

A successful meeting for the Google Action: Together we are strong!



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It was a warm evening in June when phones and laptops must already have revealed to Google where their owners were: at the Jaarbeurs in Utrecht. Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen spoke with participants of the Google Action about the lawsuit.

A lawsuit against a global company defending the interests of millions of consumers is a serious matter. It is only possible through a joint effort. This became evident at the meeting where the Stichting Bescherming Privacybelangen, one of its lawyers and the Dutch Consumer organisation Consumentenbond discussed the importance of this lawsuit. They provided insight into the proceedings and an outline of the present stage of the lawsuit: the first hearing is scheduled for October 22, 2024. During the meeting, participants in the Google Action were introduced to the Foundation's board members. The participants had many substantive questions and a lively dialogue developed. The Foundation also introduced its plan for establishing a participants panel. This panel can share valuable insights with the Foundation during the trial. The Foundation looks back on a very successful first meeting with a feeling of satisfaction: "Together we are standing strong for the privacy rights of consumers in the Netherlands and we are looking forward to continuing this fight together!"

The Mission

Ada van der Veer, chair of the Foundation, emphasized that it will be a hard and long battle. She sees the lawsuit as a hugely important step in winning back control of consumers in the Netherlands over their data. Privacy is a fundamental right and everyone should be able to decide for themselves what happens to her/his data. "This has to stop and fundamentally change," Van der Veer commented on Google's actions.

Joining forces

The board of the Foundation explained that a comprehensive and costly action against a Tech giant like Google requires the support of other professional parties. In this regard, the legal assistance provided by law firms Pels Rijcken and Lemstra Van der Korst was pointed out. The same goes for the financing of the proceedings by an American litigation financier. And, of course, the supportive role of Consumentenbond was mentioned.

Olof King, director public relations with Consumentenbond, explained that Consumentenbond supports the Foundation's action by informing consumers about the action and inviting them to sign up for it. Consumentenbond is doing this because the action goes to the heart of Consumentenbond's social mission: to stand up for the interests of aggrieved consumers.

Marlies van Eck, one of the board members and an expert on privacy law, discussed what Google is being accused of and why the Foundation is demanding that Google (1) fundamentally

changes its policies, practices and business model for the future and (2) compensates consumers for past privacy violations.

Jurjen Lemstra, lawyer on behalf of the Foundation, talked about Google's response to the writ and the timing, status and course of action. Lemstra: "On 22 October 2024 is the first hearing at the Amsterdam District Court. This will be about whether the Foundation meets all the formal requirements to be allowed to take the action against Google."

The substantive conversation with the participants

The engagement of the participants was evident from the many questions and the lively dialogue that ensued during the meeting. This underlined the shared sense of urgency and broad support for the Foundation's goal.