Nessie's Fate

Dear Reader,

Be honest – how often have you felt like swimming in a Scottish loch? So it shouldn't be any surprise that the mythical creature in Loch Ness is pretty much guaranteed to appear in the media only during the summer months, because monsters are ultimately much like people. The real reason for this is, of course, the silly season, when not only do the newspapers struggle to find stories, but, according to the dictionary, politicians also take the opportunity to bring up their favorite topics for discussion. How does this bring me around to the subject of Andreas Scheuer? Well, it has recently not only been the silly season, but also, unnoticed by many people, election time in Germany. And this is when a top-class headline-maker like Nessie is dragged out of the cupboard. A subject over which "the Germans tear each other apart," as the Spiegel TV channel rather dramatically put it around two years ago. Of course, we're talking about the speed limit.

And in the case of a hot topic like this, the German transport minister is happy to bring out the big guns. "The argument in favor of a general speed limit is a political weapon. For many people it has become a fetish. The citizens of Germany can decide in the election whether they want freedom on the roads or bans and restrictions. The Greens are leading the way in this campaign." Freedom or bans? There's no question what the majority would say, wouldn't you think? Well, you wouldn't necessarily be right, because recent studies have produced some very surprising results. At the end of May, a survey by the ADAC, the main German motoring organization, showed that 45 % of its members were against a general speed limit on German highways, but 50 % were in favor. And these are members of an association for car drivers, it's worth noting.

The fact that one can see a growing touch of common sense is not surprising in view of the ever more obvious environmental problems. According to the "2021 Projection Report for Germany" study commissioned by the Federal Environment Agency, which was published in August, the climate protection targets set for Germany up to 2040 will be clearly missed. It is all the more important to use every means to reduce pollutant emissions.

So whether Scheuer's contribution to the silly season has missed its target will become clear soon after we go to press. For the first time, there is a real chance that the threat of "every German car driver being castrated," as one rather over-excited racing driver put it, will actually become reality. The constitutive session of the new German Bundestag will take place on October 26, 2021. The composition of the parliament could finally seal the fate of Nessie – sorry, the German speed limit.

Frank Jung
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