
Commission fines five car safety equipment suppliers € 34 million in cartel settlement

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The European Commission has fined Tokai Rika, Takata, Autoliv, Toyoda Gosei and Marutaka a total of € 34 million for breaching EU antitrust rules.

The companies took part in one or more of four cartels for the supply of car seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to Japanese car manufacturers in the EEA.

All five suppliers acknowledged their involvement in the cartels and agreed to settle the case. Takata was not fined for three of the cartels as it revealed their existence to the Commission. Tokai Rika was not fined for one of the cartels as it revealed its existence to the Commission.

Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy said: "Seatbelts and airbags protect lives every day and are essential in all cars in the EU. The five suppliers fined today colluded to maximise their profits from the sale of these components. This may have raised the costs of these car parts for a number of manufacturers selling cars in Europe, potentially affecting consumers. We do not accept cartels that affect the European consumers, even if the cartel is organised outside Europe. "

The five car component suppliers addressed in this decision coordinated prices or markets, and exchanged sensitive information for the supply of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to Japanese car manufacturers **Toyota, Suzuki** and **Honda** in the European Economic Area (EEA). The coordination to form and run the cartel took place outside the EEA, notably in Japan, mainly through meetings at the suppliers' business premises but also in restaurants and hotels, as well as through e-mail exchanges. Collusion between the car safety equipment suppliers generally intensified when specific requests for quotations were launched by the car manufacturers concerned.

The cartel may have had a significant effect on European customers, since around one out of every eleven cars sold in Europe is produced by a Japanese company. Furthermore, all the Japanese car companies affected by the cartel have manufacturing plants in the EEA.

The Commission's investigation revealed the existence of four separate infringements. The following table details the participation and the duration of each company's involvement in each of the four infringements:

	Supplier (group)	Scope	Start	End
1	Tokai Rika Takata Autoliv Marutaka	Sales of seatbelts to Toyota	6/07/2004 - Tokai Rika, Takata, Marutaka 18/12/2006 - Autoliv	15/04/2009- Marutaka 11/02/2010- Tokai Rika 25/03/2010- Takata, Autoliv
2	Takata Autoliv Toyoda Gosei	Sales of airbags to Toyota	14/06/2005- Takata, Toyoda Gosei 18/07/2006 - Autoliv	15/07/2009- Toyoda Gosei 26/07/2010- Takata, Autoliv
3	Takata Tokai Rika	Sales of seatbelts to Suzuki	14/02/2008	18/03/2010
4	Takata Autoliv	Sales of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels to Honda	28/03/2006	22/05/2010

Fines

The fines were set on the basis of the Commission's [2006 Guidelines on fines](#) (see also [MEMO](#)).

In setting the level of fines, the Commission took into account, in particular, the sales value in the EEA achieved by the cartel participants for the products in question, the

serious nature of the infringement, its geographic scope and its duration. With respect to Marutaka, the Commission took also into account its role as the facilitator of one of the cartels.

Under the Commission's [2006 Leniency Notice](#):

-Takata received full immunity for revealing three of the cartels (thereby avoiding an aggregate fine of ca. € 74 million).

-Tokai Rika received full immunity for revealing one of the cartels (thereby avoiding an aggregate fine of ca. € 15 million).

-Tokai Rika, Takata, Autoliv and Toyoda Gosei benefited from reductions of their fines for their cooperation with the Commission investigation. The reductions reflect the timing of their cooperation and the extent to which the evidence they provided helped the Commission to prove the existence of the cartels in which they were involved.

In addition, under the Commission's 2008 Settlement Notice, the Commission applied a reduction of 10% to the fines imposed on the companies in view of their acknowledgment of the participation in the cartel and of the liability in this respect.

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

	Supplier (group)	Reduction under Leniency Notice	Reduction under Settlement Notice	Fine (€)
1	Tokai Rika	100%	10%	0
	Takata	50%	10%	12 724 000
	Autoliv	30%	10%	265 000
	Marutaka	0%	10%	156 000
2	Takata	100%	10%	0
	Autoliv	50%	10%	4 957 000
	Toyoda Gosei	28%	10%	11 262 000
3	Takata	100%	10%	0
	Tokai Rika	46%	10%	1 818 000

4	Takata	100%	10%	0
	Autoliv	50%	10%	2 829 000