It's Time

Dear Reader,

The time is ripe. Does Germany still want to be ranked with states such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burundi, Myanmar, North Korea, and Nepal? Does it want to tear up the Paris climate goals and its own 2050 climate protection plan? Probably not.

A speed limit on German freeways could quickly and easily solve several problems at once. The roads would become safer, the traffic would flow more freely and efficiently, and driving would be more relaxed and less stressful. A limit of 130 km/h, for example, would enable car and engine developers to design and improve their products with a specific operating point in mind. Over-engineering and excessive costs would become a thing of the past. In future, our engineers would be competing for who develops the most efficient, resource-friendly, lightweight, and safe product.

At the same time, we could move one step closer to Vision Zero. One in every ten deaths on Germany's roads (313 out of 3206 people) occurs on the freeway (figures for 2016). The consequences of accidents would also become less serious, because the relative speeds between fast cars and slow cars, buses and trucks would be lower. In addition, there would be a permanent reduction in our environmental impact. As well as lowering noise and pollution levels, according to the German Federal Environment agency, if 80 % of people were to comply with a speed limit of 120 km/h, CO₂ emissions from cars on German freeways would be reduced by 9 %. This is a significant fall, given that car manufacturers are struggling for every percentage point reduction in order to achieve their fleet CO₂ targets.

Unfortunately the new German government has not been sufficiently forward-looking in its coalition agreement and

has not set a speed limit to make our roads safer. It is planning to increase the security of data transfers by extending its cyber defenses, but the same does not apply to the traffic on the freeways. However, the most recent surveys show that the citizens of Germany are now ready to break with tradition and enter the modern era. CosmosDirekt, Germany's direct insurer of Generali, has come up with the latest figure: 52 %. This is the proportion of Germans who support a 130 km/h speed limit on the freeway.

The government must go beyond the terms of the coalition agreement, make its views clear, and finally take this bold step, even in the face of opposition from well-established associations and lobby groups. If we do not do this ourselves, it will soon be imposed on us anyway by autonomous vehicles. Or would you like to travel at 250 km/h in an automated car? Now really is the time.

With best regards

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