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EUROPEAN CAR MARKET BEGINNING TO SHOW THE STRAIN

- **Market down 9.7% in March**
- **Market down 1.9% year-to-date**
- **Peugeot 207 remains Europe's best-selling car**
- **VW is Europe's top-selling brand**

JATO Dynamics, the world's leading provider of automotive data and intelligence, today reports that after a strong start to the year, March has proved to be a more difficult month for the European car market, with drop of 9.7% (175,738 units) compared to the same month last year, posting a total sales volume of 1,631,810 units.

"It's disappointing to see such a large percentage drop during March but it's hardly surprising in view of the difficult economic climate that is prevailing in some of the core European markets", says Nasir Shah, Global Business Development Director at JATO. "Additionally, the March market wasn't helped by the early arrival of the Easter holiday and the corresponding reduction in available trading days."

Thanks to the relatively strong market in the first two months of the year, the year-to-date figures are more favourable, with the market down only 1.9% (81,238 units) on last year, to total year-to-date sales of 4,093,307 units.

Shah also comments: "In some respects the March figures are greater than they might otherwise have been thanks to the UK's registration plate change during the month. This is a peak sales month in the UK and always has the effect of inflating the March figures in Europe."

Brand Performance

Volkswagen continues its dominance of the European market, heading the sales league in both March and year-to-date, ahead of Ford, Opel/Vauxhall, Renault and Peugeot.

Top Ten Brands

Make	Mar_08	Mar_07	% Change Mar	Mar YtD_08	Mar YtD_07	% Change YtD
VOLKSWAGEN	152,920	175,562	-12.9%	399,953	399,041	+0.2%
FORD	151,709	169,590	-10.5%	350,914	365,931	-4.1%
OPEL/VAUXHALL	144,547	165,588	-12.7%	334,152	364,911	-8.4%
RENAULT	121,848	129,550	-5.9%	306,657	311,981	-1.7%
PEUGEOT	109,639	126,794	-13.5%	293,014	300,249	-2.4%
FIAT	98,411	104,687	-6.0%	275,799	267,242	+3.2%
CITROEN	87,122	101,404	-14.1%	241,041	257,779	-6.5%
TOYOTA	86,638	105,740	-18.1%	224,471	253,316	-11.4%
BMW	74,869	76,074	-1.6%	175,908	163,847	+7.4%
MERCEDES	74,086	81,783	-9.4%	186,246	184,043	+1.2%

With the market depressed, most brands suffered reduced sales volumes in March. However, those that recorded increased registrations compared to March 2007 have recorded significant increases, with Nissan up 38.1%, Mini up 21.8%, Dacia up 26.9%, Smart up 91.0%, Dodge up 57.9% and Maserati up 80%.

Year-to-date there are more success stories, including Fiat up 3.2%, BMW up 7.4%, Honda up 1.5%, Mazda up 6.8% and Kia up 4.8% .

Top Models

The Peugeot 207 continues to perform outstandingly well for the French car-maker and was again Europe's top-selling new car in March with 46,500 units registered, ahead of the Ford Fiesta (45,666 units), Volkswagen Golf (45,484 units), Opel/Vauxhall Corsa (45,459 units), Ford Focus (45,274 units), Opel/Vauxhall Astra (43,794 units), Renault Clio (39,123 units), Fiat Punto (32,890 units), BMW 3-Series (29,397 units) and Volkswagen Polo (29,356 units). The Fiesta's performance is particularly impressive given the publicity surrounding its replacement model following its reveal at the Geneva show at the start of March.

Year-to-date the Golf still clinches to the top spot (up 20.4% YtD), followed by the 207 (up 6.7% YtD), Corsa, Focus, Astra, Fiesta, Clio, Punto, Polo (up 1.0% YtD) and Toyota Yaris.

