



Thursday August 15, 2024

Re: Public consultation on Worldwide Counterfeit and Piracy Watchlist

The Motion Picture Association (MPA) submits the following response to the public consultation on Counterfeit and Piracy Watch list issued on June 4, 2024, aiming to identify marketplaces outside the EU where counterfeiting, piracy, or other forms of intellectual property abuses are common practice.

The Motion Picture Association is a trade association representing the interests of six international producers and distributors of films, home entertainment and television programs.¹

The creative sectors in Europe are dedicated to providing high-quality content for millions of people worldwide, empowering Europe culturally but also economically. The sectors make vital contributions to European growth and jobs. EU figures presented by the European Patent Office and the European Union Intellectual Property Office in October 2022 show that the core copyright-intensive industries generate 17 million jobs, contribute nearly €1 trillion to the GDP, which represents almost 7% of the European GDP.²

¹ Netflix Studios, LLC., Paramount Pictures Corporation, Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc., Universal City Studios LLC, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

² EPO and EUIPO, “Intellectual property rights intensive industries and economic performance in the European Union”, Industry Level Analysis Report, September 2019 ([WEB_IPR_intensive_Report_2019.pdf](#) (europa.eu)). See also [2022_IPR_Intensive_Industries_FullR_en.pdf](#) (europa.eu).

The sector is predominantly composed of small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and has proven to be more economically resilient than other sectors throughout the economic crisis. The EU figures show that the shares of the IPR industries in EU employment and GDP increased compared to prior editions of the research and confirms the increasing centrality of intellectual assets in modern economies³. However, the availability of unauthorized copyrighted material via illegal websites and other online services is a substantial problem for the creative industries, damaging its growth and investments in the sector⁴. The latest research in Italy by Ipsos finds that 39% of Italian adults committed at least one act of piracy in 2023, illicitly using movies, series/fiction programs or live sports.⁵ Similar findings were reported by the UK IPO in February 2023: 32% of U.K. internet users had accessed infringing content.⁶

The online piracy industry has become increasingly professionalized and organized, operating with high revenues for those operating illegal sites and services. Infringing sites make hundreds of millions of euros from advertising while maintaining profit margins ranging between 86% and 93%.⁷ One of the studies estimated digital ad revenue linked to infringing content at \$111 million.⁸ Piracy also has a negative impact on consumers. A paper published by researchers at Carnegie Mellon University on the impact of piracy on computer security finds that the more users visited piracy sites, the more often their machines got infected with malware. Specifically, whenever they doubled the time they spent on piracy sites, they increased the number of malware processes running on their machines by 20 percent.⁹ Another study covered a nine-month probe where researchers observed malware from piracy apps stealing usernames and passwords, probing user networks and surreptitiously uploading data without consent.¹⁰

³ Ibid.

⁴ See for instance https://kipa.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Deloitte-report_Internet-Piracy_2MB.pdf (Poland) and <https://www.digitaltveurope.com/2021/10/26/piracy-cost-spanish-economy-more-than-e2-billion-and-20000-jobs-in-2020/> (Spain).

⁵ <https://piracymonitor.org/italy-39-of-residents-accessed-piracy-sources-with-e2-billion-impact-to-economy/>.

⁶ Executive summary Online copyright infringement tracker survey (12th Wave) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

⁷ The Digital Citizen's Alliance study "good Money still Going Bad" from 2015.

⁸ <https://www.tagtoday.net/hubfs/Measuring%20digital%20advertising%20revenue%20to%20infringing%20sites.pdf?t=1507150221706>.

⁹ <https://techpolicyinstitute.org/2018/03/13/piracy-and-malware-theres-no-free-lunch/>.

¹⁰ https://www.digitalcitizensalliance.org/clientuploads/directory/Reports/DCA_Fishing_in_the_Piracy_Stream_v6.pdf. See also more recent studies https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4766797 and <https://cdn.website-editor.net/s/e5010535723445c28015213e9078d178/files/uploaded/MalwareReport.pdf?Expires=1722444576&Signature=pxnTKMI7B0dvQMmUrWBrTHymydRBjSCTnF-Lvt8VO4FtY82ELI~42jXPmEyexpWobZVO7tVHa~DLyNMY0qFvb22IJZuJpbvvyYibMaWclPF5-NcOnIOOeOcDYy4ee0>.

In order to combat infringement, action needs to be taken and the MPA would like to highlight our three key enforcement points in this regard.

MPA Key Enforcement Points:

1. Countries should provide effective laws, in line with international enforcement obligations, and the government will enforce them, such that rightsholders may take effective action against pirate operations and seek appropriate responses from intermediaries that facilitate piracy;
2. Intermediaries should take proactive measures to prevent the availability of infringing content;
3. Intermediaries should have a clear obligation to verify the identity of all their business customers and to ensure that the contact details listed are up to date and accurate (transparency online);
4. Intermediaries should take adequate steps to ensure their services are not used to facilitate infringement by ceasing the provision of their services (access, hosting, search, ads, domain names, proxies, etc.) to infringing services or services who have failed to meet the verification requirements.

The initiative for a worldwide Counterfeit and Piracy Watchlist is uniquely positioned to build on the central principle of the European Commission's 2017 Communication "Tackling Illegal Content Online, towards an enhanced responsibility of online platforms," which calls upon intermediaries to take greater responsibility to take proactive measures against infringing content¹¹. It is key that the focus remains on preventing the availability of infringing content.

In addition to having workable and efficient criminal procedures led by local law enforcement and efficient civil processes, with deterring sentences so that the infringement can be stopped at source, an effective enforcement model requires a situation whereby all relevant intermediaries take a combination of proactive and reactive measures to deter, stop, and prevent the availability of illegal content online and offline. Pirate services often operate in complete anonymity, making it impossible to locate the operators or tie them to a specific country. Even if the location of a service and, more importantly, its operator(s) can be established, effective enforcement action is often extremely challenging, if not impossible without the availability of no-fault injunctive relief with intermediaries who are best placed to help.

¹¹ European Commission, "Tackling Illegal Content Online, Towards an Enhanced Responsibility of Online Platforms," *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, COM(2017) 555 final, September 28, 2017. See link [here](#).

Also, meaningful transparency and accountability are key. Online enforcement efforts are frustrated when intermediaries fail to take adequate steps to ensure that their services are not being used to facilitate copyright infringement, a problem compounded by the fact that many website operators and intermediaries operate anonymously. This is an issue that needs to be addressed by the EU legislator urgently and we therefore strongly encourage the inclusion of due diligence “Know Your Business Customer” verification obligations for these services within the Digital Services Act. Moreover, EU should advocate that EU Third Countries carry out investigations into pirate services operating out of their territory and take appropriate consequential action, including proceeding with, or at the very least, facilitating conservatory or evidential seizures of (i) any equipment dedicated to delivering pirated content to consumers, and (ii) any illicit proceeds belonging to pirate operators. Third countries should also take measures to implement no-fault injunctions relief with online intermediaries (such as ISPs), to effectively prevent unknown or unidentified foreigners from operating pirate services out of their territory.

The MPA’s contribution will focus on online services as these are frequently extraterritorial in reach and have the most significant impact on the legitimate global market. This includes Piracy-as-a-Service (PaaS) offerings which constitute a suite of off-the-shelf services that make it easy for would-be pirates to create, operate, and monetize a fully functioning pirate operation. Common examples are: content databases providing access to tens of thousands of infringing movies and TV series; IPTV dashboards and infrastructure; and ready-made website templates that facilitate setup of streaming websites with a one-time payment. However, physical markets remain a threat in many territories around the world.

