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The Second Wave of Automated Driving

“We’ll sell fully autonomous cars by 2021 with no steering wheels” – that was a typical title of a press release from 2016. Well, looking at our roads today, it doesn’t give us the impression that most vehicles on our roads have no steering wheel and no brake pedals. Manual driving still clearly dominates. So what does that mean? Haven’t the promises of a turning point in driving come true? Does it mean the many new possibilities of mobility through driverless vehicles were only a dream? As always with complex things, the answer is yes and no.

Automation is certainly viewed in a much more differentiated way in today’s public and industry debate than it was a few years ago. But: The advent of functions with which automobiles can brake, accelerate and steer independently, comfortably and reliably has gained enormous momentum and is used in many mid-range passenger cars – still with the driver’s obligation to monitor these systems. The mobility industry’s plans to use completely driverless vehicles commercially in public transport have been postponed, but by no means abandoned.

The phase we are in is the second wave of automated driving. The excessive hype is gone. But this is exactly what makes sustainable development possible. And this development is in full swing: Manufacturers of sensor technologies are building ever sharper sensors for autonomous vehicles with cameras,

laser and radar sensors; new business models are emerging around digitally maintainable functions; chip producers are establishing product lines to be able to satisfy the enormous hunger for performance of driverless systems; there is a strong focus on software development expertise, and the capital market provides specialist companies with billions to develop driverless systems.

In this context, it is becoming clear that the market for automated functions at higher levels up to driverless driving represents a very complex value chain whose players are just re-positioning themselves. Realization: “Doing everything alone” does not promise success. This new added value with chips, neural networks, data, digital system maintenance, system integration, functional safety and above all the layer of software that connects it all is too diverse. The second wave of automated driving will only gather momentum if there is a smart interaction between the technical puzzle pieces of highly specialized companies.

Look forward with me to this second wave, which will result in sustainable and solid automated driving systems. I am convinced that these will be suitable for fulfilling the fascinating promises of this automotive technology and will make the necessary revolution in mobility possible: Let’s do it properly!