



# NEWSLETTER

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## Weekly Competition Law News

By Lifang & Partners

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CMA Fines 3 Estate Agents over Half a Million Pounds for Price Fixing

## Domestic News

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### Guizhou High People's Court Hears a Gas Company's Antitrust Appeal

On 17 December 2019, the Guizhou High People's Court held and live-streamed the hearing of the anti-trust disputes between the appellant Liupanshui Yumin LPG Co., Ltd and the appellees Liupanshui Chengda Trading Co., Ltd., Liupanshui Ruian LPG Co., Ltd., and Baijiang Southwest Gas Co., Ltd. (Case No.: (2019) Qian Min Zhong No. 898). The video is available at: <http://tingshen.court.gov.cn/live/9615356>. ([More](#))

### Jiangxi AMR Warns Local Sand and Gravel Companies for Antitrust Violations

Recently, the Administration for Market Regulation of Jiangxi Province (“**Jiangxi AMR**”) held a reminder and warning meeting on the price behavior of sand and gravel markets. Regarding the shortage of competition in the current sand and gravel markets, the Jiangxi AMR stressed that sand and gravel companies shall strictly abide by the *Anti-Monopoly Law* (“**AML**”) and shall not enter into and implement any monopoly agreements, or abuse dominant market position. Violations of the AML will be subject to a fine of up to 10% of the turnover of the undertakings in the preceding year. ([More](#))

## Overseas News

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### DOJ, USPTO and NIST Announce Joint Policy Statement on Remedies for SEP

On 19 December 2019, the Department of Justice (“**DOJ**”), U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (“**USPTO**”), and National Institute of Standards and Technology (“**NIST**”) issued a joint policy statement regarding the treatment of standard-essential patents (“**SEP**”) where the patent holder has agreed to license its patents on fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory (F/RAND) terms. This Statement replaces the 2013 policy statement on SEP remedies issued jointly by the DOJ and USPTO. To the end, the Statement clarifies that a patent owner's promise to license a patent on F/RAND terms is not a bar to obtaining any particular remedies, including injunctive relief. ([More](#))

### Apple, Cisco, Daimler and BMW Complain to Brussels over Patents

On 18 December 2019, the *Financial Times* reported that 27 companies including Apple, Cisco, Daimler, BMW, Ford, Continental, Dell, Lenovo had urged the European Commission to take actions on patent abuses that were hampering the development of self-driving cars and other connected devices. The letter did not name names, but it came after regulators said they would investigate Nokia's refusal to offer licenses for components for self-driving cars after complaints from German carmaker Daimler and car supplier Bury and others. ([More](#))

## **France's Competition Watchdog Imposes a Fine of EUR 415m for Anticompetitive Practices on Four Meal Vouchers Issuers**

On 18 December 2019, the French competition watchdog, the Autorité de la Concurrence, announced that it had imposed fines totaling around EUR 415m on four historical meal vouchers issuers, Edenred France, Up, Natixis Intertitres and Sodexo Pass France for anticompetitive practices. Two types of practices were implemented: 1) between 2010 and 2015, four companies exchanged confidential commercial information every month, through the Centrale de Règlement des Titres (“CRT”), regarding their respective market shares, which made it possible to restrict competition between them; 2) between 2002 and 2018, four companies adopted a series of agreements intended to lock the market for meal vouchers by controlling the entry of new players and by reciprocally banning the launch of dematerialized vouchers issuing. ([More](#))

## **13 Large Financial Firms to Pay USD 337m to Settle Price-Fixing Allegations**

On 17 December 2019, the *Associated Press* reported that thirteen large financial firms were agreeing to pay USD 337m to settle claims by Pennsylvania's treasury department and about a dozen other government agencies and pension funds accusing them of inflating the price of bonds issued by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. The bonds were a cornerstone for the investment portfolios of government and institutional investors. ([More](#))

## **CMA Fines 3 Estate Agents over Half a Million Pounds for Price Fixing**

On 17 December 2019, the Competition and Markets Authority (“CMA”) announced that it had fined 3 Berkshire estate agents more than GBP 600,000 for illegally fixing the minimum commission rates they charged their customers. For almost 7 years, the 4 companies, Michael Hardy, Prospect and Richard Worth, together with Romans, conspired to set minimum commission rates for the sale of residential properties in Wokingham, Winnersh, Crowthorne, Bracknell and Warfield – where they were the leading estate agents at that time. Romans was not fined as it brought the illegal activity to the CMA's attention and fully cooperated with the investigation, under the CMA's Leniency Programme. ([More](#))

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