpocketing is treated as a petty crime in most EU Member States with the consequence that a conviction and penalisation are rare. According to our experts, there is room for improvement when it comes to raising awareness about the organised crime aspect behind pickpocketing and the need for convictions to deter pickpocketing gangs.

It must be emphasized that a strong and effective prevention through repression is **only possible because of an efficient exchange of information**. Police officers need fast information to proof ties with a mobile OCG so that the prosecutor may be convinced. Here the EIS and the Pickpocketing Expert Network play their crucial role.¹⁰⁵

An example of how the police and judicial side can have a fruitful cooperation can be found in Belgium. Although this illustration resides within the context of drugs at festivals, it might be inspirational for pickpocketing too. The success lies in the fact that all relevant actors have the same priorities in mind and approach it in the same way: ¹⁰⁶

A cooperative approach to drugs at hardstyle festival 'The Qontinent'

In Belgium, police and prosecutors designed a cooperation where it is decided up front how infringements on the drug law will be dealt with during music festivals. Visitors holding on to a certain amount of drugs are fined with a settlement that has to be paid there and then. For the more severe cases, the police has a direct communication line with the prosecutor to give the right consequence to each case individually. At 'The Qontinent' in 2015, Belgium police collected a total of €38 570 in direct settlements.

¹⁰⁴ CALDERONI, F. (2010), *Organized Crime Legislation in the European Union Harmonization and Approximation of Criminal Law, National Legislations and the EU Framework Decision on the Fight Against Organized Crime*, Berlin: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg.

¹⁰⁵ See part 1 page 23 (3.a.) and page 27 (3.d.) of this toolbox.

¹⁰⁶ Local Police Puyenbroeck (2015), *Festival The Qontinent*,
[WWW] <http://www.lokalepolitie.be/5416/home/76-nieuws/219-persbericht-festival-the-qontinent.html>

2. DRIVERS AND BARRIERS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO CREATE A PICKPOCKETING PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

During the workshop we have concluded that local authorities are at an ideal position to work on the prevention of pickpocketing. Therefore, it is interesting to take a look at the elements that could drive a local authority to create a pickpocketing prevention campaign, and which elements form rather a barrier to do so.

There are several arguments that could help convince local authorities to take preventive action against pickpocketing. First of all, there should be a clear image of the problem. Not only the number of incidences, but also the damage and the value that was stolen. These numbers reflect the ***impact of pickpocketing*** and could serve as an ***eye-opener*** for policymakers. Another argument that could help drive a local authority to prevention is the ***safeguarding of tourism*** and with it the ***international image*** a city has. Because as described before, tourists are a heavily targeted group.

At the other side a ***lack of resources*** could form a barrier. Although a good prevention campaign can be realised with limited resources, money is an argument to take no action. A lack of funding can also impede the construction of a much needed analyses of the pickpocketing problem. Conducting a survey to probe for feelings of insecurity and to ask about victimisation, is an expensive step. Next to this the ***lack of political will*** is another barrier as long as pickpocketing is not viewed the organised crime it is.

3. CONCLUSION

It has become clear throughout this toolbox that pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs is more complex than first meets the eye. As a consequence, efforts are being made on several levels: European, national and local. The position of each level comes with its own opportunities to contribute to a more successful approach to pickpocketing. We can conclude that the **European and national** level have a responsibility to **create a favourable climate** because more resources are available, or at least they can benefit from economies of scale. This favourable context should **allow** the **local level** policymakers and practitioners to **fully engage** themselves to the prevention of pickpocketing and to **reach maximal results** doing so.

In this conclusion we wish to provide a concrete overview of **opportunities to improve current efforts at several levels**, in order to support policymakers and practitioners who are dealing with pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs.

European level

- There is an opportunity at the EU to urge Member States to **increase the provided information to the Europol Information System**. As mentioned before, the EIS is crucial in the approach to organised crime generally and definitely for pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs. It is important to see patterns and to get a view on the groups active in Europe: what is the structure, who plays a leading role, who works together with whom... Police forces want to land the big fish and not only put foot soldiers behind bars. But for EIS to work at its fullest capacity, it has to be fed with information. As mentioned before there are several issues regarding the input.
- Efforts are needed at judicial level to reach prevention through an effective repression.
 - Continuing on the efforts previously done during the EMPACT policy cycle of 2014-2017 to warm prosecutors and judges to the idea of cross border cooperation.
 - The EU could **formulate recommendations on judicial level to avoid the waterbed effect** by updating the Council Framework Decision 2008/841/JHA. The study done in 2015 is a first step in this direction.¹⁰⁷
- The analyses of the crime phenomenon is always important. It is however an expensive exercise. It could be interesting that **surveys on victimisation and feelings of insecurity are executed at European level**. The advantages are that national and local levels are less challenged in terms of funding and that the collected data will be easier to compare thanks to a uniform method.

