

THE LISBON SYSTEM – INTRODUCTION OF THE GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS

On 21 May 2015 the Geneva Act of the Lisbon Agreement that regulates the international registration and protection of the Appellations of Origin ("AOs"), was adopted.

One of the most important amendments of the new act is the establishment of an international registration and protection system of Geographical Indications ("GIs"). In addition, the amendments encourage international organisations to become members of the Lisbon Agreement.

The new multilateral treaty allows both AOs and GIs to obtain protection in all contracting parties through a single registration under the Lisbon Agreement. The International Register of AOs and GIs shall be kept by the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

The changes aim to modernise and unify the international legal framework of the AOs and the GIs as well as to make it a more flexible tool of protection. It is expected these changes to make the Lisbon Agreement more attractive to new members and thus to extend the protection obtained through a registration of an AO and/or a GI under the Lisbon Agreement.

Generally, both legal terms mentioned above, i.e. *Appellation of Origin* and *Geographical Indication*, are used to indicate the origin of a product which is essential to its specific quality or characteristics.

An AO means a denomination "which serves to designate a good as originating" therein ", where the **quality or characteristics** of the good are due **exclusively or essentially** to the geographical environment, **including natural and human factors**, and which has given the good its reputation."

A GI means a denomination "which identifies a good as originating" therein ", where a **given** quality, **reputation** or **other** characteristics of the good is **essentially** attributable to its geographical origin".

These terms are used for protection of local producers' products. By registering AO and/or GI under the Lisbon Agreement, producers maintain a better reputation of their products and ensure for protected indications to become valuable commercial assets. These indications can distinguish a product of local producers from a product of the same kind but originating in a different geographical area, thereby stimulating higher sales of local production.

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For more information about our services, please contact:



Anna Rizova
Managing Partner
anna.rizova@wolftheiss.com
T: +359 2 86 13 700



Georgi Kanev
Associate
georgi.kanev@wolftheiss.com
T: +359 2 86 13 700

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Wolf Theiss
Schubertring 6
AT – 1010 Vienna

www.wolftheiss.com