



Regional Expert Advisory Working Group (REAWG) on
Quality Policy – Schemes of Geographical Indications and Traditional Specialties

Interim Meeting

REPORT



15 – 17 April 2019

Durres, Albania

1. Introduction

Support to Economic Diversification of Rural Areas in Southeast Europe (SEDRA) is a 3-year regional program jointly implemented by SWG and GIZ, aiming at strengthening the institutional capacities of selected stakeholders in Southeast Europe for supporting EU-compliant economic diversification in rural areas. Quality policy - schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties (PDO, PGI, TSG) is a topic that is selected within the project, as part of the economic diversification agenda in SEE countries.

The interim meeting of the REAWG on Quality Policy took place in Durres on 16 and 17 April 2019 and gathered national, regional and international experts, representatives of the relevant authorities, as well as the Slow Food network to discuss progress on the assessment of the schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties in the Western Balkans. The list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**, and the program of the meeting in **Annex 2**. The meeting was a follow-up of the kick off meeting, which took place in January in Skopje: <http://seerural.org/news/kick-off-meeting-of-the-reawg-on-quality-policy-skopje-29-30-january-2019/>.

2. Interim report

2.1 General progress, issues and gaps

Bigger part of the tasks is on track and according to the plan. Some inputs (on Albania and Kosovo*) are still missing, which causes delays of the joint output. Another issue is the lack of relevant and reliable data as well as the difficulty for meeting relevant representatives of responsible authorities due to the physical distance.

2.2 National report – Albania

The legal framework in Albania needs to be aligned with the EU acquis and Traditional Specialties Guaranteed to be protected and incorporated into the law. The law does not constitute the relationship between a Geographic Indication (GI) and a Trade Mark TM, and there are no existing rules on the determination of the Geographical Area, nor on the controlling authority. The presentation is provided in **Annex 3**.

2.3 National report – Kosovo*

Law on GI and Law on Agriculture in Kosovo* need to be further aligned with the EU acquis and legal framework to be completed with administrative instruction on determining the geographical area and on controlling of product specifications. Group of experts should be established in accordance with the GI Law. The presentation is provided in **Annex 4**.

2.4 National report - Serbia

In Serbia there is low consumers' awareness on GI products and low producers' awareness on procedures and benefits of GI. There is no GI product registered at EU level. Legal framework is not harmonized with EU and there are difficulties in registration of meat and dairy processing facilities. The number of agricultural cooperatives is small and producer organizations and producer groups are not established.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

2.5 National report – Bosnia and Herzegovina

There is nonconformity between BiH legal system and EU Acquis. Processing facilities face certain difficulties in registration (relatively high hygiene requirements, availability of necessary equipment and buildings, certain number of qualified staff etc. that make registration costly or even not possible). As in Serbia, awareness on GI products is low among producers and consumers. The number of agricultural cooperatives is small and producer organizations and producer groups are not established.

2.6 National report – Montenegro

Montenegro has achieved significant progress in EU integration. Its legal framework is harmonized with EU Acquis. However, as in Serbia and BiH, awareness on GI products is low among producers and consumers. Moreover, five GI products are registered, but without registered users so far. The presentation of the national reports of Serbia, BiH and Montenegro is provided in **Annex 5**.

2.7 National report – North Macedonia

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy is the competent authority for the implementation of the GIs and TSG, in accordance with the Law on the Quality of Agricultural Products. The law should be further aligned with Regulation 1151/2012 with regards to certain additional requirements for feed and other items traceability and product specification. Further efforts are needed for implementation of the relevant rules for efficient control system and for establishment of functional control bodies, as it is the only key to gain consumer confidence and survive on the market. The presentation is provided in **Annex 6**.

2.8 International feedback and backstopping

Based on the provided input from the Regional Experts the International Expert identified the main difficulties in implementation of the GI in SEE: institutional set-up, registration process, official control system requirements, socio-cultural gaps, juridical requirements and control, food safety requirements. The full presentation is provided in **Annex 7**.