¹⁰⁷ European Commission (2015), Study on paving the way for future policy initiatives in the field of fight against organised crime: the effectiveness of specific criminal law measures targeting organised crime, DI NICOLA, A., GOUNEV, P., LEVI, M., RUBIN, J. and VETTORI, B. (project coordinators) [WWW] <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/a1183e4b-1164-4595-a742-fb4514ddd10d>

National level

- The national level is particularly suited to ***pass along information from the European level to the local level***. The efforts done at the EU should trickle down to locally based policymakers and practitioners.
 - The ***EUCPN*** itself is a good source of qualitative knowledge and good practices. The dissemination of the good practices, campaigns and output is of vital importance to increase the awareness of the phenomenon and the knowledge how to prevent it.
 - Participating in and promotion of ***ENAA*** as the administrative approach is a promising perspective on the prevention of organised crime. The administrative approach is by nature one of cooperation. As we have learned, this is a necessary part to come to a successful approach of the prevention of pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs.
- There is room for improvement when it comes to ***feeding the EIS***. Each Member State has its own rules and levels of information that can be entered into the EIS. For Belgium, for example, only information regarding organised crime is shared. In an ideal situation each known pickpocket should be uploaded in that system. To reach the general goal of a better input in the EIS, it could be interesting to ***invest in automatic data loaders*** so that sharing this crucial information can happen not only faster, but also far more cost-efficient.
- At national level there is an opportunity to support the analyses. More surveys can be done to unburden the local level and their funding. Another way to support the construction of an image with regards to pickpocketing is to ensure that ***pickpocketing*** is a ***category within the official crime statistics***.
- The national level can also aim at ***raising awareness*** for pickpocketing committed by mobile OCGs ***throughout the chain of criminal justice***, especially the judicial side. An idea is to release a campaign to police and the judicial side to strengthen cooperation and raise awareness that pickpocketing is organised property crime.
- Furthermore, it is recommended to have a ***permanent specialised pickpocketing unit*** in the local police forces. This decision could be made at national level.

Local level

- The local level is absolutely the ***best placed level*** to act upon pickpocketing waves. They have the highest knowledge on the ground and they are closer to the target groups of a prevention campaign. Additionally understanding the context of the area where the campaign is launched is of importance for a maximal result.
- A main opportunity is having a finger on the pulse: knowledge of hotspots, modus operandi and other operational information. It leads to the ***ideal positioning for*** executing ***prevention campaigns*** that raise awareness amongst the public.
- There are several ***European and international initiatives that local authorities can participate in*** to make their approach to the prevention of pickpocketing more complete: Pickpocketing Expert Network, Operation Festival, use of the European Arrest Warning...

Part 3

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

1. MOST COMMON STRATEGIES BY MEMBER STATES

With regard to preventive measures it is clear that some strategies are recurring amongst the EU Member States¹⁰⁸:

- **Raising awareness amongst potential targets** is the most important measure that is taken. Law enforcement agencies act by dispersing information via different channels such as information on police websites, educational video clips, distribution of leaflets... These awareness campaigns are in some cases made up in relation to the type of victim and their vulnerabilities (e.g. elderly people, traders, youth, tourists, people with disabilities).
- Another strategy is **warning people in real-time** through recorded warning messages whenever pickpockets are active in hotspot areas such as markets or public transport.
- Thirdly **undercover police** in plainclothes are a popular measure against pickpocketing.
- Finally **constructing a dialogue** between law enforcement and local key figures such as shop owners in hotspots is mentioned.

These above mentioned actions are boosted when it comes down to certain hotspots such as busy shopping streets, markets, public transportation or moments in time such as the summer months which reflect in a bigger tourist inflow. These peaks in pickpocketing were reported by the Member States in their prevalence data.

It is interesting to mention that in some Member States, pickpocketing policy is viewed as an assignment for the local law enforcement agencies and not so much for those on national level. This fact is interlinked with the finding that pickpocketing is underestimated as a petty crime and is not viewed as the organised property crime that it is. An inevitable consequence of this perspective is that information becomes fragmented and this is a barrier to have an overall view on the phenomenon of pickpocketing.

