

INTERNET FREEDOM: Europe Rises Up Against ACTA

By [Washington's Blog](#)

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Widespread Protests Are Starting to Turn the Tide Against Anti-Democratic Bill

The widespread protests against the [anti-democracy bill](#) ACTA by the Polish people have forced Poland's prime minister to stall – or perhaps even back out – of the treaty. As TechDirt [notes](#):

Following the [growing protests](#) about ACTA in Europe, as well as signs of [US meddling](#), Poland's prime minister is making it clear that [Poland will not ratify ACTA for the time being](#), leading to speculation that the EU may not actually join ACTA.

Tusk's backtracking could spell the end of ACTA for the entire European Union. If Poland or any other EU member state, or the European Parliament itself, fails to ratify the document, it becomes null and void across the union. As it stands, there are already five member countries that have not even signed ACTA.

"I share the opinions of those who from the beginning said that consultations were not complete," Tusk said, according to a report in Wirtualna Polska. The 54-year-old prime minister added that a Polish rejection of ACTA is now on the table, and admitted that he had previously approached the agreement from a "20th century" perspective, due to his age.

The Slovenian ambassador to Japan has apologized to her country and her children for signing ACTA, saying she signed it [because her government told her to, and "out of civic carelessness" in not bothering to understand what ACTA meant before signing it](#).

Bulgarian and Polish MPs wore Guy Fawkes masks to protest ACTA. Again, [from TechDirt](#):

We recently pointed out that a bunch of Polish politicians [wore Guy Fawkes/Anonymous masks](#) in Parliament to protest ACTA:



It appears that some politicians in Bulgaria thought that was a good idea, and have [done the same thing](#):



Indeed, even the elderly are wearing Guy Fawkes masks in protest of ACTA:



European Parliamentarian Marietje Schaake [writes](#):

As a Member of the European Parliament, I very much welcome the increased attention the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) has received in the past weeks. It has taken a while for massive outcry to emerge, but we are seeing protest voices getting louder and louder.

ARS Technica [reports](#) that the Greek Ministry of Justice was hacked by anonymous:

The Greek Ministry of Justice had its [Web site](#) defaced by Greek and Cypriot Anonymous-affiliated hackers (a mirror of the defaced site is available [here](#)). The hackers included a [video message](#) (now removed) complaining that the Greek government had abandoned the democratic will of its people and was instead bending to the will of the IMF and the EU.

Greece is expected to accept IMF funds in an effort to allow its government to bring some semblance of sustainability to its finances, but Anonymous believes that this move will “introduce a new dictatorship upon [the Greek] people’s shoulders and allow the bankers and the monarchs of the EU to enslave them both economically and politically.”

The defaced site itself focused on an anti-ACTA message. It warned that Greece had two weeks to “stop ACTA,” and that if it failed to do so, some 300 sites would be defaced. The next targets will include both media and ministry sites, with the hackers announcing that they already had passwords for most sites and that this was “JUST the BEGINING [sic].”

Swedes are out in force protesting ACTA. As The Local [reports](#):

Over 10,000 Swedes had pledged to take part in demonstrations in Stockholm and other cities on Saturday to protest against the ACTA anti-piracy legislation which is set to go before the Riksdag later this year.

The demonstration, held at midday on Sergels Torg in the centre of Stockholm, featured speeches from MEPs Christian Engström of the Pirate Party, Carl Schlyter of the Green Party and Mikael Gustavsson of the Left Party.

Over eleven thousand people had signed up to attend the Stockholm demonstration on Facebook by 10am on Saturday.

Christian Engström told the Dagens Nyheter (DN) daily that with indications that Poland’s parliament is set to reject the controversial international anti-piracy legislation, the pirate movement had wind in its sails.

“1.4 million signatures have been collected through an online petition and there have been riots in Poland. There now seems to be a commitment among citizens so I feel very hopeful,” he told DN.

