



*Doc. dr Vladimir Popović*

Vehicles which are sold and put into service in a country have to meet the regulations and standards of that country. The registration procedure of that country requires the approval of the vehicle and/or its components. The existence of separate national regulations and approval procedures in the different countries requires expensive design modifications, additional tests and duplicating approvals. Thus, there is the need to harmonize the different national technical requirements for vehicles and to elaborate a unique international regulation. Once the vehicle or its equipment and parts are manufactured and approved according to that regulation, they can be internationally traded without further tests or approvals. Furthermore, these regulations have to be continuously adapted to the technical progress and to the new requirements regarding safety, environmental protection and energy efficiency.

Currently, in the European vehicle market, there are two key, parallel system for vehicle type approval, which practically define the criteria and conditions for trading vehicles, through:

- UNECE Regulations, that is regulations of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), passed by The World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicles Regulations - WP.29, within the 1958 Agreement, and
- EU Directives, that is regulations of The European Union (EU).

The Republic of Serbia is a Contracting Party of the 1958 Agreement and it actively participates in the work of WP.29, while the application of EU regulations depends on the status of our country in the process of joining the EU, which is at this point rather uncertain. The main principle of WP.29 is "Certified once, accepted everywhere". If we consider the key challenges the UNECE Transport Department is to face in the future, we can see the importance the territory of Southeast Europe is attributed with respect to them. The region in question has significant position because of two, out of six challenges previously mentioned:

- Insufficient and inadequate infrastructures, particularly in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia;
- Old, unsafe and highly polluting road vehicle fleets, particularly in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, as well as in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which result in higher accident rates and environmental impacts.

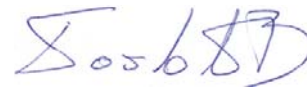
The best preventive, regarding the second challenge in particular, is harmonizing regulations to do with vehicles, with the purpose of enhancing their safety and environmental performance. Harmonizing certainly leads to market expansion and overcoming certain obstacles. In the last few years, it has become evident that harmonizing regulations connected to vehicle type approval is heading towards substituting EU Directives by UNECE Regulations. This is accounted for by the increasing importance of the 1958 Agreement. It is obvious that, in WVTAs themselves, numerous vehicle manufacturers from the EU include an increasing number of individual type approvals according to UNECE Regulations, compared to EU Directives. Among other things, the reason for this is the fact that, apart from all the countries which have signed the Agreement, USA, China, EU (Contracting Party to the Agreement) and India, whose importance in automobile industry is indisputable, actively participate in the WP.29, together with numerous non-governmental international organizations, interested in this matter (International Organization for Standardization - ISO; International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers - OICA; International Motorcycle Manufacturers Association - IMMA...).

Furthermore, it is very important to point out that one of the informal working parties of WP.29 is in charge of the development and implementation of The International Vehicle Type Approval System (IWVTA), to be applied as from 2016, which should, in the long run, replace WVTA, which is the basis of today's system of type approval in the EU. This trend will most certainly continue in the future, since it would complete the process of regulation harmonization on the world level, which is an inevitable consequence of globalization, particularly evident in automobile industry.

Speaking of our region, all countries have signed the 1958 Agreement, except for Albania. Perhaps the key indicator for the development of regulations to do with vehicles on the territory of Southeast Europe is a more or less expressed wish of all the countries and territories of this region to be members of the EU. However, each country individually, regardless of the fact whether it is a member of the EU or not, has to sign the 1958 Agreement in case it wants to apply it. On the other hand, many countries which have not signed the 1958 Agreement, recognize it unilaterally, and apply UNECE Regulations as equivalent to national regulations, which resulted in the fact that type-approved vehicles represent a harmonized level of quality on the international market of vehicles, equipment and components.

Still, this entire process of joining the EU implies two conflicting aspects when it comes to vehicle market. On the one hand, the EU will most certainly require compliance of all regulations of the countries which want to join it with its own, including regulations to do with vehicles. On the other hand, the used vehicles from EU countries must find their own markets where they can be sold, but in practice, a big difference between regulations for importing new and used vehicles in the same country is impossible and economically speaking, unsustainable.

Although regulations on vehicle type approval, formally speaking, have technical nature, it is evident that their change is rather a consequence of global and political trends, since automobile industry is a vital factor of any economy. Therefore, it is important to emphasize that the general political and economic circumstances in the Balkans have always been turbulent and prone to fundamental changes. For that reason, it is very difficult to make more accurate predictions regarding the development of any regulations, those related to vehicle type approval and importing included, for a long-term period, despite the current situation. However, this problem must be addressed with a degree of optimism, and a belief in market stability and economic prosperity of this region.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Popović', is located in the lower right quadrant of the page.

Doc. dr Vladimir Popović