The MPA’s contribution is not intended to be comprehensive but instead reflects an attempt to identify sites and services particularly illustrative of the nature and scope of online content theft. We have, when possible, included the specific information requested, including popularity rankings and site traffic data from SimilarWeb,¹² as well as information on revenue sources,

¹² SimilarWeb site traffic data cited here represents worldwide visits on desktop and mobile for June 2024. SimilarWeb is a market intelligence company that uses a combination of panel, public data sources, ISP, and other data for its data estimations. See <http://similarweb.com> for more information. All data, reports and related materials provided or made available by Similarweb are intended for informational purposes only. They are based on data obtained from third parties, including estimations and extrapolations based on such data, and are not warranted for accuracy or completeness.

volume, among other details. It is important to note that these illegal services frequently change domains and use several proxies and/or mirror sites to circumvent law enforcement agencies’ and rightsholders’ enforcement efforts. The information indicated here reflects the situation during mid 2024.

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LINKING AND STREAMING WEBSITES

Linking sites aggregate, organize, and index links to content stored on other internet platforms. Linking sites that offer access to unauthorized movies and TV shows typically curate lists and indexes organized by title, genre, season, and episode, and often use the official cover art to represent the content and create a user-friendly experience for their users. The sites then provide one or more active links so users can access the infringing content. Depending on the website, users are commonly presented with the options of either streaming the content in a video-on-demand format or downloading a permanent copy to their computer or other device. Many streaming linking sites also frame or embed video players from third-party websites, reducing the number of clicks needed to get to content for a more seamless user experience. Some also appear to be hosting the underlying content files on servers they control to maintain continuity of

infringing offerings and to avoid takedowns on third-party file hosting sites. They largely derive their revenue from advertising and referrals.

Fmovies24[.]to (formerly fmoviesz[.]to and Fmovies[.]to)

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Vietnam	280	168.8M

Fmovies is one of the most popular websites in the world for streaming pirated copies of popular movies and television shows directly to computer desktops, mobile phones, or through IPTV apps on illicit streaming devices. This site has more than 60 associated domains used by significant piracy operations such as Bmovies, 9anime, Putlocker, and Solarmovies and, likely sources files from the streaming piracy service VidSRC[.]to. Fmovies domains are subject to site blocking orders in at least 16 jurisdictions, including India, Australia, Denmark, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. Yet, the site’s popularity continues to grow. Fmoviesz[.]to has 13.08 million site visits globally in July 2024. At the time of writing, a number of domains associated with the syndicate, including the main Fmovies domains, fmovies24.to, fmoviesz.to, and fmovies.to, as well as the video library vidsrc[.]to have been taken offline.

Vegamovies

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
India	149.487	468.847

Vegamovies is one of the most popular piracy streaming sites in India with at least 40 known associated domains. Vegamovies domains hop and proliferate such that traffic is dispersed and in July 2024, vegamovies[.]yt which was ranked #149.487 globally and #12.697 in India received on average 468.847 monthly visits. The site is in English and is known for providing unauthorized access to a wide range of international movie and television content, as well as India-based content. Vegamovies’ domains distribute content through cyberlockers and drive-to-drivesource domains such as FilePress and GdToT which transform GDrive links into a player with multiple hosts. The site frequently changes its domain name to evade blocking orders and enforcement efforts and has

multiple sources of revenue including advertising. The operators of Vegamovies are believed to be based in India.

rezka[.]ag

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Ukraine	1.085	65.34M

Formerly known as hdrezka[.]me, rezka[.]ag is a popular Russian-language streaming website that offers 31,000 movies and 8,800 TV series, as well as cartoons and anime. Content can be searched and filtered by genre, year, and categories. The content is sourced from the website’s own video CDN and from other external video CDNs. The site is hosted at OrangeWebsite in Iceland. In July 2024, rezka[.]ag which was ranked #1.085 globally and #32 in Ukraine received on average 65.34M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. The site has been subject to blocking orders in Russia, Spain, Malaysia, Brazil, Australia, Indonesia and Lithuania. The alleged operators are in Ukraine.

Seasonvar[.]ru

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Avg Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Russia	5.261	16.00M

This is a Russian-language streaming website which allows users to access content for free. The domain was created in July 2009. The website claims to have 20,881 accessible files. 6,276 of these files are series in high definition and 1,635 of them have subtitles. A premium subscription is available for less than 1 EUR per month which allows users to download videos, use the mobile version, and gives access to HD videos without any advertising interruptions. Users can search for content alphabetically or by using the search bar on top of the page. The website is currently being hosted at Lantver Ltd. in Russia. In July 2024, seasonvar[.]ru which was ranked #5.261 globally and #79 in Belarus received on average 16.00M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. The site has been subject to blocking orders in Russia, Austria, Australia, Spain and Brazil.

Dizigom

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Turkey	8.061	13.19M

Operating since 2013, Dizigom enables users to stream content in their original version with Turkish subtitles and mainly focuses on TV series. The service is Turkey's top 7 pirate site (with one domain, i.e., dizigom1.tv) with a local rank of #194 and a global rank of #8,061. Dizigom has 13.19M monthly visits in July 2024. Focusing on a Turkish audience, the service has most of its online traffic originating from Turkey (93,89%). Dizigom offers a VOD library of TV series and movies in the original version with Turkish subtitles, consisting of approximately 68K TV series episodes and 800 films, affecting many IP rightsholders including all MPA members.

Gimy[.]ai

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Taiwan	1.012	61.06M

A criminal referral for the highly popular Chinese language Gimy pirate website was made in Taiwan in December 2020 and following a raid of the operators' office in early 2021, four Taiwanese operators were charged and convicted in 2023. Despite this, the site has reemerged with many mirror sites and alternative domains including redirections and mirrors to Gimy[.]ai (the current main domain), Gimy[.]video, Gimy[.]is, Gimy[.]im, Gimy[.]cc, and Gimy[.]tube, among other domains used by the pirate operators to evade blocking orders. Gimy's global SimilarWeb rank is #1.012 and the site is extremely popular in Taiwan with a local rank of #15. The Gimy website/domains had an aggregate of 61.06 million monthly visits in July 2024 from over 6.494 million unique visitors, according to SimilarWeb.

Goojara[.]to/levidia.ch/Supernova[.]to

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Indonesia	1.528	35.12M

Goojara is an Indonesia-based, English-language streaming website popular in Africa and the US. It comprises six sites, goojara[.]to, levidia[.]ch, supernova[.]to, and goojara[.]ch (which redirects to goojara[.]to), and wootly[.]ch, and nebula[.]to. Goojara[.]to is ranked #1.528 globally and #25 in South Africa, according to SimilarWeb data of July 2024. Goojara.to is blocked in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, and Australia. Levidia.ch is blocked in Malaysia, United Kingdom, Australia, and Italy.

KatMovieHD[.]boo

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
India	60.048	1.241M

Katmoviehd is an India-based, English-language streaming website popular in India. To avoid blocking orders, it had hopped across multiple domains in a short period of time (.com, .org, .net, .in, .se, .cat, .ma, zip, ac, .nl), with its most recent iteration being katmoviehd[.]boo.

Katmoviehd[.]boo is ranked #60.048 globally and #7.517 in India, according to SimilarWeb data of July 2024.

