

UK tackles counterfeiting and piracy – launch of a national IP Crime Strategy

This week the UK Government launched an IP Crime Strategy, with the stated aim of bringing together government policy makers and IP owners and enforcers to create a co-ordinated approach to IP crime i.e. counterfeiting and piracy activity.

background

A number of factors underlie the introduction of this strategy.

First, counterfeiting and piracy has grown dramatically in recent years, aided by increasing globalisation, widely available technology, and the influence of organised crime.

Secondly, there has been a growing recognition of the economic impact of IP crime. Rights owners have estimated that last year alone counterfeiting and piracy cost the UK economy £10 billion and 4,000 jobs.

Thirdly, there is concern at the dramatic increase of potentially dangerous fakes entering the market, as counterfeiters are increasingly prepared to deal in counterfeit foods, beverages, automotive parts and medicines.

Fourthly, there is a general perception among members of the public that IP crime is a 'victimless crime', less serious than other forms of crime.

Finally, because major counterfeiting activity is undertaken by serious well organised criminals, often part of trans-national networks, it cannot be dealt with effectively by IP owners alone. A well organised and co-ordinated approach involving IP owners and government agencies is required.

contents of the strategy

The strategy aims to unite Government, industry and enforcement agencies in a number of specific initiatives including:

- An Annual National Enforcement Report will be prepared, providing information in relation to the enforcement work being carried out by major stakeholders.
- The Report will be considered by a high level Strategic Tasking and Co-ordination Group which will set priorities for prevention and enforcement for the coming year.
- An IP Crime Group will meet every 6 months to discuss progress and decide best practice.
- A Patent Office Enforcement Group and knowledge system will feed information to the Strategic Tasking Group.

our comment

The strategy can be found at http://www.patent.gov.uk/about/enforcement/ip_book.pdf. IP owners, who have long been lobbying for greater government support, are encouraged to review the strategy carefully and forward any comments or observations to ipenforcement@patent.gov.uk.

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