



Platform Microdotting Europe



Submitted by Alan Taylor (UK IAATI Past President, Editor of the Alliance)

A conversation between the President of IAATI UK and a visiting speaker from the Netherlands at the 2005 IAATI Vehicle Crime Conference at Jaguar Motor Company in Castle Bromwich could result in a new standard of vehicle identification across Europe.

When Bryan Sheppard and Guus Wesselink, Director of the Foundation for Tackling Vehicle Crime in the Netherlands (AvC) met at Jaguar they discussed the progress made by the various national crime reduction programmes in the UK, the Netherlands, South Africa, Japan and Australia, both men being interested in the future of these programmes.

It was agreed that manufacturers would be reluctant to respond to enhanced levels of vehicle identification from one nation, but rather that a joint initiative was required to benefit all European countries suffering the large scale theft of vehicles, any new standard should be embracing emerging technology and where possible tackling existing problems. As a direct result a meeting was called of interested parties, hosted by the Belgium Police.

Those present included representatives from the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden and Belgium.

The proposed standard is based around VIN, EVI and dots. It was agreed any new standard should use the universally accepted 17 digit VIN, (vehicle identification number) already in use and understood by law enforcement agencies and registration authorities around the globe.

A recent study reported a pan-European EVI system was possible, Electronic Vehicle Identification requires a chip to be placed in the vehicle capable of being read from the roadside. Many modern vehicles are already fitted with a form of EVI with electrical components storing VIN and other data on keys, alarms and immobilisers. EVI chip readers will complement the massive investment made by law enforcement in ANPR assets and it is thought the ability to acquire a plate patch, (the vehicle registration number)

from a moving vehicle and compare information against DVLA data with the make, model, colour and VIN supplied from the EVI chip will reduce the number of cloned vehicles on our roads and impact on the significant rise in number plate thefts.

Whole of vehicle marking (WOVM) by manufacturers using microdots could be seen as more controversial, with manufacturers quoting the expense of fitting dots as a major obstacle. However a pilot run in Australia has shown the benefit of using VIN based dots in reducing the theft of vehicles. The theft of vehicles fitted with dots has fallen significantly. Moreover, Australian Police report a trend away from traditional ringing where the stolen vehicle is given a new identity often from a wreck, to breaking stolen vehicles for their expensive component parts; the Australians have introduced controls on salvage yards and insist on an examination before re-built vehicles can return to the road.

With the introduction of the Vehicle Identity Check scheme, Motor Salvage Operators Regulations and greater focus on the rogue element of the salvage industry in the UK, we could reasonably expect to see a move away from ringing to breaking for parts; some would argue that has already occurred, especially with bikes and trucks. WOVM with VIN based dots will result in the positive identification of stolen component parts.

Other work in progress may support the introduction of EVI as a form of vehicle identification. The DVLA are currently working to make number plates more secure, with more resilient plates, secure fixings and a trial has Government approval to test the effectiveness of readable chips in number plates. The results of these trials will be studied by Platform Microdotting Europe.

In the meantime, discussions continue and a representative from Thatcham will join the group at its next meeting at the end of September to consider the impact of this initiative on the Thatcham New Vehicle Security Assessment. 