

European auto market grew by 1.2% in 2019: ACEA

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The European car market grew in 2019, but the figures are somewhat deceptive as automakers pushed to register vehicles before the end of the year to escape tighter environmental regulations

The European auto market grew by 1.2 percent last year, with a push in December raising the total number of sales to 15.3 million vehicles,

sector association ACEA said Thursday.

Regulatory changes were behind a jump of 21.7 percent in December compared with the same month a year earlier, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association said.

Throughout the year Volkswagen cemented its place at the top of EU auto sales, with its figures up 3.1 percent. The group includes the Audi, Porsche, Seat and Skoda marques.

In [second place](#) was French automaker PSA, which owns Peugeot, Citroen, DS, Opel and Vauxhall, though it reported a 1.1 percent drop in sales.

Its French rival the Renault group that includes the Alpine, Dacia and Lada brands, the third largest by European sales, increased by 1.1 percent for the year as a whole, ACEA data showed.

The European [market](#) had started the year in decline, "but the last quarter, and the month of December in particular, pushed the annual performance into positive territory", the ACEA, said in a statement.

Of the main European markets Germany saw the highest sales increase, up a strong five percent, with France rising 1.9 percent and Italy up 0.3 percent.

On the other hands sales in Spain were down 4.8 percent and in Britain they slid 2.4 percent.

The European market has been "artificially boosted" by the tightening of standards on carbon dioxide emissions, said Flavien Neuvy, director of the Cetelem Observatory, a research unit of BNP Paribas.

The sales figures are based on the registration of vehicles, and Neuvy said carmakers had an incentive to register at the end 2019 large CO₂-emitting vehicles so they would not be used in calculations for 2020 on the overall emissions levels its fleet.

Carmakers who breach the lower ceiling in 2020 of an average 95 grams of CO₂ emitted per kilometre for their fleet face fines.

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