

THE HUNGARIAN SYSTEM OF GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS AND THE PREPARATION OF PRODUCT SPECIFICATIONS

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Following the 2008-2009 reform of the European Union's common market organisation in wine all protected designations of origin and geographical indications were imposed to prepare a product specification that described the conditions of their use. In this paper, we describe this process and the Hungarian system of geographical indications.

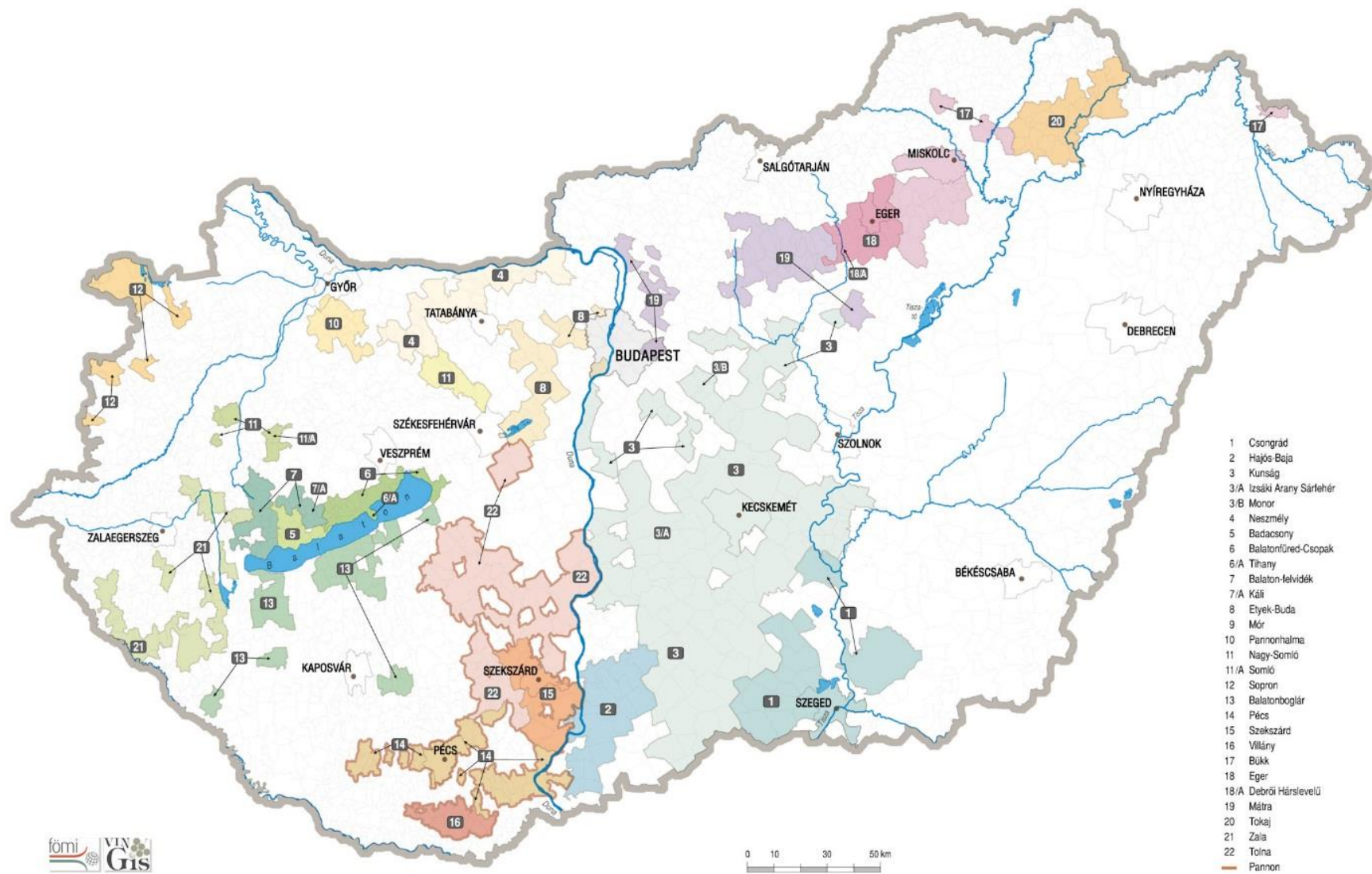
As set by EU regulation No. 1308/2013, geographical indications represent a specific wine quality that is related to the place of origin to a certain extent. The relationship is strong in case of protected designations of origin (PDO) and weak in case of protected geographical indications (PGI). The factors laying behind this relationship are regulated in the product specifications that had to be submitted to the European Commission by 31 December 2011 (for the already existing ones). Before that date the Hungarian system of geographical indications included 33 PDOs and 13 PGIs. However some of these geographical indications lost protection as their product specifications were not submitted (by intention). Following the recognition of a new PDO in 2013, now there are 31 PDOs and 5 PGIs in Hungary. The location of the Hungarian wine PDOs is presented on *map 1*.

