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"Orwellian" net proposals pushed through by EU

MEPs back file-sharing fight

by Katie Scott published on 8 July 2008

Despite concerns that they will curb internet freedom, measures have been pushed through by European authorities to fight file-sharing.

The new proposals, which will be voted on in September, are part of a Telecom Packet, which aims to bring all European countries' policies on telecoms into line.

They include making it law that internet users caught illegally downloading copyrighted material from the web- such as movies and music - are booted off after three warnings.

The proposals could also see European authorities given the power to dictate what software is used in web surfing.

Digital rights groups in Europe have now formed a loose coalition to fight the amendments.

They argue that the measure will create a "Soviet internet" and could see "popular software applications like Skype or even Firefox declared illegal in Europe if they are not certified by an administrative authority".

But MEPs insist that this is not their intention.

MEP Malcolm Harbour told the BBC that it's "about improving users' rights".

"There has been a great deal of dismay in the committee at the interpretation being put on these amendments."

"They have nothing to do with copyright enforcement. The interpretation of them is alarmist and scare-mongering and deflects from the intention which was to improve consumers' rights."



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He added: "It is about new provisions so that users can find out about new services. It will make price comparison sites easier to set up, it will force regulators to give equivalent access to disabled users and enhance emergency services with caller location".