



Local Tastes of AAs: V4 For Short Food Chains and GIs in Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine.

End of Project Evaluation Report. By Grazyna Raszewska



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Executive Summary

The project's objective was to build capacity, simulate praxis, rural cross-sectoral local partnerships for regional & local products registration (Geographical Indicators), its food chains & culinary heritage, embracing community NGOs, LA (Local Authorities), farmers, tourist sector in Moldova (Călărași region) and Georgia (Kakheti region), drawing on the best V4 practices and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) agreements. The project involved Local Authorities and NGOs from Georgia and Moldova, as well as NGOs from Visegrad countries. Additionally two NGOs from Belarus and Armenia (although with no current DCFTA prospect), aiming to learn from V4 and Eastern Partnership regions experience, has been invited to participation.

Project was designed in a way to be maximally beneficial for Georgia and Moldova. Project activities has been locally-scoped, taking due account of needs and legislation in both countries. Focused on tangible outcomes, the action succeeded in building capacity of Georgian and Moldovan local NGOs and Local Authorities to better serve the member base and constituencies, as well as simulate partnerships between NGOs and Local Authorities, thus adding to its overall sustainability. The presence of Belarussian and Armenian NGOs provided an opportunity to share practical knowledge of V4 and Eastern Partnership regions in the area of DCFTA for its potential implementation in those countries. The project drew on relevant Georgian and Moldovan regulations on Geographic Indicators (approximated to acquis), as well as EU-Georgia and EU-Moldova Agreements on GIs, which made V4 know-how fully relevant. Project directly addressed the issue of lacking of bottom-up capacity in terms of registration and promotion of local & regional products in Georgia and Moldova, where so far the majority of local and





regional products (both wine and non-wine) were registered by the Ministries, despite favorable legal environment (all public & private bodies can do so), governmental encouragement and existing binding agreements with the EU, which will take on deeper significance after DCFTA ratification. Promotion of those instruments among rural producers in targeted regions and project's lobbying were designed and used to change the perception of the whole process of the GE/MD legal approximation with the EU as only technical and with no tangible benefits for ordinary people. The project succeeded in building NGOs and Local Authorities Local and Regional Products registration consortia, with the specific praxis and ready to use registration documentations, as well as practical user guidebook.





Project activities and schedule

1. **Project's Kick-off Meeting in Georgia** (09 -11 March 2017 in Gremi, Georgia) - Needs assessment and adjustment of the project content, job-sharing and roles distribution, as well as joint formulation of the rules of usage of the shared community kitchens and processing food the community kitchens in Georgia and Moldova by the association to be established later on and the farmers have been conducted. Tasks division on the materials & handbooks on short food supply chains production and the flexibility solutions thereof followed. Preliminary analysis of barriers in short food chain, direct sales, GIs were made and the road-map of removing barriers, lobbying and technical assistance plan for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine based on V4 experience along the accompanying materials & publications were prepared.

Needs matching micro-sub-actions identified:

- Georgia – Temi community, the project partner, will engage villagers around Gremi to provide fruits for the established within complementary project juice squeezer (Estonian Aid complimentary project covering the costs of the equipment), under the community entrepreneurship programme. The cooperative should be established to take advantage of introduced and enacted regulations on cooperatives, in Eastern Kakheti/around Akhmeta, under the current V4 project.
- Moldova – Purcari micro-zone association (non-profit entity) needed to pursue the de-concentrated culinary and adventure tourism agenda under GIs and SFSC. Easy success story to be reaped & robust replication impact due to Purcari recognition, potential and current tourism flows and its characteristics. “The more for more” rule for community





kitchen at the Casa Parintasca in Palanca (Calarasi region) was developed and established matching De-concentrated Rural Gourmand Adventure Product: Codrute.

- Ukraine – the narrow-targeted support to micro producers & micro-wineries needed against the background of the recently enacted liberalization of the law on micro-wine processing and micro-sales (a fast-track success story to be replicated).
2. **Workshops on Regional Products with GI Labels and V4 Experiences in Georgia** (10 - 13 March 2017 in Gremi, Georgia) – simplified food safety rules, short supply chains, promotion and added value of local products and GIs (the best V4 practices) were discussed in presence of all actors of the change. V4 lessons learnt about GIs (SK+CZ+HU+PL) presentation was carried out and the moderated discussion followed. Participation of local entrepreneurs, Georgian NGO/CSOs/initiative groups focused on social entrepreneurship development, EaP partners, central & field office institutions (food safety, food certification, SFSC, GIs).
 3. **Founding Meeting of Producer Group/Association/Cooperative in Georgia** (11 – 13 March 2017 in Gremi & Argokhi, Georgia) – establishment of a cooperative including Woman Initiative Group from Kakheti, formed to cultivate and process rose-petals (jams/marmalades as well as for the wellness products), Tklapi – producing the regional dried puréed fruit (incl. apricot, hawthorn, barberries, blackthorn, wild plum) roll-ups, organic pesto, further possibly essential-oils. Culinary & DYD workshops were offered to participants, focused on pursuing the GIs registration of selected optimal products and providing a reference pilot for fully-fledged culinary tourism and micro-processing under SFSC formula in line with acquis. Participants were members of the established association and as the community leaders.