Member States were also asked in the questionnaire whether they have preventive projects that not so much focus on behavioural change of victims, but rather focusses on the perpetrator or on the environment. For many this is not the case. As described above, their preventive pickpocketing measures mostly focus on potential targets and how they can avoid getting pickpocketed.¹⁰⁹ According to the Dutch Centre for Crime prevention and Safety (CVV) it is not enough to deploy criminal law and the care sector alone to tackle this problem. In order to improve the approach the CCV suggests a 'chain'-approach: awareness, prevention, signalisation, intervention and aftercare. In the Netherlands a barrier model was constructed against mobile crime groups. With this model it is important to determine which barriers that can be imposed by safety partners against criminal activities. The whole criminal process is mapped, and for each step is evaluated who has a possibility to intervene.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ EUCPN, questionnaire on pickpocketing among EU Member States (2017).

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ MYRIA (2016), *Jaarrapport 2016. Mensenhandel en mensensmokkel. Bedelaars in de handen van mensenhandelaars.* [WWW] http://www.myria.be/files/MYRIA_Rapport_2016_TRAITE_NL_AS.pdf

The model is meant to frustrate travelling shoplifters and pickpockets in their criminal activities.¹¹¹ The barrier model is situated within the administrative approach.

Latvia and Estonia mention the 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design-model' (CPTED). The Latvian crime prevention unit of the state police issues guidelines for municipalities on how to build a safe environment in public spaces. Additionally community officers make contact with local shop owners in order to advise them regarding possible environmental changes.

Greece and Slovakia mention other measures that do not focus on victim behaviour, namely the increase of police presence in the streets. This police presence may even be undercover in order to focus on known offenders. The Maltese police force took action by placing plain clothes police officers in strategic areas. Additionally efforts were made to involve stakeholders such as shop owners.

¹¹¹ VAN DER WIELE, D. (2015) Roermond zet in op nieuwe aanpak van mobiele bendes in Secondant [WWW] <https://ccv-secondant.nl/magazine/secondant-2-juli-2015/roermond-zet-in-op-nieuwe-aanpak-van-mobiele-bendes/>

2. LIST OF EXAMPLES

Boefproof ('criminal proof') (NL)



Short description

Boefproof is part of a national awareness campaign for prevention, called "Do not make it too easy". The name of this national campaign refers to making it less interesting for criminals to commit an actual crime. In Dutch "Boef" means criminal. The Boefproof campaign focuses on making mobile devices "criminal Proof" since mobile phones and portable computers were overrepresented when it comes to the loot of mugging and pick pocketing.

The Boefproof campaign started off in September 2014. It stimulates citizens to activate or install an anti-theft feature on a mobile device, thus making the device non-accessible by remote control in case it gets stolen. As a result, the stolen device becomes worthless for thieves and impossible to sell. Also, thieves cannot access e-mail, photos, and confidential documents. This ensures that files, including photos, are secured.

Start/ Duration

The project started in September 2014 and is repeated annually. It is still running.

Background Research

Through data from the national police in 2013 they identified the large amount of portable computers and smartphones that were stolen. Recent research commissioned by the Ministry of Security and Justice showed that 43% of the Dutch citizens surveyed still not know that they can change settings on their mobile phones and laptops in order to render them worthless for thieves.

Budget

The costs are around 415.000 euro.

Type of evaluation

In 2016 an impact evaluation has been conducting marking the decrease of portable computers and smartphones that are stolen compared to 2013.

Actor conducting evaluation/timing

Internally.

Type of data collection method

The evaluation is conducted on the basis of police data.

Links to further information

<http://eucpn.org/document/boefproof>

www.maakhetzeniettemakkelijk.nl/boefproof

24Blue (SK)



Short description

The railway stations are often places with high concentration of passengers and therefore offer many possibilities for pickpocketing. To eliminate such criminal activities the police officers of the railway police service of the Police Force in Slovakia perform patrols in trains and at stations. The Police Force in cooperation with railway companies prepare various preventive programs for citizens to increase the awareness of the issue. And as a member of the European network of railway police forces - RAILPOL cooperates with other countries to exchange information on tactics and methods of pickpockets and takes part at international police operations „24Blue“ including this topic.

