

FOUR WEBSITES SHUT AFTER LARGEST EVER ONLINE ANTI-PIRACY ACTION IN BULGARIA

- **More than 120 terabytes of infringing material seized**
- **Criminal gang netted more than €2.5m worth in revenues**

Sofia, 2nd August 2010 - Four suspected illegal websites have been closed following the largest ever operation against internet piracy in Bulgaria. The investigation, coordinated by the Bulgarian Police's Cyber Crime Unit, led to the closure of nanoset.net, rapidadd.com, 4storing.com and afasta.com, which are all alleged to have illegally distributed books, films, games, music and software on a large scale.

The investigation took several months and was the result of a complaint by the Bulgarian Association of the Music Producers (BAMP), representing the music industry.

Police believe users paid BGN 5 million (€2.5 million) to access the illegal services, which were run by an organised criminal network. Revenue was also raised through advertising sales. On 29th July, investigators searched the premises of several ISPs where the operators had concealed servers containing more than 120 terabytes of unlicensed content, the equivalent of more than 200,000 CD-Rs.

Internet piracy is a huge problem in Bulgaria, a country with the lowest revenues from physical format sales in Europe, negligible income from digital sales and a piracy rate estimated at almost 100 per cent. Three of the top five most visited Bulgarian websites, excluding international sites such as Google or Facebook, are infringing services, according to Alexa.

Officers also seized two computer systems and documents from one of the people they arrested who is suspected of orchestrating the illegal operation.

The operation is part of the anti-piracy strategy of the Bulgarian Culture and Interior Ministries. Rights holders are represented on the Culture Ministry's Intellectual Property Protection Council.

Ina Kileva, executive director of BAMP, says: "The sheer scale of this operation, the quantity of seized pirate content and the vast financial profit of the criminals involved shows clearly what an enormous problem piracy is in Bulgaria. It is depriving creators and artists of their livelihoods, feeding organised crime and frustrating all efforts to build a successful legal digital music market.

"Officers from the Cyber Crime Unit are to be congratulated for their professional work in defence of intellectual property rights online. It is only by such actions that Bulgaria can hope to develop a legitimate digital economy in the future."