

PRESS RELEASE OF STICHTING BESCHERMING PRIVACYBELANGEN AND THE CONSUMENTENBOND

Dutch Consumers Challenge Google's Rampant Privacy Abuse

Tech giant Google must stop exploiting Dutch consumers by unlawfully collecting and processing their data for its own massive commercial gain. In addition, Google must pay financial compensation to its users for its longstanding, egregious privacy abuses. This is demanded by the Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen and the Consumentenbond. They call on consumers to join the legal proceedings against Google to enforce their rights.

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Google constantly tracks Dutch consumers by collecting, processing and exploiting their personal data, without their consent. This is in violation of Dutch and European law. If Google continues to ignore consumer privacy rights, Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen, in cooperation with the Consumentenbond, will go to court to enforce these rights by demanding structural changes and seeking financial compensation for all impacted Dutch consumers.

Illegal

Google is the most dominant data company in the world. It collects and processes vast amounts of personal data from consumers who use its ubiquitous products and services, such as Google Search, Google Chrome, Gmail, YouTube, Google Maps and Android phones. Google collects data about consumers' location and online activity, regardless of whether users seek to conceal these disclosures, in a manner that makes legal user consent to this activity impossible. Google also employs design techniques called "*dark patterns*" which manipulate users into taking actions that unknowingly provide access to their personal data and compromise their privacy rights. Google aggregates the personal data it collects to create in-depth profiles of consumers' lives which it uses to derive products and services it sells to third parties. Google transfers this data outside the European Union in contravention of the AVG, subjecting Dutch consumers to the risk of surveillance by foreign governments. These practices are a violation of the fundamental right to privacy and are illegal under Dutch and European privacy and consumer laws.

Unprecedented

Ada van der Veer, president Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen: *"Google is violating privacy laws at an unprecedented scale. Its practices constitute illegal surveillance and illegal exploitation of personal data, with unknown impact on personal lives of its users now and in future. Google knows what you are doing, where you are, what you might want to do and what you may be thinking about, it keeps track of everything and makes a tremendous amount of money with your personal data. And it does so secretly. After all, even to informed consumers, it is absolutely unclear what information Google collects and what happens with it afterwards. Furthermore, Google has broken its own promises. For example, Google claimed that users could stop the collection of location data through the 'location history' settings. In reality, Google did not stop at all."*

Enriched

Sandra Molenaar, director of the Consumentenbond: *"Google derives enormous profits by exploiting its' users data in many different ways. In 2022 alone, Google made USD 224 billion from advertising services alone. Google has enriched itself for years at the expense of consumer privacy. That must stop immediately. And, as the law demands, consumers must be compensated financially. That is the only way to make it clear to Big Tech companies that they must obey the rules. The Consumentenbond has been fighting Google's abuse of privacy rights for years, and we will continue to press on for consumer rights."*

Damages

Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen and the Consumentenbond demand that Google fundamentally change its practices and compensate consumers residing in the Netherlands who have used Google products or services at any time after March 1, 2012. Consumers who want to qualify for possible compensation can [apply](#). It is not mandatory to be a member of the Consumentenbond.

Molenaar: *"The violations are serious enough in itself but the scale on which the violations have taken*

place and still take place, makes it even worse. Almost everyone in the Netherlands has to some extent been affected by the violations. It is therefore important to join and, as a collective, show that we are no longer willing to put up with this kind of misconduct."

Collaboration

Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen and the Consumentenbond are together taking action against Google. Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen is a Dutch foundation that advocates for the privacy of Dutch users of Google products and services. Its Management Board and Supervisory Board consist of leading privacy advocates and specialists experienced in privacy protection and collective actions of social importance. Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen receives legal counsel from the law firms Lemstra Van der Korst and Pels Rijcken. The action is supported by funder Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP. Consumentenbond Claimservice is processing the claims registration. For more information about the proposed collective action, please visit <https://www.stichtingbeschermingprivacybelangen.com> and <https://www.consumentenbond.com.nl/google>.

Third Act

Google is the third Big Tech company against which the Consumentenbond has taken action. The Consumentenbond has already launched collective actions against [Facebook](#) and [TikTok](#). On 15 March 2023, the Amsterdam District Court issued a groundbreaking, favourable ruling in the Facebook proceedings, setting a powerful precedent upholding Dutch residents' privacy rights by finding that Facebook had violated consumers' privacy for years and establishing that its practices were unfair to consumers.

This is a joint press release of Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen and the Consumentenbond

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