

Online piracy pact ACTA hit by new EU setback

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Protesters wearing Anonymous Guy Fawkes masks take part in a demonstration against controversial Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), on March 10, 2012 in Lyon, France. The controversial global pact to battle counterfeiting and online piracy faced a new setback as the European Parliament's pointman on the legislation urged fellow lawmakers to reject it.

A controversial global pact to battle counterfeiting and online piracy faced a new setback on Thursday as the European Parliament's pointman on the legislation urged fellow lawmakers to reject it.

Several European governments and lawmakers have voiced reservations about the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) while protesters have marched against it in some cities, voicing fears that it may curtail Internet freedoms.

"ACTA raises more fears than hopes," the European Parliament's rapporteur on ACTA, Socialist bloc lawmaker David Martin, said after a public debate that brought together industry representatives, NGOs, unions and Internet groups.

"What it delivers in terms of important intellectual property rights is diminished by potential threats to [civil liberties](#) and [Internet freedom](#)," he said.

Hannes Swoboda, the head of the group of Socialists and Democrats, the parliament's second biggest bloc after the conservative European People's Party, said he would recommend all Socialists to reject the pact.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, has urged the parliament to hold off on voting on ACTA until the European Court of Justice rules on its legality.

Twenty-two of the 27 EU states as well as other countries including the United States and Japan signed ACTA in January but the treaty has yet to be ratified anywhere.

The EU Parliament's trade committee will vote on it by the end of May and the full assembly will make its voice heard before the summer.

ACTA's aim is to beef up international standards for [intellectual property protection](#), for example by doing more to fight counterfeit medicine and other goods.

But it is ACTA's potential role in cyberspace that has caused an outcry.

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