

alfaview welcomes European Commission competition proceedings over Microsoft's bundling of Teams and Office

Karlsruhe, 27.07.2023. The provider of the videoconferencing solution *alfaview* welcomes the European Commission's decision today to open formal antitrust proceedings against Microsoft on allegations of abuse of market power. The Commission currently assumes that the technical tying of "Microsoft Teams" into "Microsoft Office" violates European antitrust law. The Office software includes Word, Excel, Outlook and PowerPoint, among others. Since 2017, Microsoft has also integrated its videoconferencing service Teams into the Office software without allowing third-party providers such as *alfaview* a similar integration. Against this, *alfaview* had filed a formal antitrust complaint with the European Commission. Today's opening of formal proceedings addresses *alfaview's* competition concerns.

The specific allegation is that Microsoft's tying gives Teams an unassailable reach and competitive advantage in violation of antitrust law, and thus unfairly extends its dominant position in the market for productivity software into the separate market for videoconferencing and collaboration tools.

Prof. Dr. Thomas Höppner, lawyer and partner of the law firm Hausfeld, which represents *alfaview* before the Commission, further explains:

"The technical tying of Teams with Microsoft Office restricts competition between videoconferencing and collaboration tools. Office users no longer decide for or against a particular videoconferencing service on the basis of quality and relevance, but automatically use the Teams service, which is supposedly included free of charge. Innovative and efficient alternatives such as alfaview are thus no longer perceived on the market."

Competition in the data-sensitive area of video communication

With its complaint, *alfaview* also wants to contribute to Europe as an economic location and draw attention to insufficient data protection standards in numerous communication solutions. Even some of the best-known videoconferencing services are questionable in terms of data protection because they store user data on cloud servers, most of which are not located in Europe.

As part of the counter-terrorism measures, the US has enacted laws that allow US authorities to access data of EU citizens stored by US cloud services. The far-reaching intervention possibilities of US authorities contradict the European legal situation and the need for protection of companies and citizens.

"The starting point of the proceedings was a complaint by Slack, a service belonging to Salesforce. With our complaint, we want to make clear that this is not about a fight between two US tech giants, but about the protection of innovations of all kinds. With alfaview, there is a powerful communication, collaboration and AI technology from Germany that behaves in a competitive manner and respects and lives up to the specifications of data protection. We hope that the European Commission's procedure will contribute to opening up the European market for domestic innovations and thus also make it competitive again."

Niko Fostiropoulos, CEO and founder of alfaview

From *alfaview's* point of view, the latest agreements between the EU and the US also do not create a legally secure basis for transatlantic data transfer. The extensive access rights of US authorities to data

of EU citizens have not changed. For European companies, the transfer of data to so-called unsafe third countries is still associated with data protection risks. *alfaview* therefore sees data protection as a key competitive factor for videoconferencing services.

About *alfaview*

alfaview is a powerful SaaS videoconferencing provider that offers a DSGVO-compliant videoconferencing and AI collaboration solution for professional use. Since 2010, the company group has been successfully using the software internally for the implementation of training courses in professional development. Due to its success, since 2016, the software has also been commercially available to third parties on the market.

With the *alfaview* videoconferencing solution, audio-visual meetings and events can be held with up to 1,000 people. In addition, live events with over 10,000 people are possible via *alfaview*. The application includes AI-driven voice logging and language translation as well as other intelligent communication and collaboration features.

alfaview is the only high-performance GDPR-compliant AI-supported conferencing and collaboration platform on the market. The company develops its software based on the latest processes and algorithms in the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Only ISO 27001-certified data centres located and headquartered in Germany are used to provide the services. The video and audio streams as well as the servers are encrypted according to current standards (TLS/AES 256) in accordance with the latest guidelines of the German Federal Office for Information Security. *alfaview* runs steadily and without latency on all common platforms (MS-Windows, macOS, Linux, iOS, iPadOS and Android as well as via various browsers), regardless of the number of participants). The reliability of *alfaview* has been 99.9% since 2016.

The group of companies employs 500 people and is headquartered in Karlsruhe, Germany.

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