



Final 25-26/11/2020

BACKGROUND PAPER

PANEL: 'REFIT' OR HOW TO PERFECT GI REGISTRATIONS

1. OBJECTIVES

This panel will explore avenues for an administrative simplification of Geographical Indications (GI) rules related to their registration, opposition processes, and amendments to product specifications. A revision of the EU GI system should aim at shortening registration times, making the scheme more open to producers across the Union, and, ensuring that all parties are treated fairly. An efficient registration system is also a factor of attractiveness of the system and so directly linked to the GI schemes' use, as well as reducing the costs for the public purse, both at National and Union levels.

2. CHALLENGES

Being part of the Commission's 'better regulation agenda', the [Regulatory Fitness and Performance](#) programme (REFIT) aims to ensure that **EU laws deliver** their intended benefits for individuals and businesses, while **simplifying** existing EU laws and **cutting red tape**, whenever possible. All proposals to change existing EU schemes should be viewed in light of making them better **targeted** and reducing unnecessary regulatory **costs**, while **achieving** the underlying policy objectives.

To gain the best results from the REFIT process, **National authorities** and **stakeholders** must play a full part in this process.

Excellence in process management is at the heart of the challenge to improve and perfect the regulation system. **International standards** and business models exist and are used in national administrations, the private sector and agencies. This panel will open the debate to the kinds of registration management operations available and potentially applicable to GIs.

For historical reasons, EU GI legislation provides four instruments giving intellectual property rights protection. As a consequence, rules for registration of GIs for agricultural products and foodstuffs, wines, spirit drinks and aromatised wines as well as for amending product specifications differ from sector to sector. While there are **valid differences of substance** between specific agricultural sectors that are not put into question, it is difficult to justify the **resource costs** of divergent

rules, multiple legal templates, numerous adoption pathways, and differing assessment standards.

The management of GI processes in itself has not appreciably changed since the first legislation governing a GI register in this area in 1992. It continues to be a two-step process with National procedure as the first step, followed by a procedure at Commission level as the second step, and concluded by the Commission decision registering (or not) the name to be protected.

3. QUESTIONS

- (1) How could the registration process be enhanced? Could the current two-step procedure, i.e. national level followed by EU level, be reconsidered?
- (2) Could the harmonisation of the procedures across the different sectors bring simplification? Could a single set of procedures bring more clarity for its users?
- (3) How can best practice be introduced to GI assessment and examination standards to harmonise as far as possible National and Union assessments?
- (4) What other options could be envisaged to further accelerate the registration process? Do you see a further role of IT tools in this?
- (5) Overall, can economies of scale (reducing costs) and using ‘existing best practice’ be achieved through the simultaneous review of the 4 GI schemes?

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