

AUTODOC denies any association with far-right ideology and affirms its commitment to democratic principles

Response to the New York Times article from 10 August 2019

Berlin, 12 August 2019

In its article "The Global Machine Behind the Rise of Far-Right Nationalism" from 10 August 2019, the New York Times reported extensively on a network of extreme right-wing websites that have been inciting sentiment against immigration and open, tolerant policies through one-sided and in some cases false reporting in Europe and in particular in Sweden. This article suggested a link between these sites and possible geopolitical interests of Russia. The author Jo Becker also associated the company AUTODOC with these websites.

AUTODOC's position

The assertions in Jo Becker's article are untrue. AUTODOC is committed to democratic principles, human rights, equality and respect towards all people. AUTODOC employees speak over 30 different languages and come from all over the world; the majority have an immigrant background. We therefore take the assertions made by Jo Becker very seriously and are deeply concerned by them. AUTODOC expressly distances itself from far-right ideology and any attempt to externally influence or impede democratic processes.

The article could give the false impression that the banner advertisements mentioned are current or recently ended. In fact, the advertisements referenced were already stopped in 2017.

AUTODOC advertised on more than 400 Swedish websites in 2017. Among these there were six Swedish sites whose far-right contents and/or views were not known to AUTODOC at the time. As is common in e-commerce, AUTODOC advertises via third-party service providers in order to generate links and traffics quickly and efficiently. Which exact sites are used is a trade secret of the service provider. Such external service providers also placed the banner advertisements on the six aforementioned Swedish sites without the knowledge of AUTODOC.

AUTODOC first learned about this undesired advertising when it was reported on in the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter in 2017. The company's management completely ended advertising on these websites immediately and permanently blacklisted the sites. AUTODOC also established additional controls, quality standards, and clear internal rules to prevent such cases in the future.

Jo Becker's article makes reference to contents on AUTODOC's websites that are not visible to normal users. AUTODOC uses this non-public text for search engine optimization. This is also a common practice in the industry. These contents were taken automatically from other websites. The sources were primarily publicly accessible scientific content and news. AUTODOC was only made aware by Jo Becker's article that some of this content was clearly dubious in nature. AUTODOC immediately deleted all of these entries. They contradict the principles and culture of AUTODOC.

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About AUTODOC

AUTODOC is Europe's leading online retailer for car parts. As a high-growth company in this branch, with revenue growth of 63% in the 2018 financial year to approximately 415 million euros (from 254 million euros in 2017), AUTODOC aims to further develop its position. Thanks to its successful expansion, AUTODOC now operates in 25 other European countries along with Germany. AUTODOC shows its customer focus through social media activities, technical support in the languages of the countries it operates in, and a demand-based range with nearly 2.5 million products from 545 manufacturers for 128 car brands. From brake systems to chassis parts, shock absorbers and springs, exhaust systems, interior elements, steering systems and clutches, to air-conditioning and heating systems, repair kits and engine oil, the online retailer offers a wide range of products. In June 2018 the company celebrated its 10th anniversary. AUTODOC GmbH is head-quartered in the Berlin district of Lichtenberg and is completely owner-operated. Since May 2019 it also has a city-centre location in Kurfürstendamm in addition to its headquarters.