UNECE GRSP IWG Equitable Occupant Protection (EqOP)

Minutes of the 1st meeting held on April 6, 2023, in Yokohama.
Hybrid meeting with 34 participants in person and 29 on remote dial-in.

Adoption of the agenda

Approved.

EqOP terms of reference and work plan

The chair and vice-chair presented the terms of reference and workplan, followed by discussion.

Discussion on the terms of reference.
- Upon a question regarding the scope, the chair stated that the work shall focus attention on occupants of passenger vehicles and not on vulnerable road users.
- Upon a question regarding the scope, the chair stated that the work shall cover equity covering differences regarding age, weight and height, further to differences regarding sex. There are a few exceptions though. The protection of children is not included in the scope, nor issues regarding disability. Many technical solutions to cope with disability issues, such as how to manage wheelchairs in road vehicles, are subject to international standards, rather than being subject to UN WP29 regulations.
- Occupant monitoring is not included until further notice as the scope generally shall reflect the scope of GRSP.
- One reflection urged the work to be visionary, i.e., to have enough ambition and goals in relation to the expected implementation dates of any regulatory changes. Guidance regarding virtual testing for occupant protection is for example expected by December 2027 and more time will be needed before this approach can be implemented in regulations. We should point at, and prepare for, regulatory changes that will be effective in the future.
- Another comment was that we risk failing if we have a too large scope and demand too much of research findings to initiate necessary changes, i.e., we should think big and start small.
- Meeting schedule was discussed shortly as part of the presentation of terms of reference.

Discussion on the worktable.
- A worktable was introduced. The worktable will be used by the IWG to collect research findings, identify research gaps, review the concerned regulations, etc., in a structured way. All IWG participants are requested to engage actively in this work.
- A question whether we should not start by analyzing current demographic data was raised. The conclusion became that we should make a sort of inventory of available published data, but not start all over again by collecting new demographics. Regulation should be driven by evidence, but we must use findings and data that are published and readily available. Note that demographics cover much more than what is directly relevant for the IWG, e.g., socioeconomic factors.
- One pronouncement was that we should not demand science-based evidence for all decisions which the IWG must make. Certain aspects are simply about common sense. We can for example assume that virtual crash testing will become a mainstream tool for safety performance evaluation relatively soon.
- One view was that we should complete the worktable with the knowledge that we have right now, and not wait to do things until the table is perfect.

- We had questions on how "crash data" and "general relevance" of the worktable are defined. Crash data is field data and general relevance is simply how important the identified equity issue is in relation to the entire challenge of personal injuries in road crashes, to help us to prioritize among the issues.
- One remark was that we should rather consider the research papers and articles that are readily available and start from there. The response from the chairs was that the worktable is not meant to complicate the work, nor must it be completed (or be perfect) before starting to be used. The idea with the worktable is not different from the remark. Let us start with the DEOP findings and put those into the table. We can continue with other available studies, and we will likely know when we will have enough data.
- The question came whether we really should lean on old data, or should we not look forward and start new studies, or at least avoid selecting old studies with findings that risk becoming obsolete. We concluded that we have what we have, and previous studies may at least lead us to understand gaps.
- One observation is that current regulations imply a single point of performance, but we desire a safe vehicle in all normal conditions of use and ultimately the crash conditions that those normal use conditions can result in. The requirements must become more general and more robust in the future to ensure that road vehicles are truly safe. On the other hand, as it was pointed out, we must avoid having 20 different test configurations per load-case. It will simply not be feasible to perform all potentially realistic test configurations. For this reason, we must be far-sighted and think in new ways. We will need a new type of regulations.
- A statement was made that we should start directly to review the regulations to check that there is not any hinder which may prevent good things in terms of safety performance. This task should be included as a column of the worktable. A response was that we can use the "Comments column", yet to be decided.
- A question came if the worktable shall be a controlled document (version control). We discussed different alternatives. We concluded that we lose control quickly if we let anyone of us update the worktable without any management. We decided to start the work in a smaller group and the chair asked for volunteers. We should have at least one representative per region in addition the secretariat.

The presentation of terms of reference and work plan, and a proposed worktable, can be found on the dedicated EqOP page of UN Wiki.

Confirmation of consensus on session outcomes and action items
A smaller group will meet on May 2 regarding the worktable. The chair proposed to have an in-person follow-up meeting on May 15, for those who will attend the GRSP. The secretariat will do its utmost to provide for a remote dial-in possibility. Invitations will be sent out.

Any other business
The secretariat thanked NHTSA for the arrangement of the conference room (at the ESV conference venue) with equipment to support remote dial-in participation.