European Commission - Press release

Commission fines car manufacturers and association €458 million over end-of-life vehicles recycling cartel

Brussels, 1 April 2025

The Commission has fined **15 major car manufacturers and the European Automobiles Manufacturers' Association (ACEA)** a total of around **€458 million** for participating in a long-lasting cartel concerning end-of-life vehicle recycling. Mercedes-Benz was not fined, as it revealed the cartel to the Commission under the leniency programme. All companies admitted their involvement in the cartel and agreed to settle the case.

An **End-of-Life Vehicle ('ELV')** is a car that is no longer fit for use, either due to age, wear and tear, or damage. These vehicles are dismantled and processed for recycling, recovery, and disposal.

The goal is to minimise waste and recover valuable materials like metal, plastic, and glass. To further support EU's decarbonisation and recycling ambition, today the Commission has proposed a flexibility measure to help manufacturers comply with their CO_2 emission targets between 2025 and 2027 for new cars and vans. It has also proposed, as part of the EU's cohesion policy mid-term review, funding incentives for the deployment of recharging infrastructure. Finally, the Commission has launched a fact-finding exercise on how European companies procure and recycle certain critical raw materials, to support greater industry cooperation in this field in line with EU competition rules.

The infringement

The Commission's investigation revealed that, for over 15 years, 16 major car manufacturers (including Mercedes, which was not fined) and ACEA entered into **anticompetitive agreements** and engaged in **concerted practices** related to the recycling of ELVs.

In particular, the Commission found that the parties colluded on two aspects:

- they agreed not to pay car dismantlers for processing ELVs. In particular, they agreed to consider the recycling of ELVs to be a sufficiently profitable business, and therefore not to remunerate car dismantlers for their services (so-called "Zero-Treatment-Cost" strategy). The companies also shared commercially sensitive information on their individual agreements with car dismantlers and coordinated their behaviour towards dismantlers;
- they agreed not to promote how much of an ELV can be recycled, recovered and reused and how much recycled material is used in new cars. Their goal was to prevent consumers from considering recycling information when choosing a car, which could lower the pressure on companies to go beyond legal requirements.

Under Directive 2000/53/EC on ELVs, the last owner of an ELV must be able to dispose of it at no cost with a dismantler and if needed, car manufacturers are obliged to bear the costs. Moreover, consumers are required to be informed about the recycling performance of new cars.

The investigation found that ACEA was the facilitator of the cartel, having organised numerous meetings and contacts between car manufacturers involved in the cartel.

The Commission's investigation revealed the existence of a **single and continuous infringement** in the European Economic Area ('EEA'), spanning over 15 years, **from 29 May 2002 to 4 September 2017**. The following table details the companies involved in the infringement and the duration of each company's involvement:

Company	Start	End
BMW	29 May 2002	4 September 2017

Ford	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Honda	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Hyundai / Kia	2 March 2006	4 September 2017
Jaguar Land Rover	23 September 2008	4 September 2017
- Tata as parent	23 September 2008	4 September 2017
Mazda	13 September 2006	4 September 2017
- Ford as parent	13 September 2006	18 November 2008
Mercedes Benz	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Mitsubishi	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Opel	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
- General Motors as parent	10 July 2009	31 July 2017
Renault / Nissan	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Stellantis	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Suzuki	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Toyota	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Volkswagen	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
Volvo	29 May 2002	4 September 2017
- Ford as parent	29 May 2002	2 August 2010
- Geely as parent	3 August 2010	4 September 2017
ACEA	29 May 2002	4 September 2017

The Commission coordinated its investigation with the UK Competition and Markets Authority ('CMA'). Today, the CMA also adopted a decision concerning the same practice for breaches of UK competition law.

Fines

The fines were set on the basis of the Commission's 2006 Guidelines on fines. In setting the fines, the Commission took into account various elements, including the number of cars concerned by the infringement, the nature of the infringement, its geographic scope and its duration. When setting the fine, the Commission also took into account the lesser involvement in the infringement of Honda, Mazda, Mitsubishi and Suzuki. It also granted a reduction to Renault since evidence showed that Renault had explicitly asked for an exemption from the agreement not to advertise the use of recycled material in new cars.

Four companies cooperated with the Commission under the leniency programme:

- **Mercedes-Benz** received **full immunity** for revealing the cartel, avoiding a fine of around €35 million;
- **Stellantis (including Opel), Mitsubishi and Ford** benefited from a reduction of the fine for their cooperation with the Commission. The amount of reduction granted depends on the timing of their cooperation as well as to the evidence they provided to prove the existence of the cartel. All three received the maximum reduction that is foreseen under the Leniency Notice in case of multiple leniency applicants.

