

## Press release

Vienna, 16.05.2024

### FAKE-SHOP DETECTOR WINS STATE PRIZE DIGITALIZATION

Linz-based technology solution provider X-Net and its partners AIT and ÖIAT are honored for their pioneering work in the fight against online fraud

The groundbreaking work of the Fake Shop Detector, an AI-based technology in the fight against fraudulent online stores and cybercrime, was awarded the prestigious State Prize for Digitalization in the "Lifestyle, Youth and e-Sports" category at the 4Gamechangers Festival 2024 in Vienna the day before yesterday evening. The Linz-based technology solution provider X-Net, together with its project partners AIT and ÖIAT, were honored by State Secretary for Digitalization **Claudia Plakolm** for their outstanding performance and commitment to the safety and protection of young consumers in online retail.

The damage caused by fake stores in Austria runs into the millions, with tens of thousands of reports coming in to Watchlist Internet every year. Once payment has been made, the money is often lost. The moment the fraud is discovered, the stores have usually already disappeared again. This makes prevention all the more important: the Fake Shop Detector is a unique and free AI tool for consumers that automatically protects against online shopping fraud. With over 21,000 features, the system checks suspicious stores, identifies them with almost 100 percent accuracy and warns users in real time using a traffic light system. Fraud protection available free of charge in your own Internet browser while respecting your privacy - that's what the Fake Shop Detector promises and delivers.

"Being able to use artificial intelligence in prevention is immensely important to us at Watchlist Internet. We combine our years of experience in this area with the latest technology. At the heart of this is ongoing manual quality assurance by our experts," says **Louise Beltzung**, Head of Research at ÖIAT.

The Fake Shop Detector is the result of close cooperation between the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology, the Austrian Institute for Applied Telecommunications (ÖIAT) and X-Net. The project was funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Finance and the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism in the KIRAS security research program. X-Net is an IT service provider for companies of various industries and sizes and supports digitization projects, develops independent software and hardware solutions and manages hundreds of company networks. ÖIAT is an independent research institution with the aim of promoting the competent, safe and responsible use of digital media. AIT, Austria's largest non-university research institution, works on state-of-the-art information and communication technologies at the Center for Digital Safety & Security.

**Helmut Leopold**, Head of Center for Digital Safety & Security at AIT, emphasized the importance of joint efforts in the fight against cybercrime: "The growing threats posed by disinformation, hate speech and fraudulent attacks on the Internet require joint efforts to provide digital users with tools and resources to maintain their sovereignty."

The Fake Shop Detector is a highly effective AI-based tool for consumers and online retailers to ensure a secure digital shopping experience. The award of the State Prize for Digitization helps to raise public awareness of the threats in e-commerce and demonstrate the ability of trustworthy high-tech AI developments "made in Austria". A special feature of this AI solution is the manual quality assurance, which is carried out on an ongoing basis by experts from Watchlist Internet. This enables the use of transparent and trustworthy AI, which generates significant added value for the Fake Shop Detector as a security-relevant service and is aimed at consumers who are actively protected in this way while shopping online.

**Brigitte Bach**, Managing Director and Spokesperson of the Management Board, AIT: "With the development of the Fake Shop Detector, AIT has further consolidated its role as a leading research institution in the field of digital security technologies. This project embodies our commitment to innovative solutions that are both technologically advanced and socially relevant. We are proud to be making an important contribution to the fight against cybercrime."

### The State Prize for Digitization

The aim of the State Prize for Digitization is to recognize outstanding and pioneering achievements from the broad field of Austrian digital products, solutions and processes. The State Prize was awarded for the fifth time based on the decision of an independent jury. 71 projects were submitted - the best project in each of 6 categories was awarded a prize. The Fake Shop Detector is one of 6 award-winning projects.

