



Reported IP Theft Down but Digital Challenges Remain

Online IP theft has “not increased significantly” over the past year, according to new government stats which show overall IP crime having fallen during the period.

The UK IP Crime Report 2014/15 highlighted several major wins for law enforcement and industry in general.

These included the ‘seizure’ of over 15.2 million digital tracks by the BPI, and the Publishers Association requesting Google to remove 1.75m URLs from its search results which link to copyrighted material.

Meanwhile, Operation Jasper has successfully brought together officers from 63 Trading Standards teams, police forces, industry bodies and government agencies to take on counterfeiting and piracy on social media.

It managed to take down 4,300 Facebook listings and 20 Facebook profiles, and issued over 200 warning letters and 24 cease and desist notices, the report claimed.

Also during the period, the Police Intellectual Property Crime Unit diverted 11 million views of pirate websites to an official warning page and seized counterfeit goods worth £3m.

IP enforcement seems to be working in general, with an overall fall in IP crime reported to Crimestoppers. The number of reports to the non-profit relating to auction sites and markets fell by 71% and 94% respectively.

This is not a 100% guarantee actual crime levels have fallen – just reported crime – although the signs are positive.

However, the report warned that the online challenge “cannot be underestimated.”

It added:

“Sellers enjoy the perceived anonymity of the online world and ever greater access to new customers via closed social media groups. The online sale of counterfeit items remains a significant problem, but has not increased significantly from 2013/14 after a significant increase in recent years.”

The UK government last year pledged £3.5m (\$6m) of taxpayers' money to a new initiative supported by ISPs and entertainment giants designed to warn users about the dangers of IP theft.

Creative Content UK will aim to notify netizens when their online accounts have been used to download, share or consumer pirated content.

IP portfolio management firm, Novum Global Strategies, welcomed the news that reported IP crime is falling in the UK.

"Evidently, the British Government's attempts to help companies safeguard their ability to create new ideas have made an impact," said CEO, Joan Mill, in a statement.

"However there may be uncertainty on the horizon for UK businesses seeking to protect their Intellectual Property. The precarious position in which the UK finds itself in terms of its position in the EU and its subsequent participation in the Unitary Patent Court may amplify the risk of Intellectual Property crime in the UK should we decide to exit the European Union."