**FINAC - Data collection method**

The project brought together a team of academics from the social sciences (criminology and sociology), humanities (geography) and law, with practitioners from the National Trading Standards e-Crime Team (NTSeCT). The team had a range of skills and expertise that benefited the research, including a list of contacts involved in the trade and its mitigation. The team was involved in collecting and analysing data on the trade in material counterfeit goods and the processes and practices involved in its financing. The bulk of the activities were undertaken by two research institutions (Teesside University and Durham University), while the institutional partners provided support and data, participated in planning meetings and the final conference, and were engaged in the research design, execution and dissemination.

The expertise of the research team was utilised to incorporate approaches from social sciences, law and humanities. The involvement of our non-academic project partners since the inception of the research ensured that the research is relevant and realistic beyond academia. The research took place in two phases which allowed the project to develop iteratively. This staged approach was essential for this kind of exploratory project.

***PHASE 1 – Review of Available Literature***

A literature review was conducted in order for the research team to gain a better understanding of the business models (*in general)* of the trade in counterfeit products.As well as the relatively small body of academic literature, this also included research reports by academics, research institutes, governments, national and international law enforcement reports (EUROPOL, INTERPOL, National Crime Agency, etc.), reports by international organisations (UNODC, FATF), professional associations, and/or private companies that are either affected by specific types of counterfeiting (e.g. British American Tobacco) or commissioned to conduct research on a specific market by a client (e.g. KPMG). Open sources also included media sources and of particular relevance here were press releases from law enforcement agencies including the HMRC, the MHRA and National Trading Standards.The advantage of the multi-lingual team meant that Chinese and Greek language open documents could also be included. Counterfeiting-related information and statistics which are unavailable in English language literature were also obtained in published scholarly work that was gathered from the CNKI (Chinese Knowledge Infrastructure) – the largest academic database in Chinese language. This allowed an initial exploration into the UK-China perspective.

A systematic search of UK and Chinese media databases for stories relating to counterfeiting provided useful contextual information. As public domain cases, they provided insights which we would not otherwise have access to. Interesting case studies were also identified which illustrate the financial management of the trade in counterfeit products including, for example, various forms and sources of financing counterfeit products, relations between illicit structures involved in counterfeiting and legitimate business and financial facilities, and profits in the market of counterfeiting products. Furthermore, this stage of the project allowed the research team to expand their existing contact list of relevant officials and groups for second phase of the research, which resulted in the collection of primary data.

***PHASE 2 – In-depth interviews with knowledgeable actors***

In-depth interviews were carried out in theUK with law-enforcement and other government officials, and other knowledgeable experts. For this phase of the study, a number of participants were identified in two three ways: Firstly, during the course of the literature review and media research, specific officials from law enforcement agencies appearing in reports or media accounts were identified and approached. Secondly, a number of potential participants had already been identified from previous research studies that members of the search team have conducted on various manifestations of ‘organised crime’ including counterfeiting. In essence, snowball sampling was used with our initial participants introducing us to other (potential then) participants. One of the biggest advantages of this method of sampling is the ‘informal’ way of identification of participants from hard-to-reach populations such as illegal entrepreneurs. Thirdly, participants –primarily from the law enforcement side – were suggested by the member of the research team who is affiliated with the National Trading Standards eCrime Team, and who effectively operated as our ‘gatekeeper’.

In-depth interviews with 15 participants were conducted. The main objective of the research team at this phase of the study was to develop a sample that could provide detailed accounts and information on the financial aspects of the trade in counterfeiting. The list of respondents included:

* Government and law enforcement officials (e.g. Intellectual Property Office – IPO; Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit – PICPU; National Trading Standards; National Trading Standards eCrime Team; HM Revenue and Customs – HMRC; MHRA officers);
* Legal businesses people/representatives (e.g. DHL Express);
* Experts working in private companies (e.g. a forensic accountant in KPMG); and
* Members of international organisations (e.g. OECD, EUIPO, EUROPOL).

The introduction of the interview guide used during this phase of the study was identical for all interviewees. Experts with broader or more general knowledge were interviewed on several sections of the questionnaire, while other interviewees felt comfortable answering only specific questions about the trade and its financial aspects. All questions were open, and interviews lasted between 20 and 70 minutes depending on the amount of information a participant could provide as well as the talkativeness of the participant.