

# Germany freezes signing of disputed Internet pact

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Employees at work in a cybersecurity centre in Bonn, Germany. Germany on Friday halted the signing of a controversial international accord billed as a way to beat online piracy that has sparked angry protests, saying it needed more time to consider it.

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"The signing has not happened, to give us time to carry out further discussions," a foreign ministry spokesman told AFP.

"The federal justice minister in charge of the issue has already signalled her objections this week," added the spokesman.

The ACTA agreement, negotiated between the European Union, Australia, Japan, Canada, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, [South Korea](#), Switzerland, Singapore and the United States, needs all 27 [EU countries](#) to ratify the deal.

But countries including Poland, the [Czech Republic](#) and Slovakia have already frozen their ratification process.

Earlier Friday, Latvia said it had also decided to hang fire until the position of other countries became clear.

The deal aims to bolster international standards for [intellectual property protection](#), for example by doing more to fight counterfeit medicine and other goods.

But its attempt to attack [illegal downloading](#) and Internet file-sharing has prompted the most controversy, amid fears it could curtail online freedoms.

Critics say it gives copyright-holders too much clout, for example allowing them to force the closure of websites without the same level of proof as a court would demand.

An international day of rallies against ACTA (Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement) has been scheduled for Saturday.

So-called "hacktivists", including the Anonymous group, have claimed attacks on official websites they see as supporting the deal.

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