Further information

<http://eucpn.org/document/pickpocketing-railway-stations-and-trains>

Malta police force (MT)



Short description

Malta receives a lot of tourists. Malta has active pickpockets the whole year round, however peaks are noticed during the months of June and July.

Malta took action by placing plain clothes police officers in strategic areas. The police also has meetings with stakeholders such as shop owners and representatives of public transport to instruct them on action to be taken in case of suspicious activity.

ProNACHBAR (AT)



Short description

This is a collaborative partnership between the law enforcement agency, community members and groups, non-profit providers and the individuals and organizations to serve to develop solutions to problems and increase trust in police.

The alignment of organizational management, structure, personnel, and information systems to support community partnerships and proactive problem-solving together with other government agencies, community members/groups, non-profits, service providers, private businesses and the media.

Start/duration

The project started in 2007 and is still ongoing.

Further information

<http://www.pronachbar.at>

Police Awareness Vehicles (DE)



Short description

The Berlin Police department places these vans all over the city centre with big information panels that are put up by magnets. It is easy to raise awareness and to communicate that that area is a pickpocketing hotspot.

Spray Templates (DE)



Short description

By the use of a template a warning is sprayed on the pedestrian zone of known pickpocketing hotspots. This concept is successful because graffiti on the ground is not common and thus attracts the attention of the public. The paint only remains on the concrete for 4 weeks and thus no damage is done.

Warning of concert goers on social media (DE)



„Rise Against Pickpockets“

Rise Against sind zurzeit auf Europatournee und werden am Sonntagabend im Velodrom Berlin ihre Marshalls auf Elf drehen. Schon bei den Gigs der Band in Großbritannien kam es zu zahlreichen Diebstählen von Smartphones, und auch beim kürzlichen Konzert in Frankfurt kamen mindestens 15 Handys abhanden. Daher fürchten unsere Ermittler, dass auch Sonntag das eine oder andere Smartphone plötzlich und unbemerkt den Besitzer wechseln kann.



Short description

Rock concerts attract very professional pickpockets. Social media is grateful channel to warn concert goers before the concert. Through social media the Berlin Police checks in at the location and gives some tips and tricks to avoid falling victim to one of the present pickpockets such as not to carry too much cash.

Anti-pickpocketing bells (DE)



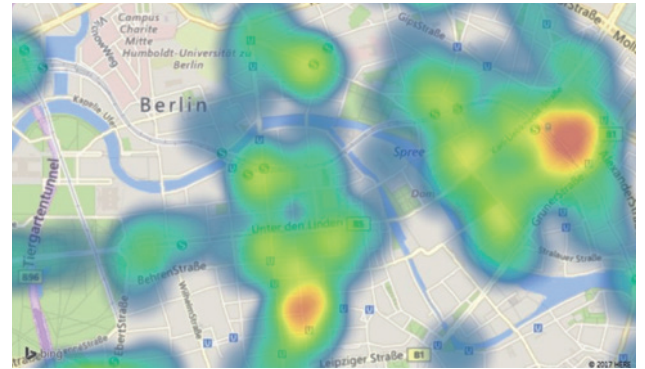
Short description

The police of Berlin hands out little cards with the warning to be aware of pickpockets. Together with the card, the public also receives little bells.

The instructions read

- Attach the bells to your wallet, pocket or backpack
- Be alarmed of pickpockets!
- Do not get distracted and take care of your valuables.

Heat map (DE)



Short description

The heat map by the Berlin police shows where the hot spots are in the city centre. This has proven to be an great way to inform whoever is interested. The map is updated every month based on the official police statistics and is published on the website.

May I help you? (Portugal)



Short description

The Portuguese Association for Victim Support (APAV) developed an international project called 'May I help your?' with the aim of improving the services available to tourists who are victim of a crime and of ensuring that they be able to exercise their rights. As a result of the project, a brochure was created that includes a series of information including practical advice on risky 'holiday behaviours'. The brochure is also available online in Portuguese, English and Spanish.

Pozor na ně! ('Watch out') (CZ)



Short description

A new campaign targeted at pickpocketing thefts was launched in 2016 as a response to pickpocketing cases increase in 2015, while property crime cases in general decreased. The campaigns' objective was to highlight some behavioural stereotypes forming criminogenic factors that might attract a felon to a potential victim. The most common pickpocket techniques were portrayed in a humorous way on posters displayed in police stations, city council offices, public transportation etc. One of the most effective ways of their distribution was in the Metro free daily newspaper available in public transport stations and stops, in the form of paid advertising. 210 000 copies of Metro circulate every day in Prague. In 2016 the campaign was published 8 times, in 2017 14 times while 3 times in foreign language on the so called English page.