3. Feedback from the ministries' representatives

The present ministries' representatives (BiH, Kosovo* and North Macedonia) emphasized the importance of the topic and concluded that they faced similar problems, such as lack of awareness among consumers and producers about GI products, lack of institutional capacity for implementation, need for greater involvement of the local community, need for further harmonization of legislation etc. Financial support (such as donor projects) is very important to stimulate the start of production with GI. The presentation delivered by the ministry representative from North Macedonia is provided in **Annex 8**.

4. Future activities

The following was concluded regarding future activities, based on the feedback from the Senior Expert:

- In all legal documents (strategies, RDPs, laws, BoRs, etc.) the number and year of issue need to be provided, followed by a link (it can be placed in the footnote);
- In all images, source and the original link should be provided (if possible);

- In order to compare the existing legal set-up, the Excel table in **Annex 9** needs to be revised/completed by the corresponding experts;
- The Guidelines on the steps and procedures for registration of products with geographical indications and traditional specialties based on the EU regulations will include concrete examples of the more challenging requirements to fulfil. The main goal is to provide interpretation, additional explanations and examples adaptable to our conditions and to be easier to understand for potential participants. Some specific issues that were mentioned in this context:
 - To describe the possible options for proving the connection of the product with the region and the history, especially if written documents cannot be provided as evidence;
 - To provide specific examples to describe how to prove the traceability, especially for the products of animal origin;
 - To provide examples for correct writing of the production specification, etc.
- Correlation Table of EU Reg. 1151/12 should be prepared with the current countries' regulations on quality schemes.

The full presentation is provided in **Annex 10**.

Below is the updated activity plan.

Deliverable	Original deadline	Responsible	Status on 17 April	New deadline
Methodology for assessment of the state of the art and existing gaps in the legislative, strategic, policy and institutional framework	28 January 2019	SE supported by IE	Completed	
Participation at the kick-off meeting	28 – 30 January 2019	All	Completed	
Final outline of the report	8 February 2019	SE supported by IE	Completed	
Contribution to the first draft report, according to the provided outline, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of key problems and challenges requiring policy interventions in the respective country/territory • Identification of products from the respective/country/territory, which fulfill criteria and have potential to be registered under the schemes of geographical indications and traditional 	8 March 2019	RE	Serbia, BiH, Montenegro, North Macedonia – completed Albania, Kosovo* - not completed	Albania - 19 April Kosovo* - 26 April

<p>specialties and cost-benefit analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of good examples and practices of the implementation of quality in the respective country/territory • Assessment of possibilities to apply digital approaches in promotion of the schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties policy and schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties in the respective country/territory • Policy recommendations and actions to overcome the challenges and ease the approximation process in the respective country/territory. 				
Participation at the interim meeting	15 – 17 April 2019, Albania	All	Completed	
Feedback on the contributions to the first draft report	22 March 2019	SE supported by IE	Not completed	Serbia, BiH, Montenegro – 25 April Albania and Kosovo* - 15 May
Improved contributions to the first draft report	5 April	RE	Not completed	Serbia, BiH, Montenegro - 15 May Albania and Kosovo* - 20 May
First draft compiled report including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of key problems and challenges requiring policy interventions in SEE 	30 April 2019	SE supported by IE	Not completed	20 June

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of products from SEE countries which fulfill criteria and have potential to be registered under the schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties and cost-benefit analysis • Identification of good examples and practices of the implementation of quality • Assessment of possibilities to apply digital approaches in promotion of the schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties policy and schemes of geographical indications and traditional specialties • Policy recommendations and actions to overcome the challenges and ease the approximation process. 				
Preparation of guidelines on the steps and procedures for registration of products with geographical indications and traditional specialties based on the EU regulations	31 May 2019	SE supported by IE	Not completed	Unchanged
Final meeting	2 – 4 July 2019, Andrevlje, Serbia	All	Not completed	24 – 25 June, Andrevlje, Serbia
Final report and final guidelines	15 September 2019	SE supported by IE	Not completed	Unchanged
Presentation of the findings at the Agricultural Policy Forum 2019	7 – 10 October 2019, Macedonia	SE	Not completed	9 – 10 October