

Briefs: French wireless firms fined for collusion

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France's three leading wireless operators were fined a record \$624 million for market collusion over a six-year period.

France's Competition Committee determined Thursday that Orange Telecom, Vivendi Universal and Bouygues Telecom conspired to share data between 1997 and 2003 in a way that quashed competition and kept rates supported.

The trio made up the lion's share of France's mobile market.

While the Competition Committee said its move was aimed at fostering competition, many analysts were telling French media Thursday that the penalty was relatively easy for the three heavyweights to digest.

Nevertheless, the companies called the fine excessive and out of proportion to penalties in similar telecom cases. They vowed to appeal the ruling at a later date.

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