

Dutch youths convicted of virtual theft

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A Dutch court has convicted two youths of theft for stealing virtual items in a computer game and sentenced them to community service.

Only a handful of such cases have been heard in the world, and they have reached varying conclusions about the legal status of "virtual goods."

The Leeuwarden District Court said the culprits, 15 and 14 years old, coerced a 13-year-old boy into transferring a "virtual amulet and a virtual mask" from the online adventure game RuneScape to their game accounts.

"These virtual goods are goods (under Dutch law), so this is theft," the court said Tuesday in a summary of its ruling.

Identities of the minors were not released.

The 15-year-old was sentenced to 200 hours service, and the 14-year-old to 160 hours.

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