

BMW, Daimler, VW broke antitrust rules: EU 'preliminary view'

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Exhaust from cars is a major source of air pollution in urban areas and numerous cities have enacted or are considering restrictions on driving heavily-polluting vehicles in city-centres

The European Union warned German car giants BMW, Daimler and Volkswagen on Friday that a preliminary inquiry has concluded they

colluded to avoid competing on emission control technology.

"As a result, European consumers may have been denied the opportunity to buy cars with the best available technology. The three manufacturers now have an opportunity to respond to our findings," EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager said.

The EU Commission has concluded that BMW, Daimler and the VW group—Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche—held so-called "circle of five" meetings to rig competition in emissions technology.

This allowed them to limit the introduction of "AdBlue" or urea to diesel engine exhaust gases, reducing its effectiveness as a way to produce cleaner emissions, the statement said.

The firms also—"in the Commission's preliminary view"—colluded to avoid or delay introducing OPF particle filters that reduce harmful particles in petrol exhaust fumes.

The findings form the basis of a "statement of objections" to which the firms will have a chance to respond before the Commission decides whether to pursue a case under competition rules banning cartel agreements.

A VW spokesman confirmed to AFP that the German automaker had received the report and would "examine the complaints and issue a statement after evaluating the investigation file as part of its cooperation".

A Daimler spokeswoman meanwhile told AFP the firm was aware of the report but had already been cooperating with investigators and "does not expect to receive a fine in this matter".

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