

OSCE warns of Internet pact's curbs on expression

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Protestors, wearing Guy Fawkes masks, hold a banner during a protest against the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) in downtown of Sofia, Bulgaria, on February 11. The OSCE's media freedom representative warned Tuesday that a global online piracy pact that has sparked protests around Europe could undermine freedom of expression.

The OSCE's media freedom representative warned Tuesday that a global online piracy pact that has sparked protests around Europe could undermine freedom of expression.

"I ... am concerned that the present agreement on ACTA might have a detrimental effect on freedom of expression and a [free flow](#) of information in the digital age," Dunja Mijatovic wrote in a letter to Martin Schulz, the president of the European Parliament, which has yet to ratify the pact.

The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) was agreed last year by the European Union and 10 other countries, including Japan, Australia and the United States.

But Mijatovic warned: "ACTA would authorise online service providers to disclose personal information of alleged copyright infringers to rights holders without a court order or the right to appeal, placing the decision on the legal status of content outside the established judicial framework."

"Furthermore, these provisions would not provide for any guarantees of the right to privacy or the free flow of information," she said.

She appealed to the European Parliament to keep these concerns in mind when debating the [pact](#).

"I think that it would be helpful to conduct a thorough assessment of the effect the agreement might have on [fundamental rights](#), particularly freedom of expression and the right to privacy in the European Union and beyond," she said.

Schulz had earlier said that the agreement was "unbalanced" and difficult to accept in its current form.

Tens of thousands of people have also staged protest marches in more than a dozen European cities against ACTA, with several countries holding off on ratifying it.

The Vienna-based Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) focuses on conflict prevention and election monitoring, but its [media freedom](#) representative regularly weighs in on human rights issues and press violations.

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