Beat: Miscellaneous

EU fines Microsoft $731 million for failing to offer web browsers

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USPA News - The European Union (EU) on Wednesday imposed a "561 million ($731 million) fine on global software company Microsoft Corp. for failing to offer Windows users the option of choosing their preferred web browser when they install the operating system. The sanction is in response to Microsoft`s failure to comply with its 2009 commitments to offer Windows users a browser choice screen, enabling them to easily choose their preferred web browser. It is the first time the EU`s executive arm had to fine a company for non-compliance with a commitments decision. In Wednesday`s decision, the European Commission found that Microsoft failed to roll out the browser choice screen with its Windows 7 Service Pack 1 from May 2011 until July 2012, and as a result, 15 million Windows users in the EU did not see the choice screen during this period. Microsoft has acknowledged that the choice screen was not displayed during that time. "In 2009, we closed our investigation about a suspected abuse of dominant position by Microsoft due to the tying of Internet Explorer to Windows by accepting commitments offered by the company," said Joaquín Almunia, the European Commission Vice President in charge of competition policy. In the calculation of the fine, the Commission took into account the gravity and duration of the infringement, the need to ensure a deterrent effect of the fine and, as a mitigating circumstance, the fact that Microsoft has cooperated with the Commission and provided information which helped the Commission to investigate the matter efficiently. In theory, the commission could have fined Microsoft up to 10 percent of its total annual turnover. The choice screen was provided as of March 2010 to European Windows users who have Internet Explorer set as their default web browser. While it was implemented, the choice screen was very successful with users. Until November 2010, 84 million browsers were downloaded through it. When the failure to comply was detected and documented in July 2012, the Commission opened an investigation and before taking a decision notified to Microsoft its formal objections in October 2012.

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