



Department
for Transport

Session 1: Regulatory Framework for Automated Driving

ITU Future Network Car Symposium 2026

Duncan Kay

9th July 2026

UNECE

WP.29

The World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations

Creation, structure, and the roles of the 1958 and 1998 Agreements

Safety

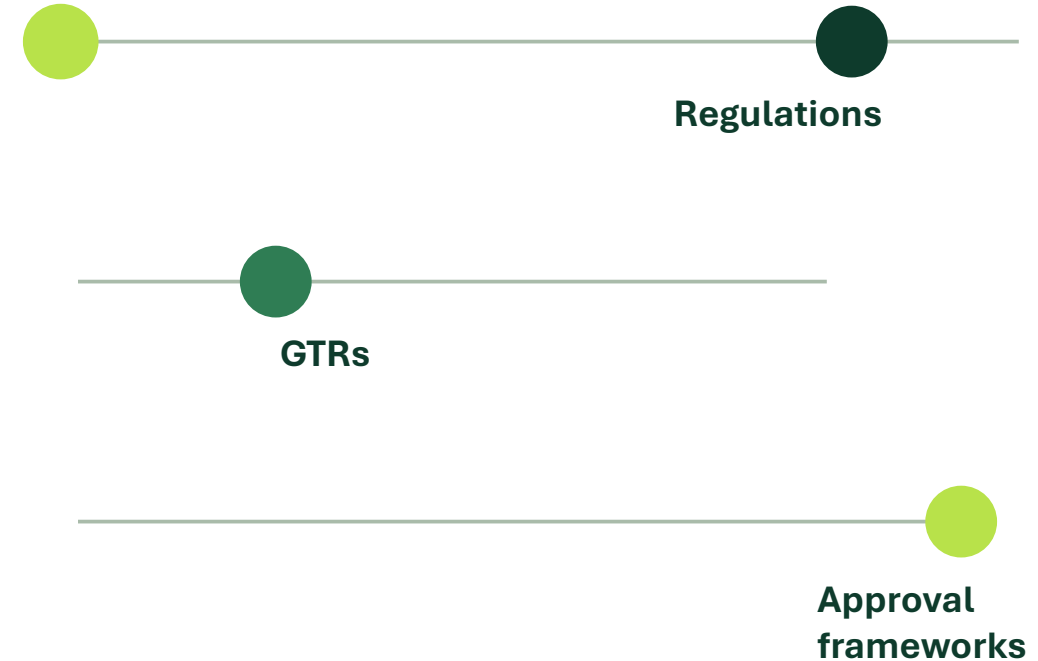
technical requirements for vehicles, systems and components

Environment

requirements supporting lower pollution and energy use

Trade

common rules that reduce regulatory fragmentation



Created to make vehicle rules interoperable

WP.29 evolved from a UNECE technical working party into a global forum for harmonised vehicle regulation.

1952**Established**

Working Party on the Construction of Vehicles, under UNECE ITC.

1958**First agreement**

Uniform technical prescriptions and reciprocal recognition of approvals.

1998**Global route**

Creates UN Global Technical Regulations for wider regulatory convergence.

2000**World Forum**

WP.29 becomes the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations.

Executive takeaway

WP.29 is not a vehicle regulator for one country: it is the UN forum where governments agree common technical regulatory requirements that national and regional authorities can utilize.

How the WP.29 system is organised

A permanent UN working party coordinates technical groups and agreement-specific decision bodies.

Institutional home

● United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

● Inland Transport Committee (ITC)

● WP.29 World Forum

Open participation

UN member countries and regional economic integration organisations may participate; NGOs can contribute consultatively.

Technical subsidiary groups

● **GRVA**
Automated / connected vehicles

● **GRPE**
Pollution & energy

● **GRBP**
Noise & tyres

● **GRSP**
Passive safety

● **GRE**
Lighting & light-signalling

● **GRSG**
General safety provisions

Groups develop proposals; WP.29 coordinates and submits items to the relevant Administrative/Executive Committee.

Agreement decision layer

AC.1 1958 Agreement adopts UN Regulations

AC.3 1998 Agreement adopts UN GTRs

WP.29 meets officially three times per year; documentation and reports are publicly available.

The two main agreements serve different governance needs

The 1958 Agreement is approval-based; the 1998 Agreement is a global technical harmonisation route.

1958 Agreement

UN Regulations

Instrument	Harmonised UN Regulations for vehicles, systems, parts and equipment.
Administrative model	Type approval, conformity of production and reciprocal recognition of approvals.
Executive meaning	Providing market access where Contracting Parties apply the same Regulation.

1998 Agreement

UN Global Technical Regulations

Instrument	UN GTRs: globally harmonised performance requirements and test procedures.
Administrative model	No type approval provisions and no mutual recognition mechanism.
Executive meaning	Aligning requirements across jurisdictions with different approval systems.

Bottom line

WP.29 gives governments two complementary paths: recognise approvals through the 1958 system, or align technical requirements through the 1998 system.