4. **PR, Publicity & Dissemination, along the Press Conferences and Briefings after the events** (GE/UA/MD respectively) throughout the project life-span – press conferences following the opening events in GE/UKR/MD held at each of those.

5. **Lobbying Meeting with Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of Moldova representatives** (17-18 May 2017 in Chisinau, Moldova) – the review and advisory session on establishment of the cross-institutional task-force on main-streaming of the certification for GIs & inclusion, transposition and adjustment of GIs related provisions on/to the new Law on Organic, with a participation of: Chief of Service of the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of Moldova Marcela Stahi, Head of Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation, International Relations, International Assistance Monitoring, Negotiation, at the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, Republic of Moldova Oxana Paierale, Consilier al Directorului General at AGEPI MD (the State Agency on Intellectual Property) Munteanu Svetlana, EU IPR enforcement project Liliana Vieru, Șef-adjunct direcția mărci și design industrial at AGEPI MD (the State Agency on Intellectual Property) Mogol Natalia, Centrul Național de Acreditare/ MOLDAC Corvig Petru, Agenția Națională pentru Siguranța Alimentelor/ANSA or Food Safety Agency Elena Sontanu, Wojciech Szpocinski (DPF, Warsaw), Sylwia Szparkowska (DPF, Warsaw), Local & V4 & international advisors on-line/offline. The result of the meeting was the establishment of Task-Force and identification of the needs for parallel fundraising, as well as the calls, proposal and expert materials.

6. **Lobbying meeting: Micro-producers & Micro-Wineries from Purcari zone – Local Cluster Analysis of Purcari Region** (13-14 June 2017, Chisinau & Purcari Region, Moldova) – Needs Assessment, Institutional Bottle-Necks Appraisal and Problem Survey





on the GIs and SFSC, Local Cluster Analysis of Purcari Region, Lobbying meeting with Micro-producers & Micro-wineries, with the participation of V4 Experts (Wojciech Szpocinski & Sylwia Szparkowska), as well as the local experts.

7. **Workshops on Culinary Heritage and Rural Tourism** (29 June 2017 - 02 July 2017 in Nova Kakhovka, Ukraine) – inciting and stimulating a closer cooperation for the sake of sustainable SFSC & rural culinary tourist products & GIs in UA, further on-spot identification and appraisal of needs and the local active & relevant stakeholders identification and involvement, drawing on V4 and cross EaP know-how, with participation of V4 and EaP representatives – 29 formal participants (along other non-registered) attending workshops about culinary tourism, GIs, SFSC, and regional products development. A moderated seminar discussion with a participation of V4 experts followed: Sylwia Szparkowska, Wojciech Szpociński, Mirosława Tomasik (PL), Peter Svaral (SK), Anna Parizan (HU), as well as EaP partners and experts: Lela Potshverashvili, Nino Tetiashvili (GE), Irina Sukhy (BY), Vyacheslav Kosteniuk, Vladimir Zhdanov, Daria Raievska, Elena Kisterska/Kiev, Vladimir Kistersky/Kiev (UA), along the representatives of local authorities, local branches of central institutions, CSO/NGOs and the business operating in the field. Additionally, the practical workshops on local tourism based on local products were provided. Meetings with agricultural universities operating in regional level took place: Agricultural University of Kherson, Kherson Technical University.

8. **Certification of community kitchens (Georgia and Moldova) & TA** – legal and institutional assistance for micro FBOs in UA/GEO/MD and existing CSOs or CSOs to be established in MD, GEO.





