

# Ensuring Brink's IP portfolio is the perfect fit

The Brink Group is one of Europe's largest companies in the field of development, production and sales of towbars. The company's head office is at Staphorst in the Netherlands. Brink has produced towbars and cable sets for decades that are both quick and easy to install, as well as safe and simple to use. Brink's business philosophy is perfectly summarized by their motto: "Brink – Your perfect fit".

The towing bar market is exposed to compliance standards, legislation and demands as governments and vehicle manufacturers increasingly impose new regulations and requirements. For some, this might be perceived as problematic, but for Brink it provides new business opportunities. Brink offers more than two thousand different types of towbar and develops about two hundred new ones annually. As such, Brink has the largest range of towbars in Europe.

Martijn Eikelenboom, IP manager at Brink, explains: "Although we have a large product range, we build our products around technology platforms. By focusing our IP on the technology platforms, we can protect a significant proportion of all our products cost-effectively." Valea supports Brink with the drafting, filing and prosecution of its patent applications. Valea further supports Brink in post-grant proceedings such as oppositions, and serves as a sounding board for IP strategies.

Martijn's colleague, Kees Pruim, VP R&D, adds: "Brink carries the legacy of a high IP awareness from when it was a part of the Thule Group. Using Valea as an IP service provider made the transition to a stand-alone company much easier for us. Valea already had a deep understanding of the technology and the IP landscape from being an IP service supplier to the Thule Group. There is no doubt that IP is becoming increasingly important for providing us with a competitive advantage. We have noticed an

increasing interest in Brink's technology from our competitors, and this is reflected in the number of oppositions filed against our patents. Since becoming a stand-alone company, we have the capability of pursuing our own agenda in a completely different way and we know we are on the right track to establishing an even stronger position on the market. Our competitor's attention is simply a confirmation of this."

## BRINK TOWING SYSTEMS

**Founded:** On 5 September 1903, Reint Brink opened a blacksmith's workshop at Rolderstraat 82 in Assen in the north-eastern Netherlands. The workshop was later expanded to include a store where transport materials and heating equipment were sold.

**Products:** Brink Group is one of Europe's largest companies in the field of development, production and sales of towbars.

**Market:** The company's head office is located in Staphorst in the Netherlands. Brink Group has production and sales branches in the Netherlands, France, the UK, Denmark, Italy, Poland and South Africa. Brink cooperates with almost all major car manufacturers and develops customized towbars for every single car.



"On the right track"