The second phase of the "Watch Out!" campaign was launched in 2017 and it targeted especially tourists visiting Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. It was

called Crowd Pickpocket and her gang back in action! – A guide for cautious tourists (Šmátralka a její gang jdou znovu do akce! – průvodce pro opatrné turisty). The guide for cautious tourists is a map of the city centre including the most common pickpocket techniques from the previous campaign on the other side of the map. This time the material includes also a QR code containing the address of the city of Prague's website where visitors can find useful information in eleven languages. The maps are available in Czech, English and German.

The campaign shall continue in 2018 as well. New, simplified visuals were created and a 6th visual of the most common pickpocket technique was developed. This phase of the project will target a new group – senior citizens. Calendars, magnets and stickers will be produced for them and will be distributed through the Social Welfare Departments in retirement homes, senior societies etc.

Start/duration

First phase: 2016; second phase: 2017; continued in 2018

Type of evaluation

The project was evaluated through comparison of pickpocket cases statistics. Registered cases of pickpocket thefts in Prague: 2010: 7.469 – 2011: 7.407 – 2012: 8.591 – 2013: 9.075 – 2014: 7.078 – 2015: 8.309 – 2016: 7.292 - November 2017: 6.632

The campaign was thus evaluated as successful, since the increase in pickpocket cases in Prague has stopped.

Obezřetnost se vyplatí ('Being cautious pays off') (CZ)

Short description

The nationwide campaign was launched in 2011 as pickpocketing thefts prevention.

The campaign was led in cooperation with AHOLD Czech Republic, which operates one of the largest retail networks of supermarkets and hypermarkets in the Czech Republic. This cooperation reflected the fact people often become victims of pickpockets in supermarkets.

Materials used during the campaign included:

- posters showing most common forms of pickpocketing: from back pockets, jacket pockets, purses and backpacks;
- leaflets with information about pickpockets and advices how to avoid them;
- in-store radio spots of 20 seconds.

Slogan of the campaign: "Be cautious and beware of your personal belongings. Pickpockets are usually present where you least expect them".

Start/duration

2011



KDO s KOHO ('Head-to-head') (CZ)



Short description

'Head-to-head' is a campaign launched by the Moravian-Silesian Region. Every year, the campaign starts in the pre-Christmas season in supermarkets and lasts until the end of the year. In 2017, the campaign was extended with prevention of pickpockets in public transport.

Materials used during the campaign aim to underline essential principles of safe shopping. They included:

- posters and leaflets showing most common forms of thefts in supermarkets (purses stolen from shopping carts and personal belongings stolen from driver's and co-driver seat while a customer is unloading his/her shopping cart

on a parking lot) and pickpockets in public transport;

- radio spots and video spots (watch here: <https://youtu.be/ID2JtaMu7Kw>).

Protagonists of theft scenes from the above described materials were white and black kimonos which symbolize the conflict between good and evil. Offender representing the evil addresses the audience: "My Christmas will be generous!! What about yours? It's all about you!" Posters contain brief information about thefts and pickpockets and advices how to avoid them while leaflets also bring testimonies of victims of thefts and pickpockets. Moreover, police officers themselves visit the high risk areas during the campaign to warn people and inform them about thefts and pickpockets prevention.

Start/duration

Launched in 2015, repeated every year.

Type of evaluation

Feedbacks from cooperating parties and citizens addressed by police officers – "prevention workers" during the campaign were used to evaluate the campaign. In general, the campaign was evaluated positively by cooperating parties and citizens as well as by the media.

Safe in the city (BE)



Start/duration

July 2015

Further information

<https://efus.eu/en/policies/national/belgium/efus/9645/>

Short description

The city of Brussels and the neighbouring commune of Ixelles, which receive together some 3.8 million overnight stays, have launched a new campaign aimed at preventing pickpocketing against tourists. It consists of four video clips and an information leaflet that were developed by the asbl BRAVVO and the commune of Ixelles as part of the European project on Security and Tourism, in which Brussels was a partner.

The four clips are silent cartoons, thus understandable by tourists from any country, which show how to avoid being victim of pickpocketing in daily life situations: at the ATM, in a café, at the hotel and in the underground. They are broadcast on the TV channel “visit.brussels TV”, which is available in some 8000 hotel rooms, in Brussels youth hostels, at the visit.brussels information points and on the visit.brussels website.