Tamilblasters[.]link

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
India	554.757	101.750

Tamilblasters is an India-based, English-language streaming/torrent website popular in India. Apart from providing torrent and magnet links on their main site (currently at 1tamilblasters[.]link), it also links to streamblasters[.]pm, which is its streaming site. To avoid blocking orders, it hops across multiple domains (.eu, .pm, .tel, .sbs, .info, .info, .fans, .art, .shop). Tamilblasters[.]pm, their previous iteration, was ranked #8.961 globally and #651 in India, according to SimilarWeb data.

Gnula.nu/[.]se

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Latin America	15.374	4.820M

Gnula is a Spanish-language streaming website popular amongst the Spanish-speaking community. The site is ranked #15.374 globally and top #1.082 in Mexico with over 5 million visits across both sites in July 2024 according to SimilarWeb data. Gnula[.]nu houses infringing movie content while gnula[.]se houses infringing tv series, with content both in original language as well as dubbed and subtitled in Spanish. Over 10% of traffic to these sites comes from European IP addresses. Gnula.nu is blocked in Brazil, Portugal, and Spain. Gnula.se is blocked in Spain and Peru. In addition, Gnula[.]se and Gnula[.]nu are the targets of a criminal case in Bolivia, filed on April 28th, 2022. Both websites were blocked in Bolivia by local ISPs following our request, made as plaintiffs of the criminal case. The defendant, R.C.E, is aware of the complaint against him and will soon be summoned to present his defense.

Dytt8[.]net, Dytt89.com, Dy2018.net, Dy2018[.]com, Dydytt[.]net, and Ygdy8[.]com

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Avg Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
China, Taiwan	27.161	2.319M

In July 2024, dytt8[.]net which was ranked #27.161 globally and #751 in China received on average 2.319M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. With a very user-friendly interface and the provision of direct links to third-party storage providers, this website remains a particular threat to legitimate services both within and outside China. Dytt8[.]net is part of a group of related sites including dytt89[.]com, dy2018[.]com, dy2018[.]net, dydytt[.]net, and ygdy8[.]com. The sites were referred to the National Copyright Administration of China (NCAC) in 2019 and 2022 as part of its annual “Swordnet” campaign. Dytt8.net is blocked in Australia and Malaysia and Dy2018.com is blocked in Malaysia.

Rlsbb[.]ru

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
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Iran	19.238	3.168M
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In July 2024, rlsbb[.]ru which was ranked #19.238 globally and #9.705 in the United States received on average 3.168M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. This is an English-language website, albeit using a Russian top-level domain (TLD). It offers a wide range of pirated content by regularly posting articles that contain movie details and links to cyberlockers. The website is organized as a blog, each article is contained in a category which enables users to quickly find titles. Currently hosted in the United States. This site has been subject to blocking orders in Portugal, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Malaysia, United Kingdom, Indonesia, and Australia. The alleged operator is based in Iran.

Solarmovie[.]to

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Vietnam	8.735	7.638M

In July 2024, solarmovie[.]to which was ranked #8.735 globally and #4.440 in the United States received on average 7.638M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data This is an English-language website which enables users to stream movies and TV series online for free. The latest releases, movies, or TV series are available for streaming on the website. The content is categorized by genre and by country. This site has been subject to blocking orders in Italy, the UK, India, Norway, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, and Denmark. The alleged operator is based in Vietnam.

Sockshare1[.]com

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
UAE	626.183	102.785

In July 2024, sockshare[.]com which was ranked #626.183 globally and #134.892 in the United States received on average 102.784 monthly visits according to SimilarWeb. This is an English-language website which allows users to stream movie content illegally without registration. The

website is categorized by genre, new movies, countries, years, and TV series. It also has a search bar which makes it easier for users to find the content they wish to view. The website streams content from different cyberlockers and is regularly updated with new releases. Currently hosted at Blueangelhost Pvt. Ltd. which has their main Data Center located in Bulgaria and their head office is located in Dubai UAE, sockshare[.]net is using a domain privacy and proxy service which hides the identity of the website operator. This site has been subject to blocking orders in Spain, Australia, Denmark, UK, Portugal, Italy, and Belgium.

Hianime (formerly Aniwatch[.]to and zoro[.]to)

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Vietnam	202	197.7M

In July 2024, hianime[.]to which was ranked #202 globally and #178 in the United States received on average 197.7M visits according to SimilarWeb. Hianime is one of the most popular pirate streaming sites globally, is understood to be a rebrand of the previously popular sites, aniwatch[.]to and zoro[.]to. The website is run from Vietnam and provides pirated versions of popular movies and television, particularly anime.

Cuevana[.]biz and Cuevana3[.]eu

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Latin America	457	121.3M

In July 2024, Cuevana[.]biz which was ranked #457 globally and #44 in Mexico received on average 121.3M visits according to SimilarWeb Named after one the largest illegal streaming brands, Cuevana[.]biz is a popular streaming site amongst the Spanish-speaking community that offers a large library of titles including movies and TV shows. The domain has been registered since at least 2011. The websites’ operators monetize them through advertising served by many national and international ad networks. Cuevana[.]biz is hosted by KnownSRV Ltd. Cuevana.biz and Cuevana3.eu are currently blocked in Spain. Internet intermediary services in Europe are being targeted by ROI claims to obtain information that may lead to its operators.

Braflix[.]video

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Brazil	63.551	1.448M

Braflix[.]video is a popular streaming site operated from Brazil that offers a large library of titles, including movies, TV shows, live channels, anime, and K-dramas subtitled in several different languages. The domain was registered in 2024. Braflix[.]video received 1.448M visits in July 2024 from 615,887 unique visitors, according to SimilarWeb. The website's operators monetize it through advertising served by many national and international ad networks. Braflix[.]video is owned by Amazon.com, Inc. The website is currently redirecting to Braflix[.]ru and has traffic from India (27.57%), United States (21.62%), and UK (9.58%), among others. Additionally, Braflix has been selected as a pirate brand and will be targeted for blocking under Brazilian Operation 404 court orders, along with several other illegal domains associated with this name.

Cuevana3[.]ch

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Latin America	4.337	17.56M

Named after one of the largest illegal streaming brands, Cuevana3[.]ch is a popular streaming site among the Spanish-speaking community that offers a large library of titles, including movies and TV shows. The domain has been active since 2022. Cuevana3[.]ch received 17.56M visits in July 2024 from over 3.6M unique visitors, according to SimilarWeb. The website's operators monetize it through advertising served by many national and international ad networks. It is hosted by VEESP-AS, LV, Cuevana. Cuevana3.ch is currently blocked in Spain and Peru. Internet intermediary services in Europe are being targeted by ROI claims to obtain information that may lead to its operators.

Veronline[.]in (formerly veronline[.]sh and veronline[.]cc)

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global)</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW)</i>
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	<i>Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Data of July 2024</i>
Latin America & Spain	3.536	27.04M

The initial domain identified for the service, veronline[.]cc, has been active since 2023. Since then, the website’s audience has grown exponentially. Following a period of redirection to veronline[.]sh, the domain transitioned to veronline[.]in July 2024. Due to the popularity of its domains, the website has achieved rankings within the TOP 5 in Spain and the TOP 25 in the Spanish-speaking region of Latin America. The service is dedicated to broadcasting TV shows and received 27.04M visits in July 2024, with significant traffic from Spain (24%), Mexico (20%), Argentina (14%), among others. The website’s operators monetize it through advertising provided by various national and international ad networks. Hosted by Namecheap, Inc., Veronline[.]in uses Cloudflare’s services to mask its IP location. Internet intermediary services in Europe are being targeted by ROI claims in order to obtain information that may lead to its operators.