9. **Short Food Supply Chains Get Praxis Boost in Moldova: Inciting establishment of association, its pre-funding meeting & workshops promoting GI & SFSC in Moldova** (25 - 28 August 2017 in Palanca and Purcari Region, Moldova) – pre-founding association meeting & CB for the local change leaders: enticing (incentive based), attracting and involving of micro-wineries, smallholders and farmers to join the future association with an aim to pursue the de-concentrated culinary & adventure tourism agenda (local DMO), further reg. GIs and dev. of SFSC: easy success story to be reaped & robust replication impact due to Purcari recognition & potential & current tourism flows and its characteristics. Extended workshops programme on the step by step to establishment of the future association, as a local DMO (possibly the future LAG to be supported under ENPARD), along the benefits, and praxis tool-kit and field assessment workshops, on how to make it workable, based on V4 and EU know-how.
10. **Lobbing & Facilitation of the establishment of local association in Moldova** (29 November - 05 December 2017 in Purcari, Moldova) – facilitation and the founding meeting of the local association – DMO Purcari Communities and the Local Impact Fund, as well as development of its culinary tourism plan and offer, SFSC & GIs connected programme.
11. **Local Products Fairs & Promotion of GIs and SFSC: Palanca Local Tastes Carnival at Casa Parinteasca** (22 – 23 January 2018 in Palanca & Hirjauca, Moldova) – the event was designed to promote local food products of Moldova, as well as the establishment of integrated, community-based culinary tourist product there, under a broad notion of short food supply chains, drawing on the V4 best practices in the field, followed by commissioning of the fully certified kitchen in Palanca. Integration of two MD projects





legs and its promotion and consolidation with two viable local associations on the ground (one established under the project: Purcari Communities).

12. Local Products Fairs & Promotion of GIs and SFSC in Ukraine: Tastes of Tavria – Winter Local Food Bazaar (14 – 15 February 2018 in Nova Kakhovka, Ukraine) – the event was designed to promote local food products of Southern Ukraine or Tavria, as well as its potential in terms of community based, culinary tourist product to be developed, under a broad notion of short food supply chains, drawing on the V4 best practices in the field. Closing the cycle: promotion of the targeted & supported project’s direct beneficiaries under the legal/institutional/CB/TA programme e.g. micro-FBOs/bazaar FBOs & wineries from Tavira (design, packages and sales).

13. Local Products Fairs & Promotion of GIs and SFSC: Winter Kakheti Local Tastes Fairs at TEMI, Gremi (16 – 17 February 2018 in Gremi, Georgia) – the event was designed to promote local food products of Central Alazani, Kakheti, GE as well as the establishment of integrated, community-based culinary tourist product there, under a broad notion of short food supply chains, drawing on the V4 best practices in the field. Closing the cycle: promotion of the targeted & supported project’s direct beneficiaries under the legal/institutional/CB/TA programme e.g. Temi & BioChaduna Women Cooperative (established under the project): design, packages and sales.

Project activities were carried out in accordance with the anticipated schedule. Slight deviations from the originally scheduled dates did not affect the project implementation and results.





Evaluation Methods and Limitations

This evaluation report was prepared after the completion of all the activities carried out during the implementation of the project and in a timeframe allowing thorough assessment of both: the level of the implementation of project's objectives and the project results achievement levels. While preparing the evaluation, the author relied on the following methods: evaluation and analysis of interviews with project's key persons, including the experts of the projects – international and local: Wojciech Szpocinski, Sylwia Szparkowska (Development Policy Foundation, Poland), Aleksandra Piasecka (LAG Vistula Terra Culmensis, Poland), Lela Pothsverashvili (KRDF, Georgia), Lusine Nabadjan (Women for Sustainable Development, Armenia), Anastasia Gongal (Ministry of Regional Development, Moldova), Elena Vesolovska (Association for Community Development, Moldova), Peter Svaral (MAS Kras Podhoran, Slovakia), Ales Konecny (MAS Kijovske Slovacko v Pohybu, Czech Republic), Vyacheslav Kosteniuk (Agency for Local Development, Ukraine), Judit Racz (LAG Felső-Homokhátság Vidékfejlesztési Egyesület, Hungary), and beneficiaries of the project: Igor Luchianov (vineyard Et Cetera, Moldova), Tatiana Popa (museum Casa Părintească, Moldova), Nikoloz Kvashali (TEMI, Georgia), evaluation and analysis of project materials (training materials, press-conference materials, product design materials), including materials available in electronic form (project official website and social media presence). Evaluation refers to the implementation of the project, quality and durability of the partnerships created, cooperation between project partners, management in terms of content, organization and finances.





