

EU Internet czar tweets against SOPA

January 20 2012, By GABRIELE STEINHAUSER , AP Business Writer

The European Union's Internet czar on Friday added her voice to resistance to the Stop Online Piracy Act, in an unusually open comment on pending U.S. legislation.

"Glad tide is turning on SOPA: don't need bad legislation when should be safeguarding benefits of open net," Neelie Kroes, the EU's Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, said in a Twitter message.

The piece of legislation, currently in the House of Representatives, would allow the U.S. [Justice Department](#) to target legitimate sites where users share pirated content.

Outrage over SOPA earlier this week triggered a one-day blackout by Wikipedia's English-language service and other popular websites and sparked growing scrutiny of the bill.

The EU is also working to tackle online [piracy](#), but is trying hard to do so without restricting [Internet freedom](#).

"Speeding is illegal too: but you don't put speed bumps on the motorway," Kroes said in a second [tweet](#).

The EU usually avoids openly criticizing pending legislation in the U.S., one of its biggest political allies and trading partners. But politicians on different sides of the Atlantic often don't see eye to eye when it comes to regulating the Internet.

The Commissioner's spokesman defended Kroes's comments, pointing to the widespread criticism of the bill.

"It shows that people do have very serious concerns about their access to the Internet and it shows that in addition to enforcement, which is very important, we need to be increasing the number of legal content offers that are available online," Ryan Heath told reporters.

He added that the EU already has legislation in place to fight online piracy and is currently working on an overhaul of its rules for [intellectual property rights](#) in an effort to make it easier to obtain the rights to distribute content online legally.

Kroes, one of the most outspoken commissioners who imposed massive fines against Microsoft during her time as the EU's antitrust regulator, has embraced new media.

Also on Friday, she asked her more than 32,000 followers on Twitter to comment on the shutdown of popular file-sharing site Megaupload.com on her department's Facebook page.

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