ILLEGAL IPTV SERVICES & STREAMING DEVICES

Illegal IPTV services typically offer hundreds of channels illegally sourced from providers worldwide alongside video-on-demand (VOD) content that includes unauthorized copies of movies and television series. Many of these illegal services are subscription based and run for profit, offering monthly or yearly packages to their user base. The technical infrastructure related to these services is often vast and complex, making the identification of content sources and service operators extremely challenging.

IPTV services have been a driving force in the emergence of a number of related illegal businesses including ones engaged in (i.) the resale of IPTV services, (ii.) individuals or businesses involved in the theft, distribution, and sale of channels, and (iii.) manufacturers of set-top-boxes, called in this case figure illegal streaming devices (ISDs).

IPTV services must rely on infrastructure and support services to function such as hosting providers, media servers, and panel hosting. Some of these services are used without the knowledge or approval of the legal service or product—however, some cater their business

strategy towards illegal sites or ignore bad actors amongst their clients even when informed. As such, these rogue legitimate services become bad actors in their own right.

The marketing and sale of IPTV services is often carried out by a growing network of global IPTV service resellers who purchase subscriptions at wholesale prices and resell them for a profit, further complicating investigations. These resellers are also often involved in the promotion and support of the service with many also providing a limited number of channels to a given service. It is not uncommon to see resellers expand on their business model and move on to become an illegal IPTV service provider. The following notorious markets are a sampling of the global illegal IPTV ecosystem:

MagisTV.net – Latin America, China. MagisTV is one of the largest IPTV brands in the world, offering over 1,200 channels and 50,000 VOD titles. The service is distributed through multiple resellers and websites, with magistv.net being one of the main services for purchasing subscription packages and downloading the app. The domain received 791.099 visits in July 2024, according to SimilarWeb. Magistv.net has been active since 2021 and is hosted by Google Cloud Platform, using Cloudflare’s services to mask its IP location.

In LATAM, there are active criminal cases against MagisTV in Ecuador (Oficialmagistv[.]com and Magistv[.]digital), Colombia (Magistv[.]la, Magisla[.]com and Magistvoficial[.]com), and Venezuela (Magistv-venezuela[.]com).

Tele-latino.com – Latin America. Telelatino is a well-known IPTV brand that offers over 1,200 channels and 280,000 VOD titles. The service is distributed through multiple resellers and websites. Tele-latino.com is one of the largest websites of this brand, receiving 407.790 visits in July 2024, according to SimilarWeb. It has been active since 2019 and is hosted by eSecureData. The website is currently redirecting to Telelatino-oficial.com, and it is believed to be related to 18 additional domains, being part of a large and highly visited illegal group.

TVExpress.pro – Brazil. TVExpress is one of the largest IPTV brands in Latin America, and nearly 10% of the traffic to this website comes from European IP addresses. The service is distributed through multiple resellers and offers over 450 channels and 16,000 VOD titles.

Tvexpress.pro is one of the main services for purchasing subscription packages and downloading the app, which can be accessed through various devices, including Firestick, Android TV, TV box, desktop, and mobile devices. The domain received 227.494 visits in July 2024, according to SimilarWeb. TVExpress.pro has been active since 2020 and is hosted by GoDaddy. Access to multiple Tvexpress derived URLs are currently blocked under Brazilian Operation 404 court orders and IPs are also being blocked/disrupted through an initiative of the Brazilian telecommunications regulatory agency's – ANATEL. Preliminary, but not conclusive information such as emails linked to Google Analytics are common to Tvexpress.pro and MyFamilyCinema, which indicates that China may be the country behind the organization of both services.

Theking365tv.site – Algeria. This is a long-standing and well-known IPTV provider. There are over 2,200 International channels and an extensive VOD library. According to SimilarWeb data, traffic to the website in July 2024 stood at around 44.124 visits a month from over 12.037 unique visitors. As the website provides no other functions, such as providing content, tech support, or updates, we believe that the actual subscriber audience of this service is significantly higher than the SimilarWeb data would suggest. Once a user has purchased a subscription, the user accesses the infringing content on third-party media players, and this access is not counted by SimilarWeb. The alleged operator is in Algeria.

GenIPTV –Switzerland/North-Macedonia. One of the largest IPTV providers in the world, GenIPTV has over 10,000 international channels and 52,000 VOD titles. The promotional websites of the service accumulated 41.551 visits and 16.800 unique visitors in July 2024 according to SimilarWeb, which is highly underestimated given the multiple resellers that the service has. Hosting of their front-end domain (genip[.]tv) is with Bandwidth Technologies in the UK, and back-end domain (geniptv[.]net) is hosted at Network Dedicated SAS in Switzerland. The alleged operators are in Switzerland and North-Macedonia.

King-IPTV.net – Tunisia. In operation since 2016, this service offers over 16,000 international channels and over 20,000 VOD titles. The site also offers IPTV restreaming, potentially feeding hundreds of IPTV retransmission/streaming websites or apps around the world. According to SimilarWeb data, traffic to the website in June 2024 stood at 7.049 visits a month from over 4.361

unique visitors. As the website provides no other functions, such as providing content, tech support, or updates, we believe that the actual subscriber audience of this service is significantly higher than the SimilarWeb data would suggest. Once a user has purchased a subscription, the user accesses the infringing content on third-party media players, and this access is not counted by SimilarWeb. The alleged operator is in Tunisia.

Globe IPTV – Lebanon. Unlike common targets that have a front-facing webpage, or at minimal some social media presence, as a channel wholesaler and content source, Globe IPTV operates in the background as the source of multiple third-party IPTV services with an offer of 1,649 live TV channels, 104 of which are sports channels, which makes difficult to assess its real spread and use. Analyzing the traffic share of the major services using Globe, the breakdown of the main markets is as follows: UK 22.76%, US 19.41% and Germany with 12.67%. The alleged operator is in Lebanon.

Crystal OTT – Morocco. Crystal OTT is one of the IPTV services with the most visits in the EMEA region, primarily distributed through resellers, and has one of the most extensive infringing libraries we've seen in an IPTV service, consisting of approximately 46.46k Movie titles, 198.11k TV shows with full seasons and episodes, and 17.38k Live TV Channels affecting many IP rightsholders, including all MPA members. According to Similar Web, during the first quarter of 2024, the service has attracted a monthly traffic of 122.537 visits only to the main reseller panels and the content servers combined.

Gogo IPTV – Algeria. Operating since 2017, Gogo/Orca is a provider of IPTV subscriptions, preloaded STB with infringing card sharing ('CCCam') and IPTV apps. The IPTV service is popular in Europe and Algeria, 67k visits/month with substantial online traffic from United Kingdom (42.85%), Algeria (26.69%), France (9.94%) and Germany (6.65%). Gogo/Orca offers more than 6k live TV channels from all around the world, and a VOD library of TV series and movies in French and original version, consisting of approximately 5.6k movies and 56k TV series affecting many IP rightsholders including all MPA members. The alleged operators are in Algeria.

SVI Cloud – China. SVI Cloud is an IPTV service which includes an Android device manufactured in China and application called SVI GO/MO offering access to pirated VOD and live TV channel content. SVI Cloud has a large pool of resellers worldwide and a userbase that is global but particularly strong in the Asia Pacific region.

