



Mr Jonathan Faull
Director General
Directorate General for Freedom, Justice and Security

European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B-1049 Brussels

Cc : Mr Heinz Zourek, Director General, DG Enterprise and Industry

Brussels, 2 June 2010

Dear Mr Faull,

We are writing today to bring to your attention the issue of construction equipment theft, which is of major importance to the companies our four organizations represent, namely construction contractors (FIEC), equipment manufacturers (CECE), equipment distributors and repairers (ECED) and equipment rental companies (ERA).

We are in the process of collecting data in Europe about the annual value of stolen equipment. We estimate that this value represents well over one billion euro per annum, as it is estimated that in the United Kingdom only, the value of recorded theft every year is in excess of 150 million GBP, and is likely to increase strongly over the next few years.

Empiric evidence, based on information gathered when stolen equipment is recovered, suggests that the theft of equipment is an activity often performed by organized criminal networks extending over several Member States. This explains why equipment stolen in one Member State can, despite the use of modern tracking devices, be transported within a matter of days to other Member States or to Third Countries and be placed on construction sites or resold on the used equipment market.

Of course, the construction industry as a whole is not inactive and is doing its utmost to prevent equipment from being stolen by installing anti-theft devices on equipment, by training staff and better securing construction sites. With the support of public authorities in some Member States and with private operators, it is also putting procedures in place to facilitate the recovery of stolen equipment.

However, fighting equipment theft in Europe is a task the construction equipment industry cannot perform alone. Although awareness of the issue is rising in some Member States, much of the efforts made today, especially when extending across national borders, are more based on the

goodwill of the police forces and organizations involved than on concerted and strategically planned action to significantly decrease the amount of equipment being stolen.

This is why we are calling today upon the European Commission to facilitate discussions at European level amongst all stakeholders with an interest in fighting equipment theft, including public authorities, with a view to adopting a strategy and subsequent measures for dealing with the issue effectively.

Only to list a few topics that need to be discussed at European level, we believe that a forum gathering all stakeholders could notably consider measures on the best ways forward, including discussion on:

- Better preventing the theft of equipment on construction and equipment storage sites;
- Raising awareness among professionals on the need for adequate security provisions on construction sites and offices;
- Encouraging the registration of equipment through approved voluntary schemes;
- Creating a European register of stolen equipment that could be consulted by police forces and relevant private operators from all the Member States, such as for example insurance companies, auctioneers and generally sellers of used equipment;
- Enhancing cooperation between police forces for the recovery of stolen equipment when its location is known;
- Facilitating restitution to the lawful owner of stolen equipment, a procedure which currently can extend over many months;
- Considering action on the theft of metal products (such as steel and copper pipes) and of other construction products.

We fully understand that coming to an agreement on any of the topics listed above may take many months or even years due to the heterogeneity of the stakeholders involved, on the complexity of the issues to be dealt with and on the differences between regulation in force in the Member States. However, the difficulty of the task cannot be a reason for inaction, as it would be an encouragement for organized crime to further thrive on stolen equipment.

Therefore, as a first step, we would very much welcome a meeting with you in order to provide you and your staff with a more in-depth briefing on construction equipment theft, and – if appropriate - to hear your views on what role the European Commission would be willing to play in this matter of major importance for the industries we represent.

Sincerely,



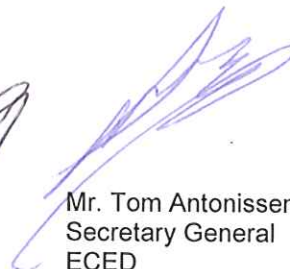
Mr Ralf Wezel
Secretary General
CECE



Mr Michel Petitjean
Secretary General
ERA



Mr Ulrich Paetzold
Director General
FIEC



Mr. Tom Antonissen
Secretary General
ECED