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How Germany can become a leading supplier for connected and automated driving



IN 30 SECONDS

- In this interview the Federal Minister for Transportation presents the strategy and plans for the future of connected driving in Germany
- Germany is a pioneer of connected car technology worldwide and could become a leading supplier in the next few years
- 'Tested on German Autobahn' should become an international label for cutting edge, innovative connected and automated driving technology



Alexander Dobrindt, Federal Minister for Transport and Digital Infrastructure in Germany, at the Google headquarters



#connectedcar

- Interview
- About the author

Minister Dobrindt, you have been to the USA lately and have tested the Google Car there. What was your impression of the vehicle?

Alexander Dobrindt: The automated-driving car that Google is testing showcases impressive technology. The engineering tools recognise each pedestrian on the pavement, each traffic signal and road marking, and then react accordingly. When you experience this advanced technology, you know the world stands on the threshold of the biggest mobility revolution since the invention of the car. In less than ten years, automated and connected driving will be part of everyday lives on the roads of Germany and the USA. Following this, traffic will become more predictable, traffic jams and accidents can be avoided and mobility will become safer. It is my goal to make Germany a leading supplier for automated and connected driving.

How do you want to achieve this?

Alexander Dobrindt: Germany is one of the pioneers of this technology worldwide. In collaboration with my Ministry I've developed a holistic strategy for automated and connected driving, which was signed off in September 2015 by the federal cabinet. We considered all the relevant fields of action for bringing the driving of the future to the street – from legislation to infrastructure, including data security and privacy.

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You already mentioned the biggest challenges here. Who will be liable when an automated car is involved in an accident? Will it be the 'driver' even though he's not really driving anymore?

Alexander Dobrindt: It is clear that a driver of an automated car will not have additional liability risks. We will therefore clarify this in our Highway Code: it will not be malpractice when a driver hands over the driving to the system and turns away from the steering wheel. Following on from this, a driver cannot be prosecuted for accidents that are caused by technical failure. The financial liability will be covered by the mandatory liability insurance already in place.

How will an automated car react in a risk situation? For example, when a child suddenly runs into the street?

Alexander Dobrindt: The extension of automated and connected driving systems will reduce the emergence of accidents considerably. The systems catch complex traffic situations much quicker than human beings and losing control, due to excess speed for example, can be eliminated.



#connectedcar

- Interview
- About the author

An automated car makes a decision based on algorithms that have been programmed beforehand. For this we need clear guidelines. My Ministry is currently working on a Code of Practice: all aspects of the code will be bound by law. We are using the following principles as a baseline:

- Material damages always have priority over personal damages; and
- In the case of inevitable personal damage, we need data protection rules to prevent the classification of people by age, sex, weight or other characteristics

But there will be a plethora of data collected with automated and connected driving. Is the age of the ‘transparent driver’ imminent?

Alexander Dobrindt: No. The basic rule we apply is that data belongs to the driver. The driver on the other hand has to agree explicitly to the transfer of his data. For collection, use and cross-linking of data, we must apply the principle of

anonymisation. At the same time, OEMs have to inform the owner of the car about the big picture of data collection.

What kind of infrastructure will be necessary for automated and connected driving? And how do you want to update our roads for such requirements in the future?

Alexander Dobrindt: We are creating several communication partnerships with respect to intelligent street cars. On our ‘digital field-test Autobahn’ on the A9 in Bavaria, we are testing automated and connected driving in real traffic. The motorway is open to all kinds of innovative organisations: OEMs, automotive suppliers, digital organisations and research facilities. The next step will be to connect the ‘digital field-test Autobahn’ to city traffic in order to gain further data and insights. On an international level we want to be recognised as pioneers for mobility in the future and for automated driving with the title ‘tested on German Autobahn’.

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#connectedcar

- Interview
- About the author

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Alexander Dobrindt

Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, Germany

Alexander Dobrindt is currently the Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure in Germany. He graduated from LMU University in Munich with a degree in sociology and was Managing Director and silent partner at an engineering company between 1996 and 2005. He started his political career by joining the 'Junge Union' (CDU Youth Organization) in 1986 and later the CSU. Since 2002 he has been a member of the German Bundestag and has taken over several functions and acted as spokesperson in a number of roles. From 2009 on he was CSU Secretary-General before being appointed Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure in 2013.

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#connectedcar

- Interview
- About the author

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