

The Belgian Competition Authority orders AutoScout24 to restore sellers' data portability to a competing platform subject to penalty payments

On 30 April 2026, the Belgian Competition Authority (the "BCA") decided to impose interim measures ordering AutoScout24 Belgium ("AutoScout24") to restore the portability of sellers' ad data from its platform to the competing platform carselect.touring.be.

The platform AutoScout24.be primarily provides a specialised intermediation service for the sale of second-hand cars. It brings together car sellers, on the one hand, and prospective buyers, on the other. AutoScout24 is the main platform for publishing second-hand car classified ads in Belgium.

A classified ad for a second-hand car contains a large amount of data (model, features, mileage, price, etc.) that must be entered before it can be published. Professional second-hand car dealers generally engage in "multi-homing", meaning that they publish their ads on several platforms at the same time (websites and/or apps). To avoid repeated manual data entry and synchronise updates to their ads, car dealers use software, technical tools and other intermediaries that interact with the various ad publication platforms.

In this context, in March 2026, the BCA received a complaint from TCS Mobility ("TCS"), a new market entrant operating the platform carselect.touring.be, which competes with AutoScout24.be. TCS alleges that AutoScout24 suddenly interrupted the automated transfer of data from AutoScout24.be to its platform carselect.touring.be. As a result, in order to publish an ad on carselect.touring.be, professional dealers are now required to re-enter the data manually.

TCS also filed a request for interim measures seeking to restore the automated transfer of sellers' ad data to its platform pending the decision on the merits. The BCA can indeed adopt interim measures intended to suspend *prima facie* infringements (*i.e.*, "at first sight") of competition law where it is urgent to prevent a situation likely to cause serious, imminent and difficult-to-repair harm to the undertakings whose interests are affected, or to damage the general economic interest.

In its decision, the BCA first found that AutoScout24 could *prima facie* be considered to hold a dominant position within the meaning of competition law, given the importance of its platform for the publication of classified ads for second-hand cars in Belgium. AutoScout24.be appears to be an unavoidable trading partner for professional car dealers due to the network effects it enjoys. In particular, the decision to publish a – paid – ad on AutoScout24's platform is largely driven by the number of visitors to that platform, who in turn are attracted by the large number of ads available therein.

The BCA then considered that, by prohibiting the automated transfer of vehicle data entered on its platform to carselect.touring.be, AutoScout24 has *prima facie* abused its dominant position in the market and thereby infringed Article IV.2 of the Belgian Code of Economic Law and Article 102 TFEU.

Indeed, AutoScout24 normally allows such transfers from its platform to other websites, including competing ones. However, when TCS added a new pricing model for the publication of ads on carselect.touring.be,

AutoScout24 stopped allowing automated data transfers to this platform. Under this new pricing model, TCS charges for “clicks” or “leads” (*i.e.*, contacts initiated by prospective buyers with sellers) generated by an ad (“pay-per-lead” model), rather than for the publication of the ad as such (“pay-per-list” model). With this decision, AutoScout24 appears to specifically target TCS and this new pricing model.

Finally, the BCA found that AutoScout24’s conduct was likely to cause serious and difficult-to-repair harm to TCS, therefore requiring urgent intervention. Given dealers’ reluctance to manually encode data twice, the contested practice is likely to prevent TCS from retaining and acquiring new customers. Indeed, as a new entrant, TCS needs to reach a critical mass of ads and visitors in order to remain active in the market.

As a consequence, subject to a penalty payment of EUR 20,000 per day, up to a maximum of EUR 7,000,000, the BCA ordered AutoScout24 to restore the automated transfer of vehicles data encoded on its platform by car dealers to TCS’s platform carselect.touring.be. In addition, AutoScout24 must send a notice to all of its professional clients and publish this notice for 90 days on the professional section of its website, explaining that AutoScout24 allows the transfer of data from its platform to carselect.touring.be, as well as their continuous and real-time updating.

The practices at issue in the BCA’s decision relate to the digital sector, which is one of the BCA’s priority enforcement areas.

This decision does not prejudice the outcome of the proceedings on the merits, which are continuing under reference CONC-RPR-26-0011.

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The Belgian Competition Authority (BCA) is an independent administrative authority that contributes to the definition and implementation of competition policy in Belgium. Concretely, the BCA pursues anti-competitive practices, such as cartels and abuses of a dominant position, and reviews the main merger operations. The BCA cooperates with the other competition authorities of the member states of the European Union and the European Commission within the European Competition Network (ECN)