"We are extremely pleased about this special recognition, which encourages us to continue driving forward the successful merger of research and development in Austria. Receiving the State Prize for Digitalization confirms our ongoing efforts to provide consumers with a secure and trustworthy online experience both nationally and beyond Austria's borders," says **Nikolaus Dürk**, Managing Director of X-Net.

### The reasons for the award by the expert jury

Shopping online plays a central role in the lives of young people. Fake stores cause millions in losses. However, those affected only realize this when the money has already been lost. The Fake Shop Detector offers a new way to prevent fraud in advance based on AI and expert knowledge. It also raises awareness of

digital fraud. With each additional validated store, the system becomes more stable in its decision-making process, making the digital lifestyle more secure.

#### About X-Net

As an IT company oriented towards the common good, X-Net has been developing individual special solutions in the hardware and software sector since 1999 and installs and supports IT networks for companies and institutions of all sectors and sizes. X-Net strives to anchor sustainability and ecological awareness in all areas of the company and to raise awareness of sustainability through the professional use of open source.

"Sharing" - i.e. making knowledge usable together - and "regionality" are the key pillars of business. In the development of forward-looking and secure IT/OT solutions, X-Net is in close contact with research institutions and builds on long-term partnerships. Further information: <https://www.x-net.at>

#### Austrian Institute for Applied Telecommunications (ÖIAT)

The ÖIAT is an independent research institution with the aim of promoting the competent, safe and responsible use of digital media. Its services include awareness-raising initiatives, content development, workshops and lectures, applied research, consulting and arbitration as well as certification. ÖIAT is a member of ACR (Austrian Cooperative Research), the Austrian network of private research institutes that conduct research and development for companies. <https://oiat.at/>

#### AIT Austrian Institute of Technology

The AIT Austrian Institute of Technology is Austria's largest non-university research institution and a highly specialized research and development partner for industry. In the Center for Digital Safety & Security, more than 200 experts work on state-of-the-art information and communication technologies in order to build and use our systems in a highly secure and reliable manner in the context of comprehensive digitalization and global networking. This technological expertise is used to address various markets, such as the semiconductor industry, the automotive sector, critical infrastructures such as energy grid and power plant operators, financial markets, as well as the security sector in the context of protecting critical infrastructures, and much more. The Center has a recognized position in national and international innovation programs and is a formative part of many European industry and research initiatives. Further information: <http://www.ait.ac.at/dss>

Further information about the Fake Shop Detector: <https://www.fakeshop.at/>

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### Captions:

Group photo\_State Prize Digitization\_(c)BKA:

Award ceremony State Prize for Digitization, (from left to right): Nina Kaiser (founder 4Gamechanger Festival), Helmut Leopold (AIT), Julia Krickl (ÖIAT), Sandra Pöheim (ÖIAT), Louise Beltzung (ÖIAT), Valentine Auer (ÖIAT), State Secretary for Digitization Claudia Plakolm, Thorsten Behrens (ÖIAT), Andrew Lindley (AIT), Nikolaus Dürk (X-Net), Wolfgang Eibner (X-Net), Michael Mürling (AIT), Lukas Ziegler (X-Net), Verena Serini (AIT), Agnes Jodkowski (AIT). Photo credit: BKA- Christoph Dunker

FakeShopDetector\_20230323\_ACR-OeIAT\_0516 :

Fake store with plugin display, photo credit: ACR-OeIAT

FSD-Team\_c\_Gregor-Hofbauer:

Fake Shop Detector Team © Gregor Hofbauer; standing from left: Ross King (AIT), Lukas Ziegler (X-Net), Thomas Ruzicka (AIT), Nicholas Lamprecht (X-Net), Wolfgang Grabuschnig (AIT), Thorsten Behrens (ÖIAT), Michael Mürling (AIT), Bernhard Jungwirth (ÖIAT), Katharina Kloiber (X-Net), Helmut Leopold (AIT); seated from left: Wolfgang Eibner (X-Net), Louise Beltzung (ÖIAT), Andrew Lindley (AIT); photo credit: Gregor Hofbauer