In a landmark case, Europe’s highest has ruled that search engine operators are obliged upon request to remove links from a person’s name to third-party information, if that information is ‘inadequate, irrelevant or no longer relevant, or excessive in relation to the purposes of the processing at issue.’

The ruling, which concerned search engine Google, effectively forces the company to remove links to content about individuals if it receives an application from data subjects to have information about them erased from Google’s index.

Google will then have to weigh up whether that information is in the public interest and whether it should remain, likely placing a significant staffing burden on the company.

Google Executive Chairman, Eric Schmidt, said that the ruling is flawed and leaves ‘many open questions’.

The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner has confirmed it has so far received nearly 20 queries from the public about having links to information about them removed from the internet.

The ODPC said it has been contacted by Google (whose European headquarters are in Dublin) to discuss the implications of the judgment and how such requests will be processed in future.

A spokesperson for the ODPC said: “Our preliminary interpretation of the judgment is that the rights of individuals in relation to data deletion would first have to be asserted by the individual with (Continued on page 17)