In addition, under the Commission's 2008 Settlement Notice, the Commission applied a reduction of 10% to the fines on all parties, as they acknowledged their participation in the cartel and their liability.

The fine of ACEA, for its facilitating role, is set as a lump sum. The fine takes into account that all car producers, which are members of ACEA, have been fined individually.

The breakdown of the fines imposed on each party is as follows:

Company	**Reduction under the Leniency Notice**	**Fine**
Mercedes-Benz	100%	€0
Stellantis	50%	€74 934 000
Mitsubishi	30%	€4 150 000
Ford	20%	€41 462 000
BMW		€24 587 000
Honda		€5 040 000
Hyundai / Kia		€11 950 000
Jaguar Land Rover / Tata		€1 637 000
Mazda		€5 006 000
- Of which jointly and severally with Ford		€1 034 000
Renault / Nissan		€81 461 000
Opel	50%	€24 530 000
- Of which jointly and severally with GM		€13 659 000
GM solely		€17 075 000
Suzuki		€5 471 000
Toyota		€23 553 000
Volkswagen		€127 696 000
Volvo		€8 890 000

- Of which jointly and severally with Ford		€3 901 000
- Of which jointly and severally with Geely		€4 419 000
ACEA		€500 000

Background

Article 101 of the TFEU and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement prohibit agreements and other restrictive business practices that may affect trade and prevent or restrict competition within the Single Market.

The Commission's investigation was triggered by an application under the Commission's 2006 Leniency Notice submitted by Mercedes-Benz in September 2019. This was followed, after the inspections in March 2022, by successive leniency applications submitted by Stellantis, Mitsubishi and Ford.

More information on this case will be available under case number AT.40669 in the public case register on the Commission's competition website once confidentiality issues have been resolved. For more information on the Commission's action against cartels, see its cartels website.

The settlement procedure

The settlement procedure for cartels was introduced in June 2008. In a cartel settlement, parties acknowledge their participation in a cartel and their liability for it. They also accept the maximum amount of the fine which the Commission intends to impose. Cartel settlements are based on Regulation 1/2003, and allow the Commission to apply a simplified and shortened procedure. This benefits consumers and taxpayers as it reduces costs. It also benefits antitrust enforcement as it frees up resources. Finally, the parties themselves benefit in terms of quicker decisions and a 10% reduction in fines. Today's decision is the **43rd settlement** since the introduction of this procedure for cartels.

Leniency programme

The Commission's leniency programme gives companies the opportunity to disclose their participation in a cartel and cooperate with the Commission during an investigation. A successful leniency applicant will either completely avoid a potentially high fine or receive a substantial reduction from it. Further information about the Commission's leniency programme, including a Frequently Asked Questions document, can be found here.

Whistleblower tool

The Commission has set up a tool to make it easier for individuals or companies to alert it about anticompetitive behaviour while maintaining their anonymity. This tool protects whistleblowers' anonymity through a specifically-designed encrypted messaging system that allows two way communications. The tool is accessible via this link.

Action for damages

Any person or company affected by the anti-competitive behaviour described in this case may bring the matter before the courts of the Member States and seek damages. The case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union and Council Regulation 1/2003 both confirm that in cases before national courts, a Commission decision constitutes binding proof that the behaviour took place and was illegal. Even though the Commission has fined the companies concerned, damages may be awarded by national courts without being reduced on account of the Commission fine.

The Antitrust Damages Directive makes it easier for victims of anti-competitive practices to obtain damages. More information on antitrust damages actions, including a practical guide on how to quantify antitrust harm, is available here.

Quote(s):

"Today, we have taken firm action against companies that colluded to prevent competition on recycling. These car manufacturers coordinated for over 15 years to avoid paying for recycling services, by agreeing to not compete with each other on advertising the extent to which their cars could be recycled, and by agreeing to remain silent on the recycled materials used in their new cars. We will not tolerate cartels of any kind, and that includes those that suppress customer awareness and demand for more environmental-friendly products. High quality recycling in key sectors such as automotive will be central to meeting our circular economy objectives, not only to cut waste and emissions, but also to reduce dependencies, lower production costs and create a more sustainable and competitive industrial model in Europe."
Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition - 01/04/2025

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