By all accounts, the number of ACTA protests in Europe is overwhelming:



But that only tells half of the story.

As Pirate Party found Rick Falvinge [reports](#):

Just look at this map. I've never seen anything like it in terms of people all across Europe demanding their freedom of speech and being angry against backroom corporatist deals that steals their most basic civil liberties.

This is not Hollywood versus Silicon Valley, as oldmedia likes to frame it. This is Hollywood versus *The People*. For decades, they have trained us to think in black and white, in good versus evil fighting for domination of the free world. And now, they've gone and put themselves in the role of evil villain.

The copyright cartel thought they were battling Google.

They're not.

They're waging war against the people, with the help of the politicians.

And we're not standing for it. We can't change the copyright cartel, but we can send a clear message to the politicians that 250 million Europeans sharing and preserving contemporary culture is *not a problem*. It is a *power base of 250 million voters* that will *kick you out of office* if you dare so much as touch the net.

And there are visible cracks in the façade, especially seeing Poland falter and the copyright cartels visibly shaken from the SOPA defeat in the US, with the politicians having started to pay attention to what the Internet wants. We can win this.

Today, Sweden rallies. List of rallies below ([via](#) Christian Engström, Member of European Parliament):

- Stockholm: *Sergels Torg, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Göteborg: *Götaplatsen, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Malmö: *Stortorget, at the Karl X Gustav statue, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Helsingborg: *at the Magnus Stenbock statue, 13:00*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Umeå : *Apberget, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Kalmar: *Giraffens Köpcentrum, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Sundsvall: *Torget, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]
- Karlstad: *Stora Torget, 12 noon*. [[Facebook](#)]

- Borlänge: *Jussi Björlings torg, 12 noon.* [[Facebook](#)]

(The observant will note that less than half of these rallies are marked on the already-impressive map of European rallies. Makes me wonder what the map would look like if all rallies were included.)

Most of Europe will rally next Saturday, on February 11. That's going to be something, too. Let's give Europe the best of precursor to those rallies from Sweden that they could possibly get!

As of early morning on February 4, 11,000 people have committed to coming to the Stockholm rally, with another 3,500 maybes. Those are numbers that would overfill the *Plattan* plaza by a wide margin. I'll be at the rally in Stockholm, Sweden, and will be taking plenty of imagery and will follow up here.

UPDATE AT 1500: ***



Rally at the Sergels Torg plaza in Stockholm, Sweden. Anna Troberg, leader of the Swedish Pirate Party, speaking (at left) and maybe 1/3 of the crowd.

The turnout was like nothing I've seen for a February rally in Sweden. In -20°C, there were well over a thousand people protesting corporate rights over their freedom of speech; normally, you're lucky getting 50.

Also, there was a very clear recurring theme among the Members of European Parliament speaking, MEPs from three different parties. They all told the story of how software patents had been defeated in Europe, followed by the crucial "amendment 138" in the Telecoms Package, which aimed to shut people off *en masse* from the Net. Well, thanks to diligent activists and people on the inside, we managed to get as strong safeguards in place as possible against shutting people off. But the monopoly lobbyists never quit. Now they're at it again, this time saying that if authorities can't shut people off *en masse* due to that "amendment 138", maybe they can get private corporations – the ISPs – to do it instead

through third-party liability forcing certain terms of service and wiretapping. Hence, ACTA.

Fortunately, and this was a consistent message from all Members of European Parliament, we have the blueprint for defeating ACTA. We need to repeat what we did with the software patents and with the Telecoms Package. It takes hard work, it takes tons of activism, but we know exactly what to do and how to do it, and most importantly: *we know that we can win*.

As the rally concluded, everybody was determined to win this fight, having heard the clear message that it takes work but is perfectly doable.

UPDATE 2: There are more photos from Christian Engström, Member of European Parliament [here](#). Free for any use (CC0 / Public Domain). Here's one of his photos, showing the protester crowd:



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