

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Häfele SE & Co KG v. Donal Gleeson, Aoife Company, LLC
Case No. DCO2026-0005

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Häfele SE & Co KG, Germany, represented by Bettinger Rechtsanwälte Partnerschaft mbB, Germany.

The Respondent is Donal Gleeson, Aoife Company, LLC, United States of America (“United States”).

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <hafele.co> is registered with eNom, LLC (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on January 12, 2026. On January 13, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On January 13, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Whois Agent (864694761), Whois Privacy Protection Service, Inc.) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on January 14, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on January 21, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on January 23, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was February 12, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on February 13, 2026.

The Center appointed Willem J. H. Leppink as the sole panelist in this matter on February 20, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The following facts are undisputed.

The Complainant is a multinational enterprise, headquartered in Nagold, Germany, with roots dating back to its founding in 1923. The Complainant is a global specialist in furniture fittings, architectural hardware, kitchen solutions, electronic access control systems, and lighting solutions. Over the last century it evolved into a global full-service provider offering an extensive portfolio of products and digital solutions for the furniture, construction, and architectural industries. The Complainant's group employs more than 8,000 people worldwide and operates through a network of over 160 subsidiaries and sales offices in more than 150 countries.

The Complainant owns several trademark registrations for the HÄFELE word mark and variations thereof in multiple jurisdictions worldwide, in particular relating to furniture fittings, architectural hardware, access control systems, electronic locks, lighting systems, and associated consulting, distribution, and technical services. These include, inter alia:

- European Union trademark registration No. 000035881 HÄFELE, registered on September 2, 1998, for a broad range of goods and services in classes 6, 8, and 20;
- United States trademark registration No. 1210236 HÄFELE, registered on September 28, 1982, for a broad range of goods and services in classes 6, and 20; and
- International trademark registration No. 1271233 HÄFELE, registered September 9, 2015, for a broad range of goods and services in classes 9, and 11.

The Complainant uses the domain name <hafele.com> for its main international website and e.g. the domain name <hafele.de> for its German website, which redirects to the domain name <haefe.de>.

The disputed domain name was registered on July 20, 2010.

At the time of filing the Complaint and at the time of rendering the Decision, the disputed domain name redirected to the website "www.kitchensource.com". The Complainant has provided evidence showing that the website "www.kitchensource.com" previously was an online retail shop operated by the Respondent, which displayed numerous HÄFELE-branded products and kitchen hardware. However, since the filing of the Complaint, the website "www.kitchensource.com" is inactive.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant contends the following.

Due to the umlaut on the a, i.e., "ä," in its company name, the Complainant uses several spelling variations of its name when registering domain names and presenting itself online, given the fact that international users may be unfamiliar with the umlaut or may use keyboards that do not support such characters. The Complainant thus uses (1) häfele (with umlaut), (2) haefele ("ä" transliterated as "ae"), and (3) hafele ("ä" simplified to "a").

Historic evidence obtained through the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine shows that in 2021 the disputed domain name redirected to "www.kitchensource.com", an online retail website operated by the Respondent's organization, offering kitchen fittings, organizers, hardware, and related household products. The archived pages prominently displayed HÄFELE products and brand references together with kitchen and cabinet hardware. The footer of the archived pages confirms that "www.kitchensource.com" is a store of the Respondent.

As early as 2021, the Complainant's Brand Protection Service Provider requested that the Respondent transfer the disputed domain name to the Complainant. Despite multiple reminders, the Complainant never received a response from the Respondent, nor was the disputed domain name transferred.

The Respondent is not commonly known by the name "Häfele", "Hafele" or any similar designation. The Complainant is unaware of any legitimate business operated by the Respondent under this name.

Evidence from the Internet Archive (Wayback Machine) demonstrates that in 2021 the disputed domain name redirected to "www.kitchensource.com", an online retail shop operated by the Respondent, which displayed numerous HÄFELE-branded products and kitchen hardware. The archived content includes extensive HÄFELE product listings, images, and promotional text. This use was unauthorized, and the Respondent was exploiting the Complainant's mark to attract customers to a third-party commercial website. Such use is not bona fide.

The disputed domain name incorporates the Complainant's distinctive and internationally well-known trademark. Given the Complainant's global presence, extensive trademark portfolio, and widespread online use of the "hafele" spelling, the Respondent must have been aware of the Complainant and its mark when registering the disputed domain name. No plausible reason exists for the Respondent selecting this distinctive company name except to exploit its reputation.

The Wayback Machine evidence shows that the disputed domain name was used to redirect users to the commercial website "www.kitchensource.com", operated by the Respondent. This website prominently marketed HÄFELE products, kitchen hardware, and other home organization products. This constitutes an intentional attempt to attract Internet users for commercial gain by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark as to the source, affiliation, or endorsement of the goods offered.

The disputed domain name now resolves to a non-functional subpage with no active website. Also, the "passive holding" can constitute bad faith. The Respondent ignored formal transfer requests. Given the distinctiveness of the HÄFELE / HAFELE mark and its long-standing global reputation, any use of the disputed domain name by the Respondent would necessarily mislead consumers.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Selected UDRP Questions ("[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service marks for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

The Panel finds the HÄFELE mark is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving that a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant’s prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

The Panel has reviewed in particular the evidence from the Internet Archive (Wayback Machine) which would demonstrate that in 2021 the disputed domain name redirected to “www.kitchensource.com”, an online retail shop operated by the Respondent, which displayed numerous HÄFELE-branded products and kitchen hardware. According to the Complainant, this content would include extensive HÄFELE product listings, images, and promotional text.

Apart from the fact that the Respondent apparently used the disputed domain name for redirection to its own site, even if the Respondent was offering goods or services of the Complainant on the website at the disputed domain name, the Respondent would not be considered as having a right or legitimate interest in the disputed domain name, under the so-called “Ok! Data” test enshrined in section 2.8.1 of the [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), and *Ok! Data Americas, Inc. v. ASD, Inc.*, WIPO Case No. [D2001-0903](#). In particular, the site does not accurately and prominently disclose the Respondent’s relationship with the Complainant. To the contrary, the site creates the impression of a commercial relationship between the Complainant and the Respondent.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel refers to its considerations under 6.B, in particular those in relation to the “Ok! Data” test.

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Respondent has clearly targeted the Complainant and thus intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users to the website “www.kitchensource.com”, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant’s mark. The Panel also takes note that the disputed domain name is almost identical to the Complainant’s domain name

<hafele.com>. The Panel finds that the Respondent registered and used the disputed domain name in bad faith.

At present the disputed domain name still redirects to the website “www.kitchensource.com” although the website is inactive. This fact does not change the Panel’s finding of bad faith.

The Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <hafele.co> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Willem J. H. Leppink/

Willem J. H. Leppink

Sole Panelist

Date: February 27, 2026