Financial and cost management

The project was carried out in accordance with the assumed budget. The implementation of the budget was in line with the recommendations of the donor (an appropriate level of implementing agency's own contribution and in-kind contributions, an appropriate level of expenditures on administration). Transfers of funds between budget positions, done to optimize project activities' efficiency, were carried out in accordance with the rules set out in the contract with the donor and after obtaining the written approval of the donor. All the expenditures were preceded by a thorough market analysis (information obtained through local project coordinators). It should be emphasized that thanks to the great commitment of the coordinators, excellent quality of communication between partners, trust in local partner organizations and commitment of the beneficiaries themselves, the degree of implementation of project activities and achieved results exceeded those expected according to budget assumptions.





Evaluation of the implementation of activities and outcomes

The project, despite being complex, technical and operational, severely time-squeezed and multi-layered adventure, running in parallel in three different settings with a slightly different needs, directly and within its time-span archived its main goal and overall objective – to boost income of farmers and micro-producers in targeted regions of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine through comprehensive (legal, organizational and promotional) support in production, processing, promotion and sales, as well as overall diversification of rural income in three AAs by promoting of rural and culinary tourism, GIs, in line with AAs and V4 best practices. A measurable success of clearly and tangibly over-achieved specific objectives must be emphasized, being possible only due to flexibility in approach (in reaction to the identified needs) and the unparalleled merit quality of cooperation within the consortia.

In relation to the specific expected outcomes as follows:

- Legal and technical support for farmers enabling legal sales of agricultural including products processed at farms – range of support has been offered, among other – sanitary certification, SPC, fiscal facilitations for farmers and micro producers, GIs and local products marketing. As initially assumed directed at two immediate, tangible beneficiaries: Casa Parinteasca, Moldova (supplemented with the home stay) and Temi, Georgia under the community kitchen certification tracks. At the end of the project above the target – asparagus and saffron producer from Kakhovka (promotion, packings and CB), Watermelon Producers' Group (CB), Berkuysh Winery (support to certification of legal sales), group of bazaar nano-FBOs (the association from Nova Kakhovka from Ukraine). Support to establish and initial certification of FBO and promotion of Bio Chaduna Women Cooperative from Argokhi (with an additional, while not overlapping





community kitchen, in total at least 90 people who will get access to certified production, instead of 60 assumed for Moldova and Georgia altogether, with qualitatively more members and wider direct impact), forming a culinary tourist product with TEMI, from Georgia. Establishment and main-steaming of Purcari Communities and the Local Impact Fund (DMO with SFSC/GI registration and culinary tourism mission), endowed with an initial base to develop BIKE & WINE network wine & adventure product.



- Direct promotion of rural and culinary tourism and regional products with GI label and local products among Georgian, Moldovan and Ukrainian decision-makers, producers





(robust when explained and entailed with tangible incentives) and consumers through reference models (certified community kitchen), education, promotional events. The implemented pilots indicated above attracted considerable interests among the decision makers because of its closed and tangible features and the quality of merit and technical/design/investment out-puts combined: being the only feasible way to achieve change in Eastern Partnership region – make it done and show how you do, proving the change is possible. The regulatory support and macro-TA must always go hand in hand with micro-interventions with the tangible results in the field, being a testimony of commitment. Unfortunately being not always the case, even in under multi-year topic relevant TA facilities founded by EUROPEAID or USAID/Chemonics.

- Analysis, identification and removal of bottlenecks and gaps filling in short food supply chains, direct sales and SPSs and food safety rules in line with AA and V4 experience. Key obstacles have been identified and effectively lobbied in the regulatory pipeline, assuming realistic perspective in Moldova due to full reference model/framework, stressing that further support is needed in all three Eastern Partnership representative countries participating in the project, as the field pilots coupled with the narrow TA are the key for further progress.
- Practical solutions based on V4 experiences i.a. certification of the community kitchen, micro producers and farmers assistance and support for NGO promoting GIs and rural development were archived above assumptions – ref. above. Low level semi-corruption and harassment & so called red type remain the urging problem in the region. The local FBO market in rural areas of three AAs is very limited, thus and so the local sanitary authorities can afford “to check” certified FBOs even weekly in all AAs.





- Awareness and interest of the local consumers in GIs & SFSC are mainly income dependent and though tested high remain formally low. However, slow-food event-related interest can be described as huge, even in impoverish Ukraine. Rising interest in quality of the products can be observed, urging to address the existing issue of lack of quality of products, their availability, production technology and product design. Interest of the foreign tourists, donors and the community is immense, e.g. the project was selected to be show-cased (including the public posters display) at the Development Days (Europe Days) hosted in Ungheni by EU DEL, as well as the V4 embassies to Moldova in May 2018.

