

Title: A New Paradigm for the Protection of Non-Agricultural Geographical Indications in the EU: A Comparative Legal Analysis and a Proposed Control Model

Limoges porcelain, glassware from Krosno, or Koniaków lace - we choose these products not only for their quality, but also because they are deeply rooted in local tradition and culture. Increasingly, however, the market is flooded with imitations that exploit the reputation of well-known regions without any genuine connection to their origin. The research project I am conducting addresses this very issue and seeks effective ways to counter it. Geographical indications (GIs) are special designations that inform consumers that a given product originates from a specific place and that its quality, appearance, or method of production is closely linked to that region. Examples include oscypek cheese or Łącko apples. So far, the legal framework has primarily protected agricultural products. This project focuses on a new category - non-agricultural products such as artisanal crafts and industrial goods. The European Union has adopted a new regulation (EU 2023/2411), which, starting from December 2025, will establish a harmonized framework for the protection of non-agricultural products. While this marks a step forward, several key issues remain to be clarified - for instance, how to legally protect a product's appearance, such as its shape or design; how to resolve conflicts with other forms of protection, such as industrial designs or three-dimensional trademarks; and how to strengthen market oversight, especially in the era of online sales and counterfeits. The project aims to develop a theoretically coherent and institutionally effective model for the protection of non-agricultural geographical indications, along with a robust control framework. This includes an analysis of how the appearance and form of a product can be legally protected; an assessment of whether a geographical indication can support the recognition of a product as part of intangible cultural heritage; an exploration of how new technologies (e.g. blockchain, geolocation) can assist in verifying authenticity; and a comparative study of protection systems in France, Italy, Slovakia, and Poland, to identify the most effective solutions for EU-wide implementation.

The research will proceed in three stages:

1. An analysis of legal provisions and court cases related to product protection and geographical indications,
2. A comparative study of national systems, including the French certification model based on producer groups, Italy's guarantee marks, and Slovak regulations implemented prior to the EU's new framework,
3. An analysis of producer organization documents, such as statutes, control procedures, reports, and the activities of EU and national supervisory bodies.

Local products are more than just commodities - they represent cultural heritage, regional identity, and a livelihood for many communities. Their protection is not only a legal matter but also a social, economic, and cultural one. This project demonstrates that geographical indications are a powerful tool for supporting local economies, promoting authenticity, and countering global uniformity.

The most significant outcome will be the development of a coherent protection model for the entire European Union, one that supports the implementation of the new regulation and ensures effective protection of local products against counterfeiting and misuse. The findings will be valuable to legal experts, cultural anthropologists, local governments, and producer organizations.

The project offers an innovative contribution to the ongoing discourse on intellectual property, cultural heritage, and local development in an era of globalization. In a time when distinguishing the original from the imitation is increasingly difficult, investing in knowledge that safeguards what is unique and valuable - not only for the market but also for Europe's cultural identity - is essential.