

Poland freezes anti-piracy pact ratification

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Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk at the EU headquarters on January 30 in Brussels. Tusk said Friday that Warsaw would put on ice plans to ratify a controversial international online anti-piracy accord after massive off-and-online protests in his country.

Poland's prime minister said Friday that Warsaw would put on ice plans to ratify a controversial international online anti-piracy accord after massive off-and-online protests in his country.

"I consider that the arguments for a halt to the ratification process are justified," Donald Tusk told reporters.

"The issue of signing of the ACTA accord did not involve sufficient consultation with everyone who is part of the process," Tusk said, adding that he would hold broad talks on what to do next.

"The ACTA ratification process will be frozen as long as we haven't overcome all the doubts. This will probably require a review of Polish law. We can't rule out that, at the end of the day, this accord will not be approved."

Tusk's decision comes in the wake of high-profile protests mostly by young Poles who fear the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) -- aimed at creating international standards for intellectual property protection -- could significantly curtail online freedom.

Despite the unprecedented outcry among Polish Internet users, Poland gave a nod to the agreement on January 26 with an initial signature of endorsement, but ratification by parliament is needed for it to come into force.

Tusk's centre-right government faced particular criticism for signing the accord after talks with record companies and commercial media, but failing to address groups representing Internet users.

The day after the signature, the under-fire Tusk had already expressed caution about ACTA, a broad-brush accord which besides cracking down on illegal downloading also aims to stop counterfeiting of goods.

In addition to street rallies and online protests, Poland also faced anti-ACTA cyber attacks by "hacktivists" Anonymous and another group called Polish Underground, which took down the websites of the president, parliament and foreign and culture ministers, as well as the national police headquarters.

ACTA was negotiated between the 27-nation European Union, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and the United States.

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