# Parking payment solutions sector in France: the Autorité clears the acquisition by the EasyPark group of the Flowbird group

Published on November 20, 2024

---

### Background

On 30 September 2024, EasyPark Group notified the *Autorité de la concurrence* of its plan to acquire sole control of the Flowbird group.

Through the transaction, the EasyPark group, via its subsidiary EasyPark Group, which operates primarily in the parking payment solutions sector, will acquire all the activities of the main supplier of pay-and-display parking machines in France, the Flowbird group.

Following an examination of the effects of the transaction on the markets concerned, the *Autorité* has cleared the acquisition without conditions.

## The parties to the transaction

**EasyPark Group** is a Swedish company whose capital is held by two European private equity firms, Vitruvian and Verdane. It heads the EasyPark group (hereinafter "EasyPark"), which operates in the mobility services sector in both France and abroad. In France, EasyPark is mainly active in the provision of parking payment solutions, notably through its EasyPark mobile app and its Camerapark number plate recognition system, as well as in the provision of

parking management support services for local authorities.

The **Flowbird group** (hereinafter "Flowbird") is primarily active in France and abroad in the production and sale of parking payment equipment, systems and services, including parking payment terminals (pay-and-display machines) and payment terminals for public transport and payment platforms. Flowbird is also active in the provision of connected parking payment solutions, notably through its Flowbird mobile app and its ANPR Minipark solution, as well as in the provision of parking management support services for local authorities.

In the case of paid parking, local authorities must – at a minimum – offer physical parking payment solutions (pay-and-display machines) located within a reasonable distance of the parking area concerned. To that end, local authorities acquire pay-and-display machines from specialist suppliers such as Flowbird, in particular through public tenders.

Local authorities may also decide to designate one or several mobile parking payment solutions providers, such as Flowbird and EasyPark, to offer their services to drivers through a mobile app or via the internet. Local authorities can select the mobile parking payment solutions provider(s) that will be available in their areas through public tenders, "adapted" tenders (*marché à procédure adaptée* – MAPA) where the conditions of the tender are freely determined by the buyer, or contracts concluded by mutual agreement.

To facilitate the management of their car parks, local authorities also subscribe to various services, such as ticket hubs, which centralise information on tickets paid by users via different parking payment solutions on a single server, so the tickets can be checked by traffic wardens, or permit management services, which enable local authorities to manage the application of specific parking prices to different drivers (e.g. a resident price).

In examining the transaction, the *Autorité* focused its analysis on the upstream markets for the provision to local authorities of mobile parking payment solutions, on the one hand, and pay-and-display machines, on the other. The *Autorité* also analysed the downstream market for the provision of on-street

mobile parking payment solutions to end users and the markets for the provision of parking management support services.

## The *Autorité* ruled out any risk of harm to competition in the markets concerned

The ***Autorité*** considered that the transaction was not likely to affect competition, either through horizontal or non-horizontal effects.

Following an examination during which it consulted the parties' competitors and customers, the ***Autorité*** did not identify any competition risks in the main markets in which the parties compete, namely the markets for the provision of on-street mobile parking payment solutions to local authorities and end users, in which the parties will notably compete with PayByPhone, as well as the markets for the provision of parking management support services, such as ticket hubs and permit management services.

In addition, the ***Autorité*** examined the risk of non-horizontal effects from any foreclosure strategies, insofar as the transaction would enable the new entity to offer both pay-and-display machines and parking management support services, as well as to increase its presence on the markets for the provision of on-street mobile payment parking solutions.

At the end of its analysis, the ***Autorité*** ruled out any risk of foreclosure for the competitors of the new entity on the markets for the provision of pay-and-display machines and on-street mobile payment parking solutions, as well as on the markets for the provision of parking management support services.

According to the investigation conducted by the ***Autorité***, the parties to the transaction would have neither the ability nor the incentive to foreclose access to the competitors of the new entity to the markets for the provision of on-street parking payment solutions by tying sales between pay-and-display machines and mobile parking payment solutions, on the one hand, and parking management support services, on the other. Local authorities set the terms and

conditions for their tenders and therefore have the ability to encourage companies to engage in competition. In addition, there are a number of technical and regulatory constraints that would hamper the possibility of the two offerings being tied.

Moreover, the new entity would not be able to foreclose its competitors' access to the markets for the provision of on-street mobile parking payment solutions by reducing the opportunities for interfacing mobile solutions and parking management support services, in particular insofar as interfacing the support services concerned by the transaction is not always a prerequisite for a mobile solutions provider to be able to offer its services in a local authority.

Lastly, the *Autorité* ruled out any risk of foreclosure for competing providers of parking management support services through tied sales between pay-and-display machines and parking management support services. On those markets, the increment in market share resulting from the transaction is nil or marginal. The transaction would not therefore affect the incentives to engage in such tying.

At the end of its competitive analysis, the *Autorité* cleared the transaction without conditions.

**DECISION 24-DCC-247 OF 20 NOVEMBER 2024**

on the acquisition of sole control of the Flowbird group by the EasyPark group

See the full text of the decision (in French)

## Contact(s)

Nicola Crawford
Communications Officer
+33155040151
Contact us by e-mail