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## **GRIP – Google Redress & Integrity Platform**

### **NEW PLATFORM FOR DAMAGES ACTIONS AGAINST GOOGLE**

*Hausfeld and Avisa create platform to seek redress on behalf of those affected by*

*Google’s anti-competitive behaviour in Europe*

Specialist competition law firm Hausfeld & Co LLP (“Hausfeld”), and public affairs consultancy Avisa Partners (“Avisa”) today launch **GRIP**, a new platform to offer victims of Google’s anti-competitive business practices in Europe a mechanism to evaluate their potential claims.

**GRIP’s** two main goals are to seek **redress** for those who have suffered harm, and to ensure search **neutrality**.

**GRIP** will deal with all Google services, including Search, Android, YouTube, Shopping, Maps, etc.

**GRIP** supports the European Commission’s (“EC” or “Commission”) initiative to promote private enforcement actions across the continent and expand the legal rules facilitating redress for individuals and companies across all EU Member States.

**GRIP** builds on the European Commission’s Statement of Objections (“SO”) of April 15, 2015 which outlines the Commission’s position in assessing the viability of their claims against Google and, where merits can be established, obtaining redress for the harm suffered by representing them in anticipated damage actions.

**GRIP’s** platform will also provide information on representation and legal services in relation to both the EC and other competition watchdogs and regulators. This initiative comes ahead of the EC’s final decision on Google. A number of claims have already been brought in different jurisdictions across Europe and further litigation is expected in the years to come.

Hausfeld's Chairman, Michael Hausfeld, says:

*"The European Commission's investigation seeks to determine whether Google artificially diverted traffic from rival online services, hindering their ability to compete in the market. Google may have achieved unfair market advantage, in breach of EU antitrust rules. Intervention of private parties in the Commission proceedings could materially benefit the investigation through actual experiences. In light of the global presence of Google, and the participation of U.S. companies as complainants, any Commission decision would have international implications."*

Laurent Geelhand, Managing Partner at Hausfeld Brussels adds:

*"Rival online services were denied a fair display in search results because of Google's practices. Google was also able to generate additional profit, often at the consumers' expense. Any person or entity that engaged in e-commerce in the EU may have a civil claim and through GRIP."*

Avisa Partners founder Jacques Lafitte says:

*"It has been five years between the first complaint against Google and the EC's statement of objections, which is about three times longer than the groundbreaking Microsoft case. Google's President, lawyers and publicists have worked well to create this delay. But Google has not been able to stop the inevitable: it finally faces justice."*

Hausfeld has a history of representing companies, charities, small businesses, consumers and other vulnerable groups affected by anti-competitive behaviour in the EU. In particular, Hausfeld represents UK vertical search technology company Foundem, the original complainant in the EC's Google investigation, in its damages action in the UK High Court. Since 2009, Foundem has spearheaded the campaign to bring Google's anti-competitive search manipulation practices to light and subject them to public and regulatory scrutiny.

Avisa Partners has followed the EC investigation since 2009. It is in particular assisting 1plusV, a French Internet search firm, one of the companies whose complaint prompted the EC's investigation into Google. Avisa Partners believes that Google's practices prevented 1plusV from innovating and improving its services, and stifled its ability to generate business and advertising.

To learn more about **GRIP**, please visit [www.grip.eu](http://www.grip.eu) or connect with GRIP via Twitter at [@Grip\\_eu](https://twitter.com/Grip_eu) or LinkedIn at [GRIP Google Redress & Integrity Platform](https://www.linkedin.com/company/grip-google-redress-integrity-platform).

For media enquiries or additional information please contact: [info@grip.eu](mailto:info@grip.eu) .

-ENDS-

## NOTES TO EDITORS

The European Commission sent a Statement of Objections to Google on April 15, 2015 outlining the preliminary view that the company abused a dominant position in breach of EU antitrust rules, by systematically favouring its own comparison shopping product in its general search results pages in the European Economic Area (EEA). Google has a dominant position in online search services in the EEA, with market shares above 90% in most EEA countries.

The EC has expressed concern about other Google practices: alleged exclusivity obligations that prevent advertisers from placing competing ads on their websites; copying of rival's web content in Google's search services without consent; and contractual restrictions discouraging advertisers from diverting their online search advertising campaigns from Google's AdWords.

The Commission also announced an antitrust investigation into Google's Android mobile operating system, focusing on whether Google hindered the development and market access of rival mobile operating systems, applications and services.

For further information about the Commission investigation on Google, please click [here](#).

### **About GRIP**

Investigations into Google's business practices have been launched worldwide, on both national and international level. The EC investigation provides a stimulus for damages recovery against Google and further inquiries into Google's conduct, not only by national competition authorities, but also by potential claimants.

Google is accused of abusing its dominant position in the European search market. This has had a profound effect not only on its competitors - from large multi-national companies to SMEs and local businesses - but also on Google's own customers by stifling innovation, suppressing competition, and limiting consumer choice.

**GRIP** offers corporations, consumers and other entities harmed by Google's anti-competitive business practices in Europe a mechanism to evaluate their potential claims. **GRIP** is conscious of the needs of companies and individuals seeking redress, who could not otherwise afford to protect their rights against large companies such as Google.

The EC's investigation into Google is an example of public enforcement going hand-in-hand with private litigation for damages. Over the recent years there has been a shift in the public enforcement culture across the EU, with the EC recognising that private damages actions bolster not only the deterrent effect of fines and penalties imposed by the public authorities, but also correct the illegal conduct of market players. Furthermore, private enforcement restores fairness in the market by re-establishing competitors and, in turn, stimulating competition. **GRIP** will play a key role in spearheading functions of private enforcement and thus increasing consumer confidence to take action.

#### **About GRIP's founders:**

**Hausfeld** is a global law firm with offices in Brussels, London, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, DC. It has a broad range of litigation expertise, particularly in antitrust/competition, financial services, sports and entertainment, environmental, mass torts, consumer protection, and human rights matters. Hausfeld works with governments, court working groups, and consumer organisations to find ways for claimants to obtain better access to court-based remedies through innovation in funding and court procedures.

<http://www.hausfeld.com>

**Avisa Partners** is a public affairs company focused on European Union policy development and regulatory enforcement. It advises corporate clients, trade associations and governments with intelligence on EU activities and public affairs campaigns in areas like antitrust, trade, regulatory affairs and industrial policy.

<http://www.avisapartners.eu/>