As part of the campaign, information leaflets containing practical advice and useful contacts, in particular of the police stations that are open 24/7, will be distributed in tourism hotspots, in hotels, in the public transport system and available online, thanks to the cooperation with the Brussels Hotels Association and other partners.

‘Safe in the City’ (2) campaign in Brussels (BE)



Short description

To supplement existing tools and in view of the increasing number of certain types of incidents, the city of Brussels decided to launch a communication campaign on security linked to tourism and available in various formats: leaflets, flyers, posters on advertising panels in public areas, and a new website. The campaign is aimed particularly at burglary, theft in and of automobiles, and pickpocketing, which are on the rise. Originally intended for Brussels residents, it has since been expanded for specific publics such as clients of the hotel-restaurant sector, tourists and expatriates (in collaboration with the municipality of Ixelles). These publications contain specific advice adapted to target publics and available in several languages.

These are used in particular by the Peace Guards (Gardiens de la Paix), for example when a rise in crime is observed in some neighbourhoods or else events such as the Christmas market ‘Winter Wonders’.

The aim of the campaign is to reassure the public and provide practical advice of caution.

In Brussels, a public/private partnership centred on a joint strategy with hotels for crime prevention (BE)



Short description

The Brussels Hotels Association (BHA) brings together 90% of the hotels in Brussels (independent and hotel chains) to defend the interests of the sector and tourism. This organisation pays particular attention to the crime prevention measures that can affect clients. For example, the hotels liaise with the police in reporting acts by making appropriate forms available to clients. Similarly, informative brochures comprising prevention advice against pickpocketing are available in hotels.

Furthermore, the Brussels-Capital-Ixelles police zone and the Brussels Hotels Association collaborated on drawing up an overall, easy-to-use FAQ, summing up all information useful for clients (aid service, police substations) and for the hotel sector (what to do in case of a given type of occurrence). A ‘police contact sheet’ including all the contact information of the relevant police units has also been distributed to all hoteliers. Moreover, the partners of the pickpocketing platform collaborated on the elaboration of a prevention video shown in hotels.

Brussels' 'Winter Wonders' Christmas market (BE)



Short description

The 'Winter Wonders' Christmas market is the largest event of the year in Brussels with more than a million and a half visitors, a large share of whom are tourists. Such an influx invariably poses security problems: presence of pickpockets, brawls, thefts and various infractions. Every year, a large number of BRAVVO's (the Brussels prevention department) Peace Guards are deployed and their presence reassures visitors. This action is supplemented by the theft-prevention campaign 'Safe in the City'. In order to guarantee effective prevention, some 30 agents participate in 'Winter Wonders' every year.

In the framework of the 'Safe in the City' campaign, the techno-prevention unit and communication service of the city of Brussels have collaborated with the municipal police for several years. A (BRAVVO) 'Safe in the City' project manager and a police inspector alert shopkeepers and put up posters and stickers in appropriate places in order to inform and alert visitors. Before the opening of the Christmas market, all the shopkeepers of the chalets are informed by letter of the 'Safe in the City' campaign and receive prevention material (stickers, leaflets) that they are invited to place on their stand as a

sign of active participation in the prevention of pickpocketing and theft. The shopkeepers and managers of cafés, restaurants and hotels are also contacted directly, thus reinforcing the impact of the campaign.

Moreover, BRAVVO has stepped up its collaboration with the event's organiser, the agency Brussels Major Events (BME), which was invited to broadcast a prevention message via audio and on the seven giant screens installed in the Christmas market.

Laat je niet bij de neus nemen (Don't let them fool you) (BE)



Short description

During the yearly festivities 'Gentse Feesten' in the city of Ghent, prevention advisors of the local police were present in the streets to address and sensibilise people. Meanwhile they were distributing tissue boxes in the form of a smartphone. One message bubble says 'Don't let them fool you', another one gives the website of the police where people can find prevention tips.

Start/duration

12.07.2017- 23.07.17 for the duration of the Gentse Feesten.

Handen af van mijn tas! (Hands off my bag!) (BE)



Short description

During the sales period the shopping streets of the city center of Ghent are flooded with bargain hunters. However not only shoppers are drawn to the shopping streets, also for pickpockets and purse snatchers these are heydays.

