New EU mechanism to protect local craft and industrial products

- New rules to protect local, renowned crafts such as porcelain, jewellery, textiles
- It builds on the EU’s existing protection system for agricultural products
- MEPs want to simplify registration for small producers

The Legal Affairs Committee adopted its position on a new scheme to ensure the geographical indication of traditional crafts is protected in the EU and globally.

With 19 votes in favour, MEPs from the Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) adopted unanimously on Tuesday a draft negotiating mandate on legislation introducing a geographical indication (GI) protecting the names of local craft and industrial products. It would close the gap between diverging national systems by protecting goods such as natural stones, jewellery, textiles, lace, cutlery, glass and porcelain both in the EU and internationally.

Assistance to SMEs and digital services

Building on the existing regulation protecting locally produced food in the EU, the proposed bill would set up a procedure to register GIs and their labelling. Producers’ applications would first be examined by national and local authorities, then the EU Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) would decide on the registration. MEPs propose that those member states not willing to establish a national registration authority should be able to opt out and the registration be covered for them directly by the EUIPO.

To make the process smoother, MEPs suggested making use of electronic applications. They also proposed that national authorities assist micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with the administration for their application and ensure lower registration fees for them.

Checks and enforcement

EU countries would be required to designate a competent authority in charge of checking that a GI has been placed on the market in accordance with the product specification. MEPs want to make sure that the rules effectively apply also to goods placed on the electronic market and
make obligatory the proposed establishment of a digital portal with details of certification bodies accessible to the public.

Quote

Following the committee vote, rapporteur Marion Walsmann (EPP, DE) said: “It is time to create an EU-wide mechanism to protect specific European local skills and traditions relating to craft and industrial products. We designed an efficient European mechanism with minimal administrative burden and made it particularly attractive for MSMEs, since they will benefit from an easier application process and lower fees. This new mechanism will not just help traditional products also from less-developed regions to become known, attract tourists and create jobs, but it will also make consumers more aware of them, ensure fair competition for producers and help them fight counterfeit products.”

Next steps

Once the mandate to enter into negotiations with EU governments is confirmed by the Parliament as a whole, the talks on the final text of the legislation can start.

Background

Protecting geographical indication at EU level for agricultural products and foodstuffs has been in place for years. MEPs called for EU-wide protection of locally manufactured products already in 2015. In 2019, they reiterated their call following the EU accession to the Geneva Act, allowing for international recognition of local non-food products.

Further information

Draft report
Procedure file
Think Tank EP: Geographical indications for non-agricultural products (7 November 2019)

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