

UNOFFICIAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION

DUTCH DATA PROTECTION AUTHORITY – NEWS

<https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/nl/nieuws/boete-van-525000-euro-voor-locatefamilycom>

Fine of 525,000 euros for Locatefamily.com

Press release / 12 May 2021

The Dutch Personal Data Authority (AP) imposes a fine of 525,000 euros on Locatefamily.com. Locatefamily.com publishes address details and phone numbers of people, often without these people being aware of this. If they want to have their data deleted, it is not easy because Locatefamily has no representative in the EU. Not having a representative in the EU is a violation of privacy law and the reason for the fine.

In order to force Locatefamily.com to open a counter in the EU, the AP is also imposing a penalty. The company had until March 18, 2021 to designate a representative in the EU.

If this is not done, Locatefamily.com must pay 20,000 euros for every 2 weeks that the order is not complied with, with a maximum of 120,000 euros. Locatefamily.com has not confirmed to the AP at this time whether it has now appointed a representative in the EU.

Unexpected visitors on the doorstep

The AP has received dozens of complaints about Locatefamily.com. This site contains full addresses and sometimes phone numbers of people who do not know how their data ended up on the website. In any event, they did not register themselves.

This situation has a major impact on people whose data appears on Locatefamily.com. So unsuspecting people can suddenly be surprised with unexpected visitors on their doorstep.

What is private must remain private

“The fact that a website publishes your name, phone number and address without your knowledge is a bad thing,” says AP vice-president Monique Verdier. “What is private must remain private. With this kind of information, malicious parties can commit identity fraud, for instance. Or visit you at home or harass you by phone or email.”

“If you want to share that information, you can of course do that. But you must be able to choose for yourself. At Locatefamily.com, many people don't get that choice. And if your address and phone number end up on such a website anyway, you should at least be able to easily arrange for that information to be removed from the website. That's not possible here. This is partly because Locatefamily.com has no representative in the EU. That's why we fined Locatefamily.com.’

No representative in the EU

Organizations that offer services or products in the EU must set up a counter for EU citizens where they can go for information or to exercise their privacy rights. Locatefamily does not have this.

The AP mediated for people who wanted their personal data removed. In most cases Locatefamily.com has since deleted their data.

700,000 Dutch citizens

Locatefamily.com is a platform where people can find contact information of relatives they have lost sight of or of people with whom they would like to get in touch.

The platform contains personal data of people from all over the world, including the EU. Around 700,000 Dutch citizens are listed on the site.

The site and all personal data are freely accessible to everyone. Locatefamily.com creates overviews without people having to become members or having to create an account.

International investigation

Locatefamily.com has an international character. Several European regulators also received complaints about the company. This is why the AP cooperated in the investigation with 9 other European data protection authorities and with the Canadian data protection authority.