Unblock Tech (unblocktech.com) – China. Unblock Tech’s core business is the manufacture and distribution of the “Ubox” series of ISDs. Ubox runs on Android and incorporates peer-to-peer (P2P) technology as well as UB-branded apps to enable access to pirated VOD and live TV channel content. It appears that Unblock Tech has a large pool of resellers worldwide, and a userbase that is global but particularly strong in the Asia Pacific region.

WHMCS Smarters – India. WHMCS Smarters (sites include whmcsmarters[.]com, iptvsmarters[.]com and smarterspro[.]com) is a company in India that sets customers up in the illegal IPTV business by building for them a customized “over-the-top” (OTT) IPTV platform from scratch and providing end-to-end support. According to the WHMCS Smarters website, services include website design and development, customized apps on several different platforms, design, graphics, branding, payment processing, and billing. WHMCS Smarters also provides the IPTV Smarters Pro App, a video player configured for different types of platforms that allows users to watch live television, movies and TV series on demand, and TV catch-up on their devices. While WHMCS Smarters states that they do not sell infringing streams, channels, or other content or subscriptions, it does sell the software, tools, and services an individual would need to establish and operate his or her own “off the shelf” illegal IPTV business. Between January 2024 and July 2024, iptvsmarters[.]com received 17.22 million visits, averaging 2.4 million visits a month.

CYBERLOCKERS AND STREAMING VIDEO HOSTING SERVICES

Cyberlockers and streaming video hosting services are websites that provide centralized hosting for infringing content which can be downloaded and/or streamed by the public. The distribution process is simple. A user, or the operator of an infringing third-party site, uploads an infringing

file and the cyberlocker or video hosting service gives the user a link for accessing the file. The user, or operator of an infringing third-party site, posts the link on one or several linking sites. Clicking on the link will either initiate a download, a stream, or both of the uploaded file.

It is common for links to illegal copies of movies and television programs to be widely disseminated across the Internet, not just via linking sites, but also via applications, social media platforms, forums, blogs, and/or email which are available through computers, mobile devices, smart TV, and other hardware platforms. Complicating enforcement, cyberlockers and video hosting services frequently provide several unique links to the same file and use proxy services to mask the locations of where the site and content are hosted. If a content owner sends an infringement notice for one of the links, the others may remain up, enabling continued infringement. No meaningful measures are in place to prevent the upload and publication of clearly infringing content. In addition, many cyberlockers and video hosting services do not respond at all to takedown notices.

Many file hosting services, in particular video streaming hosting services, heavily monetize the dissemination of infringing content. The content is served with an abundance of advertisements in the form of pop-ups, pop-unders, pre-roll ads, banners, etc. These ads generally are aggressive and adblockers are required to be turned off. At the same time, uploaders of unlawful content are paid by these file-hosting services based on reward schemes that apply certain amounts per views/downloads of the uploaded files.

Doodstream (doods[.]pro)

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
India	14.308	4.694

Doodstream with at least 40 known associated websites (e.g. doodstream[.]com, doods[.]pro, dood[.]yt) is an illegal video hosting service relied on by over 660 popular illegal streaming websites and receiving traffic from a network of over 10,000 sites due to its hosting capabilities. Doodstream pays users to upload popular (including copyrighted) content onto Doodstream, which

could then be disseminated through weblinks on illegal streaming websites and other platforms. The service also implemented various tools to allow its uploaders to evade takedown and enforcement efforts. One of the largest illegal video hosting services in the world, Doodstream received massive traffic of at least 2.69B visitors across the various Doodstream domains in 2023. In July 2024, doods[.]pro which was ranked #14.308 globally and #553 in Indonesia received 4.694 monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. In March 2024, a group of Plaintiffs including MPA members filed a lawsuit against Doodstream in the Delhi high Court. In May 2024, the Court granted an interim injunction against the operators of Doodstream, though the domains are still active, and the Defendants have failed to comply with the court’s orders. Various Doodstream domains have been blocked in France.

Baidu Wangpan

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
China	-N/A	103.0M

Baidu Wangpan, or pan.baidu[.]com is a cloud storage service operated by Baidu, the largest search-engine provider in China. Users of this service are able to share links to files stored on their accounts with other users, and infringing content is reportedly disseminated widely through social media and other piracy linking sites. Although Baidu has several tools to take down unauthorized content, according to right holders, procedures for filing complaints are applied unevenly and lack transparency. Additionally, takedown times are reportedly lengthy, and right holders often have to repeatedly follow-up with Baidu to ensure that pirated content does not reappear on the platform. In July 2024, pan.baidu[.]com received 103.0M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. There has been little progress in Baidu’s actions to suspend or terminate repeat infringers. In a 2024 case brought by rightsholder TVB, the Court found Baidu Wangpan liable for copyright infringement for failing to disable and permanently block the infringing files complained of from being shared on the service. It remains to be seen whether the case will have an effect on Baidu Wangpan’s compliance with takedown notices.

VK[.]com

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Avg Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Russia	23	1.092B

Vkontakte, or VK[.]com, is the leading social networking site in Russia and Russian-speaking territories and is a source of illegal distribution of movie and television files. Searching for content is relatively easy and the site supports streaming playback through embedded video players. In July 2024, VK[.]com which was ranked #23 globally and #4 in Russia received 1.092B monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. Whilst VK used to be responsive to takedown notices, they now ignore most of them and continue to be a significant infringement hub; MPA and its member companies continue to find thousands of infringing files on the site each month. Available worldwide in multiple languages, including English, it is one of the most visited sites in the world. VK Group, the parent company of VK, has in the past demonstrated its intention to improve copyright protection. This included joining the anti-piracy memorandum in November 2018 and implementing a content filtering system that allows rights holders to search for and remove infringing content. However, since 2022, VK's compliance with takedown notices has fluctuated, with inconsistent results at times dropping to 30% and below by 2024.

Legislation to replace the voluntary MOU process is pending and is reportedly being deprioritized by government stakeholders due to a lack of support from local rightsholders who trust the MOU process. The site operates on corporate-owned servers in Russia. The site has been blocked subject to criminal blocking orders in Italy.

Uploaded.net

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Switzerland	127.985	488.649

Uploaded[.]net was a direct download cyberlocker with an average of 15M monthly visits between 2021 and 2022, and an average of 8M monthly visits between July 2023 and July 2024 according to SimilarWeb. It was owned by Swiss company Cyando AG and is hosted by Eweka Internet

Services B.V. in the Netherlands. Uploaded[.]net incentivized its users to upload infringing files with various rewards. The website operated through multiple redundant domains that include Uploaded[.]to and UI[.]to. The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) was seized for questions referred to as a preliminary ruling in several Uploaded cases. It ruled in July 2021 that certain factors present in Uploaded’s business model can result in direct liability but left the final decision to the national courts. In June 2022, the German Federal Court (BGH) confirmed that based on the factual considerations of the referring courts of appeal, liability was established in one case. In the other cases, there were, according to the BGH, strong indications for the assumption that Uploaded did not take sufficient technical measures in some of the proceedings. The service shut-down end of 2022. There do not seem to be any final court of appeal decisions (yet); proceedings might not be resumed due to insolvency.

According to Similarweb, there is some residual traffic due to user clicks on Uploaded links remaining on the internet (488,649 visits from 327,677 unique visitors in July 2024).