Top Ten Models

Make & Model	Mar_08	Mar_07	% Change Mar	Mar YtD_08	Mar YtD_07	% Change YtD
PEUGEOT 207	46,500	49,802	-6.6%	123,150	115,444	+6.7%
FORD FIESTA	45,666	49,821	-8.3%	98,229	105,511	-6.9%
VOLKSWAGEN GOLF	45,484	47,209	-3.7%	123,555	102,633	+20.4%
OPEL/VAUXHALL CORSA	45,459	50,345	-9.7%	106,624	118,607	-10.1%
FORD FOCUS	45,274	54,104	-16.3%	106,502	118,832	-10.4%
OPEL/VAUXHALL ASTRA	43,794	51,492	-14.9%	99,940	108,229	-7.7%
RENAULT CLIO	39,123	46,264	-15.4%	97,643	110,087	-11.3%
FIAT PUNTO	32,890	47,125	-30.2%	89,605	116,247	-22.9%
BMW SERIES 3	29,397	37,219	-21.0%	66,942	75,718	-11.6%
VOLKSWAGEN POLO	29,356	32,133	-8.6%	74,168	73,424	+1.0%

National Trends

The European market in March is dominated by the UK registration plate change, but this year the 0.5% increase in UK registrations was not enough to offset the 14.3% fall in Germany, 18.6% fall in Italy and 28.1% fall in Spain. Many other markets also recorded significantly reduced car markets in March.

Country	Mar_08	Mar_07	% Change Mar	Mar YtD_08	Mar YtD_07	% Change YtD
Austria	29,907	32,345	-7.5%	73,778	75,319	-2.0%
Belgium	57,077	59,170	-3.5%	169,864	163,858	+3.7%
Cyprus	2,212	2,114	+4.6%	6,344	5,862	+8.2%
Czech Republic	15,455	14,592	+5.9%	42,713	37,662	+13.4%
Denmark	8,553	14,451	-40.8%	35,386	36,981	-4.3%
Estonia	2,531	2,812	-10.0%	7,435	7,650	-2.8%
Finland	12,625	12,734	-0.9%	46,230	40,188	+15.0%
France	188,879	189,869	-0.5%	526,121	519,191	+1.3%
Germany	286,609	334,592	-14.3%	735,974	717,536	+2.6%
Great Britain	451,642	449,287	+0.5%	683,339	688,476	-0.7%
Greece	22,393	27,786	-19.4%	79,071	79,297	-0.3%
Hungary	13,895	15,669	-11.3%	39,621	41,066	-3.5%
Iceland	855	1,182	-27.7%	3,322	3,103	+7.1%
Ireland	21,590	27,898	-22.6%	93,159	100,317	-7.1%
Italy	213,735	262,464	-18.6%	665,470	741,823	-10.3%
Latvia	1,893	2,783	-32.0%	5,990	7,895	-24.1%
Lithuania	2,209	1,461	+51.2%	6,837	4,080	+67.6%
Luxembourg	5,355	6,007	-10.9%	13,489	14,421	-6.5%
Norway	9,506	11,264	-15.6%	29,974	33,742	-11.2%
Poland	28,961	27,948	+3.6%	85,520	72,736	+17.6%
Portugal	20,657	20,880	-1.1%	53,843	49,448	+8.9%
Slovakia	6,789	5,940	+14.3%	19,656	16,150	+21.7%
Slovenia	6,643	6,469	+2.7%	18,799	16,586	+13.3%
Spain	124,676	173,408	-28.1%	356,304	409,759	-13.0%
Sweden	23,540	27,477	-14.3%	61,823	68,402	-9.6%
Switzerland	26,654	25,837	+3.2%	69,724	61,952	+12.5%
The Netherlands	46,969	51,109	-8.1%	163,521	161,045	+1.5%
Grand Total	1,631,810	1,807,548	-9.7%	4,093,307	4,174,545	-1.9%

In percentage terms, Lithuania remains the rising star of the European market, up 51.2% in March and up 67.6% in quarter one. Strong first quarter growth was also recorded in the Czech Republic, Finland, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland.

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Editorial note: JATO Dynamics background

JATO was founded in 1984 and provides the world's most timely, accurate and up-to-date intelligence on vehicle specifications and pricing, sales and registrations, news and incentives. The company has representation in over 40 countries, providing unique local market expertise. The JATO client base includes all of the world's volume vehicle manufacturers, giving them the ability to react to short-term market movements, plan for long-term developments and ultimately to meet consumers' needs. JATO's data has also been adapted for consumer use in motoring web portals where customers can see the advantages and disadvantages of a specified model against any other while major leasing companies use JATO data to drive the vehicle quotation process. Visit JATO at www.jato.com

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