

Summary

Handling stolen goods

In the report 'Markets of stolen goods, a closer look' ('Helingspraktijken onder de loep') the results of a study into various aspects of the Dutch market for stolen goods are described.

The study has three aims:

- mapping the functioning of the market of handling stolen goods;
- mapping the policy of handling stolen goods and its consequences on trade and industry;
- finding points of departure for reducing handling stolen goods.

The functioning of the market for stolen goods has been studied with the following questions in mind: Who are sellers of stolen goods? Which products are sold? And: what kinds of distribution channels are used? To answer these questions a combination of research methods has been used: literature study, analyzing police registrations and statistics, in-depth interviews with people that steal or handle in stolen goods, and expert meetings.

In juridical terms three forms of handling stolen goods can be distinguished. In Dutch: 'schuldhelings' (being blamed for handling stolen goods), 'opzethelings' (handling stolen goods with intention) and 'gewoontehelings' (handling stolen goods as a habit). 'Schuldhelings' means that a reasonable person ought to suspect that the goods bought were more likely to be stolen than not. 'Opzethelings' indicates that the buyer knows that the goods were stolen. In case of 'gewoontehelings' the buyer knows that the goods were stolen and makes a habit in handling these goods.

In our study we distinguish three types of handlers in stolen goods: individual handlers, commercial handlers and handlers within a criminal network. The report focuses on individual handlers in more detail. It describes their profile, courses of action, products handled, distribution channels used and prices of the goods.

Persons who handle stolen goods can be found in all segments of society. Their courses of action are various. The most important reason to work in the market of stolen goods is the low level of risk: in criminal investigation the subject has no priority. Handling stolen goods is a substantial economical phenomenon. There are rarely limitations in sorts of goods handled. Half of all registered cases concerns cars, bicycles and money. The other half concerns consumer electronics, clothing, jewelry and food & beverages. The buyers of stolen goods are both civil citizens and the trade and industry. Popular distribution channels are the black markets, the internet, individual trades and distributive trades. The research shows that there is no taboo on buying stolen goods, neither for civil citizens nor for the industry.

In the Netherlands the phenomenon of handling stolen goods has no priority at all. Registered cases are just the tip of the iceberg. The police

have no knowledge about the voluminous part that is not registered. To force back handling stolen goods, serious political attention is needed. A higher priority is a necessity. The report points at the importance of public attention for the phenomenon. The general public should be aware of the fact that handling stolen goods is criminal. In addition, the report pays attention to the fact that young people are a high risk group and the internet can play an important role in forcing back handling stolen goods.