Mixdrop[.]co

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Russia	54.157	1.233M

Mixdrop is a video hosting service that is popular with well-trafficked pirate streaming sites. Servers for this video hosting service are in Russia with MS Networks LTD. Mixdrop has a personal dedicated affiliate program, MixPartners, advertising the opportunity to earn up to 1,000 USD per week. SimilarWeb indicates that Mixdrop.co attracted over 1.233M visits from 686,084M unique visitors in July 2024, an increase of approximately one-third in comparison to last year. Mixdrop.co is blocked in France, Australia, India, and the United Kingdom.

Streamtape[.]com

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Switzerland	2.157	28.95M

Streamtape is a video hosting service offering unlimited storage and bandwidth which is used by many popular pirate streaming sites. Streamtape operates a partner program, through which it is possible to earn a fixed amount per 10,000 downloads or streams, depending on the country of origin. As a result, this platform has become a popular place for the unauthorized sharing of media content. According to SimilarWeb, in July 2024 streamtape.com had 28,95M visits from 10,58M unique visitors. Streamtape.com is currently blocked in France.

Netu[.]ac

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Belize	25.895	2.884M

Hqq[.]to

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Belize	10.620	6.461M

Waaw[.]to

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Avg Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Belize	-N/A	4.618M

Netu[.]io is a video hosting service heavily used for disseminating copyright protected content. Netu[.]io also relies on the domains hqq[.]to and waaw[.]to. Netu offers a reward scheme for uploaders of popular content with the highest tier offering 80 NetuCoin (80\$) per 10.000 views. The domain waaw[.]to is used to access the streaming page itself through direct URL or in an iframe HTML code while the domain hqq[.]to is to be used in an iframe HTML code by a linking site. Netu allows its users to customize the streaming domain by adding a CNAME record to bypass ISPs/government blocking measures and to customize the player to create their own visual branding. The player itself also features a search function. Netu.ac, hqq.to and waaw.to are currently blocked in France.

PIRACY APPS

An ecosystem has emerged around piracy apps for mobile, handheld, and other compatible devices. Websites provide a portal through which the app can be downloaded. Once downloaded and/or registered/subscribed, these apps provide users access to myriad pirate movie and television titles. These apps attract millions of consumers who often pay for subscriptions.

EVPAD – China. EVPAD (ievpad[.]com) is an Android app that incorporates P2P technology as well as EVPAD-branded apps to enable access to more than 2,000 movies and TV titles and over 1,000 live international channels. EVPAD has a large pool of resellers worldwide, and a global userbase. It has recently established a new brand, “EVBOX,” targeting Taiwanese & European customers.

TVMOB – Pakistan. Previously known as TVTap, this service offers a free Android streaming application with access to over 500 live channels. According to SimilarWeb, the app saw over one million visits in the last year at its main domain, tvmob[.]net, which facilitates access to the infringing application. The app is monetized through advertising placed within its content offerings. The site relies mostly on servers hosted by Amaratu in the Netherlands but is believed to have operators in Pakistan.

MagisTV.video – Latin America. MagisTV[.]video is dedicated to providing access to the infringing application of MagisTV, one of the largest illegal IPTV brands in Latin America. Popular among the Spanish-speaking community, this service offers a wide variety of channels and VOD content for free. According to SimilarWeb, the website received 7.116M visits in July 2024 from 4.041M unique users. This domain has been active since 2023 and is hosted by eSecureData.

Telegram – UAE. Telegram is an instant messaging service available on Windows, iOS, Android, and Linux that allows users to create channels and groups, upload and share content, and run livestreams. In the Financial Times dated 11 March 2023, the founder of Telegram remarked that the platform boasts 900 million monthly active users worldwide. Given this substantial global user

base, it seems implausible that a service with such extensive reach would fall short of the European Union's requirement of 45 million average monthly active users (which is the DSA's threshold to qualify as a Very Large Online Platform to which more elaborate due diligence obligations apply). Telegram is known for its strong emphasis on privacy and security, with features like encrypted chats and calls. It allows users to send messages, photos, videos, and files of up to 2 GB, and hosts channels for broadcasting to unlimited subscribers, as well as large groups. However, the same features that enhance its privacy and security also make it a perfect tool for piracy and copyright-infringing content¹³.

The encrypted and private nature of communications on Telegram complicates the enforcement of copyright laws as this protects the anonymity of uploaders. Additionally, channels with large subscriber counts and no subscriber limits can distribute infringing content to vast audiences, and the non-centralized distribution of files allows for rapid sharing and replication of such material. These factors have made Telegram a notable platform for sharing pirated content.

While there have been improvements in compliance rates for the removal of infringing links and channels, Telegram's response to takedown notices varies greatly, from almost immediate to none in spite of multiple re-notifications. Furthermore, instances of online piracy accessed through Telegram remain high overall due to the ease with which the same content can be uploaded to channels, discovery of infringing content that is facilitated by piracy bots and inconsistent enforcement of its repeat infringer policy (as mentioned above; enforcement is challenging due to the encrypted and private nature of the communications, which complicates enforcement even not only for law enforcement, but even for Telegram itself). The European Commission placed Telegram on its Counterfeit and Piracy List in 2020. Enforcement actions have been brought

¹³ <https://torrentfreak.com/piracy-bots-and-channels-are-rampant-of-telegram-but-for-how-long-230519/>: "Initially, Telegram did not respond to notice and takedown requests," says Jan van Voorn, Head of ACE and Chief of Global Content Protection at the MPA. Since then, Telegram has improved its effectiveness and as things stand today the majority of all takedown requests are processed within a day. "We have been focused on improving their [takedown notice] compliance and now have over 130,000 enforcements on Telegram with over a 90% removal rate, including many infringements removed within 24 hours," van Voorn says. ACE also notes, however, that results are inconsistent and there's still a lot of progress to be made in order to successfully crack down on piracy channels, bots, and repeat infringers. [...] ACE has established cooperation to address urgent escalations and has continued outreach to seek further improvements in removing infringing channels, disrupting piracy bots, and terminating services to repeat infringers," Van Voorn explains. If this cooperation is successful, it may eventually become harder for pirate channels to survive. At least the ones with hundreds of thousands of members. That's not the case today, however ..."

successfully in India, Israel, and Italy requiring Telegram to provide operator information and block access to infringing content. Telegram is a platform of immediate concern.

PEER-TO-PEER NETWORKS AND BITTORRENT PORTALS

Users of Peer-to-peer (P2P) or file-sharing networks employ software to allow them to join “swarms” of other users who are distributing a particular title (movie, TV show, and or types of content). As each user downloads pieces of the file, his/her computer distributes the pieces to others in the swarm. Both uploading and downloading of copyright protected content without authorization from the rightsholder is a violation of the EU legal framework. The most popular P2P software is “BitTorrent.” BitTorrent websites facilitate file sharing by organizing and indexing torrent files and initiating and managing the download process. The BitTorrent landscape remains popular, serving millions of torrents to tens of millions of users at any given time. Just like streaming/linking sites, they largely derive their revenue from advertising.

1337x[.]to

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Global	896	40.05M

1337x[.]to is a Torrent website which allows users to download movies, TV shows, games, music, apps, and other files. Users are able to sort the content by genre, year, and language. Bitcoin donations are accepted to help finance the website. The site hosts advertisements from popular ad network RevenueHits, based in Israel. 1337x[.]to is amongst the highest ranked and most visited pirate sites across European countries. In July 2024, 1337x[.]to which was ranked #896 globally and #994 in the United States received 40.05M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. Has been blocked in many countries including Italy, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, Portugal, Malaysia, Netherlands, Singapore, Indonesia, India, Austria, and Australia.