In order to raise awareness the police had have made shopping bags with the slogan 'Hands of my bag!'. These shopping bags were distributed by the police, and were after that available for free in all police stations.

House Call – We Deliver Safety (HU)



Short description

On the 30th of September 2015 the Crime Prevention Unit of the National Police Headquarters started a program for enhancing the subjective sense of security of the public. The property protection program called „We deliver safety”. Its main aim is to help people to avoid emergency situations and to improve their decision-making skill in property protection.

The financial resources of the Program were provided by the National Crime Prevention Council and the National Police Headquarters. Aegon insurance company also supported the activities with promotion materials, brochures and videos.

Due to the prevention activities and the increased presence of the police in public spaces the number of thefts has decreased

nationwide in the past years, while the effectiveness of the investigations has increased. As a result of the Program we experience that the population is more conscious and aware of the risks, people use better security technologies to protect their valuables. They take the advice of the police about the prevention techniques that cost nothing but can help to prevent infringements.

In order to achieve the goals laid down in the Program the regional police forces have implemented the following activities under the direction of the Crime Prevention Unit of the National Police Headquarters;

- on their area of competence they have examined the current criminal situation and three towns/communes or parts of communes were selected according to the crime statistics where the presence of the police was reasonable;
- the programs were held monthly at three locations at different times for five days;
- the citizens were informed continuously about the place of the so called “information points” and about its services.

In 2016 there was a national contest taking place about property protection. One primary school student (5th - 8th grade), one parent and one grandparent could apply in one team. All together 525 people in 175 teams participated in the contest. The final competition took place in the building of the National Police Headquarters. The first three places won shopping vouchers, the 4-6 place received gifts from Aegon insurance company.

Do not be a carp! Do not get caught! (PL)



Short description

The Voivodeship Police Headquarters in cooperation with the Municipal Transport Company in Poznań regularly conduct preventive activities under the slogan “Do not be a carp! Do not get caught!”. They are aimed at increasing public awareness in terms of preventing small but also severe losses resulting from pocket thefts.

These activities were initiated in 2009 by police officers from the Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters and the Municipal Transport Company in Warsaw and are implemented each year in two scenes. Before Christmas, under the slogan “Do not be carp! Do not get caught!” because carp is a traditional fish consumed during Christmas. In turn, through the Easter holidays under the slogan “Do not be made into an egg”, because the egg is a traditional dish during this period, and also serves as a table decoration prepared as so-called “Easter egg” (an egg decorated with different patterns).

The pre-Christmas as well as the pre-Easter period is a time with intense preparations and so-called “shopping fever”. Unfortunately, it is also the harvest season for criminals specializing in pocket thefts. These thefts are made primarily in public transport, on marketplaces, in shopping centers. The detection of these matters is low. This results both from the fact that the perpetrators do not leave traces and that the victim of the crime is noticed late. Usually there is also a lack of pickpocketing witnesses due to the use of methods of action of the perpetrators that effectively distract people from the object of crime.

Therefore, the described activities remind recipients of the need to be careful and protect their personal belongings during these periods. Among the most common activities is placing posters, stickers and film spots in public transport, shopping malls, railway and bus stations. These materials also advise on how to effectively protect personal belongings from thieves.

Start/duration

Launched in 2009.

Sticker “You’ve been caught by the police, do not get caught by a thief!” (PL)



caught by the police - do not get caught by a thief!” This yellow sticker warns and at the same time shows how easily these people could be robbed by a pickpocket.

Also the Berlin police department has taken over this idea.

VORSICHT TASCHENDIEBE! BEWARE PICKPOCKETS!



www.polizei.berlin.de



POLIZEI
BERLIN



Short description

In Warsaw, the police officers from the Warsaw Metropolitan Police Headquarters also carry out additional preventive and intelligence activities consisting mainly of conducting actions by the unrecognized police officers from the Section for Combating Pocket Theft. In various means of public transport they also approach people who for obvious reasons caught their attention (for example, they walk with an open bag or hold a wallet in the back pocket of trousers) and suggest that they should pay more attention to their property. In addition, police officers are attaching stickers to an unsecured pocket or open purse of people who are careless. The slogan on the sticker reads “You have been

Leaflet European Football Championship EURO 2012 (PL)

Short description

The police conducts many activities of a similar nature, especially in periods associated with major cultural or sports events taking place in Poland. An example is a leaflet prepared in different language versions (Polish, English, German and Russian) for tourists and fans coming to the European Football Championship EURO 2012. The leaflet included warnings and advice on protecting personal items from pickpockets while supporting and resting in Poland.