Such complex project endeavour was made possible exclusively due to formidable merit quality of cooperation within the consortia, including the V4 partners in particular. The project was a genuine common V4 set of activities, drawing on pooled, while selected, the best needs suiting V4 know-how from each of V4 (e.g. learning on Poland's flexibility packages and thematic tours, Slovakia's expertise on SFSC sales optimisation and coupling with other offers, Hungary's and Czech Republic's specific know-how on legalization of certain types of non-FBO home producers status, in line with acquis or V4 pooled know-how on culinary, adventure & DYD products etc.), pragmatically adjusted for each of AAs contexts. The participation of V4 experts has been noticed by media in beneficiary countries, mentioning the V4 experts, as well as the International Visegrad Fund. The explanation of Visegrad Group (SK+CZ+HU+PL) is provided, as example of interest based close cooperation within the EU, while fully committed to the EaP project (getting three East AAs countries even closer to the EU) , the common market and the Union as a whole.





Unforeseen challenges and obstacles

Remaining obstacles to the effectiveness of development activities aimed at transforming and increasing rural potential in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine are marked by the still low levels of civil society capital and the associated high corruption. Evaluation interviews with the beneficiaries of the project in Moldova – Igor Luchanov (Et Cetera) and Tatiana Popa (Casa Părintească) confirmed that the local administration often abuses its powers to extort financial benefits. Particularly noteworthy is the observation that the activities of the rural entrepreneurship control institutions (for example, the local sanitary inspection units) are of selective nature and are aimed particularly against start-up, indigent, small enterprises and processors. The beneficiaries' statements indicate a clear disproportion between the number of controls imposed by the sanitary institution in the relatively high income luxury vineyard (once a year on average) and a newly opened, small community kitchen situated in extremely poor village of Palanka (controls conducted on average twice a month). Undoubtedly the fact of increased control may result from disproportion in the same level of entrepreneurship in the regions - in Purcari it is definitely higher than in Calarasi, which certainly prevents the relevant institutions from control proceedings in the region with a similar frequency as in Calarasi. Nevertheless, such actions and enforcement of financial compensation – bribes, in exchange for favorable assessments in the context of health inspection, effectively reduce the development potential and extremely poor region.

The level of specialized services provided in the targeted regions should be assessed as relatively low compared to similar services provided by V4 based contractors (carpentry, construction), nevertheless, the fact of participation in the construction of facilities that are part of a project financed from development funds often led to the presenting of overpriced offers by local





contractors for services to be provided (often significantly higher than the prices proposed on the V4 market). This led to the necessity of repeatedly negotiating contracts with subcontractors and required extremely high efforts on the part of project coordinators, as well as their continuous presence and supervision over construction works.





Conclusions and Recommendations

The evaluator assessed positively the implementation of the project in terms of organization, finance and content. Particularly highly rated should be – the quality of project materials and the adaptations of the project made to the specific needs of the beneficiaries in different Eastern Partnership countries – Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine (theme, scope, type of materials), durability potential of the project and partnerships built in the frame of the project as well has been positively evaluated. Evaluator rates high the involvement of the project staff in building the tourism potential of the Moldavian, Georgian and Ukrainian rural regions, which will have the most important impact on the sustainability of the project results also after its completion.

It is recommended to continue the good practices drawn upon pooled and selected, best needs suiting V4 know-how, which constituted the ideological basis of the strategy adopted in the project - implemented in Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine with the aim of the development of rural areas that should be primarily focused on achieving measurable and tangible results, going hand in hand with providing technical assistance - institutional and legal support aimed at employees of local administration (through lobbying and support in day-to-day activities). Previous projects on similar topics conducted in Eastern Partnership region financed from European and international funds in greater part limited their activities almost exclusively to providing training to the local experts (NGOs, local authorities), regardless of the fact that local expert staff already has such competences, as well as real opportunities to work on actions aimed at changes in Moldovan legislation, often prohibitive, therefore in need of significant simplifications. It is unacceptable that the number of foreign experts, who do not participate in the work on documents leading to changes in local legislation, exceeds dramatically the share of local experts. An increased level of organic work on the spot is recommended, and thus an





increased financial outlay for the financing of local expert support for the needs of local administration. Lack of real and tangible results achieved by the internationally funded projects (e.g. of the alternative approach in that context provided by the evaluated project as a result of synergy with the concurrent projects in the regions: purchase of bicycles, creation of tourist routes, construction of guest house, adaptation and certification of community kitchens) leads to the lack of trust and support from local institutions, being crucial to the nature of the rural development objectives and changes needed to be achieved, and therefore, it is recommended to undertake activities specifically aimed at practical and measurable results, in order to increase the credibility of the project implementing institutions and the efficiency of activities undertaken as part of active cooperation with the local administration.

