



German automakers are considering putting EDRs—Event Data Recorders, popularly known as "black boxes"—in self-driving cars. The idea is being met with no small amount of resistance on grounds of surveillance, but it may be a key step in getting self-driving cars into road traffic.

Mercedes and BMW are among car makers who have developed autonomous or semi-autonomous cars, along with technology firm Google. But while some features, such as assisted parking, are commercially available, legal questions are hampering the roll-out of other technologies, such as automatic overtaking on motorways, and fully self-driven cars remain prototypes.

A consortium of automakers, lawyers, privacy advocates, and insurance executives in Germany seek to make sure that country maintains its lead in car manufacturing; their mission includes identifying autonomous-car adoption hurdles in Germany's regulations, technological know-how, and legal framework.

German carmakers advocate a controlled approach to how data from autonomous and semi-autonomous cars' EDRs could be used—an idea popular with privacy advocates, but which could hinder participation by software and telecoms companies trying to join in on the self-driving car development wave. Thomas Weber, a Mercedes-Benz spokesman, says "(...)personal data belongs to the customer, and we are not entitled to do with it whatever we want; the fact that we take these issues more seriously than some other companies is an opportunity for German industry"—a remark which has been interpreted by some observers as something of a swipe at Google. Weber added that Germany's VDA auto industry association is holding talks about whether it is possible to reach a common position on how to deal with vehicle data rights.

The German group hope their stance on data security and other matters will inform a greater European consensus. To promulgate their views, the consortium have already held presentations at the United Nations and European Union.