ThePirateBay[.]org

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global)</i> <i>Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW)</i> <i>Data of July 2024</i>
Global	2.065	22.96M

In July 2024, ThePirateBay[.]org which was ranked #2.065 globally and #1423 in the United States received 22.96M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. Available in 35 languages, ThePirateBay[.]org (TPB) is one of the largest BitTorrent websites on the internet. Swedish prosecutors filed criminal charges against TPB operators in January 2008 for facilitating violations of the copyright law. The operators were found guilty in March 2009, sentenced to prison and the rightsholders were awarded multimillion-euro damages. The judgment was affirmed by the Svea Court of Appeal and the European Court of Human Rights. In 2012, one of the site's cofounders was found guilty on hacking charges in Sweden after his extradition from Cambodia. He was then extradited to Denmark and sentenced for similar charges in 2013. In addition, another operator was captured in 2014 in Sweden. The last operator was apprehended in Thailand and extradited to Sweden in 2014 for an outstanding sentence. TPB continued to combat efforts to protect the interests of copyright holders by changing their top-level domain to .SE in an effort to thwart site-blocking orders.

The website has been reported to have multiple alternative domains hosted in various countries around the world over the years. In December 2014, TPB's hosting provider was raided and the site went offline, only to reappear online a few months later under various TLDs. While it has never returned to its number one position, it had a significant comeback after KickAssTorrents and torrentz[.]eu went offline in 2016. As of March 2016, courts in Luxembourg and Germany ordered registrars to disable a few dozen domain names used by The Pirate Bay. In June 2017, the Court of Justice of the European Union (case C-610/15) confirmed that The Pirate Bay communicates to the public, directly infringing copyright. In December 2017 the Swedish Supreme Court confirmed that domains can be seized under Swedish law, upholding the Court of Appeals' decision to seize piratebay[.]se and thepiratebay[.]se from one of the original founders.

The Pirate Bay is currently blocked in at least 22 countries: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Rutracker[.]org

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Russia	1.281	31.99M

This BitTorrent portal was launched in 2010 in response to the takedown of Torrent[.]ru by the Russian criminal authorities. Rutracker[.]org is a BitTorrent indexing website with 13.9 million registered users and 2 million active torrents. It is one of the world’s most visited pirate websites, with a global SimilarWeb ranking of 1.281 and a local rank of 119 in Russia. The site is hosted in Russia by Dreamtorrent Corp., a Seychelles company that is also believed to be the owner of the site. The site has been subject to blocking orders in several countries, such as Malaysia, Brazil, Indonesia, Italy, India, Denmark, Australia, Singapore, and Russia. Approximately 15% of all traffic directed to rutracker.org originates from Europe, which counts for at least 6 million visitors a month from Europe.

Rutor[.]info

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Switzerland	4.598	11.23M

Previously known as Rutor[.]org. A Russian-language website where torrents that have been uploaded in the last 24 hours can be found on the home page of the website. In July 2024, Rutor[.]info which was ranked #4.598 globally and #489 in Russia received 11.23M monthly visits according to SimilarWeb data. The domain is using a domain privacy service which hides the identity of the website operator. The website is blocked in Denmark, Italy, India, Spain, Australia and Russia.

YggTorrent

<i>Country Ties</i>	<i>SimilarWeb Rank (Global) Data of July 2024</i>	<i>Average Monthly Visits (SW) Data of July 2024</i>
Morocco	2.364	17.25M

YggTorrent is the biggest Francophone BitTorrent Community. According to SimilarWeb data, in July 2024, it attracted 17.25 million visits. The visits mainly originate from French-speaking countries such as France (70%), Canada (7.40%), Algeria (6.97%), Belgium (5,82%) and Switzerland (1,92%). The website is ranked #128 in France and #2.364 globally. Yggtorrent has been subject to Siteblocking orders in France, Belgium and Lithuania. The alleged operators are based in Morocco.

HOSTING PROVIDERS

Hosting companies provide the essential infrastructure required to operate a website. Websites engaged in massive copyright infringement depend on a hosting provider to make their website easily viewable and to provide high quality streaming videos. The hosting provider has the ability to take down websites engaged in massive copyright infringement offline. The hosting providers we come across most often used by services that massively commit copyright infringement through the content hosted on their networks are hosted in Europe, in particular the Netherlands, France, and Germany.

Virtual Systems, V-Sys – Ukraine. Virtual Systems has been a go to hosting provider for infringing sites for many years. Over the years, we have found content from VOD streaming websites, IPTV services and sports live streaming websites. The company is registered in Ukraine, where the servers are hosted.

Squitter, ABC Consultancy, Peenq, ESTOXY, BestDC, SERDECH – Netherlands/Estonia. Squitter is the fastest growing hosting provider for infringing sites. As other hosting providers take action removing infringing content, we have found Squitter to be the replacement destination of choice for many pirates. The service changes name regularly, making it more difficult to track and identify – currently SERDECH and BestDC are the names it uses most frequently. The servers are

located in the Netherlands. The companies are registered in different countries, including the Netherlands and Estonia.

Private Layer, Swiss Global, and affiliated companies – Panama/Switzerland. For years, Private Layer, Swiss Global, and affiliated companies have served as trusted partners for infringing sites. Private Layer and Swiss Global operates in anonymity, refusing to respond to outreach notices. They host a large number and array of infringing sites. The company is registered in Panama and uses servers located in Switzerland.

DDoS-Guard.net – UK, Russia. This service is considered a “bulletproof” hosting provider for pirate sites. Many piracy sites including s[.]to and bs[.]to are relying on Ddos-Guard’s services for hosting. It does not respond to takedown notices. This service also operates as Cognitive Cloud LLP (UK).

REGISTRIES

Registries are organizations that manage the registration of domain names within the domains for which it is responsible, control the policies of domain name allocation, and technically operate the domains it has registered. It can also fulfill the function of a domain name registrar or may delegate that function to other entities. Websites engaged in massive copyright infringement depend on a registry to provide the domain name required to operate. The registry, directly or via its contractual relationship with registrars, has the ability to withdraw or disable domain names used by websites engaged in massive copyright infringement.

.CH Registry – .CH is the ccTLD for Switzerland, and its registry is SWITCH Information Technology Services. Examples of infringing websites operating with .CH domains include flixtor.ch, filma24.ch, elitetorrent.ch, and levidia.ch.

.CC Registry – .CC is the ccTLD for the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, an Australian territory. Examples of infringing websites operating with .CC domains include cuevana4.cc, gratisfilmer.cc, gnula.cc, and streamtape.cc.

.IO Registry – .IO is the ccTLD for the British Indian Ocean Territory. This registry is operated commercially by Afiliias, a subsidiary of Ethos Capital. Examples of infringing websites operating with .IO domains include pelisplus2.io, 123moviesgo.io, rezka.io, and extreme- down.io.

.ME Registry – .ME is the ccTLD for Montenegro. The .ME registry is operated by doMEn. Examples of infringing websites operating with .ME domains include kinostar.me, cuevana3.me, repelishd.me, and cpasfini.me.

.RU Registry – .RU is the ccTLD for the Russian Federation, and its registry is the Coordination Center for TLD RU. Examples of infringing websites operating with .RU domains include rlsbb.ru, films-torrent.ru, bflix.ru, filmpalast.ru, and lastmovie.ru.

