

49 servers shut in Euro police raid on online piracy network

September 7 2010



A man surfs the web at an internet cafe. Police shut down 49 servers and detained 10 people in a Europe-wide raid in 13 countries against an online film pirating network, the Belgian prosecutor's office said Wednesday.

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The operation, organised after a two-year investigation by Belgian police, was aimed at "groups pirating films and TV series in Dutch or international productions sub-titled in that language."

The raids on Tuesday night, coordinated by Belgian police and European authorities, hit Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Britain, Italy, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Austria and Hungary, said spokesman Jean-Marc Meilleur.

He said police searched 57 high-capacity servers managed by four big release, or distribution, groups that together account for 80 percent of all new Dutch films downloaded illegally.

Losses incurred by the industry due to the illicit downloads are estimated at around 30 million euros a year in Belgium (38 million dollars) and six billion worldwide, the spokesman said.

Police made 10 detentions in Belgium, Norway, Sweden and Poland. "They were the leaders of the four groups," Meilleur said.

One of the biggest servers shut down and seized, which was found in Poland, had a capacity of 150-180 terabytes.

The online pirates had also been using hospital or university servers on the sly, the spokesman said.

In Sweden, police raided seven locations including one in a suburb of Stockholm containing servers used by file-sharing website The Pirate Bay and WikiLeaks, the whistleblowing website.

Pinter said the raids had "nothing to do" with WikiLeaks, whose founder Julian Assange, faces rape allegations in Sweden.

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Citation: 49 servers shut in Euro police raid on online piracy network (2010, September 7) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-09-servers-euro-police-raid-online.html>

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