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ACTA and basic rights

Opposition to ACTA gathering pace, as ratification process falters

This Saturday will witness Europe-wide demonstrations against the controversial Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) - with Green MEPs set to take part. Public pressure against this secretive and far-reaching agreement is ramping up, while a number of EU governments are now having second thoughts about proceeding with its ratification.

The EU and 22 of its member states have signed up (1) to the controversial Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) but the agreement must still be ratified by member states and the European Parliament.

The Greens have consistently highlighted concerns about the legality of the deal and its compatibility with EU provisions on fundamental rights. The European Parliament will play a crucial role in the overall EU ratification process and the Greens/EFA group will push for the agreement to be rejected when MEPs are asked to give their consent to the ratifying ACTA.

On Tuesday next week (14 February), the Greens/EFA group will also organise an action in the European Parliament with a view to convincing MEPs from other political groups to reject ACTA.

Numerous analyses (2) have raised serious doubts about the compatibility of ACTA with EU law, particularly provisions on fundamental rights. Of particular concern: ACTA encourages its signatory states to step up cooperation with private actors, like internet providers, for intellectual property enforcement in the absence of any minimum standards for legal procedures. This opens the door to undermining the basic rights of individuals with no protection for those affected.

Experts have also pointed out that ACTA could undermine access to medicines, particularly in developing countries, which are more dependent on generics, but were not even part of the negotiations.

(1) Cyprus, Estonia, Slovakia, Germany and Holland did not sign but committed to do so in the near future but the situation has now changed with a number of signatory and non-signatory member states postponing any planned ratification.

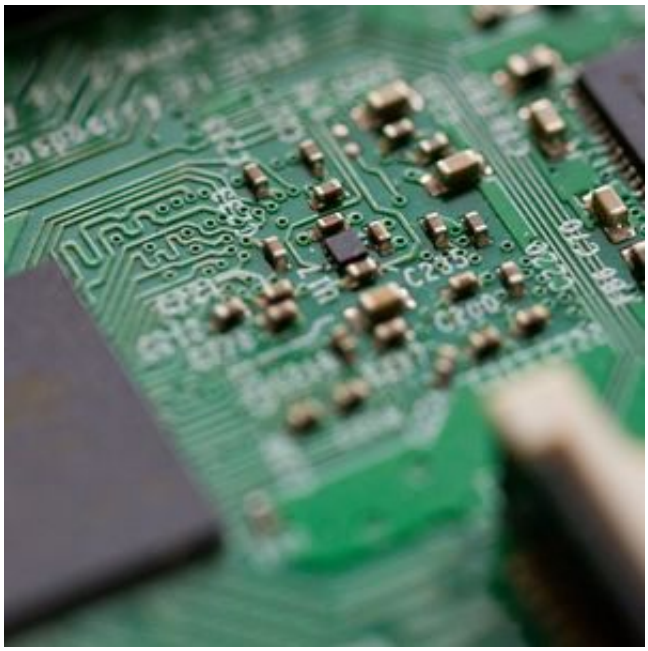
(2) Studies on ACTA commissioned by Greens/EFA:
- ACTA and Access to Medicines, http://rfc.act-on-acta.eu/access-to-medicines
- Compatibility ACTA with the European Convention on Human Rights & the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, http://rfc.act-on-acta.eu/fundamental-rights

ACTA text: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/html/147937.htm

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