



ACTA now rejected by four EP committees

Committees: Committee on Legal Affairs / Committee on Industry, Research and Energy / Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) was rejected on Monday by the Development Committee, the fourth committee advising the International Trade Committee to do so. These committees' positions are not binding on the Trade Committee, which adopts its own position as lead committee on 21 June.

Civil Liberties MEPs say ACTA fails to respect the EU's fundamental rights and the Industry Committee says it does not balance the rights and freedoms of the different stakeholders. The Legal Affairs Committee voted narrowly against a recommendation to approve the controversial Agreement and the Development Committee voted overwhelmingly against ACTA.

Development committee

The Development Committee voted by 19 votes to one, with three abstentions, to recommend that Parliament reject ACTA. The rapporteur, Jan Zahradil (ECR, CZ), had initially recommended approving ACTA, on the grounds that it does not impede access to medicines, or trade in generic medicines for developing countries. However, Development MEPs passed an amendment refusing Parliament's consent.

Civil Liberties Committee

ACTA does not comply with the rights enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the International Trade Committee should "recommend that Parliament declines to consent to the conclusion" of this agreement, says the Civil Liberties Committee in its opinion, which was adopted by 36 votes to one, with 21 abstentions.

Civil Liberties MEPs point out that Europe needs an international agreement to step up the fight against counterfeiting, but all deals concluded by the EU must be compatible with its treaties and ACTA does not ensure full respect for private life or full protection of sensitive personal information. The text also stresses that when fundamental rights are at stake ambiguity must be avoided and ACTA entails various layers of ambiguity.

Internet providers should not police the Internet, says this committee, urging the Commission and EU countries to ensure that the role of providers is legally clear. It also calls for an EU strategy to combat counterfeiting and piracy, which must fully respect fundamental rights in Europe.

Industry Committee

The Industry Committee voted by 31 votes to 25 to reject ACTA, saying that it fails to balance intellectual property rights, business freedom, protection of personal data and the freedom to receive or provide information. It also says ACTA's approach to intellectual property ignores the specific features of each sector and adds that the Agreement's lack of definitions could create legal uncertainty for European firms.

Amelia Andersdotter (Greens/EFA, SE), author of the opinion and member of the Swedish pirate party "Piratpartiet", said: "I am very satisfied that this committee has listened to the concerns of EU citizens, companies, entrepreneurs and the artistic community, who do not believe that ACTA is the way forward".

Press release

Legal Affairs Committee

The Legal Affairs Committee voted by 12 votes to 10, with two abstentions, to reject the opinion drafted by Marielle Gallo (EPP, FR) endorsing ACTA. Ms Gallo dissociated herself with the outcome and a new opinion reflecting the committee's position will now be drafted by Evelyn Regner (S&D, AT).

Next steps

The four committees' opinions (which are not binding) will be sent to the International Trade Committee, which is the lead committee for the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) and will adopt its position on 21 June. The file will then pass to the full House, which must consent to the Agreement in order for it to enter into force. Parliament is scheduled to vote in the July plenary.

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