

NEWS | 13 May 2025

German Federal Cartel Office fines Sennheiser and Sonova for vertical price fixing

Summary

On 30 April 2025, the Bundeskartellamt (the German Federal Cartel Office, 'FCO') imposed a total fine of 6 million EUR on Sennheiser electronic SE & Co. KG and Sonova Consumer Hearing Sales Germany GmbH for engaging in vertical price fixing.

Background and conduct

Since at least 2015, Sennheiser employees coordinated retail pricing with German dealers by monitoring sales prices and intervening when prices were significantly lower than the recommended resale prices. Retailers were often contacted – either proactively or following complaints from competitors – and encouraged to raise their prices to align with Sennheiser's pricing expectations.

To coordinate their efforts, Sennheiser employees reportedly used "code language" in internal communications. The FCO found that the employees involved acted intentionally, having received training in antitrust compliance but choosing to use their knowledge to disguise their misconduct.

Following Sonova's acquisition of Sennheiser's consumer audio division in 2022, similar practices continued, albeit to a lesser extent.

Legal assessment

The conduct violated Section 1 of the German Competition Act ('Gesetz Gegen Wettbewerbsbeschränkungen' or 'GWB'), which prohibits vertical price agreements between manufacturers and their retailers.

In determining the fine, the FCO considered the extensive cooperation provided by both Sennheiser and Sonova during the investigation. No fines were imposed on the retailers involved.

The official press release on the original decision of the Competition Authority is available [here](#) in German and English.