

EU refers anti-online piracy pact to court

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The EU executive "decided today to ask the European Court of Justice for a legal opinion to clarify that the ACTA agreement and its implementation must be fully compatible with freedom of expression and freedom of the internet," said a statement.

The United States, Japan and Canada are also among signatories, but a number of mainly eastern European states have threatened not to ratify the treaty, which critics say could curtail [Internet freedom](#).

The Commission has defended ACTA against from accusations that it amounts to a witch hunt against individuals illegally downloading content and has vowed to try to keep the deal alive when it comes up for ratification later this month by the [European Parliament](#).

"This debate must be based upon facts, and not upon the misinformation and rumour that has dominated social media sites and blogs in recent weeks," EU [trade commissioner](#) Karel De Gucht told a news conference in announcing the decision.

He said the agreement "aims to raise global standards for [intellectual property rights](#)" and said ACTA "will help protect jobs currently lost because counterfeited, pirated good worth 200 billion euros are currently floating around."

However, there appeared to be differences of view even within the Commission.

Viviane Reding, the EU's commissioner for justice, [fundamental rights](#) and citizenship had shortly earlier flagged up on Twitter a statement of her own in which she said "copyright protection can never be a justification for eliminating freedom of expression or freedom of information."

She underlined: "That is why for me, blocking the Internet is never an option."

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