

General Speed Limits on German Motorways

Resolution of 11th May 2020 on the basis of the recommendations of all DVR Board Committees

The German Road Safety Council (DVR) demands general speed limits for all vehicles on German motorways in order to sustainably reduce the number of serious injuries and road accident fatalities.

Resolution

In the sense of Vision Zero, measures are to be taken which are suitable to reduce the number and severity of road accidents. A general speed limit on German motorways is expected to have a significant effect on the prevention of serious accidents.

In its road safety programme of 2011, the German government set the target of reducing the number of road accident fatalities by 40 percent by 2020. Germany is far from achieving this goal. The European Commission intends again to halve the number of road accident fatalities by 2030 from a 2020 baseline. A speed limit on German motorways is a cost-effective and quickly implemented contribution to achieve this aim.

With regard to the road users who will be killed or seriously injured in the future and with the conviction that the actions of a road safety organisation must solely be concerned with the protection of road users against the risks of road traffic, after thorough examination of a large number of statistics and studies, after thorough investigation of the prohibition of arbitrary action and the principle of reasonableness, after thus carefully balancing the interests of individuals in the unhindered pursuance of their general freedom of action against the need for protection of the general public and individuals against avoidable risks in road traffic, the German Road Safety Council proposes an additional general speed limit on German motorways also for passenger cars without trailers, motorcycles, trikes and quads as well as other vehicles up to a total permissible weight of 3.5 t.

There are several reasons for a general speed limit of 130 km/h on German motorways: The general public is already aware of this value as it is the current recommended speed on motorways and therefore a high level of acceptance is to be expected. It is also the most

widespread speed limit in Europe.

On suitable sections, an increase of the permitted speed limit may be allowed by placement of the speed limit sign 274 with a special justification.

The DVR also demands a considerable increase in the use of intelligent traffic systems on German motorways in order to mitigate situational effects such as weather, road works, accidents, congestion risks and other road safety impairments by adjusting speed limits for individual types of vehicle.

Explanations

Germany is the only country in the EU in which there is no general speed limit for vehicles up to 3.5 tons gross vehicle weight over the entire motorway network. In all other countries, for many years now there have been various general speed limits on motorways, usually between 110 km/h and 130 km/h.

On the basis of OECD data, the safety on German motorways is only in the middle range in comparison with all other EU countries.

On approximately 23 percent of German motorways there is a section-related, permanent speed limit and on approximately 6 percent there is a section-related, situation-dependent speed limit. The recommended speed of 130 km/h applies on approximately 70 percent of German motorways.

The causes of accidents on German motorways must always be considered as being due to multiple factors. Here, in particular, speed plays an essential role with regard to the reaction time and distance travelled as well as the kinetic energy which acts on vehicle occupants. For the same reaction time, a reduced speed results in a shorter stopping distance or less serious accidents. Furthermore, it has a positive effect on the harmonisation of traffic flow.

Therefore, accidents due to large differences in speed could be avoided and high-risk situations and potential accidents more easily compensated for by drivers.

Drivers also adapt their choice of speed to social norms, for example the speeds which they assume to be acceptable or observe among other drivers in particular situations. Widespread observance of speed limits influences the social norm and therefore the choice of speed of

individual drivers because lower speeds are more frequently noticed and therefore replicated.

It is time to improve safety on German motorways - every life counts!

Signed
Prof. Dr. Walter Eichendorf
President of DVR