It is common to differentiate two types of systems of geographical indications: German and Latin ones. In German systems, geographical indications represent a quite diverse character and the wines are usually segmented upon the ripeness of grapes. The latter is somewhat obvious as the wine districts concerned are the northernmost grape growing areas.

Meanwhile the Latin systems, originate from France and thus incorporating the concept of *appellation d'origine contrôlée*, put emphasis on the typicality of the given area. Therefore this approach concentrates on a much more limited scope of products that are strongly related to their place of origin.

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Map 1 Protected designations of origin of Hungary (as of 1 Jan 2014)

This difference is in line with the findings of Königer et al (2003) who showed that in case of Northern grape growing areas it is the topography (and thus microclimates) that affect the most the grape quality, while in Southern districts it is the soil that plays the most important part.

The Hungarian system of geographical indications is evolving and in a slow transition from the German approach towards the Latin as 9 out of the 31 PDOs do not coincide with a name of a wine district. Three have been named after their respective wine regions and six bear the name of a specific wine typical of a narrower regional unit. The 22 wine districts have a double function: they are units of the professional administration while their names serve as PDOs as well. The professional administration is based on the system of wine communities (“*hegyközség*”) who became more responsible for their geographical indications following the wine reform.

The transition towards a Latin system of geographical indications was accelerated by the EU’s wine reform and the product specifications in two ways. On one hand, the content of these technical files included elements that required a more precise definition of wine quality. On the other hand, the whole process involved the producers to an unprecedented extent as the product specifications had to be prepared by local and regional wine communities with the involvement of all producers.

Several factors of the wine quality had to be determined in the technical files: description of wines, oenological practices, demarcation of the area, maximum yields, varieties and minimal grape maturity. Several items in of the literature argue that these factors affect wine quality (Barócsi, 2006 and Gál 2006, for instance) and the mechanism is provided as well (Crespy, 2003, van Leeuwen et al, 2004).

With the dominance of the German approach when most of PDOs covered a heterogeneous set of products, the description of wines – including organoleptic and analytical characteristics – proved to be the hardest element to provide. Therefore, the institution of wine types was introduced. A wine type represents a relatively homogeneous set of products that unambiguously differs from other products with the same geographical indication.

The importance of demarcation of the area of production is inevitable and evident in case of wine terroirs. The basis of the demarcation is the Hungarian cadastral system of wine producing areas set up in the 1970s. The methodology of the qualification was developed by the Research Institute of Vine and Wine and includes agrometeorologic and pedologic data, information on the water management, degree of erosion, relief, land use and road conditions. The information is summarised in a score up to 400 points. The national vineyard register of

Hungary (VINGIS) was created in 2001 and maintained by the Institute of Cartography, Geodesy and Remote Sensing. VINGIS serves as a basis of allocation and checks of subsidies related to vineyards. Moreover, it contains all major information about each parcel (including the cadastral system). The precise demarcation of the geographical area of PDOs and PGIs is based on this system.

In case of some PDOs and wine districts, smaller geographical units (mainly single vineyard sites or *crus*) may play an important role. Therefore, the need for their precise demarcation was inevitable. Parallel to the drafting of product specifications, 1627 *crus* were delimited. These sites and micro-climates play the most important role in the case of Tokaj and Eger, where 411 and 328 of them were delimited respectively.

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