.TO Registry – .TO is the ccTLD of Tonga, and its registry is the Tonga Network Information Center (TONIC). Examples of infringing websites operating with .TO domains include rarbg.to, hianime.to, fmovies.to, kinox.to, serienstream.to, 1337x.to, torrentgalaxy.to, solarmovie.to, ibit.to, and bs.to.

ADVERTISERS

Some advertisers intentionally place ads on infringing websites, recognizing these platforms as opportunities to reach a large audience at a lower cost. By doing so, they contribute directly to the financial viability and success of these piracy sites. This practice provides a significant revenue stream to the operators of such sites, thereby perpetuating their existence and growth. While some advertisers may turn a blind eye to the nature of these platforms, others actively seek them out as part of a cost-effective advertising strategy. Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts to enforce stricter guidelines and promote ethical advertising practices.

1XBET – Russia; Cyprus. 1XBET is not an ad network but an advertiser. In 2020 it became the third most active online advertiser in Russia. It is an online gambling site that originated in Russia but now operates worldwide. 1XBET knowingly and routinely pays to place display ads on pirate

sites as well as ads with promotion codes watermarked into infringing videos, including in some of the earliest releases of infringing theatrical camcord recordings. After Russian law enforcement agencies initiated an investigation in 2020, its advertising activity declined. However, 1XBET remains active, and its ads continue to appear on infringing websites today.

PIRACY AS A SERVICE

Piracy-as-a-Service (PaaS): PaaS offerings constitute a suite of off-the-shelf services that make it easy for would-be pirates to create, operate, and monetize a fully functioning pirate operation. PaaS providers lower the barriers to entry into commercial piracy. They include in particular: (i) website templates that facilitate setup of streaming websites; (ii) content management systems (CMS) which are databases providing access to tens of thousands of infringing movies and TV series, in exchange for payment of a fee or a cut of the advertising revenue; (iii) dashboards that allow an illegal IPTV operator to oversee the infrastructure of their service (including monetization, content-hosting servers, and user interactions); (iv) hosting providers that provide a safe haven for pirates because they do not respond to DMCA notices of copyright infringement; (v) video hosting services that obscure links to infringing content (instead of providing a single weblink for each piece of content, a PaaS video host may break up the content and host it across dozens of random links to inhibit its takedown, without inhibiting its access via a streaming site that pieces the content back together); and (vi) decentralized streaming software that acts as a third party tool between a streaming site and a cyberlocker or video host, allowing for quicker upload of content with a large variety of cyberlockers and video hosting services.

2embed[.]cc – Vietnam. 2embed, or 2embed[.]cc / 2embed[.]skin is a pirate content management system that provides a large library of infringing content obtained by crawling many infringing websites and search engines and scraping infringing content. It offers its database to other illicit streaming websites and pirate IPTV apps, which can either use 2embed’s services for free (in which case 2embed monetizes the infringing content by inserting advertisements into the streams) or by paying to insert their own ads. Despite successful enforcement action in July 2023 by right holders and anti-piracy trade associations to shut down 2embed[.]to, which was run from Vietnam, the site is now operating again using different domains such as 2embed.cc and 2embed.skin.

2embed is an example of a PaaS provider that significantly contributes to the global trade in pirated content by offering services that make it easy for other bad actors to create, operate, and monetize fully functioning piracy operations.

Vidsrc[.]to – Vietnam. Vidsrc is a popular video library used by Fmovies and over 500 dedicated piracy sites. The service provides an enforcement resistant library of content to piracy sites. Its operators are believed to be based in Vietnam. In August 2024, Vidsrc[.]to was taken down, resulting in hundreds of sites depending on the video library going offline as well.

Njal[.]la – 1337 Services (St Kitts and Nevis). Njalla (located at njal[.]la) acts as an intermediary for domain name registration purposes, procuring and owning domain names on behalf of others to provide them with anonymity. Njalla was founded and is owned by Peter Sunde, a founder of The Pirate Bay. Njalla is prominent among pirate services, with customers such as FlixTor[.]se, and ygg[.]re.

Collaps.org – Russia. This popular pirate video CDN has gained attention since Moonwalk, another prominent Russian CDN, went offline in 2019 following a concerted multinational enforcement action. The popular streaming video website zetflix[.]top hosting currently uses Collapse[.]org. This off-the-shelf piracy facilitation service makes it easy for would-be pirates to create and monetize a fully functioning pirate service.

GDrivePlayer – Russia. GDriveplayer.to offers various simple-to-use APIs for operators of pirate streaming services to source lists of links to infringing video content hosted on Google Drive, Google Photo, Youtube and Facebook. The content is played through GDrivePlayer's own media player, which can be embedded in Android apps. GDrivePlayer's compatible with the popular web publishing system WordPress. The service is monetized by displaying one ad before each play. GDrivePlayer has been observed in use in popular websites such as uflix.cc, gudangmovies21.gives, xxiku.com.

XFileSharing/XvideoSharing – Russia. SibSoft.net has developed two software programs that enable the automation of file hosting and sharing (XFileSharing) and the creation of a

cyberlocker (XVideoSharing is one of the most widely used cyberlocker programs, with the service claiming in its marketing materials to work with over 1,000 customers). Both products include a wide range of modern technical features, either out of the box or as premium features. Major services such as Upbam.org, GoUnlimited, Openload, and FruityHost are among the sites that are, or have been, their clients.

TELEVISION OPERATORS

There are generally two methods via which TV channel operators or distributors infringe copyright. Mostly TV channel operators illegally broadcast movie or television titles, purchased on DVD or illegally obtained otherwise (e.g., downloaded from pirate websites) without the rightsholders' authorization. Another method is where TV channel distributors are rebroadcasting entire TV channels without the necessary rightsholders' authorization. Those TV channels are usually stolen by redistributing the signal originating from a single subscription, or directly from satellite networks. This issue can be witnessed among both authorized and unauthorized TV distributors.

SatCon Africa – Gabon and Central Africa. SatCon Africa is a television operator based in Gabon recognized to be infringing IP laws and the rights of third parties. While some SatCon channels are properly licensed from their rights holders, SatCon also offers several pirated television channels, particularly channels that offer appealing entertainment content such as movies, TV series, and sports. SatCon steals this content from legitimate local distributors or satellite signals and illegally rebroadcasts it. SatCon is estimated to serve between 40,000 and 50,000 users.

Excaf Telecom – Senegal. Excaf Telecom is an infringing digital terrestrial television (DTT) operator, located in Senegal. Excaf Telecom has approximately 100,000 subscribers. Excaf Telecom offers pirate television channels that offer appealing entertainment content such as movies, TV series, and sports. The channels are pirated via various methods: Excaf Telecom rebroadcasts from legitimate local distributors without authorization or directly steals from satellite signals before illegally redistributing them, which causes significance damage to the rightsholders.

Cross Connect – Paraguay. Cross Connect is an Internet Service Provider which operates in Paraguay, headquartered in Asunción. The company claims to be legally incorporated as an ISP but offers several pirated television channels, particularly those providing movies, TV series, and sports. Cross Connect is the target of a joint Criminal Referral in Paraguay, filed in August 2022 and again in August 2024. The second referral was necessary due to the operator's continued infringement activities and is currently active, pending further developments. During the raid in 2022, multiple servers, desktop computers, and other devices were seized, including equipment dedicated to the retransmission of channels, which customers accessed via decoders in their households. Additionally, according to investigations, the captured signals are also being forwarded to globally known services such as Magistv.