Pickpockets love distraction (DK)



Short description

The last 3 years there was noted a large increase in pickpocketing in Copenhagen. This led to the decision to analyse this phenomenon as it occurred during the years 2013-2016. Key insights learned from this analysis were that

- the same hotspots seem to recurring each year;
- no specific period reflected a peak of incidences, which indicated a need for a long term strategy;
- 86% of the victims were Danes between 17 and 30 y.o., of which there were double as many women than men.
- Based on the insights of the analysis, a strategy for 2017-2019 was created. The three objectives of the project were to:
- raise awareness about pickpockets in Copenhagen;

- stimulate the target groups to take preventative measures (such as being aware of valuables in crowds, keeping valuables safely stored...);
- ensure awareness at hotspots and in particular situations.

Additionally, it was key to raise awareness without scaring anyone. Therefore an easy, simple to understand campaign with a high visual quality was created. Thanks to the look and feel that reminds of summer the campaign was Instagram-worthy and easily shared on social media.

Because of the specific demographics of the pickpocketing victims in Copenhagen, three young professional bloggers were brought in to reach the target groups via to their social media feeds. Next to this, prevention talks were held in the streets with lolly pops, balloons and greetings cards as conversation starters.

Start/duration

Kick-off event was held in June 2017.

Budget

€ 25 000

Type of evaluation

Outcome evaluation

Type of data collection method

Survey amongst Copenhageners and foreign tourists.

Further information

<https://www.kk.dk/artikel/pickpockets-love-distraction>

Tine Pind Jørum, City of Copenhagen:

tpj@okf.kk.dk

Protect yourself against thieves (DK)

Short description

The project was launched by the South-East Jutland police district to halt the increase in certain crimes: distraction theft, pickpocketing and payment card fraud, which is often the consequence of the first two, and which causes great nuisance to ordinary citizens, and particularly elderly people, who already feel marginalised and vulnerable.

The project was designed to increase citizens' awareness of such offences and changing their behaviour – without creating fear. The project also intended to involve external partners to reach the target group through different approaches. The DanAge Association (Ældresagen) was a prominent partner. It is an NGO with a large 50+ y.o. membership.

Particularly vulnerable areas were identified through a thorough analysis of initial crime reports (scenes of crime, number and types of crime). This analysis revealed that most offences were committed in people-dense areas like shopping centres. It also revealed that most victims of those offences were senior citizens.

Available knowledge on the techniques applied by offenders was gathered for the project campaign and used for wording five simple instructions deemed suitable to prevent most of the offences hitherto committed against the target group.

Start/duration

The project campaign lasted a brief, but intensive two-week period. The intention is to repeat the project in [about] three years following adaptations based on evaluation findings.

Budget

The project was performed within the scope of the ordinary activities. The analytical department spent about 20 hours. The flyers handed out were made and printed by the South-East Jutland Police. The activities that were part of the project accounted for about 200-250 man hours.

Type of evaluation

Both a process as an outcome evaluation was performed.

Type of data collection method

The process evaluation was done through qualitative interviews. The outcome evaluation was based on an analysis of the official crime statistics.

Further information

<http://eucpn.org/document/protect-yourself-against-thieves>

Rome, a joint, operational approach (IT)

Short description

The Security & Tourism project of Efus, in which the local and national authorities have put considerable effort, has allowed for adopting a joint and structured approach.

Definition and evaluation of the main themes linked to tourist security in Rome. Two seminars were devoted to this in September 2014, in the presence of the partners, i.e. all the services of Rome Capitale concerned by the subject: the mayor's office, the department of tourism, the department of economic development and productive activities, the Capitoline superintendence in charge of cultural property, the department of culture, the department of social policies and the command of Rome's municipal police, with the participation of 12 contributors who presented the operations and actions underway.

Systematisation of the gathering of information on various aspects of security broached with the partners on the occasion of meetings organised at the European level. A guidebook, Turismo Sicuro a roma (Safe Tourism in Rome), was created to avoid tourists being victims of unpleasant incidents. It includes useful information, prevention advice and information on the steps to take in case of theft or loss of documents and other personal objects.

The partners discussed the need to develop a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the system for registering complaints, reports and evaluations to which tourists and residents resorted between 2013 and 2014, and which led to the audit developed by the city of Rome.

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