



Autonomous Driving

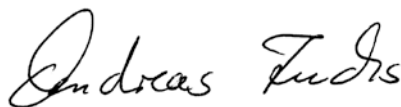
Dear Reader,

California is leading the way when it comes to autonomous driving. Whereas it used to be necessary for a human driver to be at the wheel at all times, from April 2018 onwards self-driving cars without a steering wheel or pedals will be allowed to drive on public roads. Manufacturers must, however, prove that their cars meet safety standards and are protected against cyber attacks, for example. But it is difficult to see how a technical device that communicates with other technical devices can possibly be protected 100 % against cyber attacks. And there are many other unanswered questions, such as how the police are supposed to stop such a robot car.

I admit to feeling somewhat uneasy when I think that such robot cars might also be driving on our roads in the near future. The current level of automation and digitization means that autonomous driving is indeed feasible. But it should still be possible for a human (driver) to intervene at any time. Or are our present-day technical systems really so safe as to totally rule out a fault occurring in a complex road traffic situation? And will the car always react correctly to every situation? I doubt it.

The agricultural world, however, is a completely different matter. Here, vehicles that can drive autonomously alongside a harvester, for example, make sense both technically and financially. Research and industry are working intensively on this subject. And even

today, robot vehicles are also in use in other, self-contained areas such as warehouses, mines, and airfields. In other words, in those areas where it is highly unlikely that unauthorized persons will be able to go near them. But as soon as they go onto a public road, such vehicles have to overcome huge obstacles. From an insurance perspective alone, there is the question of who is liable in the case of an accident: the operator, the vehicle manufacturer, the software developer, or even the satellite service provider if the navigation system fails? Until all of these issues have been resolved and the systems are really safe, robots should only be allowed to drive in certain situations, no matter how attractive the technology might seem.



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